

# topical Weill

Volume 17

Numbers 1-2

Fall 1999

A supplement to the Kurt Weill Newsletter

## Curtain Up on WEILL 2000

### Opening Ceremony

WEILL 2000 officially commenced with a ceremony in the Chemnitz Opera House on 13 June 1999, on the afternoon of the premiere of *Der Weg der Verheißung*. Richard von Weizsäcker, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, delivered the keynote speech. Other participants included Chemnitz Mayor Peter Seifert; Guy Stern, Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music; Hans Joachim Meyer, Saxony's Minister for Arts and Sciences; and Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation. Peter Hanser-Strecker, CEO of Schott Musik International, raised a toast to launch the centenary.

### [www.world-weill-day.com](http://www.world-weill-day.com)

On 2 March 2000, Schott Musik International will host a multilingual website where friends around the world can post 100th birthday greetings to Weill. Music, pictures, and texts in English, French, German, Japanese, and Russian may be entered. After 2 March, visitors to the site will be able to view the greetings, but not add to them.

*The Museum of Television & Radio in Los Angeles will reprise its acclaimed screening series of films, kinescopes, and videos of Weill television productions and documentaries, 11 February-19 March 2000.*

### Worldwide Performances

On the heels of the trio of June 1999 Weill stage revivals described in this issue, celebrations will continue with major festivals in London (South Bank Centre and BBC Symphony Orchestra/Barbican Hall), Berlin (Konzerthaus), New York (city-wide), and Dessau (Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft). Performances will illustrate the range of Weill's stage works—from *Der Protagonist* to *Lost in the Stars*—and showcase all of his concert works as well. The centenary brochure enclosed with this newsletter features a detailed listing of festivals, stage productions, and concerts around the world. Additional copies may be requested by calling European-American Music Corporation at (305) 521-1604.

### "Musical Stages"

In association with the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are compiling a traveling multi-media exhibition entitled "Musical Stages: Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and His Century," which will be on view in Berlin (27 February-15 April 2000) and New York (early 2001). A series of 20 lobby panels—conceived thematically to inform the viewer about Weill, his works, his collaborators, and how his works continue to influence contemporary culture—will be distributed to major performance venues worldwide.

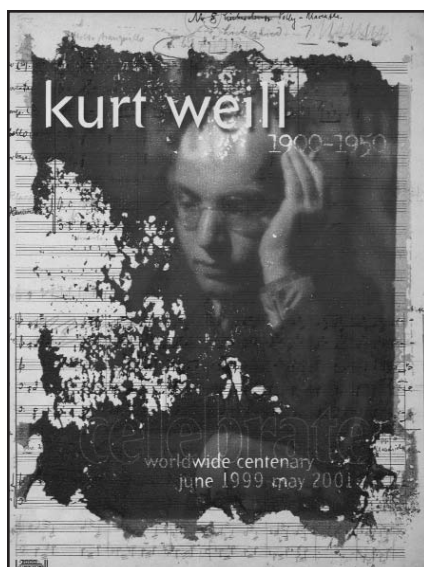
### Forthcoming Publications

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, featuring HK Gruber and Ensemble Modern, will be released by BMG in October 1999—the premiere recording of the newly-edited Kurt Weill Edition score.

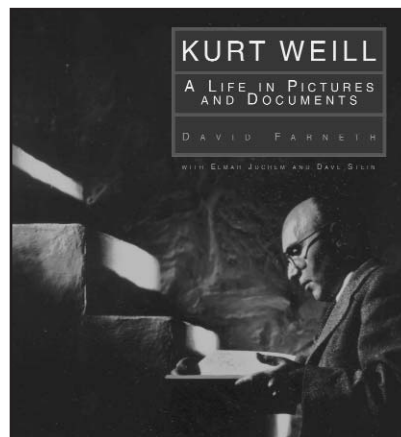
Musical Heritage Society will issue the first-ever recording of *Die Bürgschaft*, documenting Spoleto Festival USA's recent acclaimed production led by Julius Rudel. EMI plans to release the recording on Weill's birthday in March 2000, after its February MHS release.

*Die Dreigroschenoper*, edited by Stephen Hinton and Edward Harsh, will be published in January 2000 by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in association with European American Music Distributors as the first edited volume of the Kurt Weill Edition. Later in the year it will be followed by the critical edition of *The Firebrand of Florence*, edited by Joel Galand.

Warner Bros. Publications will issue *Kurt Weill Songs: A Centennial Anthology*, a two-volume collection reprinting all of Weill's popular songs published as sheet music during his lifetime, in December 1999.



A centenary poster and a detailed calendar of worldwide events are included with this newsletter.



*Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, by David Farneth with Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein, will be available in English from Overlook Press Verlag (early 2000). The book also serves as the catalog for the exhibition "Musical Stages: Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and His Century."

news & events

## News

### Kurt Weill Distinguished Achievement Awards to Teresa Stratas and Lys Symonette



Teresa Stratas receives an honorary doctorate from the University of Rochester, 13 November 1998.

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music has bestowed Distinguished Achievement Awards on world-renowned singer Teresa Stratas and on Lys Symonette, Vice-President of the Kurt Weill Foundation. At a 13 November 1998 dinner held at the University Club in Rochester, President Kim Kowalke made the presentations on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation “in recognition of lifetime devotion to the music of Kurt Weill.” Each award winner received an engraved Steuben glass paperweight.

After hearing Teresa Stratas sing Jenny in the 1979 premiere of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* at the Metropolitan Opera, Lotte Lenya proclaimed her “my dream Jenny.” At a tribute to Weill at the Whitney Museum in January 1980, Stratas first sang several of the unpublished songs later included in her recording, “The Unknown Kurt Weill” (Nonesuch). The concert review in *The New York Times* reported “. . . she is already the complete mistress of the [Weill] style, bending the words to create a spell-binding mood and using her bright, flexible soprano to capture a fascinating array of tonal colors.” Stratas went on to record “Stratas Sings Weill” (a second album of favorite Weill songs) and *Die sieben Todsünden*. Her performances of “Surabaya Johnny” and “Youkali” are featured in Rhombus Media’s video *September Songs*.

Lys Symonette was engaged by Weill in 1945 as rehearsal pianist and general understudy for *The Firebrand of Florence*, and she was subsequently promoted to his musical assistant for *Street Scene*, *Love Life*, and *Lost in the Stars*. After Weill’s untimely death in 1950, Symonette continued as musical advisor and accompanist for Lotte Lenya, who also nominated her as Trustee and Musical Executive of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. Symonette is the author of numerous German-to-English and English-to-German translations of Weill stage works; she is also the co-editor and translator of the English and German-language editions of *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*.

Stratas and Symonette are the third and fourth winners of the Kurt Weill Distinguished Achievement Award. Previous winners have been the conductor Maurice Abravanel (1990), who conducted the premieres of many of Weill’s stage works in Europe and America; and David Drew (1996), whose contributions as editor, producer, and scholar helped lead to a worldwide rediscovery of the breadth of Weill’s works.



Lys Symonette with Lotte Lenya.

### Pabst Film Recognized

BBC Music Magazine chose G. W. Pabst’s film of *Die Dreigroschenoper* as “video pick of the month” in November 1998. Writing about BFI Films video (BFIV 025), which includes both the German and French versions of the 1930 film, Mike Ashman opined: “Pabst rarely loses the spirit of the original. He got Theo Mackeben and the Lewis Ruth Band straight from the theater pit to play the film soundtrack. He took Carola Neher (Polly) and the young Lotte Lenya (Jenny) to re-create their stage roles in the German version. Overall both German and French casts get the elusive playing style so right . . . it makes for a fascinating contrast in national performance styles.”

### Arms and the Cow: The Bovine Comedy

A new English translation of *Der Kuhhandel* by Jeremy Sams will be introduced with performances in London and New York in early 2000. As part of the BBC’s Kurt Weill weekend, on 15 January 2000 the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Robert Ziegler, will present in concert the first U.K. performances of the work since its 1935 premiere. Under its new English title of *Arms and the Cow: The Bovine Comedy*, the American premiere of the work will follow on 11 April, in a production mounted by the Juilliard Opera Theatre; Randall Behr conducts and Frank Corsaro directs. Concurrently, German audiences will be able to see *Der Kuhhandel* in German in a new production at the Anhaltisches Theater Dessau (Robert Hanell, conductor; Johannes Felsenstein, director) which opens on 2 March, during the city’s Kurt-Weill-Fest.

### Robert Vambery, 1907–1999

Robert Vambery, author of the libretto of *Der Kuhhandel*, died on 2 August 1999 in La Jolla, California. Vambery was born in Budapest in 1907 and first entered the theatrical world as a teenage assistant to Max Reinhardt at the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna. In 1927 he moved to Berlin to work for Ernst Josef Aufricht at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, where he served as dramaturg for the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. In early 1934 Vambery and Weill collaborated on the satirical operetta *Der Kuhhandel*, which was produced in an English-language adaptation at the Savoy Theatre in London in 1935. After the initial production, Vambery was not to see *Der Kuhhandel* again on stage until sixty years later, when the Deutsch-Sorbisches Volkstheater Bautzen presented its German premiere.

## Upcoming Events

### **The Firebrand of Florence in Concert**

Audiences in London and Vienna will have a rare opportunity to hear *The Firebrand of Florence* in the 1999–2000 season, when the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna Konzerthaus will present the U.K. and Austrian premieres of the work in concert performances. Andrew Davis, conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, has chosen *Firebrand* for the final concert (16 January 2000) of its all-Weill weekend at Barbican Hall, featuring Rodney Gilfry as Benvenuto Cellini. On 21 May 2000, Vienna's Konzerthaus has scheduled the work with the RSO Vienna and conductor Dennis Russell Davies. Thomas Hampson stars as Cellini, elaborating on the *Firebrand* excerpts he included in his EMI CD, "Kurt Weill on Broadway."

### **"Kurt Weill's Berlin" at Kaye Playhouse in New York**

The New York Festival of Song will celebrate "Kurt Weill's Berlin" at the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse in New York City on 14 October 1999. The program will include Weill songs along with excerpts from *Der Silbersee* and *Happy End*, and rarities by Berlin contemporaries Eisler, Spoliansky, Holländer, Biener, and Nelson. NYFOS co-Artistic Director Steven Blier leads the evening from the piano, joined by soprano Constance Hauman, mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber, and tenor Peter Kazaras.

### **Six Divas in Seven Deadly Sins**

*Die sieben Todsünden* remains a favorite vehicle for leading ladies from several media. In the upcoming months, diverse artists from the realms of film, cabaret, Broadway, rock music, and opera will essay the challenges of Anna I:

- \* Anne-Sofie von Otter, with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (Joseph Swenson, conductor), on tour to Amsterdam, 'S-Hertogenbosch, Brussels, and London (2-6 February 2000);
- \* Marianne Faithfull, with the Berliner Sinfonie-Orchester (Ralf Weikert, conductor) in Athens (13 February 2000); and with RSO Vienna (Dennis Russell Davies, conductor) 29 May-2 June 2000, on tour to Birmingham, Manchester, London, Baden-Baden, and Cologne;
- \* Milva, with Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (Patrik Ringborg, conductor), 18 February in Dessau;
- \* Hanna Schygulla, with the Munich Philharmonic (Lothar Zagrosek, conductor), 28-29 March 2000;
- \* Audra MacDonald, with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (John Mauceri, conductor), 27-29 April 2000;
- \* Angelika Kirchschrager, Sony Classical recording (orchestra and conductor TBA) to be made in late 2000.

### **American Premiere of *Royal Palace* in Cincinnati**

The University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music will present a double bill of *Royal Palace* (the work's American premiere) and *Der Zar läßt sich fotografieren* on 10-12 February 2000. Staged by noted Weill director Jonathan Eaton, the double bill will be a featured component of the National Opera Association's annual meeting in Cincinnati. Before and after the opera performances, audience members will be able to hear two different cabarets of Weill's music—one German and the other American. The College-Conservatory of Music has also scheduled a symposium entitled "Opera—Where To?" Kurt Weill and Topical Opera," to be held on 11 February.

### **"Street Scenes" Premieres at the New York Philharmonic**

A new concert suite derived from *Street Scene* will be featured at the New York Philharmonic concerts on 9-11 March 2000, Leonard Slatkin conducting. Following Weill's wish to compile a symphonic suite from the opera, Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke of the Kurt Weill Foundation have assembled a fifty-five-minute concert sequence entitled "Street Scenes," condensing the fifty-member cast to five singers while preserving the opera's essential drama. The Philharmonic cast members include Christine Goerke (Anna Murrant), Yvonne Gonzales (Rose Murrant), Charles Castronovo (Sam Kaplan), and Dean Ely (Frank Murrant). After the New York premiere, the suite will be performed in Berlin on 12 March by the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, led by Lawrence Foster.

"Street Scenes" is available for concerts worldwide. For further information, please contact the Kurt Weill Foundation.

### **1999 Grants Awarded**

Based on the recommendations of an independent grant review panel, in December 1998 the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music approved grant awards to the following individuals and not-for-profit organizations:

#### **Research**

Barbara Barker, Sioux City, IA.  
Reconstruction of the original dances from *One Touch of Venus*.  
Technische Universität Chemnitz, Germany. Symposium on *Der Weg der Verheißung*.

#### **College and University Performance**

Calvin Theatre Company, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI. *The Threepenny Opera*.  
Ensemble weil..., Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, Berlin, Germany. *Mahagonny* and *Happy End Songspiels*.  
Utah State University, Logan, UT. *The Threepenny Opera*.  
Wichita State University, Wichita, KS. *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

#### **Recording Project**

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, Australia. *Marie galante* and songs of Weill's Paris period.

#### **Professional Performance**

Broomhill Opera, London, United Kingdom. *Der Silbersee*.  
Central City Opera, Central City, CO. *Street Scene*.  
Ohio Light Opera Company, Wooster, OH. *The Firebrand of Florence*.  
Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft, Dessau, Germany. Funding for the position of artistic director, Kurt-Weill-Fest.

In the grant category for professional performances, the following mid-year awards have been made thus far in 1999:

Cincinnati Musical Festival Association, Cincinnati, OH. *Propheten*.  
Spoleto Festival USA, Charleston, SC. *Die Bürgschaft*.  
Art Generation XXI Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (Bulgarian premiere).  
Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY. *Der Weg der Verheißung*.  
New York Philharmonic, New York, NY. "Street Scenes" suite.  
The Symphony Space, Inc., New York, NY. "Wall-to-Wall Weill" marathon.  
Japan Society, Inc., New York, NY. *Der Jasager*.  
Plymouth Music Series, Minneapolis, MN. *The Road of Promise*.

**Reminder: The deadline for submission of Kurt Weill Foundation Grant Applications (funding period 2000) is 1 November 1999.**

## Press Clippings

### *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, Chicago Lyric Opera (14 November 1998)

No opera production pushed the envelope further than Lyric's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (heard 14 November), which trashed Brecht and Weill's grubby anti-capitalist satire in the name of making it more "relevant" to brain-dead yuppies. I'm still trying to figure out the guy in the polar-bear suit.

—John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune* (24 December 1998)

Lyric's new production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (14 November) made two errors in judgment—one of them forgivable, one of them fatal. Michael Feingold's English translation of Brecht's text is as fine as anyone might ask for, but performing the entire libretto of *Mahagonny* in English softens the wonderful impact of the English lines Brecht himself composed. . . . The second misjudgment was more serious and will pretty much doom Lyric's production to perpetual neglect: David Alden's production, aided and abetted by Paul Steinberg's designs. . . . Lyric assembled a nearly ideal cast, who could do little more than try to maintain vocal integrity while having to submit to arbitrary interference from the producer. . . . [Conductor] Sylvain Cambreling found haunting beauty and transparency in the densely written score. The chorus once again shone in mastering some of opera's most demanding ensemble writing. This was definitely a performance to be heard and not seen.

—William Shackelford, *Opera* (April 1999)

### *Symphony No. 2*, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg (4-5 July 1999)

Ingo Metzmacher and the Philharmonic gave us the opportunity to discover Kurt Weill's "Second (and last) Symphony" in the Musikhalle. It is a great pity that he did not continue along this road, because this original work makes one suspect that Weill could easily have become something like a German Shostakovich. He, too, had the talent to serve as a musical witness for his times—to give a wordless voice to the persecuted. This comes through plaintively and passionately in the soli of the trumpet, the clarinet, the cello and the trombone, with an undeniable family resemblance to the famous songs from Weill's stage works. . . . Ovarions greeted Metzmacher and the Philharmonic on this occasion.

—gdt, *Die Welt* (7 July 1999)



Susan Graham

### *Die sieben Todsünden*, London Symphony Orchestra (4 July 1999)

For Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* [John Eliot Gardiner] had the inestimable advantage of the American mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, who captured the composite personality of Anna I and II to perfection. Gardiner gave strong but flexible support, taking the players by surprise once or twice, but achieving a vividly stylish backdrop. . . . All in all, this was a highly successful rendering of a work that is difficult to bring off, with a particularly touching Epilogue. Susan Graham returned after the interval for a no less triumphant

group of Weill's Broadway songs. Her natural command of accent and idiom, combined with the orchestra's consummately professional adaptability and Gardiner's fresh approach, ensured delightful performances of such favorites as "My Ship," "Surabaya Johnny," and "Speak Low." In "One Life to Live" Gardiner even vocalised a stanza from the podium. Is there no limit to the man's talents?

—Barry Millington, *The Times* (6 July 1999)

Weill's "sung ballet," *The Seven Deadly Sins*, was first. Here, Susan Graham, in marvelous voice, took the dual leading role of Anna I and Anna II, while the male quartet which represents the ever-exhorting family back home was headed by the bass Jeremy White, complete with beard, rouged cheeks, handbag and scarf, and one dangling earring. The piece works well in concert; in spite of its somewhat ritualistic procession through sins and cities. Gardiner managed to sustain the momentum well, and after the interval . . . Graham returned to deliver a sequence of half a dozen Broadway songs by Weill—sealing her audience's approval.

—Stephen Pettitt, *Financial Times* (7 July 1999)

### *The Threepenny Opera*

#### Pimlico Opera in HMP Downview (10 February 1999)

There is an audaciousness about Wasfi Kani's company which is thrilling purely in dramatic terms irrespective of the fact that its casts regularly include some of the naughtiest boys detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. . . . Pimlico's latest show is *The Threepenny Opera* . . . staged in Downview Prison. . . . I have rarely seen Brecht's witheringly misanthropic portrait of the Soho underworld recreated with such sardonic glee and exuberant energy, nor heard Weill's sour choruses spat out so venomously as under Kani's vigorous direction—especially where they concerned the imperfections of the Metropolitan Police! Outstanding among the professional performers were Roger Monk's wily Mr. Peachum and David Antrobus's strong-voiced Macheath. Arabella Nathan's Polly and Rhiannon Meades' Jenny offered pleasingly contrasted caricatures of the gangster's moll; and there was an impressive performance by the prison's own drama teacher, Esther Baker, as Lucy. One inmate, Trevor Toussaint, sang "Mack the Knife" with ferocious intensity and has his sights set, not unreasonably, on a showbiz career when he gets out. Best of all, however, were the big ensemble numbers, hurled out with chilling power by a bunch of real-life cons wielding baseball bats, saws, and knives. A sight to send a frisson through braver spines than mine.

—Richard Morrison, *Opera* (April 1999)

## **Mahagonny Songspiel/Happy End Songspiel, Ensemble weil . . . , Berlin (21-25 July 1999)**

Ensemble weil . . . celebrated the premiere of this production in May in the Saalbau Neukölln and now tours to the “regionale kapitale 2” culture festival in Prenzlauer Berg. In 1932 Kurt Weill already had the idea of presenting both Songspiels on the same evening, but his wish has not been realized until this production. The six singing students of the Hanns Eisler Musikhochschule impress with their unusual presence: the emotionless gaze, the posture full of aggression. The voices of the singers change skillfully between song and speech and find exactly the raw charm of the Brecht style. From the sidelines, the musical director Ari Benjamin Meyers acts as mediator between the brass-dominated orchestra and the singers. An outstanding ensemble achievement.—Cordula Deuper, *Der Tagesspiegel* (24 July 1999)

. . . we can delight in many a singing and acting accomplishment. In particular in that of Esther Kaiser, who sings better than Corinna Harfouch and acts almost as well as she. The viewer’s eyes remain on her, she demands attention when she . . . sits on the trash can, the throne of God, and sings the “Fürchte dich nicht” song and later the song “Ja, das Meer ist blau, so blau.” A wicked, coldly calculating, and at the same time completely unhappy being is she, one who carries within her the ambivalence of the human condition.—Jürgen Otten, *Berliner Zeitung* (23 July 1999)



Ensemble weil...in *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Photo: Henning Schossig.

## **Der Weg der Verheißung in Concert**

*The fall 1998 Kurt Weill Newsletter contained reviews of performances of Propheten in Vienna and London. Since that time, various concert versions have prepared the way for the first complete staged performance of Der Weg der Verheißung in Chemnitz.*

### **“Kings and Prophecies,” American Symphony Orchestra, New York (4 October 1998)**

Trying to extrapolate the original experience from Sunday’s concert was a little like trying to visualize the Titanic from a muddy locket. . . . Botstein offered two truncated acts’ worth of Weill’s music (“Kings” and “Prophets”) and as much half-hearted stage business as could be crammed into the strip of proscenium the orchestra didn’t occupy. It was an intriguing afternoon, but we’ll have to wait until the Brooklyn Academy of Music puts on the whole shebang next season to see *The Eternal Road* in all its glory.—Justin Davidson, *Newsday* (6 October 1998)

Mr. Botstein and his orchestra delivered what seemed an idiomatic and strong performance. The enormous cast was wildly variable, from the fine baritone Kurt Ollman, wasted in the small role of the Dark Angel, to some singers with larger roles who were barely adequate. Elizabeth Batton as Ruth and Katherine Benfer as Naomi were affecting. Susan Pfau as Bathsheba was also strong. . . . But this was a formidable undertaking, and Mr. Botstein and his forces essentially brought it off.—Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times* (6 October 1998)

### **Propheten, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, Bochum, Germany (14 November 1998)**

In the acoustically hostile atmosphere of the Ruhr University’s “Auditorium Maximum,” and in spite of soloists of variable quality, Steven Sloane succeeded in an impressive rendition of the work, especially as far as the chorus was concerned: fifty minutes of demanding, eclectic music. In this postmodern age, at long last those enthusiasts can be found before whom Weill no longer needs to be defended. . . . The end of the Bochum performance, when an apostate finds his way back to the Rabbi because of his small son’s unshakable faith—the outstanding Philip Goody in a part which was played by the young Sidney Lumet in 1937—also brought Kurt Weill’s homeland closer to the composer. The mountain does come to the prophet, after all.—Ulrich Schreiber, *Frankfurter Rundschau* (30 November 1998)

### **Propheten, Cincinnati May Festival, Cincinnati, Ohio (13 May 1999)**

Much of the credit goes to conductor James Conlon, who, for his twentieth anniversary as music director, pursued his idea of presenting “The Prophets” in the renovated Isaac M. Wise Temple on Plum Street. . . . Except for [John] Aler, who articulated the English text with superb expression, and baritone Victor Ledbetter, a persuasive Jeremiah, the strong cast consisted of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music graduates and faculty. . . . Joseph Sofranko, 12, was an exceptional actor in his role as the 13-year-old boy. The cries of the double chorus (as the people of Jerusalem and the people in the synagogue) added tension to the drama. The audience, many moved to tears, gave it a lengthy standing ovation.—Janelle Gelfand, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (15 May 1999)

Kurt Weill’s “Prophets” is that mythical catch: an unknown work of immediate appeal, fully prepared to enter the repertoire. . . . John Aler as the Rabbi-narrator led a vocally and theatrically fine cast of fifteen. . . . Chorus master Robert Porco rehearsed the Festival Chorus into an alert, exultant mob, filled with anger, sorrow and naive praise. And, true to Weill, there’s not a dull or trite moment in the score. Conlon reinforced this by sure, swift pacing.—Pierre Ruhe, *The Financial Times* (26 May 1999)

### **The Road of Promise, Plymouth Music Series, Minneapolis (3 June 1999)**

*The Road of Promise* turns out to be a fascinating, gratifying and, at times, baffling piece of work, a succession of biblical scenes moving from Abraham toward the goal of the Promised Land. . . . The concert version, of course, focuses on the music, and it’s a grand, spectacular, rich and tuneful score. The good tunes never stop. . . . Brunelle led a sweeping, fast-paced production with a strong cast headed by [Victor] Ledbetter that included [Dan] Dressen, Stephen Guggenheim, Vern Sutton, Mark Schowalter, Bradley Greenwald, Andrew Penning, Patricia Thompson and Marietta Simpson and featured first-rate choral singing.—Michael Anthony, *Star Tribune* (4 June 1999)

## News

### Mahagonny at Deutsche Oper Berlin

The current Deutsche Oper Berlin production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* has incited considerable controversy, particularly over the casting of the stage and film actress Corinna Harfouch as Jenny, which necessitated changes in Weill's score. After attending a dress rehearsal of the work, representatives of Universal Edition A.G. lodged a protest regarding the extensive transpositions of the vocal line to accommodate Harfouch's range. While noting the alterations to the score and Günter Krämer's near replication of his earlier Hamburg production, critics praised the conductor Lawrence Foster and the other cast members, especially the Jimmy Mahoney of Robert Dean Smith. As the Newsletter goes to press, it has been announced that Corinna Harfouch has withdrawn from the upcoming performances of *Mahagonny*, and the role of Jenny will be sung by Maria Husmann.

*In honor of Weill's centenary, in February 2000 the Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft in Dessau will join the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in hosting a Lotte Lenya Singing Competition in Germany. Consisting of two categories—for students in accredited German schools and for professional singers—the competition will take place on 16 and 17 February, with the winners presented in concert at Dessau's Kurt-Weill-Fest on 18 February. For further information, please contact: Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft e.V., Ebertallee 63, D-06846 Dessau, Germany. Telephone: +(49) (340) 619595, e-mail: weill-zentrum@t-online.de, Fax: +(49) (340) 611907.*



Weill, Lenya, and Alan Jay Lerner in Bloomington for the premiere of *Down in the Valley*.

### Fiftieth Anniversary Production of *Down in the Valley*

The Indiana University Opera Theater presented chamber performances of Weill's folk-opera, *Down in the Valley*, on 15 and 16 January 1999, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the work's world premiere at Indiana University on 15 July 1948. The Bloomington *Herald-Times* reviewer reported: "[Jessica Riley] brought to [Jennie] not only a convincing portrayal but a voice that could both lift and penetrate. Much credit is due to the chorus, guided by Jonathan Ng, which sang with fervor and flavor the authentic American folk songs around which Weill constructed his work." One member of the original cast, David Aiken, the Leader in 1948, returned to play a speaking part in the anniversary production. In a *Herald-Times* interview a few days before the performance, Aiken recalled that Weill, Lotte Lenya, and Alan Jay Lerner were all present in Bloomington at the premiere of *Down in the Valley*; Lerner's wife, Marion Bell, had been engaged to play the leading role of Jennie.

### Lotte Lenya Singing Competition

The first Lotte Lenya Singing Competition, hosted by the University of Rochester for students of the University, took place at the Eastman School of Music on 12 November 1998. Established by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in honor of Weill's wife and foremost interpreter on the occasion of the centenary of her birth, the competition encouraged excellence in the performance of music for the theater. Each Rochester contestant was asked to prepare four musical selections, including an aria from an opera, a piece from the American musical theater repertoire, and two selections by Weill. Judges Teresa Stratas, Julius Rudel, and Mark Cuddy awarded prizes to 11 Eastman students: Rachel Albert, Leah Arington, Heidi Bieber, Rebecca Comerford, Katia Escalera, Danielle Frink, Elizabeth McDonald, Brian Mulligan, Lauren Pastorek, Tami Petty, and Teresa Winner. The competition winners were presented on 14 November in a recital at Eastman's Kilbourn Hall.

*The 1999 Lotte Lenya Singing Competition will be held on 3 December 1999 at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music. Undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled in a degree program at any institution in New York, Connecticut, or Massachusetts are eligible to apply. For further information regarding competition requirements and eligibility, please contact: Dr. Scott Stratton, Eastman School of Music, 26 Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY 14604, e-mail: scsn@mail.rochester.edu, phone: (716) 274-1020.*

### ARSC Award to Notes for Bear Family's Lotte Lenya

The Association for Recorded Sound Collections announced the winners of the 1999 ARSC Awards for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research at its annual conference in Madison, Wisconsin, on 22 May 1999. In the Recorded General Popular Music category, the winner was "Lotte Lenya: A Centenary Tribute," by Richard Weize, Rainer E. Lotz, et al., notes to the Bear Family 1998 CD collection. The 250-page book was produced by Bear Family Records in collaboration with the Kurt Weill Foundation; contributors to the book included Kim H. Kowalke, Jürgen Schebera, David Farneth, Dave Stein, Guy Stern, Lys Symonette, Hans-Gerhard Lichthorn, Alan Rich, George Avakian, Harold Prince, and Teresa Stratas. It was edited by Lauriejean Reinhardt.

## The Threepenny Opera Helped Shape the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In a series entitled “Turning Points - 50 Works That Shaped the Century,” London *Daily Telegraph* writer Patrick O'Connor called *The Threepenny Opera* “the birth of what we now call alternative or fringe theater.” The article, appearing on 15 May 1999 as installment number 20, lauded Weill's creation: “By inventing this musical form, Weill inspired generations of disciples in the notion of music-theater experimentation. What he called it was a ‘return to a primitive form of opera.’ At first he thought that writing for actors with untrained voices would inhibit his style, but later he found ‘it proved to be an enormous enrichment.’” O'Connor described *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s original 1928 Berlin production as “the most famous theatrical event of the Weimar Republic.”

After its initial tremendous success, *The Threepenny Opera* was banned by the Nazis and disappeared from the stage until after the Second World War. Of *The Threepenny Opera*'s eventual worldwide influence, O'Connor asserted: “In New York, in Marc Blitzstein's translation which made ‘Mack the Knife’ a hit-parade success more than once, and then in London in Sam Wanamaker's production in 1956, it took on the status of a cult classic. Its influence over Bernstein, Sondheim and Kander and Ebb and many other music theater composers is plain. Weill wouldn't have been surprised—he called it a ‘breakthrough into a consumer industry.’ He wanted to extend the influence of ‘classical’ music beyond its traditional audience and said, ‘We addressed a public that did not know us at all.’”



Philip Casnoff (Macheath) and Bebe Neuwirth (Jenny).

Photo: Ken Friedman

### Bebe Neuwirth Stars in ACT's *Threepenny Opera*

San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater announces a new production of *The Threepenny Opera* opening on 8 September 1999 and starring two-time Tony Award winner Bebe Neuwirth as Jenny Diver. The cast also features Philip Casnoff (Macheath), Anika Noni Rose (Polly Peachum), Nancy Dussault (Mrs. Peachum), Steven Anthony Jones (Mr. Peachum), Lisa Vroman (Lucy Brown), and Charles Lanyer (Tiger Brown). ACT Artistic Director Carey Perloff directs, and Peter Maleitzke conducts. Leading off the Geary Theater's 1999-2000 season, the production will run through 3 October.

## New Books

### *Sprich leise (wenn du Liebe sagst)*. [Symonette and Kowalke]

The painstaking, loving exactness of Weill's answers to Lenya's artistic and personal questions and problems, the ever-present reference to works in progress, to political events, as well as the amazing stylistic similarity of both letter writers . . . present not only a documentation of the life of two artists, but also one of the destiny of two emigrants.—**Bettina Hirschberg**, *Frankfurter Rundschau* (15 October 1999)

One meets the prominent artists of Hollywood and Broadway, gossips about colleagues. . . . Marlene Dietrich is a dumb cow, Brecht mutates into a dried-up herring and Eisler into a nutcracker. . . . One is astonished by the perseverance and skill of the translators.—**Horst Koegler**, *Opernwelt* (January 1999)

### *Lenya the Legend: A Pictorial Autobiography*. [Farneth]

The illustrations are well reproduced, and Lenya's ruminations on music, theater, and life are a joy. No one ever looked or sounded like Lenya, and her unique voice and spirit are successfully captured here.—**Paul Gruber**, *Opera News* (April 1999)

Wonderful pictures, accurate documentation, and a text full of characteristic quotations from Lenya. The book is as much about Kurt Weill, of course.—**Michael Kennedy**, *The Sunday Telegraph* (13 December 1998)

This stunning pictorial autobiography weaves materials from Lenya's interviews and writings into a compelling narrative, enhanced by rarely seen graphics. . . . In all aspects of a career that took her from the epochal Weill-Bertolt Brecht operatic and ballet collaborations to playing James Bond's nemesis, Lenya remained unique and unforgettable.—**Allan Ulrich**, *San Francisco Examiner* (17 December 1998)

## New Recordings

### *Lotte Lenya Sings Kurt Weill: American Theatre Songs* [Masterworks Heritage MHK 60647]

The 1957 collection, “September Song and Other American Theatre Songs of Kurt Weill,” has now been spiffed up with 24-bit technology, as they say, and expanded. . . . Many of these songs have been recorded elsewhere, of course, but there is something inescapably authentic about Lenya's renditions. . . . None of the orchestrations are credited in the extensive liner notes, but the selections from *Street Scene* and *Lost in the Stars* seem to use Weill's charts—and it is on these tracks that Lenya is most effective. Three songs especially stand out: “Lonely House” and “A Boy Like You” from the former, and “Stay Well” from the latter. These are typically performed by singers with an operatic bent; Lenya sings them in theatrical style, simple and straightforward, and I find the songs far more moving than in other recordings.—**Steven Suskin**, *Playbill On-Line* (23 August 1999)

### *Daniel Hope: Weill Violin Concerto* [Nimbus NI 5582]

The Weill concerto is a tough nut to crack, but here Hope and the English Symphony Orchestra, sensitively directed by William Boughton, achieve just the right balance between its haunting vein of irony and Weill's natural expressivity.—**Julian Haylock**, *The Strad* (April 1999)

Daniel Hope, born in England in 1974, possesses not only a stupendous technique, but also the creative intelligence necessary to bring off Kurt Weill's eccentric Violin Concerto. The bitter charm of this work . . . is exactly right in Hope's hands. His tone is slim but has at the same time great warmth, avoiding any trace of sentimentality.—**Thomas Schulz**, *Rondo* (June-August 1999)

## New Publications

### DISSERTATIONS

Juchem, Elmar. "Die Entwicklung eines amerikanischen Musiktheaters in der Zusammenarbeit von Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson." Ph.D. dissertation, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 1999.

Linn, Michael Edward von der. "Degeneration, Neoclassicism, and the Weimar-Era Music of Hindemith, Krenek, and Weill." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1998.

### BOOKS

Bakos, Eva. *Wilde Wienerinnen: Leben zwischen Tabu und Freiheit*. Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1999. [Includes a chapter on Lotte Lenya.]

Brinkmann, Rainer O. and Katharina Megnet. *Szenische Interpretation von Opern. "Die Dreigroschenoper": Begründungen und Unterrichtsmaterialien*. Oldershausen: Lugert, 1998.

Brinkmann, Reinhold and Christoph Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*. Berkeley: University of California, 1999.

Grosch, Nils. *Die Musik der Neuen Sachlichkeit*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999.

Sullivan, Jack. *New World Symphonies*. New Haven: Yale, 1999.



### RECORDINGS

Archer, Robyn. "Cabaret Songs." London Sinfonietta; Dominic Muldowney, conductor. HMV Classics HMV 5 73042 2. [Reissue; includes songs by Weill, Eisler, Brecht, Dessau, and Muldowney.]

*Berliner Requiem*. "The Singing Apes and Other Song of Love and War." Vocalists: Stefan Dahlberg, Anders Bergström, Folke Alin; Uppsala Chamber Orchestra. BIS-CD-733.

Hirsch, Fred. "Fred Hirsch at Jordan Hall: Let Yourself Go." Nonesuch 79558-2. [Includes "Speak Low."]

"Ich bin. Weil(l) ich bin." Andrea Thelemann, voice; Kurzweil-Foundation; Thomas Mahn, musical director. Unicornio Records UR 34010. [Eighteen songs by Weill in new arrangements.]

"The Jewish Palette." Avery Tracht, tenor; Jules van Hessen, conductor; Herman Rouw, piano. Erasmus WVH195. [Includes *Kiddush*.]

Lenya, Lotte. "Lotte Lenya Sings Kurt Weill: American Theatre Songs, Songs from *The Threepenny Opera* and *Cabaret*." Orchestra and chorus conducted by Maurice Levine with Louis Armstrong, Jack Gilford, and Turk Murphy. Masterworks Heritage MHK 60647. [Includes a reissue of "September Song and Other American Theatre Songs by Kurt Weill," songs from the Theater de Lys *Threepenny Opera*, *Cabaret*, *Brecht on Brecht*, and recording sessions with Louis Armstrong and Turk Murphy.]



McGovern, Maureen. "The Pleasure of His Company." Mike Renzi, piano. Sterling S1017-2. [Includes "My Ship."]

*Der Silbersee*. Heinz Kruse (Severin), HK Gruber (Olim), Juanita Lascarro (Fennimore), Graham Clark (Lotterieagent), Helga Dernes (Frau von Luber); Heinz Zednik (Baron Laur); London Sinfonietta; Markus Stenz, conductor. RCA Victor 09026-63447-2.

Smith, Jocelyn B. "Blue Light & Nylons." JBS 145. [Songs by Weill and Gershwin.]

*Violin Concerto*. Daniel Hope, violinist; English Symphony Orchestra; William Boughton, conductor. Nimbus NI 5582. [With works by Schnittke and Takemitsu]

