

topical Weill

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A supplement to the Kurt Weill Newsletter

Up and Coming Weill

This issue of the Newsletter is devoted to reviews of Weill performances that have taken place in recent months, but a wide array of outstanding events are yet to come in 2001. Bratislava's Theater Aréna will produce *Die Dreigroschenoper* enacted by oversized Japanese Bunraku-style puppet figures (5 April–30 June 2001). On 4, 5, and 6 May, Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, Brazil—the famed jungle opera house featured in Werner Herzog's film *Fitzcarraldo*—will host the production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* that premiered in Rio de Janeiro last August (reviewed on p. 6). Het Nationale Ballet of the Netherlands will present an evening-length tribute to Weill's life and music choreographed by Krzysztof Pastor, premiering at Amsterdam's Het Muziektheater on 15 June. In a New York City parks series (16–21 July), Audra McDonald joins the New York Philharmonic for *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Thomas Hampson sings *Four Walt Whitman Songs* on 30 July at the Salzburg Festival with the RSO Wien, Dennis Russell Davies conducting. Sir Andrew Davis will lead the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a Proms performance of *Royal Palace* on 2 August in London, repeating last year's acclaimed BBC Weill Festival concert. The Prince Music Theater brings *Lady in the Dark* to Philadelphia (6–21 October), with Andrea Marcovicci as Liza Elliott. A new production of *Street Scene* with Catherine Malfitano, conducted by Richard Buckley, opens at Lyric Opera of Chicago on 2 October (nine additional performances run through 3 November). Also in October, New York's Cherry Lane Alternative will begin an off-Broadway *Threepenny Opera*. The Opéra National de Paris has scheduled *Die sieben Todsünden*, paired with Prokofiev's *The Prodigal Son* and Stravinsky's *Mavra*, as a Paris Opéra Ballet tribute to Boris Kochno, with performances 26 November–11 December. Featuring Anne-Sofie von Otter as Anna I, the work will be broadcast on French television on 26 December.

Several new recordings are due out in the coming months. Meirion Bowen's reconstructed orchestration of *Die Zaubernacht*, as recorded by the Ensemble Contrasts with conductor Celso Antunes at its June 2000 Cologne Music Triennale debut, will be released by Capriccio. The Leipziger Streichquartett is recording the forthcoming Kurt Weill Edition score of the String Quartet in B minor. Gerard Schwarz will conduct the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the Ernst Senff Chor in a Milken Archive recording of excerpts from *Der Weg der Verheißung*. Decca Broadway will reissue the Broadway cast recording of *Lost in the Stars*, and Warner Bros. will publish a *Lost in the Stars* songbook as part of its "Rediscovered Broadway" series. The long-awaited first complete recording of *One Touch of Venus* is due to be released on TER.

Please visit the Kurt Weill Foundation's website (www.kwf.org) to view a calendar of all upcoming performances and other events about which the Foundation has received information. Readers are invited to inform us of additional events not posted in the calendar (kwfinfo@kwf.org).



"Life, Love, and Laughter"

On the heels of their highly successful recording of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, HK Gruber and Max Raabe have joined forces on a new Weill CD from RCA, entitled *Life, Love, and Laughter: Dance Arrangements, 1927-1950* in the United States and *Charming Weill: Dance Band Arrangements* in Europe. Under Gruber's direction, the Palast Orchester of Berlin plays salon orchestra arrangements of Weill musical theater songs, and Raabe solos on several favorites. On 4 March 2001, a live international radio broadcast from Berlin of Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion" featured Raabe singing "Tango Ballade" and discussing the album.

At a 22 October 2000 Berlin ceremony broadcast on German television, the German Recording Academy awarded an Echo Klassik 2000 Prize to the RCA recording of *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

"Song of the Century"

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Recording Industry Association of America have named "Mack the Knife" as one of the top twenty "Songs of the Century." The song (as performed by Bobby Darin) was chosen to join hits like Judy Garland's "Over the Rainbow," "White Christmas" sung by Bing Crosby, and Louis Armstrong's "When the Saints Go Marching In." Official "Songs of the Century" ballots listing more than 1,000 nominated songs were sent to music professionals, teachers, students, government officials, and members of the media. The songs selected by the voters are to be used by American schools



in a teaching curriculum designed to further an appreciation for the music development process, from songwriting to performing, recording, and distribution.

"Mack" in the Movies

As further evidence of its wide appeal, the ubiquitous "Mack the Knife" (or "Moritat," as it is known in German) can be heard in several recent Hollywood movies, among them *Chump Change*, *Lucky Numbers*, *What Women Want*, and *Heartbreakers*. The upcoming *Rollerball* will feature renditions of three other songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

Grant Reports

Opera Omaha, recipient of a 2000 Kurt Weill Foundation Professional Performance Grant for its semi-staged production of *Die sieben Todsünden* on 14, 15, and 20 October 2000, augmented those performances with additional Kurt Weill centenary events presented in September and October under the title, "Kurt Weill: An American Journey." G. W. Pabst's film *Die Dreigroschenoper* was screened; letters from *Speak Low* (*When You Speak Love*) were read; and a song concert, "From Dessau to Times Square," was presented with the participation of Tuffy Epstein's Klezmerim. The ancillary events were produced in collaboration with the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, which also provided an exhibition entitled "Jewish Immigrants to Omaha" for display at the Opera Omaha lobby.



"Kurt Weill in Europe," Chautauqua Opera Studio

Chautauqua Opera, likewise a 2000 Professional Performance Grant winner for its production of *Street Scene* on 18 and 21 August 2000, presented a Chautauqua Symphony "Pops" concert featuring the American works of Kurt Weill on 19 August; singers from the Young Artists program participated in a workshop revue focusing on Weill's European works on 12 and 17 August. Chautauqua Festival audiences had the rare opportunity to compare Weill's opera *Street Scene* with the Elmer Rice play from which it was adapted when Rice's 1929 *Street Scene* was staged on 17, 18, and 19 August.

Street Scene

Minnesota Opera, Minneapolis (premiere 24 February 2001)

"*Street Scene* is an old-fashioned hyper-realistic tale of tenement life, climaxing in a jealous murder. An aura of grim despair hangs over even the innocent romance. Set designer Adrienne Lobel admirably captures this world in a remarkably realistic set. It shows four floors of a block of apartment buildings, accurate to the smallest detail. Director Michael Ehrman fills that space with a broad range of quirky characters and a whole city's worth of daily activities. . . . Conductor Rob Fisher clearly understands the score and loves it. He does his best to show it off. And Weill's clever orchestrations, far more sophisticated than your average musical, are dazzling. . . . Bass Kimm Julian almost steals the show, both vocally and dramatically, as Rose's jealous father. Soprano Maria Plette, as his lonely, tragic wife, is every bit his equal. Brandon Jovanovich, as Rose's love interest, has an attractive lyric tenor but is wooden as an actor. The large cast is made up of primarily local singers, from both the classical realm and the theater, confirming the wealth of talent here. There was not a weak link among them, and their diction was so good, the subtitles were almost unnecessary." — William Randall Beard, *Pioneer Press* (26 February 2001)

Excerpts from *Der Weg der Verheißung*

The Cantata Singers, Boston (19 and 21 January 2001)

"The evening brought the local premiere of three episodes from Kurt Weill's largest work, *Der Weg der Verheißung*. . . . The score is full of magpie thievery of everything from Bach to *Cavalleria Rusticana* and the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, with exciting narrative passages, stirring proclamations, and glorious choruses; the harmonium wheezes away like an accordion, and Weill's characteristic hootchy-kootchy appears in the dance before the golden calf. No other composer could have brought these things together into one strong, coherent, and powerfully communicative musical message. These episodes made one eager to hear the rest of the score; this is necessary music, and it was thrilling to hear it for the first time. . . . Seven Cantata Singers soloists shone, David Kravitz most brightly, and David Hoose conducted with his precision and passion." — Richard Dyer, *The Boston Globe* (20 January 2001)

2001 Grants Awarded

Research and Travel

Heidi Owen, Rochester, New York.
Grant to support research on Weill's role in the phenomenon of Broadway opera, 1934–1958.

Professional Performances

Abramyan String Quartet, Salt Lake City, Utah. String Quartet in B minor.
Orchestra X, Chicago, Illinois. *Die sieben Todsünden*.
Minnesota Opera, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Street Scene*.
Spier Arts Trust, Lynedoch, South Africa. *Der Silbersee*.
Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft, Dessau, Germany. "Street Scenes."
Prince Music Theater, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *Lady in the Dark*.

College and University Performances

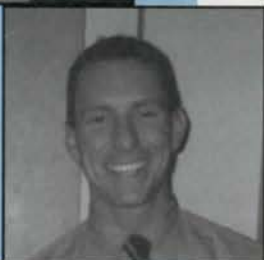
Cornish College, Seattle, Washington. *The Threepenny Opera*.
City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, California. *Happy End*.
Lycée Blaise-Cendrars, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. *Der Lindberghflug* and *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*.
California State University, Fullerton, California. *Street Scene*.
Denison University, Granville, Ohio. *Happy End*.

Symposia

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. "Music Suppressed by the Third Reich"

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music solicits proposals from individuals and not-for-profit organizations for funding of projects related to the perpetuation of Kurt Weill's artistic legacy. For each funding period, the Foundation accepts proposals in the following categories: Research and Travel Grants, Symposia, Publication Assistance, Dissertation Fellowships, College/University Performance and Production Grants, Recording Projects, Broadcasts, and Professional Performance and Production Grants. The application deadline for the 2002 funding period is 1 November 2001. For further information, visit the Foundation's website (www.kwf.org).

Young Singers Shine in Lenya Competition



On 17 March 2001, the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music was the site of the finals of the fourth annual Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers, open to students enrolled in a degree program at any college, university, or conservatory in the United States or Canada. Established in 1998 by the Kurt Weill Foundation in honor of Weill's wife and foremost interpreter on the centenary of her birth, the Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers recognizes excellence in the performance of music for the theater, including opera, operetta, and American musical theater.

Judges André Bishop (Artistic Director, Lincoln Center Theater), Welz Kauffman (President and CEO, the Ravinia Festival) and the world-renowned singer Teresa Stratas awarded three prizes: First Prize of \$3500 to soprano Jennifer Dyan Goode; and two Second Prizes of \$2000 each to Raquela Sheeran, soprano, and Jacob Langfelder, baritone. In addition, the judges singled out two contestants for special awards: tenor Noah Stewart received \$1000 for Outstanding Vocal Potential; and soprano Misty Ann Castleberry Sturm received \$500 for Outstanding Performance of a Single Number, "Surabaya-Johnny."



André Bishop, Teresa Stratas, Welz Kauffman

To show versatility in the performance of varied musical theater styles, each of the thirteen contestants was asked to prepare a fifteen-minute program including an aria from the operatic repertoire, a selection from one of Weill's German stage works, a selection from one of Weill's American stage works, and a selection from the American musical theater repertoire by a composer other than Weill. Criteria for adjudication included vocal technique and beauty of instrument as well as interpretation, acting, idiomatic performance, and stage presence.

First prize winner Jennifer Dyan Goode presented a program consisting of "Ain't It a Pretty Night" from Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, "Bill" from *Show Boat* by Jerome Kern, and Weill selections from *Knickerbocker Holiday* ("It Never Was You") and *Happy End* ("Surabaya-Johnny"). Jacob Langfelder chose selections from *Mahagonny* ("Haben alle Zuschauer Billette?") and *Street Scene* ("Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway?"), along with Papageno's Suicide Aria and Marc Blitzstein's "The New Suit (Zipperfly)," and Raquela Sheeran sang "My Ship" (*Lady in the Dark*) and Juanita's aria from *Der Kuhhandel*, in addition to Menotti's "Steal Me, Sweet Thief" and "How Could I Ever Know?" from *The Secret Garden* (Simon). Coincidentally, two of the three winners had participated in Weill centenary activities last year in New York City—Jennifer Goode played Lotte Lenya in "September Songs," a Weill cabaret at the Manhattan School of Music, and Raquela Sheeran was Juanita in the American premiere of *Der Kuhhandel* at The Juilliard School.

Finalists in the competition were selected by regional judges Teresa Stratas, Judy Kaye, Angelina Réaux, and Wilbur Pauley after four auditions held at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; Symphony Space, New York City; the Eastman School of Music, Rochester; and the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. The thirteen finalists from the United States and Canada were Jennifer Dyan Goode, Manhattan School of Music; Jazmin Gorsline, Eastman School of Music; Sarah Hagstrom, University of Southern California; Melanie Henley Heyn, University of Southern California; Jacob B. Langfelder, Boston Conservatory of Music; Mireille Lebel, University of Toronto; Andrew Meyer, University of Southern California; Raquela Sheeran, The Juilliard School; Noah Stewart, The Juilliard School; Misty Ann Castleberry Sturm, Eastman School of Music; Siri Vik, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; Andrew Wilkowske, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; and Monica Yunus, The Juilliard School.

Left, from top: Jennifer Dyan Goode, Jacob Langfelder, Raquela Sheeran, Noah Stewart, Misty Ann Castleberry Sturm, and finalists on Eastman stage.

On Stage

"Kurt Weill in America," Andrea Marcovicci

Prince Music Theater, Philadelphia (12–17 September 2000)

photo: A. Marouk,
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"Weill had always wanted his music to communicate with a large public, and the buoyant lyricism of American musical theater not only appealed to his aesthetic sensibility but seemed ready-made for such an end. 'He said that if a cab driver was whistling his tunes, he would like it better than a Pulitzer Prize,' Andrea Marcovicci reports in her one-woman cabaret. . . . They all are beauties, these twenty-two numbers in 'Kurt Weill in America,' and they have their perfect interpreter in Marcovicci, who doesn't so much sing them as totally inhabit them. The protean flexibility of her voice, the supple precision of her phrasing and diction invest each song with a character all its own—this one sexy and sinuous, that one bouncily lilting, this one gravely introspective. Yes, now and then her intonation falters. But so did Maria Callas', and it isn't overstating things to call Marcovicci the Callas of cabaret. It helps that Marcovicci is an altogether charming personality who knows how to work a room, occasionally leaving the stage and her virtuosic pianist, Shelly Markham, to interact with the audience. She can reach only the front rows, yet her warmth is such that the entire house, beautifully lit by Peter J. Jakubowski, appears to shrink to boite-size proportions. Of the three cabaret-style productions I've seen at the Prince, this is the first that has truly felt like a cabaret." — Clifford A. Ridley, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (16 September 2000)

Andrea Marcovicci returns to the Prince Music Theater this fall as Liza Elliott in a new production of Weill's *Lady in the Dark* (6–21 October 2001).

Der Silbersee Spier Arts Festival, Lynedoch, South Africa (24 February, 2 and 9 March 2001)

"The main objective of the Spier Summer Festival is to offer young artists the opportunity to share the stage with experienced local and international talent so that they may gain experience and realise their full potential. In a time where the arts are struggling to survive in South Africa, it is a worthy cause, and it is fascinating to see how artists with different backgrounds and disciplines can be brought together in one production. . . . All the artists delivered good performances. Vumile Nomanyama [Severin] and Herman Hardick [Olim] portrayed their characters' inner conflict brilliantly, while Hardick surprised with his comedic abilities. Their singing was also satisfying, although Nomanyama seemed uncomfortable with a few of the higher notes. As far as the acting was concerned, the star of the evening was British actress Buffy Davis [Frau von Luber]. She portrayed the selfish and authoritative role with great conviction and has a razor-sharp feel for comedy." — Birgit Otterman, *Die Burger* (24 February 2001)

"Whether one warms to it or not, it is impossible to remain indifferent to its lively depiction of crime, expiation, and forgiveness—themes that sit well with the public of post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike some politically correct works, however, it is free of moral syrup, having an astringent element of comedy to enliven the storyline." — Beverley Brommert, *Tonight* (26 February 2001)

Lady in the Dark, Boston Academy of Music

Emerson Majestic Theater (20, 21, and 22 October 2000)

"[*Lady in the Dark*], which premiered sixty years ago in the Colonial Theatre, just around the corner from the Emerson Majestic, is a work of major artistic ambition. It is not a 'musical' but a play with music, a serious, sensitive play about psychoanalysis by Moss Hart, who had undergone analysis himself. . . . There are touches of the German *Threepenny Opera* Weill in Liza's black wedding dream; but Weill also knew how to write for Americans, and in its scope and complexity of invention the score stands as one of the half-dozen finest ever composed for Broadway. No wonder Stravinsky admired it and Copland envied it. *Lady* has great tunes, snappy numbers, and hit songs, but it also burrows deep. . . . The Boston Academy of Music's production was pretty wonderful—a true ensemble effort, with a genuine star performance in the middle of it, Delores Ziegler's Liza Elliott. . . . All three men in Liza's life were excellent—Bryan McNeil had a self-parodying swagger that suggested the dopey good nature of Burt Reynolds; Richard Santos was almost painfully sincere as the sugar daddy whose little girl has grown up; and Michael Lopez-Saenz was terrific as the tough customer who's met his match in Liza. . . . [Ziegler] navigated 'One Life to Live' pretty carefully—her voice is really *too* opulent for this kind of music, but long before she got to 'The Saga of Jenny' she had seized control of the role. That great song she delivered with tremendous risqué panache, but also from inside herself." — Richard Dyer, *The Boston Globe* (23 October 2000)

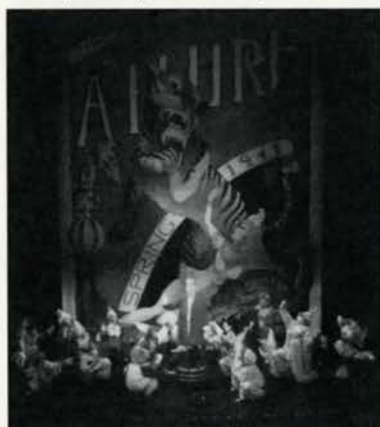


photo: Clive Grainger © 2000

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

Bremer Theater, Bremen

(Premiere 10 February 2001)

"Director and stage designer Andrej Woron has transformed the opera into a partly sad, partly amusing, mischievously suggestive revue of resignation. . . . Here, terrifying images have been transformed into snappy, amusing, giddy 'infotainment.' At the end Jim rises from the dead and, leaving the stage, whistles the tune of 'Mack the Knife.' As Jim, Mihai Zamfir is far more accurate and melodic when he whistles than when he sings his unbelievably difficult part, especially in the first act. . . . [Anne Marie Kaufmann as Jenny], with her short, low-cut, bright-red latex dress, and long mane of red hair, adds a kind of cheap glamor to the proceedings. She sings like a performer in a musical, with accented words plus vibrato to intensify emotion. She serves up 'Alabama Song' in a gentle croon, and it sounds good. Later on, however, her pop-singer training is not up to coping with the demands of the dramatic-soprano role, and she has to belt out the high notes. . . . The orchestral realization under Stefan Klingele was delightful. This young conductor understands how to make the disparate sound harmonious: the sentimental operatic tone just as much as its parodistic alienation. Klingele is as much at home with melodic aria as with terse gesture." — Jürgen Kesting, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (22 February 2001)

Focus on Weill International Beethovenfest Bonn 2000

Charming Weill RCA Red Seal recording

"Turn to Max Raabe on an extraordinary RCA disc called 'Charming Weill' and you hear a smooth, eerie light baritone with a wide vibrato, haunting enough to sound authentic. The conductor is none other than HK Gruber, composer, 'chansonnier,' and now conductor—and if you were to switch your amplifier to single-channel mode, then overlay the sound with shellac surface noise, I doubt you'd not question the recording's year-old provenance. Gruber, Raabe, and the Palast Orchester perform dance-band arrangements of both the 'Berlin' and 'American' Weill, all of them authorized by Weill himself and given with a period sonority made up of banjo, guitar, fiddle, saxes, trumpets, trombone, double bass—even a sousaphone. I have never heard a more convincing reenactment of old-style dance music, and if the chosen selections occasionally seem more melancholy—even occasionally more sinister—than especially 'charming,' that's more to do with our retrospective perception of the troubled period they sprung from. It's a brilliant production, and sounds absolutely marvellous." — Rob Cowan, *The Independent* (2 March 2001)



Alice and Ellen Kessler, HK Gruber

Die sieben Todsünden

Stadthalle Wuppertal (29 September), Straßenbahnhalles Bonn-Dransdorf (30 September), Tonhalle Düsseldorf (1 October)

"Ambivalent—or schizophrenic?—is the representation of the heroine, Anna I and II, whose duty is to make every sacrifice for the family. The casting of Alice and Ellen Kessler was simply superb. Not only because the two are twins in real life, but especially because they managed to feel their way into Anna's double role most convincingly. Nothing was too beautiful or too smooth; a bit of the proper milieu was always present. Four members of the vocal sextet Singer Pur provided the parodistic part of the family. The irony, bordering on cynicism, came through loud and clear, carried by the highly flexible musical accompaniment created by HK Gruber, conducting the MusikFabrik NRW." — Susanne Hasse-Mühlbauer, *General-Anzeiger* (2 October 2000)



Orchester Damals und Heute at Cologne/Bonn Airport

Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments, Op. 12

Altes Wasserwerk, Bonn (15 October 2000)

"Busoni's student Kurt Weill wrote to Lotte Lenya that one needed to know a lot about Arnold Schoenberg in order to understand this piece. However, at the same time the solo part's *Gestus* reminds one of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat*. Schönberg, Busoni, Stravinsky, and the concerto's neoclassical features: openness toward everything he encountered was certainly a typical feature of Weill. Sergij Stadler was very pleasing in the concerto's solo part. He engaged in the dialogue with the wind instruments in an extraordinarily intense fashion. Rather than showing off, Stadler presented himself as an intelligent servant of the music. . . . The Ensemble Octagon also received generous applause." — H.D. Terschüren, *Bonner Rundschau* (17 October 2000)

String Quartet No. 1, op. 8

Beethovenhaus Bonn

(3 October 2000)

"The program's centerpiece was a string quartet by Kurt Weill (his works along with Krenek's represent a focus of this year's International Beethovenfest). Presented was Weill's op. 8, composed in 1923 under the tutelage of his Berlin teachers Busoni and Jarnach, which prepares the move to modernity in its structure and sonority. . . . Weill employs contrasting tempos, agitados, and expressive lyricism. Parity between dissonance and consonance characterizes the sonic realm, tonal centers are avoided, and the harmonic structure is primarily a result of voice leading. Here the Berlin Philharmonia Quartet impressed with its creative and dynamic intensity during tuttis as well as in solo passages, especially the cello's solo passage in the concluding *Choralphantasie*. In such a performance one is glad to hear the still little-known work of the young Weill."

— Barbara Kaempfert-Weitbrecht, *General-Anzeiger* (5 October 2000)

Der Lindberghflug

Cologne/Bonn Airport

(10 October 2000)

"Why not try something different? An airport terminal can become an exciting concert hall, as demonstrated by the Beethovenfest. All the more if the program contrasts the fluorescent lights with the bucolic idyll of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, but then suits the coolly technical atmosphere to Kurt Weill's *Lindberghflug*. . . . The airman Dietmar Kerschbaum took off and landed with bravura. His versatile tenor and trained operatic pathos ably profiled Lindbergh's recklessness, his iron will, and the obstacles he faced. Karsten Mewes (bass) and Stephen Bronk (baritone) filled the remaining solo parts with full voices and stage presence. Worthy of praise was the Orchester Damals und Heute, navigated safely by pilot Michael Willens through all the turbulences of Weillian harmony, as well as the gorgeous sounding Vokalensemble Köln (chorusmaster: Ma Ciolek)." — Gunild Lohmann, *General-Anzeiger* (12 October 2000)

Concert Reviews

Die sieben Todsünden, Suite from Der Silbersee

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
(9-11, 14 November 2000)

"Markus Stenz is making certain Chicago pays due respect to Kurt Weill, one of the important figures of musical theater in the 20th Century, on this, the 100th anniversary of his birth and 50th of his death. . . . [Ute Lemper's] performance on Thursday was quite simply astonishing. . . . Her German diction so clear the CSO almost could have dispensed with its projected English captions, Lemper drew subtle distinctions between the two Annas. And she brought the house down with Weill's 'I'm a Stranger Here Myself,' sung as an encore. Stenz infused the chamber orchestra with a similar kind of intensity, bringing out the mordant humor and crisp, banjo-picking color that leaven the soberly didactic text. And the family, sung by members of the group Hudson Shad (Roy C. Smith and Eric Edlund, tenors; Peter Becker, baritone; Wilbur Pauley, bass) could not have been more sharply characterized. The conductor's own suite from 1933's *The Silver Lake*—based on an earlier suite arranged by one Karel Solomon—proved well worth hearing as a companion piece. Two arias from the work are treated instrumentally, framed by the overture, Act II interlude and music from the finale. The last great statement of the Weimar Republic's lyric stage, this brave fable is lifted to greatness by some of Weill's deepest music—too bad there is so little of it in this suite. You can hear the entire *Der Silbersee* (to revert to the German title) on a recent BMG recording conducted by Stenz." — **John von Rhein**, *Chicago Tribune* (11 November 2000)

Symphony No. 2, Weill songs Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (2-4 November 2000)

"[Ute] Lemper, a classic European chanteuse of the highest order, knew exactly what she was about with Weill's German music. . . . 'Surabaya Johnny,' 'Alabama Song,' and 'Salomon Song' are brewed from a potent formula. . . . Such a program is a gamble on a classical subscription series, but music director Andreas Delfs rolled sevens and eights. Lemper was brilliant, and so was the orchestra, whether backing her in Weill's bitter, world-weary European style, swinging hard in his American-period tunes or exploring the strange beauties of the rarely heard *Symphony No. 2*. Delfs had a great time, moving from podium to organ to piano to accordion. Concertmaster Frank Almond found unexpected heartbreaking beauty in three tunes from *Threepenny*, and trumpeter Mark Niehaus and trombonist Gary Greenhoe played gorgeous solos in the *Second Symphony*." — **Tom Strini**, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (3 November 2000)

The Seven Deadly Sins Kansas City Symphony (17-19 November 2000)

"In the end, the evening was saved by a classy, absorbing performance from mezzo-soprano Emily Golden, whose dusky voice lent Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* an appropriate depth and melancholy. . . . Golden sings the part of the 'practical' sister, with occasional interjections from her more impulsive sister. In the original production, the second sister was played by a dancer, and for these performances the symphony whimsically placed an empty chair for this 'mute' character. . . . The orchestra's playing was still a bit unkempt here, though [Anne] Manson conducted with more clarity of conviction. Nevertheless it was Golden's luscious abandon that gave this performance its fiber and substance." — **Paul Horsley**, *Kansas City Star* (20 November 2000)



"Mack the Knife" by Arbit Blatas

"Arbit Blatas: *The Threepenny Opera*" and "The Classic Kurt Weill"

Famed mezzo-soprano and stage director Regina Resnik has dedicated a multi-media tribute to Kurt Weill and to her late husband, the painter and sculptor Arbit Blatas, including an exhibition of the series of Mr. Blatas' paintings depicting scenes from *The Threepenny Opera* and a documentary film by Ms. Resnik on the genesis of the series. Mr. Blatas was inspired by the 1954 revival of *The Threepenny Opera* at New York City's Theater de Lys and used actors from the production as his models. The series is doubly notable: When the original paintings were stolen from a New York City storage facility in 1994, Mr. Blatas recreated them from photographs. The exhibition and documentary were on view 17-27 January 2001 in the Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery at New York City's Hunter College.

On 17 January 2001 at Hunter College's Kaye Playhouse, Ms. Resnik presented "The Classic Kurt Weill," an evening of songs narrated by Ms. Resnik featuring Michael Philip Davis, tenor, and Jennifer Aylmer, soprano. Accompanied by pianist Kenneth Merrill, Mr. Davis and Ms. Aylmer sang songs from Berlin, Paris, and New York, ending with excerpts from *Street Scene*. The concert, film, and exhibition had previously been presented in October 2000 at Belmont University in Nashville.

"Just when you thought it was safe. . ."

Newsletter readers were informed in Fall 2000 that "Mack the Knife" was to be performed by America's favorite wall-mounted singing fish, Big Mouth Billy Bass. But as marketed by Gemmy Industries, Billy has been replaced by



"Jaws: A singing, dancing great white shark." Activating the fish's motion detector triggers a sinister performance of the first ten seconds of John Williams' movie theme for *Jaws*, followed by Bobby Darin's rendition of "Mack the Knife."

Kurt Weill Fest in Dessau (2–11 March 2001)

"Anna I and Anna II of Weill/Brecht's *Die sieben Todsünden* impersonated by two male performers: It was the big hit promised by this year's Kurt Weill Festival in Dessau. Many an eyebrow was raised in anticipation, and not only by the critics. Could it work? . . . Jörg Waschinski and Gregor Seyffert refuted the various objections splendidly. Above all, the artists' matter-of-fact sincerity, relentlessly dedicated to the work, dispels any doubt. . . .

"After last year's centenary celebrations, Dessau has returned to daily routine with a budget cut in half, but by no means have things gone back to business as usual. The emphasis is now on the unknown Weill and on new interpretations. In this respect, Dominique Horwitz's aggressive punk version of *Dreigroschenoper* hits was less convincing than Stefanie Wüst's coloratura singing of earliest songs which accompanied a book presentation of Weill's highly intriguing and just published family correspondence. . . .

"With a performance of *Love Life*, the Berlin Musikhochschule's musical theater program under Stanley Walden demonstrated what a successful adaptation of the American Weill should look like. Dragging sentimental passages were eliminated in Rüdiger Behring's casual German-language version with a few courageous cuts and reorderings; from a modern-day perspective, the protagonists Antje Rietz and Detlef Leistenschneider pursued a tongue-in-cheek 'musical marriage counseling' — a 'tightrope walk' which shows us that nobody has to be concerned about the future of the musical and singing actors." — Isabel Herzfeld, *Der Tagesspiegel* (11 March 2001)

Street Scenes, Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau (2–3 March 2001)

"Under the lively direction of James Holmes, the relatively small orchestra played a noteworthy, colorful part, with good solos, a well balanced accompaniment of the singers, and clear musical portraits of the diverse characters. Sheri Greenawald (Anna), Richard van Allan (Frank), Teri Hansen (Rose), Kip Wilborn (Sam Kaplan), and Peter Savidge (Harry Easter) played their roles convincingly. . . . The extraordinary performance was complemented by the responsive chorus of the Anhaltische Theater Dessau (Markus Oppeneiger, chorus master)." — Helmut Rohm, *Volksstimme* (5 March 2001)

"In *Street Scenes*, Weill benefited from the world outside his window. True, the concert sequence devised by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke, trustees of the estate, reduces the 'Broadway Opera' to its central family tragedy. But from the introductory lament about the muggy heat in the melting-pot New York City to Rose's escape to an uncertain future, even this suite demonstrates Weill's stylistic assimilation and his social compassion. Thanks to the soloists who were especially engaged for this occasion, the belated Dessau premiere was more than merely satisfactory: In particular, the casual Sam (Kip Wilborn), the yearning Rose (Teri Hansen), and the desperation-hardened Anna (Sheri Greenawald) were sharply defined and upheld the work as a convincing example of the ongoing and rich tradition of American psychological music theater. The inevitable fact that director Winfried Bauernfeind and set designer Martin Rupprecht had to reduce the street to a small catwalk, seemed like a call for a full-fledged production. And the Anhaltische Philharmonie seemed perfectly suited for the task." — Andreas Hillger, *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* (5 March 2001)

Love Life, Hochschule der Künste Berlin (4 March 2001)

"Kurt Weill's contribution to the battle of the sexes is *Love Life*. Although the libretto was written by Alan Jay Lerner, it is apparent in every note: Weill understood what he set to music. . . . The idea of the average American couple Sam and Susan living through American history creates some exciting situations. Susan's scene with the suffragettes, for instance, becomes one of the production's highlights, supported by the choreography of Rhys Martin. In Peter Kock's staging, the crisis of Sam and Susan finally culminates in a bizarre talk show. The reconciliation is shown by Kock as a tightrope walk with an uncertain future: Before Detlef Leistenschneider (Sam) and Antje Rietz (Susan) can touch each other, the curtain closes. . . . In an almost vain fashion, Kurt Weill showcases his compositional skills in *Love Life*. He presents rhumbas and boogies, even a multi-voice madrigal which—only in this one moment—created trouble for the splendid student cast. At any rate, the cast's strength was not virtuosic performance in a single event, but rather the stage triathlon of dancing, acting, and singing." — Johannes Killyen, *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* (6 March 2001)

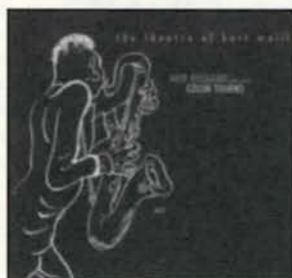


photo: B. Geilert/GAFF

Die sieben Todsünden, Berliner Kammer-symphonie (8–10 March 2001)

"From the very beginning, when [Anna I and Anna II] appear like Siamese twins wrapped in a cloak, their journey through the big cities develops into a paradox of continued shedding; with each layer of clothing an illusion is also lost. In Gregor Seyffert's case, the accumulation of experience manifests itself in a gradual silencing of his eloquent body language, starting out with playful naive enthusiasm but being slowly paralyzed in the course of the drill. Jörg Waschinski is an absolute match for Seyffert on every level. Although his vocal range suggests itself for soft vocal nuances, he articulates with such precision and sharpness that the larynx remains present. . . . In addition, the Atrium-Ensemble clearly benefits from its experience as a vocal quartet when performing the family's commenting and gossiping part; it also counters the stasis Seyffert calls for with an enormous vocal flexibility. In combination with Andreas Auerbach's sparse set and Artif Hussein's beautiful costumes this casting becomes an irresistible attraction for intellect and emotions. Even when the Berlin Kammer-symphonie under Jürgen Bruns does not do justice to the venue's acoustics, increasing volume rather than highlighting accents, the *Sieben Todsünden* were never heard or seen in such a performance. Without its singular stars, it would be almost impossible to duplicate this production. But there is no doubt that it will become part of Weill reception history." — Andreas Hillger, *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* (10 March 2001)

New Publications



RECORDINGS

- Charming Weill: Dance Band Arrangements.* Palast Orchester; Max Raabe, voice; HK Gruber, conductor. RCA Red Seal 09026 63513 2. [Includes 19 dance arrangements. Issued in the U.S. under the title *Kurt Weill: Life, Love and Laughter: Dance Arrangements, 1927-1950.*]
- Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments.* Alexander Kerr, violin; Ebony Band; Werner Herbers, conductor. Radio Netherlands 93090. [Produced "for unlimited broadcasting purposes." Available from Radio Netherlands.]
- Kleine Dreigroschenmusik; Violin Concerto; Berlin im Licht.* Henri Raudales, violin; Münchner Rundfunkorchester; Gerd Müller-Lorenz, conductor. Orfeo C 539 001 A.
- Kurt Weill: From Berlin to Broadway—A Selection.* Various historical recordings. Pearl GEM 0108. [Excerpted from Pearl's earlier 2-CD sets, *Kurt Weill: From Berlin to Broadway*, vols 1-2.]
- Kurt Weill: Jazz Songs.* Noga, vocals, with jazz quartet. Sony Music 500616 2.
- No Place to Go But Up: A Centennial Recording.* Stefan Karlsson Trio. TNC Jazz CD-1707. [Jazz arrangements of ten songs by Weill.]
- Ohne Dich macht mir überhaupt nichts mehr Spaß.* Excerpts from the Weill-Lenya correspondence read by Helene Grass and Gerd Wameling. Kein & Aber 906547-41-8.
- Sonata for cello and piano.* Jan Vogler, cello; Bruno Canino, piano. Berlin Classics 0017062BC. [Includes works by Shostakovich and Falla.]
- Symphonies 1 & 2, Bastille Music.* Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; David Atherton, conductor. GMN.com GMNC0100. [Available only at www.gmn.com]
- The Theatre of Kurt Weill: A Suite by Colin Towns for the 100th Birthday of Kurt Weill.* NDR Bigband; Colin Towns, director. ACT 9234-2.
- The Threepenny Opera.* Original cast from the 1954 Theater de Lys production. Decca Broadway 012 159 463-2. [remastered reissue].

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- Kessler, Harry. *Berlin in Lights: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler.* Trans. and ed. by Charles Kessler. First American edition. New York: Grove Press, 1999.
- Mahagonny: Die Stadt als Sujet und Herausforderung des (Musik-)Theaters: Vorträge und Materialien des Salzburger Symposions 1998.* Anif-Salzburg: Verlag Mueller-Speiser, 2000.
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