

Kurt Weill

Volume 21

Number 2

Newsletter

Fall 2003



In this issue

Note from the Editor 3

A Letter Surfaces 4
Weill's Reply to Theodor W. Adorno in April 1942

Feature

I'm a Stranger Here Myself 6
Free Associations from an Ethnomusicologist
Bruno Nettl

Weill as Emigré 11
One American's View by Claire R. Reis

Letter from Berlin 13
Jürgen Schebera attends Mahagonny.com

Recordings

The Eternal Road (excerpts) on Naxos 14
Edward Harsh

The Firebrand of Florence on Capriccio 16
Stephen Banfield

Books

Music & German National Identity 17
ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter
Jürgen Thym

Amerikanismus—Americanism—Weill 19
ed. Hermann Danuser and Hermann Gottschewski
Guido Heldt

Performances

Die sieben Todsünden in Cincinnati 21
Janelle Gelfand

Happy End at the Shaw Festival 22
Maarten van Dijk

Die Dreigroschenoper in Williamstown 23
John Lucas

Topical Weill 1a–8a

ISSN 0899-6407

© 2003 Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

7 East 20th Street

New York, NY 10003-1106

tel. (212) 505-5240

fax (212) 353-9663

Published twice a year, the Kurt Weill Newsletter features articles and reviews (books, performances, recordings) that center on Kurt Weill but take a broader look at issues of twentieth-century music and theater. With a print run of 5,000 copies, the Newsletter is distributed worldwide. Subscriptions are free. The editor welcomes the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for inclusion in future issues.

A variety of opinions are expressed in the Newsletter; they do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. Letters to the editor are welcome.

Staff

Elmar Juchem, *Editor*

Carolyn Weber, *Associate Editor*

Dave Stein, *Associate Editor*

Teva Kukan, *Production*

Kurt Weill Foundation Trustees

Kim Kowalke, *President*

Paul Epstein

Lys Symonette, *Vice-President*

Walter Hinderer

Philip Getter, *Vice-President*

Welz Kauffman

Guy Stern, *Secretary*

Harold Prince

Milton Coleman, *Treasurer*

Julius Rudel

Maury Yeston

Internet Resources

World Wide Web: <http://www.kwf.org>

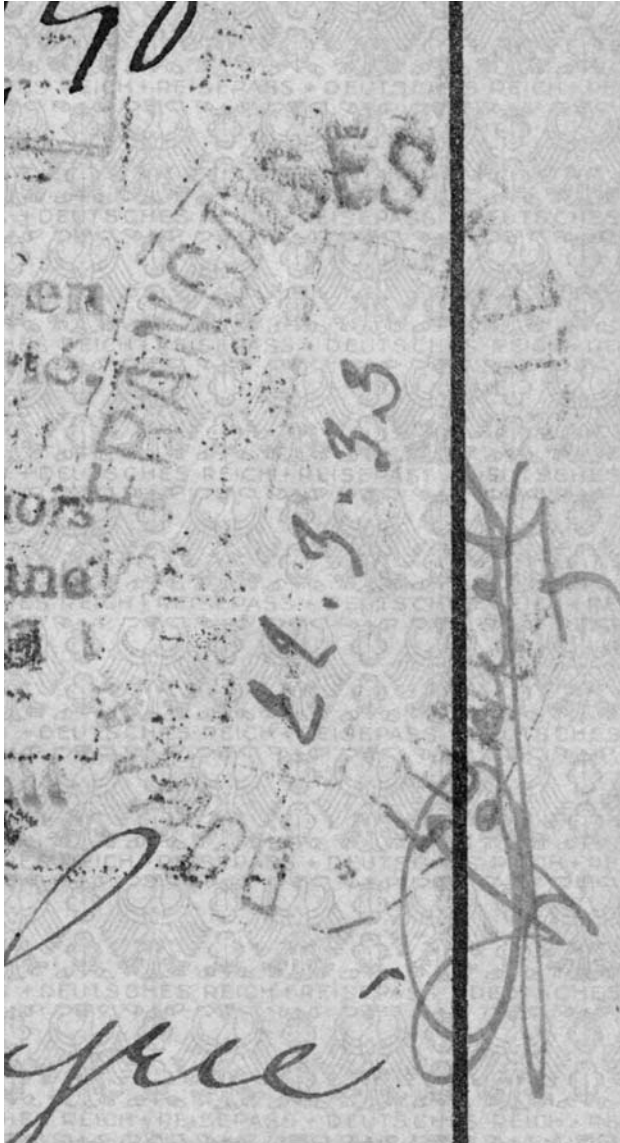
E-mail:

Information: kwfinfo@kwf.org

Weill-Lenya Research Center: wlr@kwf.org

Kurt Weill Edition: kwe@kwf.org

Cover photos: Images of Weill's IDs provided by Yale University Music Library. Clockwise from left: France (April 1935), Germany (February 1936), U.S.A. (August 1937).



The enigmatic stamp

Weill's passport, issued in April 1931, was stamped by the French authorities when he entered the country on 22 March 1933. The exact circumstances of Weill's flight remain obscure. Caspar and Erika Neher drove him to the border but it is still unknown where he crossed, leaving his native Germany for good. Weill never told the story to Lenya.

The bottom of the stamp reads LONG . . . LLE, perhaps "Longueville," but the two cities of that name are not close to the German border. The question remains: Where did he cross?

Note from the Editor

Early in his compositional career, Weill already experienced an "issue of identity." In 1926, just after the success of *Der Protagonist* in Dresden, he didn't know whether he was a citizen of Baden, Anhalt, or Prussia. The police had even paid him a visit and questioned him. What made the matter really urgent, though, was the fact that his passport was about to expire, and any delay in the renewing process threatened to postpone further an already late honeymoon with Lenya in Italy.

No scholarly debate has unfolded about Weill's identity in a Weimar Germany still bearing the traces of small statism (he turned out to be a citizen of Anhalt). Ten years later, however, Weill was in a completely different situation when he renewed his passport. Walking into the German General Consulate in New York in February 1936, five months after the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, must have stirred up an eerie feeling. The new passport that was issued to him looks oddly "normal": no swastika on the stamp, no addition to his passport that would brand him as Jewish (that law was to come in 1938), his citizenship this time stated simply as German, his current place of residence listed as Berlin-Charlottenburg. Weill's life in the spring of that year was far from normal, both on a professional and a personal level. The *Eternal Road* project had just been postponed indefinitely, and with no imminent job opportunities he faced the grim prospect of returning to France, where his publisher was in the process of canceling his contract. Although Lenya had accompanied him to the United States, the two were still estranged, and Weill was devastated by Erika Neher's decision to end their long-distance affair.

As is well known, an extensive scholarly debate has ensued over the consequences of Weill's decision to stay in the U.S. and to embrace it as his new homeland. This Newsletter issue supplies new views, insights, and documents for that discussion. The feature article takes a look at Weill from an ethnomusicologist's viewpoint, a perspective that is not only helpful in regaining a larger picture of Weill and the various national and cultural contexts in which he lived, but also shows how our views have changed during the past fifty years. A fascinating document that shows dramatic differences in opinion and attitude between two émigrés has come to light: a reply by Weill to Theodor W. Adorno on the issues of American theater and the *Threepenny Opera*. Claire R. Reis's recollection of concerts organized by the League of Composers, on the other hand, offers an American view of how Weill adapted to his new homeland and the cultural debates therein. Finally, we review two books that look at issues of national identity, one focusing on Weill and Americanism, the other on the role of music in Germany's identity—both of which present an exemplary mixture of German and American scholars tackling questions raised by these issues.

A Letter Surfaces

Weill's Reply to Theodor W. Adorno in April 1942

Ever since the Weill-Lenya correspondence became available after Lenya's death in 1981, we have known that Weill responded to a letter he received from Theodor W. Adorno in the spring of 1942. The sociologist, whose centenary is celebrated this year, had written to Weill in support of a planned production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in California, initiated by Brecht. Weill had not been informed about these plans until the last minute and was therefore strongly displeased. In a letter to Lenya, he complained about the "good old swinish Brecht method" and mentioned that he had written "Wiesengrund a letter which he won't forget for

some time" (8 April 1942, published in: *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996, letter no. 263, p. 320). An inquiry by archivist Dave Stein to the Theodor W. Adorno Archiv in Frankfurt has resulted in the unearthing of this letter. Since the exchange of letters touches on many issues central to Weill scholarship in general, and performance practice of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in particular, we reproduce both letters below with the kind permission of the Theodor W. Adorno Archiv.

Theodor W. Adorno in Los Angeles to Kurt Weill 31 March 1942:

Dear Weill,

It must be a surprise after such a long time and a failed rendezvous in New York to suddenly hear from me again. However, independent of the wish to keep alive a relationship which has meant a lot to me and perhaps something to you too, I am writing to you for a particular reason. It is the problem of an American performance of the *Dreigroschenoper*.

As you know, Brecht lives here and we are together a lot. He told me that there is an opportunity to organize a performance of *Dreigroschenoper* by a Negro ensemble, and he also mentioned your own hesitancy to endorse this project. Please do not consider it presumptuous of me if I express my unsolicited opinion concerning this matter—a matter which, as nobody knows better than you, is most dear to me and whose possibilities in America, musical and sociological, I feel qualified to evaluate.

The Broadway production ten years ago apparently was what Karl Kraus called a *verbroigten Leubusch*. My strong feeling is that in an intellectual environment where artistic productions are judged in terms of tests, contests or, at best, raffles, a repeat of the experiment on Broadway would not be guaranteed success, unless the *Dreigroschenoper* was established earlier in some other venue, so as to conquer New York by storm from the outside. Furthermore, the ideological situation in America cannot be compared to the German one of 1929; it is in no way a "critical situation" and therefore as yet not ready to accept the authentic *Dreigroschenoper*, which is so inseparably tied to a climate of crisis.

On the other hand, there is Brecht's situation, which, as far as I can judge, is such that he can hardly afford to wait indefinitely for a *Dreigroschenoper* revival. Of course, a personal point of view cannot and should not be the decisive factor in a question of artistic responsibility; however, it is this same artistic responsibility which gives impetus to try anything to allow the creative powers of Brecht to reproduce themselves in a dignified way so that he is relieved of the most trivial daily worries.

Now as far as the performance itself is concerned: we are talking here about the founding of a Negro theater on a national level, backed by Paul Robeson and the so-called Negro Lodges, therefore considerable moral backing, with financial consequences, if successful, which offer you and Brecht good prospects. The *Dreigroschenoper* should be the first work to be showcased on this

stage by this group. However, the thought which actually motivated me to intervene, is the following: from the very beginning the performance style of the *Dreigroschenoper* has been based on the jazz arrangement. In my opinion, there exist only two possibilities for an adequate performance, namely the strict, tone for tone rendition of the original full score—a process which would work against your own intention and your and Brecht's vision of montage. Or one has to present the work in an actual jazz adaptation. This, however, can be successful over here only if the principle of jazz variation would be applied in a far more radical way than would have been necessary in Europe. You surely will agree with me that the method of someone like Mackeben would not be successful here, because it lags far behind American rhythmic refinements. If one handed over the jazz adaptation to one of the commonly employed white jazz arrangers, even the very best, there would be the danger that something tame and bland would be made out of *Dreigroschenoper*, that it would lose its sting and its foreignness. I cannot counter Brecht in his assertion that the only chance—a paradox—to achieve success and at the same time retain its extraterritoriality, at least for the moment, lies in a really far-reaching "re-functioning" using a Negro ensemble working on both text and music. One should strive for a somewhat economically self-sufficient performance, one in which the Negroes, whose general reactions could never be completely grasped by us anyway, would largely be left to themselves and who would improvise the work in their own way. I would go so far as to say that *Dreigroschenoper* depends either on the utmost faithfulness and literality, or on the crassest and most infringing improvisational liberties, and the work itself is laid out from the beginning for the latter, such that it would find solace in it, until such a day when it can celebrate its negative-theological resurrection once more, like on the first day of creation in the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.

To show you that I have not become musico-sociologically half-witted in my period of silence, I am sending you under separate cover my last two publications in that field.

Please be so kind as to reply.

Best wishes to you and Lenja.

Your old friend,
Theodor W. Adorno

Kurt Weill in New City, N.Y. to Theodor W. Adorno 7 April 1942

Dear T.W.,

please allow me to write in English. It is easier for me and I like it better.

It was very nice to hear from you after a long time. I have been working a lot these last years and most of the time I have been living in the country and did not see many people. Lenya has been playing since last fall in the Helen Hayes play *Candle in the Wind* (by Maxwell Anderson). She is touring the whole country with this play now and will not be back before the end of May. When you pass back to the East, I hope you will come out and see Brook House.

As far as *Dreigroschenoper* is concerned, I must say that I don't agree at all with your point-of-view, neither in general nor in detail. Your letter contains a number of mistakes and wrong statements which I would like to correct because I think it is a shame that a man of your intelligence and integrity should be so misinformed about certain things.

What you say about the "Broadway Theatre" is, in my opinion, absolutely wrong. I have other people from over there seen making the same mistake. They see a few shows on Broadway, they compare them with the best things they have seen in Germany and they pass a judgement on the entire American Theatre. You forget completely that more than 10 years have passed since we worked in the German theatre and that we would do an entirely different form of theatre if we were still in Germany. I have made a thorough study of the American theatre and I have seen all important shows in this country, on Broadway and outside of Broadway, in the last seven years, and I can assure you that they have done just as much "experimental" theatre of every type here as we have done in Germany. They had the expressionistic theatre, the epic theatre and the surrealistic theatre. They had projections, narrators, Greek choruses. The modern Russian theatre had the same influence here as in the German theatre, and I have seen a great number of plays with social criticism, political satyres [*sic*], "Zeitstücke" etc. The only difference is that all this is concentrated on New York, that Broadway is at the moment the center and the heart of the American Theatre. (The National Theatre Conference of which I am an active member is trying very hard to change this situation). But, next to Russia, Broadway is today the most interesting theatre center in the world. You are entirely wrong when you say that any theatre experiment has to be done somewhere else and then forced on Broadway. That has been tried a few times and always ended in complete disaster [*sic*], for the simple reason that those shows that were brought in from other towns were completely provincial and second-rate. You can do anything on Broadway and find an audience for it—if it is good. I have myself done three experimental shows here, and the last of them has been sold out for fourteen months now in spite of the fact that it represents an entirely new form of musical theatre. I know that I would have done some day a revival of *Dreigroschenoper* on Broadway which would have preserved all the values of the original work, transformed into the terms of the American life and not into the terms of the Negro theatre which is something special and rather far-fetched for a German adaptation of an old English ballad-opera.

What you say about the musical problem of *Dreigroschenoper* sounds rather odd, coming from a man who was always a defender of musical integrity. Where did you get the notion that the "performance of *Dreigroschenoper* was always based on the jazz-arrangement?" Have you never seen my orchestral [*sic*] score for

Dreigroschenoper? Don't you know that this score has always been played exactly as I have written it? There were no "rythmische Künste" in Mackeben's interpretation that he didn't find in my score. Or how would you explain the success of this music in hundreds of places where Mackeben didn't play? Also: I am not sure at all if this score shouldn't be played here in its original form. It always makes a great success with Americans and the old German records are still selling by the hundreds here. But if it has to be changed or adapted, don't you think that I would do a better job than a second rate negro musician in Los Angeles? "Der Stachel und die Fremdheit" of which you talk, is in my music, in my melodies, my harmonies and my orchestration and everybody who will touch it will destroy it.—As far as the "jazzvariation" is concerned, you don't seem to know that this form has been mastered to much greater perfection by white musicians and arrangers than by negroes. I have myself made a study of it and used it quite a bit lately. It is no secret.

I have to say another thing, as long as you want to know my point-of-view in this matter. Paul Robeson as well as Clarence Muse told me that Brecht has known about this project since last summer. If he would have informed me about it I would have had the opportunity to get in touch with those people, to talk to them, to collaborate, to help and to protect my artistic interests. But the first time I heard about the whole project was on March 5th 1942, when his agent suddenly asked me to sign a contract, out of the blue sky. And since then the only thing which I demanded was to see the book and the lyrics which he constantly refused. I don't know what you or anybody else would do if he would be treated this way. But I do know that a thing like this could never happen with anyone of my American collaborators. Maybe the main difference between the German and the American theatre is the fact that there exist certain rules of "fair play" in the American theatre. Three cheers for the American theatre!

This poor fellow Clarence Muse wrote me a desperate letter. He is really in an awful position. I have therefore decided to put aside all my doubts and all my objections and have worked out a proposition which would allow them to go ahead with their production, but to show it in California only. If they want to show it outside of California I have to see it first and decide if I want my music to be used or not. My friends here say I am crazy that I do this. But I do it first out of the above mentioned feeling of fair play towards Clarence Muse, second because I don't want anybody to say that we people from over there are quarreling among ourselves, third because Brecht and his friends seem to think that this is the great opportunity for him here in America and I don't want to be the one who is in the way—and fourth because the whole thing is really not so important for me. I have a lot of other things to do, things that are more important, and much more fun.

I hope you don't mind that I gave you my frank opinion in this matter. But I felt that I had to be absolutely honest to you and I am sure you will understand it.

With my best regards for you and your wife,

Yours cordially,
Kurt Weill

I'm a Stranger Here Myself

Free Associations from an Ethnomusicologist

By Bruno Nettl

Several Kinds of Strangeness. “*You?*” exclaimed my wife. “He [the editor of this Newsletter] asked *you* to write something about Kurt Weill?” She was no more incredulous than I had been, when asked—an ethnomusicologist with principal experience among Native Americans of Montana and musicians in Tehran, who loves but knows only little of the music of Weill, and who is thoroughly ignorant of scholarly issues surrounding this major but idiosyncratic figure in twentieth-century music history. In these pages, “stranger” is surely the right designation for me. But I am struck by this interesting coincidence: the gradual recognition of Weill’s significance by musicologists, after his death, involved the erasing of boundaries, and the history of ethnomusicology since 1950 too is marked by the deleting of unnecessary conceptual borders. Kurt Weill certainly has to be sort of a stranger in this article and the world of ethnomusicology in which it is based, but actually, certain recently developing interests of that field, and the burgeoning of Weill scholarship, have eradicated some of the distance.

My own memories of Weill go back to my teenage years in the family home in Princeton, ca. 1942, where my father, the historian of 18th-century music Paul Nettl, once played a catchy-sounding tune about somebody called Messer, but the most important thing about it at that moment seemed to be its relationship to the *Beggar’s Opera*. Later, as a young student in the School of Music at Indiana University, I had begun to learn something about what was later to be called ethnomusicology, a field that at the time rather rigidly divided the musical world into categories such as “classical,” “popular,” and “folk,” wherein the primary concern with folk music was about “authenticity.” My teacher, George Herzog (1901–82), almost an exact contemporary of Weill’s, an immigrant from Hungary who had lived in New York in the 1930s and most of the ’40s and had met Weill, considered these categories real and their maintenance important. Herzog’s message, as I perceived it, was this: Seek out and study authentic folk music as had his idol Béla Bartók; avoid cultural mixes like popular music (e.g., the kind that combines African-American and European styles, or which draws on both folk and classical sources); maintain respect for, but in your scholarship eschew, Western classical music, remembering that it has its own scholarly discipline. Well, Dr. Herzog wasn’t really that rigid, but in mid-century this was the early ethnomusicological view of the musical world. In such a world, Kurt Weill’s oeuvre would surely be a stranger.

Actually, ethnomusicologists in America and Europe themselves are generally seen as strangers in the world of music, concerned with the “other” in various respects. But they didn’t until recently want to hear about strangeness within the cultures they were studying. Originally, they wanted to know what was typical in the music of India, or in an aboriginal tribe, or Appalachia—what was “nor-

mal” and acceptable (in this field that most people see as the home of abnormal musical taste). Not about the Indian who had learned to play ragas on the cello, or the folksinger who was inserting Mozart songs into his repertory, or the Cheyenne peyote religionist who was accompanying his songs on the guitar, or for that matter, the kind of composer who would write both “September Song” and the 1921 *Berliner Symphonie*. And the musical public and its critics were also narrow-minded, feeling obliged to choose between the “German” Weill of the *Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny*, or the “serious” Weill of chamber music, or the “American” Weill of *Street Scene* and *One Touch of Venus*. And were uncomfortable when they found that Weill swimmingly straddled musical worlds as did my cello-playing Hindu.

A Foray Into the History of Ethnomusicology. Because of the way people—and peoples—have been forced to move from place to place, and also (on account of technological advances) able to move around the world easily—physically and now also virtually—strangeness has been a kind of leitmotif of life since 1950, the era of modern diasporas. Ethnomusicologists began their studies by trying to find music as it existed, or as it might have once existed, in cultures that were self-contained, to contemplate music uncontaminated by intercultural influences. This was their perception of the cultural norm of the past eras, but I think they knew that this quest would ultimately be frustrated, and still they sought the unspoiled, emphasizing the concept of authenticity. They avoided the impact of colonialist cultures on the world’s musics, of hybridization, of mass mediation, the multi-cultural nation-state, and the processes that led to what is now widely called globalization. The music of indigenous peoples and village folk and uncorrupted classical systems were their favorite subject matter.¹

This kind of focus hasn’t quite disappeared, but after World War II, there came the realization that the kind of unspoiled authenticity the early ethnomusicologists sought just wasn’t around any more—maybe had never been, as the “pure” of today was usually the “hybrid” of yesterday. While scholars from everywhere participated in this sea change in attitude, I think it was concentrated in the USA and Canada, and incidentally also Israel, nations which have in common the significance of diasporas—I’m using the term broadly to refer to large-scale movement and dispersal of populations and cultures.

Following this virtual turn-around, ethnomusicologists became (and now are) very much concerned with concepts that help us to understand the role of music in enabling individuals to negotiate and maintain various kinds of identity—ethnicity (the group of which you’re most essentially a part), nationalism (membership in a larger, imagined community), hybridity (recognition of simulta-

neously holding several identities), gender, class, age-group. The notion of ethnicity (I'm following Martin Stokes' analysis)² is concerned with establishing boundaries within which a social group may use music and other cultural domains to erect boundaries between "us" and "them," using concepts such as authenticity to justify these boundaries.³

Of these various concepts, ethnicity is the one that is least related to specific, predictable criteria such as physical borders, language, culture. Its contents are fluid and debatable. But all of these concepts could be helpful in interpreting the relationship of Kurt Weill to the cultural contexts in which he lived and worked. I say this, realizing that the question of Weill's personal and musical identities, seen by himself and by his audiences and critics, has been a major issue in the burgeoning literature, both critical and documentary.⁴

I first heard the term "ethnic groups" in early 1950s Detroit. The cultural diversity of American cities had begun to be recognized, and an organization, the International Institute, had been established to encourage ethnic groups to practice their traditions but also to share and mix them; traditions such as music, dance, holiday customs, foods. When I joined the faculty at Wayne State University to teach about folk music, I found that music was indeed an important ethnicity marker. People who had become thoroughly "anglo" nevertheless knew some songs from the old country, could sing them but didn't understand the words, for example. But also, I realized that when vernacular musicians played at, say, Polish and Serbian weddings, they exhibited what Stokes calls a "magpie attitude toward genres" from different national sources, picked up and digested and reinterpreted in various ways.⁵

After about 1960, ethnomusicologists in the United States began to take seriously the task of analyzing the music of ethnic groups, and this meant taking significantly into account the ways in which these societies related, musically, to other groups—those who were like themselves, their relatives elsewhere, perhaps in their place of origin, and their immediate neighbors.

To make this more concrete, ethnomusicologists would have done fieldwork among Hungarian-Americans in Detroit, some of whom had arrived in the 1890s, finding individuals who remembered and sang traditional Hungarian folk songs, and comparing these songs to the repertory collected in Hungary, thus studying how the traditional repertory had been preserved in America, how it had been changed, and perhaps also how—while the home tradition had undergone change—it had preserved older forms. But they would also examine the socio-cultural context to see how, for example, the functions and uses of traditional songs changed in the shift from a rural agricultural to an urban industrial society. How songs came to be performed by professional musicians with instruments taken from the jazz world. Or how their function of accompanying traditional rituals changed to one of maintaining cultural identity in a culturally hybridized world. From the occasional collecting of such music—even as critics worried about its authenticity—this

approach to understanding the musical culture of America became almost the norm for ethnomusicological studies after about 1980. Interestingly, because of the confluence of Jewish populations from many parts of the world in Israel, their musical interaction reflected the developments in North America. In all of these studies, though, one was concerned with groups who agreed, not with idiosyncratic individuals.⁶

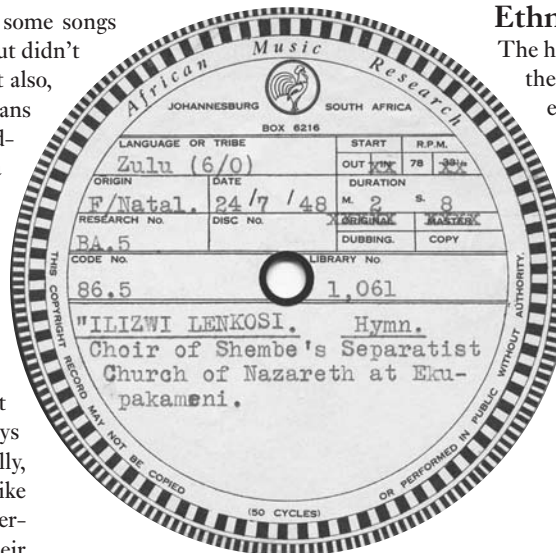
This kind of research came into existence because of the way the cultures of the United States and Canada grew, through immigration from everywhere, to form in some respects a melting pot, in others a kind of cultural mosaic, and other configurations as well. It's the result of hundreds of separate waves of immigration, and of hundreds of ways in which immigrant groups settled and negotiated their relationships to their places of origin and their new environment. Using the term now very loosely, it's the result of hundreds of separate diasporas that provided food for study and thought for a substantial population of music scholars. Considering the life and work of Kurt Weill motivates us to see if the ethnic group of which Weill was a member, Germans and Central Europeans of Jewish background fleeing the Nazi threats, was different from the others and to ask whether those who came to America were like those who went to Palestine/Israel.

Ethnicity, Diasporas, and Music.

The heterogeneity of the Jewish population and their variety of musical traditions was noted early on by Abraham Zevi Idelsohn, and also by Robert Lachmann in the 1930s.

The increase in immigration as a result of the Holocaust and then of the founding of the state of Israel gave further impetus to seeing Israel's musical culture as a microcosm of Jewish traditions from everywhere, and also of the Christian and Islamic musical traditions in which Jews had participated. A large number of scholars, significantly beginning with Edith Gerson-Kiwi and continuing with many others including Ruth Katz, Dahlia Cohen, and Amnon Shiloah, made studies that in some ways paralleled those being carried out in North America. But of course the situation was more complex, for while the American scene involved people who left their traditional and permanent home for something hopefully better, Israel gathered in people

who were also looking for something better, but doing it by coming home, bringing music traditions from abroad while trying to integrate themselves into the traditions they found. Among the German-speaking (and Czech and Hungarian) immigrants, there developed a musical culture which, according to Philip Bohlman,⁷ duplicated and even surpassed the experience of the original home, a musical life based on the nurturing of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert. Composers coming from Europe began to use Middle Eastern and Eastern European folk styles as resources, but worked hard at remaining composers of "art music." While Kurt Weill blended into the vernacular musical culture of the USA, Israeli composers, and for that matter many others who came to America (e.g., Schoenberg or Hindemith) did not effect this kind of blend.



When working on *Lost in the Stars*, Weill asked ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey to provide him with examples of South African music.

In the literature on Kurt Weill, one doesn't read much about experiences he might have had with music his generation of German musicians would have labeled as "exotic"—e.g., Arabic music on his visit to Palestine—but he drew on a great variety of musical traditions. In today's world, in which the norm of music is to have multicultural roots and to be polysemic, he might have felt quite at home, more than in 1920s Berlin. On the other hand, some of his correspondence around 1948 suggests that while he considered issues of authenticity and appropriation of music from various sources, he did not seem to be too comfortable or sympathetic. In working on *Lost in the Stars*, he became acquainted with examples of South African music, but in the end decided that it wouldn't really be appropriate as source material.

The primacy of music as an index of ethnic identity was made clear to me in numerous of my field experiences, and particularly when I was trying to learn something about the classical music culture of South India, in Chennai, formerly called Madras. Somehow the emblem of ethnicity of the whole culture seems to have been the classical music, Carnatic music. It is a complex system, and few people, I think, knew it well, and very few went to live concerts—although there were plenty of those. It was principally the music of the intelligentsia and the associated caste groups. Even so, pride in this great music, and its great composers such as Tyagaraja and Muttuswami Dikshitar, and its great performers, was a kind of hallmark of Madras society as a whole. It's a bit as if the emblem of American ethnicity were Aaron Copland—which is probably not imaginable; or of Austrian ethnicity, Mozart and Schubert, which definitely is. Here the purpose of presentation to the outside world was a matter of showing parity; one was told that there are two great musical systems, and two great cultures, European and Indian. Indian music was melodic, and European, harmonic; Indian vocal, European instrumental. But each had its trinity of great composers. Music symbolized the superiority, in a world context, of Hindu society and culture.⁸

As ethnomusicologists ceased paying much attention to the boundaries delineated by the George Herzog generation, some of them began to look at the Viennese trinity, and at the whole group of Great Masters, not as historical figures but as a kind of pantheon ruling our world of classical music today, and I undertook to examine them in the context of a study of university schools of music. A pantheon indeed—who the principals are is clear; they are the composers whose names are on our music buildings and whose music you must unquestionably respect. Some at the borders (Berlioz, Bruckner, Liszt) might have a kind of associate status, like certain semi-divines in ancient Greece. Can one imagine Kurt Weill joining such a pantheon? It's not that among them there aren't composers who reached out. Take Mozart: one thinks of the incredible variety of genres, his multinational sources of inspiration, his ability to appeal to audiences not particularly learned musically. He's not the only one. But the uniqueness of Kurt Weill and his existence on several sides of too many borders may keep him a stranger.

What Are You, Anyway? In the modern world, deciding on one's ethnic identity and one's cultural allegiance has not always been an easy matter. According to the anthropologist Anya Royce, people manipulate their identities in order to attain satisfaction in different contexts; identity is less a matter of external ascription or biological or cultural pedigree than of the conscious decisions of individuals presenting themselves to others in a variety of situations.⁹

When I first came to the USA, in 1939, my father frequently went to a pastry shop on 72nd Street called Eclair, where recent émigrés from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia gathered; sometimes I got to go along. Much of the vigorous but also desperate-sounding conversation revolved about the speakers' relationship to Europe and America. All were happy to have escaped with skin largely intact, but only a few seemed to love America while others were critical and disappointed—no gold in the streets, no jobs,



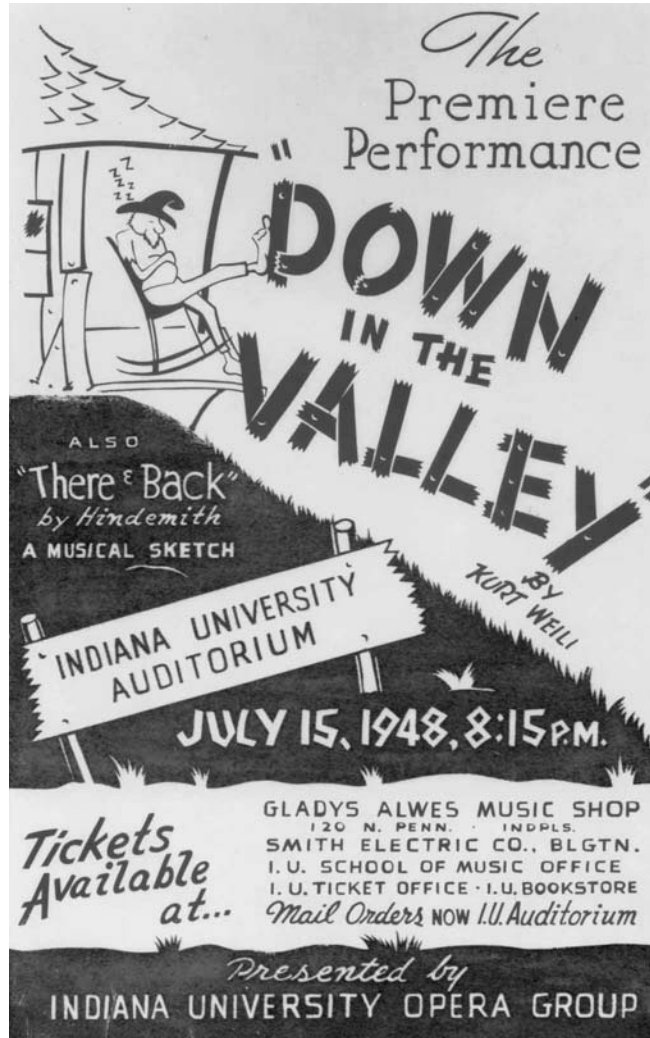
Ernst Hoffman rehearses the orchestra for the premiere of *Down in the Valley* at Indiana University in July 1948. The author of this essay, playing third violin, is seated in the back (from the conductor's viewpoint) next to the bassoon player. Photo: Indiana University Archives

no proper “culture,” the few words of British English they had learned unintelligible to New York doormen, and so on. A few were determined never to return, and even in their homes, conversed in heavily accented English. Some were clearly disoriented, thinking they had better leave the refugee-beehive of NYC for the hinterlands but afraid it would be just too strange. A good many thought they would hold on and, when it was again safe, return to Europe.

My parents arrived from Czechoslovakia (they had lived in Bohemia, first an Austro-Hungarian and then a Czechoslovak province, all their lives), but speakers mainly of German, with Czech a second language, and of Jewish background but without religious participation. With no knowledge of America and no plan of action, they were typical refugees; they turned eventually into exiles, who hoped eventually to return, and, near the end of the war, they turned into immigrants, becoming citizens.¹⁰

Even so, around 1946, I witnessed a curious conversation between my father and a German who asked him, “Was ist eigentlich Ihre nationale Einstellung?” best translated, “What do you consider yourself to be?” (Maybe he just said, “was sind Sie eigentlich?”—“who are you, anyway?”—I don’t remember for sure.) Mentally weighing the alternatives—was he Jewish, German, Czech, Sudeten-German, Deutschboehme, American?—my father answered, “well, when all is said and done, I think I am an Austrian,” going back to what he would have had to say in his youth before World War I, and at the same time confessing to his identification with Germanophone culture without uttering the then-negative word “German.” But our household language continued to be German, with English words thrown in to bridge the culture gap, and with Czech largely neglected. The whole business of identity made him uncomfortable, though. Although he traveled a great deal in Europe in his old age, he never returned to Czechoslovakia, where he was born, and he never visited Israel, which would tie him to his roots in a significant way. I mention all this to illustrate the problems that others in Kurt Weill’s shoes might have had.¹¹

I have no survey of statements of identity of the intellectual émigrés of the late 1930s available, but I suspect that my father’s attitude was not atypical. Many of them opted to stay as strangers, seeing that this nation consisted of people who could easily survive by remaining strangers, a country of diverse ethnic groups with no ethnic majority. This was an aspect of the cultural context in which Kurt Weill lived in the period of World War II, but when it came to



decide how to present himself, he may have been a bit of an exception, a man who came to America and decided with little difficulty that it was the right place for him. Reading the biographical literature, one sees Weill coping with his multiple identities in a pretty straightforward way; so also with his musical identities, not worrying about whether he’s doing the right thing by composing light or heavy, classical or popular, E or U music, taking refuge in the somewhat simplistic cliché—there’s only good and bad music. It’s my impression that Weill adjusted personally better than most émigrés; maybe it had to do with his ability to adapt musically, especially to the American musical culture.

Ethnomusicologist Meets “Folk Opera.”

During this period of my life, when I was absorbing the musical worldview espoused by my teachers of mid-century, I also had the good fortune of being asked to play, in 1948, in the orchestra that was rehearsing for the stage premiere of *Down in the Valley*, in the incunabular stage of the eventually famed Indiana University opera program.¹²

A type of work sometimes labeled *Gebrauchsmusik* (a term that Paul Nettl is sometimes credited with originating)¹³ that could be staged rather quickly, it was produced on a couple of months’ notice. The score—written to be accessible to high school orchestras with players who were of an age at which many studied violin but few had yet shifted down the perfect fifth to embrace the viola, which was more respectable than second violin—called for three violin parts. I was assigned to Third Violin and played under the watchful eye of Ernst Hoffman, the conductor who built the IU orchestra from a scraggly bunch of amateurs into a pretty disciplined crew before being killed in an early-morning car crash in 1953, and about whom I remember particularly his strategic use of rubato both for dramatic effect and to help us get through difficult passages. I remember from the pit hearing the high-pitched, intense voice of the distinguished Hans Busch, son of Fritz, directing the singers, trying to get them to act and not just to sing. And it was the first time I played in the pit of a real opera house, the Indiana University Auditorium with its 3800 seats, in which I had seen Metropolitan Opera productions.

A few days before the performance, Kurt Weill appeared, with Lenya (not yet so famous in the Midwest), along with Marion Bell, who sang the lead, and her husband Alan Jay Lerner. I wish I could say I actually met Weill—it was less than two years before his death—but I only saw him from a distance as he observed the dress

rehearsal. He made some encouraging remarks to Hoffmann and Busch and waved to us in the pit in a friendly fashion, but I suspect that he was otherwise monopolized by the University's administrators. I have the feeling, though, that some of those people in Indiana didn't quite know what to make of a German composer who wrote Broadway musicals and film music. After all, "popular music" was something of a no-no to the orchestra, whose members had been ordered by the dean to avoid dance band gigs and such.

Mostly I remember the heartbreaking story of *Down in the Valley*, of the falsely accused hero escaping from death row to visit his girl. But I also found it pretty curious that someone was trying to combine opera and folk music, and was bemused at this way of injuring the authenticity of folk music by the intrusion of the operatic genre, wondering if this was a proper "opera," and whether the song that gave it its title was still a proper "folk song."

What should ethnomusicologists do with *Down in the Valley*? They might look at it as an outcropping of the Anglo-American folk-song tradition, see it as part of a minority movement in the turbulent history of twentieth-century opera, or an aberration in the canon of the Broadway musical. They could view it as a contribution to a genre that never got off the ground in America, serious but accessible music for young musicians, a kind of *Gebrauchsmusik*. Or, looking at it within the theoretical frameworks used by ethnomusicology, an example of syncretism, or hybridization, in contemporary terms, globalization.¹⁴ Might it be best related to the history of musicians in Europe, America, the Middle East, regarded with suspicion and to some extent outsiders, who—like the Jewish musicians in Middle Eastern villages, or the Bohemian musicians throughout 18th-century Europe, or the 1990s Peruvian musicians in the world's cities—make music for their audiences, music maybe strange to their own ethnicity or perhaps exaggerating the traits of their ethnicity?

The creation of *Down in the Valley* at about the same time as the beginning of the great reverse of ethnomusicological interest may be just an interesting coincidence. But it's probably more significant that it also came at the time at which the so-called "second folk-song revival," came into its own, spearheaded in Weill's time by Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, who broke down the barriers between popular and folk with their particular ideas of the authenticity and modern role of folk music.¹⁵

Although ethnomusicologists have tried to avoid being labeled as the musicologists whose job it is to study and evaluate the use of folk and indigenous music by composers of art music, I can imagine examining *Down in the Valley* as a part of a movement in which American folk music moves into several mainstreams of American musical culture. Certainly the sources of the songs that Weill used were a step or two away from their form as recorded by folklorists and sung by untutored miners or farmers' wives.

Contemplating *Down in the Valley* and Kurt Weill's work at large enriches my sense of the wealth of our twentieth-century musical culture, and reinforces my sense of the uselessness of the boundaries among the various kinds of music available to us. While others may argue about the proper conceptual category for his music and look critically at the variety of his interests, Kurt Weill himself, who might hold the record among composers for participation in the most genres, classes, and types, seems to me, in his life, to have made his peace with being a stranger everywhere, and might perhaps have been willing to be culturally at home anywhere.

Notes

1. For views of the history of ethnomusicology, see Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
2. Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music" in his edited volume, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994, pp. 1–28.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
4. As in Ronald Taylor, *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991); and the collections of letters, *Kurt Weill: Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950)*, edited by Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000) and *Speak Low: The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, edited and translated by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
5. For further details and bibliography, see B. Nettl, *Encounters in Ethnomusicology: A Memoir*. Warren, Mich.: Harmonie Park Press, 2002, pp. 177–181.
6. For background and illustration, see Stephen Erdely, "Ethnic Music in America, an Overview," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 11: 114–137, 1979.
7. Philip V. Bohlman, *The Land Where Two Streams Flow*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
8. B. Nettl, "A Tale of Two Cities," *Asian Music* 15, no. 2: 1–10, 1984; "Mozart and the Ethnomusicological Study of Western Culture," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 21: 1–16, 1989.
9. Anya Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 19.
10. For a more detailed account and interpretation, see B. Nettl, "Displaced Music and Immigrant Musicologists," in R. Brinkmann and C. Wolff, eds., *Driven into Paradise*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 54–65.
11. B. Nettl, *Encounters . . .*, pp. 12–18, 33–39.
12. Beyond the accounts of this in the standard literature on Kurt Weill, see also George Logan, *The Indiana University School of Music: A History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 152–53 and *passim*.
13. Paul Nettl, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Tanzmusik im 17. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 4: 258, 1921–22.
14. For comments on these concepts and terms, see B. Nettl, *The Western Impact on World Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1985; Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
15. See Neil V. Rosenberg, ed. *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Bruno Nettl is Professor Emeritus of Music and Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Weill as Emigré

One American's View by Claire R. Reis

Claire R. Reis (1888–1978) was one of the leading American organizers and promoters of contemporary classical music. Reis studied in France, Germany, and the U.S. and trained as a pianist, but she made her greatest contributions to American music as the director of the League of Composers, which she helped to found in 1922. The League (now merged with ISCM) has played an important role in encouraging and promoting American composers ever since. Led by Reis, the League organized concerts, championed innumerable composers (most notably Aaron Copland), commissioned new works, sponsored radio programs, and published a journal, *Modern Music*, devoted to contemporary music. The League also arranged concerts of the music of many refugees, including the one for Weill described below. Reis remained an active and beloved figure on the musical scene long after her retirement in 1948.

The texts below are drawn from Reis's memoir, *Composers, Conductors, and Critics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Not long after that the union took notice of another experiment, this time in a theater orchestra. The late Kurt Weill had introduced the Hammond Organ into a Broadway show entitled *Johnny Johnson*. The strong tonal volume of this instrument replaced five live-players; the Musicians' Union ordered the management to engage the five theater orchestra men, even if they had to sit in the cellar throughout the performance and play pinochle. (p. 122)

Upon one of Milhaud's arrivals in New York, I asked the Customs Department to have him met at the dock by a special inspector. I impressed upon the port authorities that here was an important musician who needed help; at the time he was in a wheel chair.

The special inspector met us and together we waited until the Milhaud baggage was assembled, sixteen pieces of it—but where was the seventeenth?

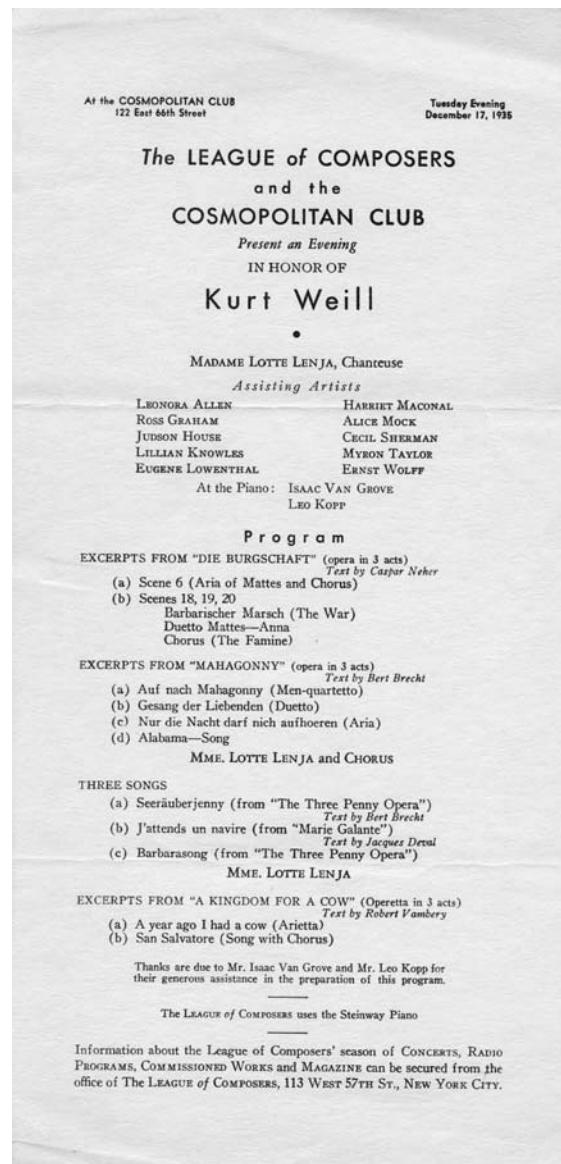
While Madeleine searched for it, Darius sat calmly in his wheel chair. It was a mercilessly hot day in July but a nice breeze blew on the French Line's open pier.

Suddenly someone remembered that Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenja would be coming to greet the Milhauds but, as they had no pass, they would have to wait outside the barrier.

Nearby the inspector was waiting for the missing piece of luggage to be found so he could begin his work. "You mean Kurt Weill of *Street Scene*?" he exclaimed, overhearing us; "I'll go and get them through the gate right away." In a moment he was back with the Weills who were overjoyed to join their great friends. All of us launched into a lively conversation about new operas and films in Europe and the States. (p. 185–186)

At the end of 1935 Kurt Weill had arrived from Europe. He was another composer who had left Germany to find a new home in this country, one more European intellectual escaping from Hitler's tyranny. Before leaving Europe he had spent two years in France, and arrived in New York with the great stage producer Max Reinhardt.

Although the League of Composers had not found it possible to produce Weill's operas, we were well aware of their important place in the opera houses of Germany. He had appealed to a new German



Program from the 1935 League of Composers concert in honor of Weill.

public with music that was simple enough—even jazzed-up enough—to be intelligible to the masses. In 1927 at the famous Baden-Baden Music Festival his opera *Mahagonny* had created a new interest for musicians and music lovers who gathered there. This opera—his first attempt to blend jazz and blues rhythms—gave the public a certain shock; at the same time there was a simplicity to the work that gave it a truly popular appeal.

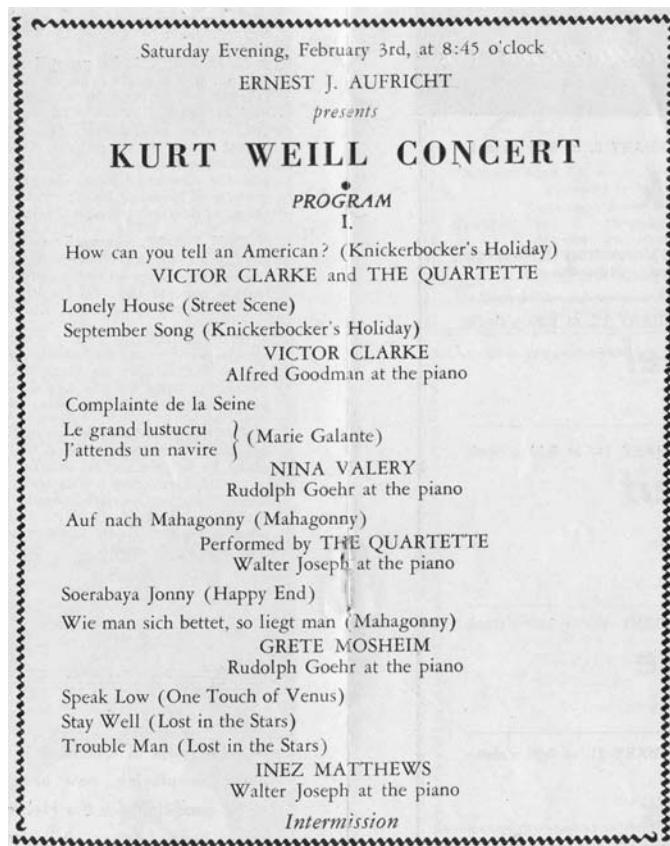
Of course, it was in order for the League to plan an evening in Weill's honor shortly after his arrival here. He chose for the occasion a program of great variety. There were excerpts from an opera, excerpts also from what he called an "operetta." His wife, Lotte Lenja, with her marvelous talent and charm, had interpreted many of his works in Europe; she offered us her co-operation. Though her singing voice is slight, her personality is so remarkable that her presence on the stage makes itself felt immediately.

The program included a chorus from *Die Bürgschaft*, solos and chorus from *Mahagonny*, and *Three Penny Opera* (*Drei Groschen Oper*), and closed with excerpts from the operetta *A Kingdom for a Cow*.

As far back as 1932, the late Jerzy Fitelberg had written in the League's magazine, that it did not seem possible to carry the style and development of Weill's opera *Die Bürgschaft* and *Drei Groschen Oper* farther; "but Weill is a genuine creator, and will find a new path along which to guide opera. Today he is probably the only real opera composer in Germany, a fact that is generally accepted and which explains the great interest that awaits all his further development." As it turned out Weill found his "new path" in this country, though perhaps it was a path that did not always add to his stature in the best phase of his musical talent.

That evening in honor of Kurt Weill proved a great success musically; an enthusiastic audience at the Cosmopolitan Club brought him and Lotte Lenja forward to take innumerable bows. For me, only one thing marred the evening in retrospect; it was a telephone call the next morning from Olga Samaroff, with whom I had enjoyed a long close friendship. We had been colleagues in various musical activities—the Town Hall Music Committee, the Schubert Memorial, and the League of Composers—and, since she was always open minded and far seeing, I had often sought her advice, and she had been helpful in many ways. This was the first time she had ever taken me to task.

She explained that she had brought several people to this evening for Kurt Weill, with the hope that they were potential



Program from memorial concert presented 3 February 1951 at New York's Town Hall. The concert was also noteworthy because it saw Lotte Lenja's first public performance after Weill's death.

patrons for the League. "Claire," she cried on the telephone, "how could you have a League program presenting a mixture of classical opera and popular operetta? I have never before known you to lower the League's musical standards!"

"But Olga," I tried to explain, "not only has the League always quite frankly aimed at representing all the contemporary composers of note at these evenings, we have tried to present them in their various styles. Weill—famous not only for light music—chose this program himself because it represented the wide range of his work."

I was not absolved. Olga assured me that we had lost the potential patrons; being purists, they could not accept the musical "mixture" they had heard. Those were still days when, to many people, there was simply no meeting ground between serious and so-called light music. I think we should always bless the name of George Gershwin for breaking down many of the barriers.

A few years later I recalled Olga's scolding, when Kurt

Weill wrote the music for the New York World's Fair exhibit called "Railroads on Parade." Many critics dwelt on what a fine example of music it was, written for a specific purpose; some went so far as to claim it was as important as a symphony written for performance in Carnegie Hall.

Kurt Weill, as a man of the theater, came very quickly in contact with theater groups in the United States. Perhaps his easy ability to blend into the American scene may have lost to him certain of his earlier traits. Seemingly his music for *Street Scene*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *Knickerbocker Holiday* might well have been written by a native American composer.

However, the original Weill is in evidence in his folk opera, *Down in the Valley*. At a program given as a memorial to him in 1951 I sat with Nicholas Nabokov, who had been a personal friend and great admirer of Weill's music when he knew him in Europe.

"How very different, how far apart, are the two styles of the music we have heard tonight," Nicholas reflected. (The program had included excerpts from some of Weill's earlier works as well as recent compositions.) "How completely integrated is Weill's music, written in Europe before he came here, and what a pity that he lost some of that quality when he took on the coloration of the American scene—or, should I say, of Broadway?" I felt compelled to agree with him, that the great success Weill had achieved in this country—doubtless because of his ability to blend with it—seemed at the same time to have weakened the reservoir of a profound creative talent. (p. 186–189)

Letter from Berlin: Jürgen Schebera attends “Mahagonny.com” (26–29 June 2003)

When an interviewer from the *Berliner Zeitung* asked about the conference’s subheading, “75 Years of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*,” considering that 2003 marks neither the anniversary of the premiere of the songspiel (1927) or the opera (1930), one of the conference’s organizers, Marc Silberman (Madison, Wis.), replied with disarming nonchalance: “You mustn’t be too particular.”

Precisely this kind of *laissez-faire* attitude marked the entire conference: Pick a hip title that caters to the current zeitgeist (“mahagonny.com”—wow!), assemble as many papers as possible (a total of 84—again: wow!) regardless of whether they fit under the topic or just wear Mahagonny drag, gather a diverse international crowd of participants (132 from 17 countries), the core being from Germany and the U.S. with the required exotic additions from Russia and Norway to South Africa and Singapore, and, yes, you will get publicity—which seems to have been the main goal.

With such a concept—or rather the lack thereof—the chances for scholarly success are slim, and the course of the event proved a case in point: no proper discussion of the work’s complicated genesis based on new source studies; no detailed examination of the contributions of poet and composer to either the work or the theory of epic theater; in particular, no discussion of the new genre of epic opera and its impact on twentieth-century opera history. Too much to ask of a symposium of the International Brecht Society? Certainly not, if one had focused on this exceptional work of music theater, supposedly the *raison d’être* of the conference.

Right away, the opening night’s keynote address at the Akademie der Künste signaled that the organizers had nothing of the sort in mind. Borrowing some convenient snippets from *Mahagonny*, media studies scholar Norbert Bolz (Berlin) talked about “Consumerist Urbanism in Our Time.” And indeed, in the ensuing days one had the distinct feeling of attending a symposium on “Contemporary Urbanism.” Papers were given—to name a few examples—on “Uncivil Society in Johannesburg,” “Moscow, the City of Utopia,” “Actual Bologna,” or—listen to this one—“Honolulu as a Historic Counter-Model to Brecht’s Imaginary ‘Paradise City.’” Berlin-based listeners struggled to suppress belly laughs when the new Federal Republic of Germany and its modern capital were explained to them by blissfully naïve presenters from thousands of miles away who, needless to say, had brought along a few appropriate Mahagonny quotes. For example: “Mahagonny Resurrected? Metaphors for Understanding 21st Century Berlin” (Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Springfield, Mo.), “The Berlin Republic As Redemption of Brecht’s Mahagonny” (Alexandra Ludewig, Perth), or “Berlin-Mahagonny and the Re-Shaping of Post-Wall-Borders” (Janet Ward, Las Vegas).

Of course, traditional exegesis of Brecht’s texts received its due, often with well-worn peripheral references to Walter Benjamin and—yes—his “Flaneur” (1929) but also in rather contrived new comparisons, for example to Karl Kraus and Anna Seghers. And there was ample opportunity to present one’s field of specialty, whether related to Mahagonny or not: People talked about Oswald Spengler and Rudolf Schlichter, about Margarete Steffin and the Bauhaus master Marcel Breuer. As for the zeitgeist, a special session on “Mahagonny: Gender & Race” simply had to make an appearance, featuring three papers from—you’ve guessed it—U.S. scholars.

Facing such massive numbers of urbanists and Brechtians, the

musicologists and Weill specialists (those from overseas with a stipend from the Kurt Weill Foundation) had a hard time finding an audience during the parallel sessions, always held five at a time. Still, the organizers had dedicated four sessions of a total of twenty-eight to musical aspects: “Mahagonny: Music History” (chair: Joachim Lucchesi, Karlsruhe), “Mahagonny: Music Aesthetics” (chair: Manfred Durzak, Paderborn), “Mahagonny: The Music I” (chair: Vera Stegmann, Bethlehem, Pa.), and “Mahagonny: The Music II” (chair: Rolf Goebel, Huntsville, Ala.). But here, too, there had been no coordination of concepts that would have allowed for a common thread, and the sessions remained a series of interesting yet unrelated papers. Among others, Gerd Rienäcker (Berlin) talked about the opera’s chorales, Stephen Hinton (Palo Alto) about musical symbolism in Weill’s score, and Erica Scheinberg (Los Angeles) about traces of American popular song in the 1927 “Alabama Song.”

Completely inexplicable was the shortage of practitioners, i.e., opera directors, conductors, and dramaturgs. Only two directors had been invited, but since they were both first-rate, their presentations marked a high point of the conference. Joachim Herz reported many interesting details from his various stagings of the opera in East Berlin (Komische Oper, premiere 1977, with 117 performances in repertory until 1986), Munich, Dresden, and Leipzig. And Peter Konwitschny, probably Germany’s most important opera director today, in tandem with the dramaturg Werner Hintze, answered questions from Rienäcker about his Hamburg staging in 2000 (conducted by Ingo Metzmacher). According to Konwitschny, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* requires no contrived, modernized staging: “In the context of late capitalism’s globalized victory parade, ever since the collapse of so-called ‘actually existing socialism’ some ten years ago, the opera is even more timely and provocative than at the time of its composition. For what Weill and Brecht may have considered a gross exaggeration became today’s reality long ago.” Konwitschny continued: “We must not forget that this is an opera. The librettist notwithstanding, today one simply cannot stage the work with the usual set of clichés, in ‘Brechtian style,’ where the plot is acted with ironic distance, as if the singers must apologize constantly for the fact that they are presenting such pseudo-art in the first place. That fits very well into postmodernist arbitrariness and into a general trend toward the dumbest kind of irony, today’s signature of fashionable intellectuality. But Weill’s music is completely alien to this cool, know-it-all, and therefore inhumane distance toward the characters. He did in fact write an opera—and this has to be staged, even if it goes against the grain with the followers of an ‘orthodox’ Brecht style.”

In order to see the internationally acclaimed production by Konwitschny and Metzmacher, one would have had to travel to Hamburg in 2000 or 2001. At Berlin’s three opera houses, the work is currently missing in action (after the flop of Günter Krämer’s production at the Deutsche Oper in 1999)—and no other Weill work is to be found. Hence, the symposium’s organizers initiated, in a laudable effort, a student performance by the Hochschule für Musik “Hanns Eisler” (directed by Alexander Busche, conducted by Jörg Iwer). But the staging turned out to be so stuffy and old-fashioned, and the musical aspects were so weak (the hired Filmorchester Babelsberg was crushed by the work), that it’s best to spread the cloak of silence over the whole affair.

“Mahagonny.com” in a nutshell: Typical of academia today, it was an “event” with high pretensions, bold statements, staged with much brouhaha, but in the end, despite some interesting presentations, the overall result was disappointing.

Recordings

The Eternal Road

(excerpts)

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester
Berlin
Gerard Schwarz, conductor

Naxos 8.559402

How Jewish a composer was Kurt Weill? That is possibly the most beguiling question about a man whose personal and musical identities seem to offer few if any clear answers. On a simplistic level, of course, the answer is easy: Weill's father was a cantor in a family with a proud, centuries-long heritage of rabbis and other Jewish intellectuals. In terms of his background, to assert that Weill was not a Jewish composer would be perverse. But how did the seeds of his heritage grow in the course of a remarkably eventful fifty-year life and thirty-year career? If he indisputably began from a solidly Jewish base, where did he go from there?

None of Weill's works promises a more direct and complete answer to this particular biographical riddle than does *Der Weg der Verheißung / The Eternal Road*. But it is an appropriate measure of the depth of the riddle that the promise of its solution is frustrated by the convoluted complex of uncertainties that this work and its history present. It is those very qualities, and the tantalizing suggestions they offer, that make *The Eternal Road* an ideal object of attention for the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music.¹

Supported by the Milken Family Foundation, the Milken Archive was founded "to record, preserve and distribute a vast cross-section . . . of outstanding pieces of American Jewish music from the past 350 years." In an effort of awe-inspiring ambition, the Archive seeks to cover a truly vast field, extending far beyond the well-known (and vast enough in itself) body of secular works of major figures such as Berlin, Gershwin, Weill, Bernstein, et al., to the full range of music "related to the American Jewish experience, both sacred and secular."

The most public aspect of the Archive's work will be its plan (truly astonishing,

given the current state of the recording industry) to release on the Naxos label fifty compact discs comprising more than 600 newly recorded works. These releases will take place over a number of years, led by an initial group of five in September 2003. Prominent among those in the initial group is a "world premiere recording of scenes" from *The Eternal Road*, featuring Gerard Schwarz conducting the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin.

The lack of a recording of *The Eternal Road* has been one of the most gaping holes in the Weill discography. No such recording emerged from the revival of the work in an international co-production on the occasion of the Weill centenary. The Milken recording thus is a most welcome development, and the label "world premiere recording" is deserved so long as it is followed by the words, "of scenes." This is, overall, a fine representation of some of the most compelling musical moments of *The Eternal Road*. It is not—and does not purport to be—a recording of *The Eternal Road* as a work of musical theater.

Given the eighty-minute limitations of a single compact disc, the Milken selection of excerpts is largely praiseworthy.² Even on points of possible debate, the choices are defensible. The nature of the work again presents a challenge. Since the relationship between music and dramatic structure changes frequently in the course of the work, many of the musical movements do not lend themselves to easy excerpting. On the one hand, Weill generally maintained his customary style with closed musical structures. On the other hand, those structures are often interrupted (sometimes repeatedly) by large patches of dialogue, or interspersed with stage music.

The first act contains more such interruptions and interspersions than the other three, which may explain why the impression left by the excerpts from that act is the least satisfactory. The movement that should be the musical highlight of the act, the duet between Jacob and Rachel, is a disappointment. On the positive side, the recording presents the later—and in my opinion, far stronger—of the two versions, which renders the scene in much more dra-



matic tones. But Constance Hauman (Rachel) is merely acceptable and Ian DeNolfo (Jacob) is weak, exerting a great deal of effort to achieve pitch and tempos. The tempos are both a shade too slow—at the opening—and a shade too fast—in the middle, Vivace section. The recitative introduction to the duet features the first appearance on the recording of the Rabbi (Karl Dent), which is the key vocal-dramatic role in the entire work. Dent's voice is appealingly clear and unforced, with easy command of the extensive range demanded by the part. His interpretation can best be described as straightforward. He sings accurately and with some attention to detail. As I listened to each of his successive leading moments, however, the lack of dramatic characterization and especially of *style* was increasingly frustrating. There is an audible sense that Dent—and many of the other vocalists—studied a series of isolated musical movements rather than learning a *dramatic role*. I wondered whether the vast base of cantorial experience embodied in the Milken Archive might have been brought to bear here more effectively.

The other two movements from the first act, the denouement of the Abraham-Isaac scene and the reuniting of Jacob and Joseph in the finale, are unremarkable but for one fact. The final bars of the finale feature a reminiscence of the Jacob-Rachel duet. Since Weill composed two versions of the duet, he also composed two versions of these final bars. Inexplicably, the Milken recording presents the *earlier* version of the closing even though, as noted above, we have just heard the *later* version of the full duet. This is a major inconsistency: a rem-

iniscence of something that never was. It leaves a most curious impression.

The impression improves with excerpts from the second act, which represent a large portion of the whole. Schwarz handles the opening scene, which includes the so-called “Miriam’s Song,” with sensitivity. This movement is the first of the truly airtight structures in the work, and it shows Weill’s familiar, exquisite skill in combining musical phrase with dramatic action. Meanwhile, the Ernst Senff Chor begins to emerge as a true star of the recording, moving flexibly from resonant background to vivid characterization as the music requires.

From the beginning of the cleverly rendered “dual action” movement that juxtaposes Moses’s receipt of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments with the dance around the golden calf, the music completely takes over the dramatic action. Weill sets the remainder of the second act as if it were an operatic libretto. Indeed, by the start of Moses’s death scene the genre of the work has undergone a radical change from pageant-with-music to music-drama of Wagnerian pedigree.

James Maddalena cuts a formidable figure as Moses, fulfilling the daunting vocal demands (involving range and endurance especially) with relative ease. Again, the approach is more oriented to singing than acting. Better that, though, than the converse, since in this case the whole act fails without decisive command of the sung role.

The sole musical representative of the third act is the Ruth-Boaz scene. Its melodious, surprisingly tango-laced phrases are attractively sung by Barbara Rearick and Vale Rideout. On the basis of lyric beauty alone, it is difficult to argue with the choice of this scene over the many bits and pieces of effective melodrama that make up the middle of the act. The exclusion of the spectacular choral scene (corresponding to the building of Solomon’s temple) that closes the act is a different matter. In that it communes very closely with the spirits of director Max Reinhardt and scene designer Norman Bel Geddes, the finale is a key piece of the *Eternal Road* puzzle. Its absence here leaves a tangible emptiness.

The fourth act is very well represented. It unfolds in full from the opening movement contrasting the spirits of Jeremiah and Isaiah through Jeremiah’s confrontations with the false prophet Chananiah and the crowd. The politically charged (and musically relatively weak) scenes in which

King Zedekiah considers the consequences of capitulating to Babylon are skipped over to reach the deeply ambiguous final scene. Aside from Moses, Jeremiah is the only other role that can make or break an entire act. Thankfully, Ted Christopher’s Jeremiah is the strongest performance on the recording, combining vocal excellence with strong dramatic personification.

The orchestral performance throughout most of the recording is solid. The few moments of imperfection in ensemble playing are more than balanced by the many instances of excellent solo and sectional features. Likewise admirable is Schwarz’s scrupulous attention to the letter of Weill’s notations regarding expression and articulation. When he takes liberties, it is clearly intentional and often to good effect. For example, the shortened bowstrokes in the string accompaniment figure to Scene 24.4 (Track 11) give an evocative breathlessness to Boaz and Ruth’s love duet. It is unfortunate that often throughout the disc the orchestra is set substantially behind the singers in the mix, sometimes reducing its effect to an echoey blur. Tempos for the most part lie within reasonable ranges. Occasionally, Moderato passages are performed a bit too slowly, as in the semi-stasis of the *meno mosso* just prior to the close of the first act.

Milken Archive Artistic Director Neil Levin’s liner notes helpfully raise some of the key points related to the work, its creation, and its creators. He is especially strong on summarizing the theological and philosophical tensions implicit in Franz Werfel’s expressionistically tinged text. In the post-Holocaust, post-founding-of-the-state-of-Israel reality of the present day, the fourth and final act of *The Eternal Road* poses stark challenges to interpretation. Levin makes it clear that some of these challenges were already very much in evidence in the environment of the 1930s, mirroring a tension between Werfel’s universalist conception of Messianic redemption and the more earthly focus of producer Meyer Weisgal’s Zionism.

Levin also addresses the question of Weill’s Jewish identity; his biographical sketch raises many of the salient points. Given the breadth and depth of the issues involved, they cannot possibly be given proper consideration in such limited space. Tantalizingly, a note in very small print at the end of the notes in the CD booklet states that “a comprehensive history and analysis of *The Eternal Road* and its Judaic perspectives” by Levin will be published as

a separate monograph. Those interested in the work will eagerly look forward to this volume’s appearance.

The Eternal Road is indeed quite problematic. But it is problematic in the most positive of senses. The “problems” it presents—and they are many—to would-be performers and interpreters are really better understood as engaging challenges. The process of discovering one’s own responses to those challenges, on whatever level, is a growth process, just as it should be with all meaningful works of art.

At the same time, the work can instruct on a final truth: that too much fretting about the problems of *The Eternal Road*—or, again, any meaningful work of art—can lead one to overlook the work’s direct communicative power. Schwarz takes this lesson to heart in his approach to the inscrutable little march that closes the work. He determines not to over-interpret what is possibly uninterpretable. He sets his course and plays it fast and straight and strong to the end, without undue drama or sentiment.

Sometimes the right thing to do is simply to let something be what it is.

Edward Harsh
New York City

Notes

1. Throughout this review, I use the title *The Eternal Road*, because the stated focus of the Milken recording is on the work as it was presented in the 1937 New York premiere. The use of the American title is, however, meant to suggest neither that *The Eternal Road* and *Der Weg der Verheißung* are different pieces nor that they are the same piece. The reality is more complex than that.

2. The CD booklet includes only a brief note on the process of selecting excerpts. Mention is made therein of reliance on my “restored or new orchestrations.” It is important to note that the great majority of music on this disc is in Weill’s own original orchestrations, with only a few movements using mine or those of Noam Sheriff, who unfortunately is not mentioned anywhere in the recording materials.

Recordings

The Firebrand of Florence

BBC Symphony Orchestra
Sir Andrew Davis, conductor

Capriccio 60 091

The recent publication of *The Firebrand of Florence* as both score and recording is such a major event for students of popular musical theater that it is difficult to separate out one's responses. The critical edition of the full score by Joel Galand is epoch-making simply because it is the first ever artifact of its kind. The recording is therefore also unique in that one can for the first time follow a Broadway show, plot and all, with the orchestral score to hand ("to hand" is not quite the expression, the score being by far the largest and heaviest item in my personal library).

We have been working up to this moment over the past couple of decades, of course—with *In Dahomey* in the MUSA catalogue, Bernstein's *Candide* and *West Side Story* in full score from Boosey & Hawkes, some Gershwin piano/vocal scores and various critical editions of Offenbach, Gilbert and Sullivan, and Johann Strauss on the paper front, recordings of "restored" shows by Gershwin, Porter, Kern, and others on the digital. But coordinated materials come together only with *The Firebrand of Florence*, and a great moment it therefore remains. Listening to (more or less) a whole show of the 1930s or 40s in one's home, professionally played and sung and captured at the highest studio standards, may no longer be the luxury it once was, but doing so in the company of 1004 pages of full score still takes some getting used to.

What, however, constitutes the proper aural complement to a critical edition of a musical? No sooner is it asked than this becomes a vexed question. Should we have all the spoken dialogue, even though this would not necessarily be sufficient to clarify the action in a piece whose first-act finale is bedroom farce? Are supplementary tracks (cut numbers, alternatives) a good idea? And what about authenticity

of sound? The original Broadway orchestra would have sounded thin and surely have been augmented for an original cast recording, had there been one in 1945. The original voices were in several cases far from ideal, even if Lotte Lenya was Weill's choice (indeed his command) for the Duchess. Besides, performance practice has changed radically. All the more reason, one might argue, for period recordings to supplement the new one within the same package as a kind of critical apparatus, the aural equivalent of textual variants in the perennial quest for *Werktreue* and the composer's intentions. The only period tracks hitherto issued for *The Firebrand of Florence* are Ira Gershwin's own renditions of the main numbers with Weill at the piano, but I should dearly love to hear Maurice Abravanel's five numbers on 78 rpm discs, if they survive (they were never issued). A complementary, perhaps more pressing concern is how the roles should be sung, acted, and enunciated today, if they are to convince a modern audience.

Short of a DVD of a responsible modern stage production—in other words, if one cannot have the visuals as well—my most rewarding experiences of sound recordings of musicals have hitherto been, first, a live radio relay from the original theater captured on tape (Ellis's *Bless the Bride* of 1947—this must be an example—gets you very close to the real thing), and second, a radio broadcast of a complete musical, dialogue and all, in a modern radio recording such as the BBC and North American public stations have occasionally broadcast.

Here we have, again from the BBC, something rather different. It is the live recording of a concert performance of the

operetta given at the Barbican, London, as part of a Weill weekend in January 2000 and broadcast live at the time on Radio 3. Sir Andrew Davis conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Singers, and it must be said that the standard of performance is astonishingly, consistently high for such a complex, multi-movement, one-off operation complete with audience response (for laughter can affect timings and mood). The orchestral playing is alert and unanimous, the tempi unproblematic (I do not have the confidence to say perfect in the company of so many Weill experts), the pacing fluent, and the microphone mix—or however one describes what had to be got right in the concert hall and (presumably) adapted for the recording—triumphant, for the words are clear and constantly focused, and the kind of projection problem that can prove tricky in the theater (or out of it) rarely raises its head: only with the male-voice harmonies accompanying the second stanza of the Duchess's "Sing Me Not a Ballad" does an idea sound ineffectual. Mistakes are extraordinarily rare, an unfortunate (horn?) A-flat on the fermata climax to the opening scene perhaps the only glaring one.

Issues for debate might be many but boil down to two: cuts and vocal performance practice. Back in 1999 Galand and the production team had to shorten a Broadway evening to a radio or concert one—two hours plus intermission, translating here to one CD for each act. The two consequences of this were, despite some restored material that had been cut in New York, a number of musical omissions and the substitution of a specially commissioned, witty verse narration by Sam

Brookes for most, though by no means all, of the spoken dialogue. One misses various dance breaks, the sizeable entr'acte, a gigue near the end of Act II, and the Act II soldiers' march, though the number of times a tune will bear repetition needs to be carefully weighed on a continuous narrative recording such as this, where the book scenes are summarized and visual distraction is missing, so it was probably wise to have erred on the side of contraction.

The singing is excellent, the performers and Weill's score sufficiently operatic that showbiz elements could arguably have



been completely avoided. Certainly Felicity Palmer's voice in the role of the Duchess is a blessed alternative to the stereotypical female belter of similar tessitura. George Dvorsky conveys the *buffo* Duke with commendable restraint when singing, which makes his spoken falsetto excesses all the less appetizing on repeated listenings. Rodney Gilfry and Lori Ann Fuller as the baritone and soprano leads sing strong and straight. Far from straight, however, is the camp effect of Simon Russell Beale's narration, its excruciating rhymes and arch commentary an equivalent to the Broadway humor of the book, yes, but so 1990s in flavor as to have added a sometimes smothering layer of postmodernism to the whole enterprise, a dubious achievement. Most irritating is the fact that this is declaimed in British English while the singers, including the British chorus, attempt American ("the man awaiting hanging" in the second sung line is quite a jolt after Beale's spoken opening), though in a piece whose overall thrust is operatic one feels that a false distinction has been created that it should have been possible to submerge. Again, one would like to hear how the original cast sounded.

And what about Weill's music? I hate to say it, but utterly professional and likeable though it is, Ira Gershwin's lyrics provide the element of sustained genius in the show. Weill does pull out all the Broadway stops in "A Rhyme for Angela," but this is not quite enough, though the opening scene has some very fine music and builds in an utterly satisfying way. We will probably love Weill most in this show, as our perspective on it lengthens and deepens, for having retained something from his Brechtian years in the trial scene, for "You Have to Do What You Do Do" fuses Gershwin's verbal dexterity, critical acuity and amusement at psychoanalysis with the discomfort of our being pulled up short by an ethical challenge in a Broadway show. If Weill and Gershwin could not afford to alienate Cellini from their Broadway audience on the sexual front in 1945—he and Angela are presumably supposed to live happily ever after—they did manage to hint at the enormity of creative amorality and the nature of responsibility in this number. Good for them: after all, the Nuremberg Trial was soon to begin, with its all too similar defenses.

Stephen Banfield
University of Bristol

Books

Music & German National Identity

Edited by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter

Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002. 319 pp.
ISBN: 0-226-02130-0

I remember a powerful scene from a Fellini film, *Casanova*, that I saw many years ago. Although my memory of the film is somewhat vague, one scene left me with a vivid image of Germans and Germany. After long travels through fog, inhospitable landscape, and inclement weather, Casanova finally arrives in Fellini's "Germany": a tremendously spacious hall, half church, half factory, with organ consoles placed on the walls, sometimes so high above ground that the players have to be catapulted into their seats by a machine. Once seated, the organists immediately begin hammering away on their instruments with heavy cluster chords. At a certain moment the playing stops while a male chorus sings a sentimental song; each organist rising from his seat to join the chorus with hand on heart. After the Lied is finished, the cluster chords resume and reach even greater intensity as several more organists are catapulted into their seats. Germans, Fellini seems to tell us, take their music very seriously; they go to great lengths to bring it off; their music is hard work and always profound (a semi-religious expression best performed in quasi-religious venues).

Fellini's parable about music and the Germans, expressed in bizarrely hilarious visual images, is the subject of an ambitious and important book. Its editors, Celia Applegate, a historian at the University of Rochester, and Pamela Potter, a musicologist at the University of Wisconsin, have gathered fifteen experts from a wide variety of fields (musicology, ethnomusicology, history, and German literature) to shed light on the role of music in contributing to the national identity of Germans in their quest for nationhood in the nineteenth century, in their aggressive pursuit of national ambitions leading to the political catastrophes of the twentieth century, and in the era of separation and re-orientation after

the war, up to the leveraged buy-out of the Eastern part of the country by West Germany. The span of "coverage" is thus enormous—200 turbulent years—and several authors do not shy away from making connections with the most recent developments. The strength of the book, whose essays are organized in roughly chronological order, is indeed that it does not end German history with the Nazi period, but avoids the black hole of 1945 (the "hour zero" as wishful thinking would have it) by discovering common denominators on either side of this historic watershed.

The first essay, Bernd Sponheuer's "Reconstructing Ideal Types of the 'German' in Music," sets the tone by juxtaposing Forkel's 1779 critique of Burney's *A General History of Music* and Adorno's 1958 radio lecture on Toscanini and teasing out of this juxtaposition a remarkable consistency in defining the German in music: "depth, hard work, and thoroughness" (not unlike Fellini's imagery) and the espousal of a "mixture of styles" (as Quantz had put it in the eighteenth century). The exclusive and the universal definition seem, at first glance, to be mutually exclusive, but through much of the 1800s and 1900s they were interconnected. The first helped Germans to separate their music from the musical styles of other countries (which they considered lightweight, superficial—in short, fluff); the second led to claims of supra-nationality and universality of German music (espousing the "purely human") as well as the notion of superiority. Both definitions reflect the idea of a German special path (*Sonderweg*) in music history. Albrecht Riethmüller's essay, strategically placed at the end of the volume, is related to Sponheuer's in that it pursues illusions of German musical superiority in a series of vignettes citing Hegel, Droysen, Franz Brendel, Busoni, Goebbels, and an anonymous reviewer in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. (As a cosmopolitan and multi-culturalist, Busoni is the only one in this illustrious group of authors with a healthy skepticism toward claims of musical superiority, suggesting that they might best be relegated to *Simplicissimus*, a satirical magazine of his time.) Riethmüller concludes his essay with a few enlightening remarks on the German music industry and how it commodifies the nation's alleged musical superiority, and several personal observations supporting his thesis that illusions of musical grandeur continue in Germany and Austria to this day.

Philip V. Bohlman's "Landscape-Region-Nation-Reich" focuses on the *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* project (a series of publications of folk songs from various German regions) begun in 1924 during the Weimar Republic, continued during the Nazi period, and finally completed in 1972. In a fascinating essay, the author maps the various stages of the edition onto the turbulent history of Germany, interpreting the project, despite its emphasis on regionalism, as an expression of German national identity during times of dramatic historical changes.

Two of the essays explore, with entirely different and surprising conclusions, the reception history of two artifacts that figured prominently in the national consciousness of the Germans, the *Deutschlandlied* (text by Hoffmann von Fallersleben sung to Haydn's "Emperor Hymn") and Wagner's *Meistersinger*. Jost Hermand pursues the meandering path of the song that later became the German national anthem, from its beginnings as an expression of *Vormärz* republican hopes for unity, justice, and freedom via its dormancy after the failed revolution of 1848 to its accrual of chauvinist and imperialist meanings ("Deutschland über alles") during World War I. The Weimar Republic, eager to acquire patriotic credentials, made the song the official national anthem, while the Nazis did not see anything wrong with the chauvinist rhetoric that, by then, had been foregrounded in the song, and forces of traditionalism prevailed in the early years of the Bundesrepublik in keeping the anthem. Hermand comes to a somewhat rueful verdict: "Much as one might wish it to be so, the history of the 'Lied der Deutschen' consists of more than its democratic past. The reception of the song reminds us of the darkest moments of Germany's past." Appropriation by right-wing groups did similar harm to *Meistersinger*, but Thomas S. Grey argues that the opera is no more representative of a national consciousness leading to fascism than, say, Brahms's *Triumphlied*. He tries to salvage the opera from its Teutonic-minded enthusiasts as well as its fascist-bashing critics by proposing that we should respond to *Meistersinger* both as an artwork *and* a historical artifact whose reception history has added a layer that "far exceeds the author's original intentions." But Grey is not quite sure, because he adds, "At least, we can only hope so."

Hans Rudolf Vaget and Michael H. Kater explore the positions of two artists, Thomas Mann and Hans Pfitzner, respectively—both of whom believed in the centrality of music for the Germans—during the first half of the twentieth century. While the two were quite close in their assertion of German cultural supremacy during World War I (the composer's opera *Palestrina* figured prominently in an essay of Mann of the same time, espousing a contrast between German culture and Western civilization), the two broke ranks over Mann's critical Wagner essay of 1933 and set off in different directions. The composer tried (unsuccessfully) to ingratiate himself with the Nazis; the writer (by now a Nobel laureate) became the leading figure of Germans in exile, giving vent to his doubts and despair over the Germans and their close relation to music in the novel *Doktor Faustus*.

The most personal and, at the same time, broadest of the essays is by Bruno Nettl: "Ethnicity and Music in the Czech Lands." In a series of vignettes he describes how the German-speaking people of Bohemia and Moravia (the regions that, by now, have become the Czech Republic) interacted for centuries with a rich mix of other ethnic groups (Czechs, Jews, and Gypsies), all of them with music as an important ingredient in their cultural make-up (Burney's verdict that Bohemia was the conservatory of Europe is appropriate here). The German-Bohemian culture declined and finally disappeared as racist and imperialist policies tried to stamp out its attrac-

tive hybrid nature by force through occupation and concentration camps, and an inverted version of "ethnic cleansing" after World War II resulted in the expulsion of Germans from the Czech lands. It is a culture now irretrievably lost.

Most of the essays in the volume cover time spans smaller than the aforementioned contributions. Schumann's late choral works as compositional reverberations of the political events around 1848 are the subject of John Daverio's "Einheit-Freiheit-Vaterland." Bruce Campbell's "Kein schöner Land" and Doris L. Bergen's "Hosanna or 'Hilf, O Herr Uns'" show the importance of music in furthering political and ideological causes, even in amateur groups and in church-affiliated organizations, during the Weimar Republic and Nazi period, respectively. Another pair of essays by Joy Haslam Calico and Gesa Cordes focuses on attempts at cultural reorientation by the two German states after World War II. While East German officials, taking their cues from the Soviet Union, saw (at least initially) in opera the seeds for a new musical culture (only to stymie performances or discourage the composition of the first DDR operas by Dessau and Eisler early in the 1950s), the West Germans tried to create a new musical identity far removed from reminiscences of the past and, at the same time, different from the social realism prescribed by the East. The emergence of total serialism, espoused as the only way to salvation by the Darmstadt School of the 1950s and supported by state subsidies, has thus an undeniable political subtext. The Cold War also figures prominently as a backdrop in the essays of Uta Poiger and Edward Larkey, as the West German elites tried to cope with the onslaught of jazz as well as Western pop music on their populations after World War II.

Last but not least, Applegate's and Potter's introductory essay "Germans and the 'People of Music': Genealogy of an Identity" is a welcome staple, connecting the various contributions and providing a context for them. In addition, it fills in (or at least touches on) some of the "blanks" that almost inevitably show up in any book consisting of articles wide and narrow by more than a dozen sometimes rather diverse contributors: the role of state institutions early in the nineteenth century in supporting musical life, the significance of the Bach and Handel revivals (and Mendelssohn's hand in them), the issue of canon formation, and how the field of musicology contributed to the interaction between national and musical movements. Applegate and Potter avoid taking a stand on whether "the parallel emergence of the German nation and the universally acknowledged masterworks was nothing more than a coincidence in chronology," but insist that "the interaction developed into an interdependence over the last two centuries."

The interdependence, of course, is vividly apparent in the career of Kurt Weill, who received his training under Busoni thanks to the generous cultural sponsorship of the Weimar Republic, under the direction of its thoughtful and determined minister of music, Leo Kestenberg. Likewise, the vitriolic comments of Schoenberg, Adorno, and others when Weill turned away from what was considered the proper Germanic path of composition and instead cultivated a greater level of accessibility (in his works after 1926 and, most decidedly, in his Broadway musicals) give ample testimony of the almost desperate sense of cultural uniqueness and mission that German musicians had inherited from their forebears. The essays in this volume provide evidence of the wide-ranging, sometimes damaging manifestations of this (not entirely unfounded, of course) belief in Germans' unique musical achievements.

Books

Amerikanismus—Americanism—Weill: Die Suche nach kultureller Identität in der Moderne

Edited by Hermann Danuser und Hermann Gottschewski

Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003. 330 pp.
ISBN: 3-931264-23-8

Amerikanismus—Americanism—Weill: The title is awkward in its mixing of languages, its double reference to America and its refusal to clarify the relationship between its three main terms. But it is a fitting title for a book that flips freely between English and German papers and explores a wide range of topics and perspectives, inspired by Kurt Weill, but moving in wide arcs around and on paths far beyond him.

The volume presents the proceedings of a conference held during the Weill centenary in March 2000 in Berlin, organized by Hermann Danuser and Herrmann Gottschewski from the Department of Musicology at the Humboldt University, Berlin, in collaboration with Kim H. Kowalke from the Kurt Weill Foundation.

Nine articles are written in English, eleven in German; the list of participants includes music, media, and literary as well as political historians. And the pairing of *Amerika* and America is the book's main organizing principle: the double view, multiplied by the mirror images both perspectives entail: *Amerikanismus* means German images of the USA in the early twentieth century; *Americanism* means American constructions of its own cultural identity. Both are, as Danuser stresses in his introduction, by no means clearly distinguishable, but densely intertwined, especially in the case of the USA, built by people with links to numerous countries of origin—links that permitted cultural exchanges back and forth over the oceans, steadily modifying self- and external images. It is a perspective—imagology—that has been common in comparative literary history since the 1960s, but it has rarely been applied to music historiography.

The relevance of such a double perspective for Weill—a composer who long before his emigration had been involved in Europe's imaginings of the land beyond the "great pond"—is obvious. But beside this relevance, the double perspective also summarizes recent trends of dealing with that most vexing problem of Weill scholarship: The problem of the double Weill, the German/American composer, and the problem of what to stress in describing his musical output and its historical contexts—the obvious biographical break brought about by his emigration, or the artistic continuities linking his production in Berlin, Paris and New York?

The double-track construction of the book becomes immediately apparent in its two radically different introductions: Kowalke's relaxed digest of Weill's relationship to America, before his immigration and after, as compared to Danuser's painstaking unfolding of the book's methodological foundations. Both, though, discuss Europe *and* the USA, indicating the book's refusal to follow the traditional bisection of Weill's career.

Kowalke—as befits the president of the Kurt Weill Foundation—starts with Weill, yet shows how many different discussions can be hung upon the skeleton of his career and his developing relationship with America, in how many ways Weill's work refracts the political and cultural discourses of its time. Danuser sets out from the "cultural turn" (p. 20) in the humanities, the development of umbrella disciplines such as cultural history or cultural studies, partially overriding old disciplinary boundaries and forcing everyone to reconsider the contexts in which cultural phenomena can be profitably placed. The task of a conference reflecting this "cultural turn" was, for Danuser, to explain Weill no longer within the confines of a traditional history of modern music (usually meaning "modern art music," a concept that already collides with the realities of Weill's aesthetics and reception), but to connect the specific insights of such a history to the wider context of cultural and social modernity.

The first set of papers is headed *Perspectives in Economics, Society and Culture*. Here, political, literary and media historians have their say, and Weill is visible only from afar, if at all. Interlacing the history of ideas with the history of their academic (de)construction, Michael Hoenisch investigates *E pluribus unum*, the formula describing the United States not only as united states, but also as united ethnicities and cultures, combining the "enlightenment construct of a universal culture to be realized in an American nation" (p. 38) and the Protestant Christian vision of a New Jerusalem (p. 37) that led to the concept of the melting pot. Yet Hoenisch also touches upon those—indigenous peoples, African slaves or Mexicans in the south—whom the motto has often hidden from view, those who did not come as willing immigrants, but found themselves willy-nilly added to the stew.

The other papers in this section are all in German and analyze different European images of America. Alexander Schmidt-Gernig explores the change of German images of the USA focusing on political aspects—the land of the free, the beacon of democracy—to a discussion that between 1900 and 1930 switches to using the USA as the positive or negative example of unbridled capitalism. It was a discussion highly relevant to Weimar Germany, a nation that had to reinvent itself at a moment in history that invited the comparison with or distancing from the USA. Schmidt-Gernig's claim of a preponderance of socioeconomic aspects in Germanic constructions of the USA is somewhat undermined by Richard Herzinger's analysis of the role of America in German cultural philosophy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in its relation to different (and sometimes not so different) conceptions of modernity on both the ideological left and right—a classic example of projecting local problems onto an external screen, where they may be less painfully discussed at one remove.

Complementing Schmidt-Gernig and Herzinger, Egbert Klautke analyzes the French discussions pro and contra America between 1918 and 1933 and shows that comparisons with the USA were by no means a German specialty, but a common European phenomenon. Apart from touching another country where Weill worked, his paper also dampens the minor German exceptionalism of claiming a special 1920s relationship between the Weimar Republic and the USA.

Friedemann Apel's *Adorno, Amerika and Amorbach* leads back into a Germanocentric discussion, not least because the object of Apel's case study, Theodor W. Adorno, was so deeply rooted in German culture and so much less willing than Weill to embrace the USA as a new (cultural) home, but also because Apel's account

keeps so close to Adorno's ways of thinking that he never gains critical distance. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler provides a less personalized case study in his analysis of scientific and technological exchanges between the USA and (especially Weimar) Germany and the central role of military demands on technology in its international development.

Edging closer towards Weill is the second section, *Popularization and Technicalization of the Arts*. Still Weill-less is John Czaplicka's study of the voyage the German architect Erich Mendelsohn undertook, in 1924, to New York, a city that to him conjured up the image of Babylon—stimulatingly grand and uncanny in equal measure. It is surprising, though, that Czaplicka fails to mention Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the most influential example of the German reception of American architecture, a film whose mega-city is clearly modeled on New York, yet also uses the imagery of Babel (then there's the fact that Lang had come to New York on the same ship as Mendelsohn in October 1924).

Bryan Gilliam explores the influence of American film on modern German music theater in the 1920s, an influence built on the immense popularity of movies which not only offered an inexpensive glimpse into the exhilarating “land of cowboys, gold miners, gangsters, tramps, and millionaires” (p. 147), but which also transmitted the cinematic techniques of D.W. Griffith to George Antheil's *Transatlantic* or those of Charlie Chaplin, the most famous artist of his time, into the work especially of left-wing playwrights such as Weill's collaborators Iwan Goll or Bertolt Brecht.

Hardly less influential during the 1920s was American popular music. Michael von der Linn traces the knowledge European composers such as Weill, Ernst Krenek or Karol Rathaus had of American popular music—and of which American popular music—and discusses how this knowledge influenced their own music. His and Gilliam's studies might have been truer to the book's professed methodological perspective if they had focused not only on which bits of American culture European artists were fascinated by, but also on what was transformed in their ‘translation’ into European contexts—on how America became *Amerika* (or *Amérique*). Similarly, Gisela Schubert's study of the melting pot as a metaphor in and for American musicals of the 1920s looks more at the aims and claims of their makers than at compositional processes and results—more at the menu than at what exactly went into and what came out of the melting pot. Jack Sullivan, too, in his short paper on Walt Whitman as source for European composers as diverse as Delius, Britten, Hindemith and Weill looks more at influence than at transformation, more at what the composers saw or wanted to see in Whitman than at what they made out of his texts and ideas. Andreas Eichhorn shows greater methodological care in his study of Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*, whose quite different reception in Germany on the one hand and in Paris and New York on the other demonstrates the limited international applicability of national images of other nations—of the differences between America, *Amerika* and *Amérique*.

The final group of six papers deal with Weill himself and with the ways his works exemplify the paired terms *Amerikanismus*/Americanism. The perennial problem of the “two Weills” reappears in the papers of Stephen Hinton and Tamara Levitz. Hinton focuses on the methodology of writing biography in general and of the “biographical method” in particular, meaning to read “musical works with reference to or in terms of a life (or vice

versa)” (p. 211). He follows the ways Weill's biographers have (re)constructed his personal and his artistic biography and asks for an approach that steers clear of the “two Weills” as well as from teleological models stressing a planned continuity of the works. Levitz questions the conventional wisdom of the “two Weills” from the perspective of Weill's Jewish roots in Germany, pointing out that there was not so much “a Jewish identity” in pre-Nazi Germany but an array of identities, a “fragmented universe.” She calls for a biographical approach that would do justice to the complex structure of Weill's Jewish-German roots and its relationship to the American and Jewish-American contexts that added to Weill's “multiple identity” (p. 245). But though Hinton's and Levitz's calls for caution make sense as such, they are more easily realized in accounts of Weill the man than in accounts of Weill the composer or of Weill's music, which, not least due to its enormous (though highly selective) popularity, to some extent transcends the bonds of biographical contextualization and enters the realm of the cultural icon, where different laws apply from those of the historiographer.

After Hinton's and Levitz's broad perspectives, three other papers deal with specific examples of Weill's *Amerikanismus*: J. Bradford Robinson describes a source for the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* (a vocal score held at the Weill-Lenya Archives at Yale) that allows a reconstruction of a particular staging of the *Songspiel*. Hindemith specialist Giselher Schubert looks into the complex genesis of the *Lindberghflug* and its different versions—a modern American myth that was as eagerly invented and amplified by the European public as it proved difficult for librettist Bertolt Brecht and composers Hindemith and Weill to shape it into a final form. Nils Grosch uses *Die sieben Todsünden* and its textual and musical “picture postcards of a stylized America, intentionally drawn for an audience that was far away” (p. 271), for a discussion of Weill's (and partially Brecht's) *Amerikanismus*, for his changing ideas about and uses of the America where he was soon to find a new home.

This new home and its musical landscape, as encountered and influenced by Weill, is the topic of Kim Kowalke's concluding paper. He—and unfortunately he alone in the Weill section of the book—looks not at Weill's *Amerikanismus*, but at his adoption of Americanism: at the way he developed into a composer of American musical theater. Kowalke focuses on *Street Scene* and *Down in the Valley*, but embeds them in a broad panorama of Weill's American musical contemporaries. And with a final look at Weill's unfinished projects we get an idea of the even richer contribution to American music he might have made had he lived a little longer.

Were one to name the main defect of the book, it would be the same as its main strength: the enormously wide political, cultural and musical landscape(s) it endeavors to traverse and in which the reader may occasionally feel somewhat lost; it certainly loses sight of Kurt Weill for long stretches. But at the same time the reader—or at least this reader—is grateful that the conference did not set out to replace bad old Weill orthodoxies with bad new ones and that it dared to go into the open (though more the German and European than the American open). If the applicability of all that can be found in these papers to Weill research is not immediately apparent, this may be a blessing more than a curse: It is at least an invitation to think, and think anew—certainly a quality Kurt Weill himself possessed in abundance.

Guido Heldt
Wilfrid Laurier University

Performances

Die sieben Todsünden

Cincinnati Opera

26–28 June 2003

Cincinnati Opera's production of Weill and Brecht's *Die sieben Todsünden* (*The Seven Deadly Sins*) was one of the more unique and imaginative productions mounted on Music Hall's stage this season. In an unusual grouping, Nicholas Muni, Cincinnati Opera artistic director since 1996, made *Sins* the centerpiece of a triple bill, framed by Poulenc's *La voix humaine* and William Bolcom's and Arnold Weinstein's *Medusa*, a monodrama created for American soprano Catherine Malfitano.

Capping the one-woman evening, Malfitano performed both the singing Anna and the dancing Anna—a fusion rarely, if ever, attempted (in October 2000 in Vienna, Helen Schneider portrayed Anna I and Anna II; however, she was accompanied only by piano, and the performance was semi-staged).

As a vehicle for Malfitano, the triple bill worked surprisingly well, especially given the extremes of performance styles, as well as the fact that she was performing role debuts of Poulenc's woman and the Annas, and creating *Medusa* for the opera stage for the first time. Her *tour de force* performance rose in a steady crescendo to the taxing *Medusa*, where Bolcom had her shriek, growl, cackle, and half-speak her lines.

The curtain rose on a stark, raised roadway curving across Cincinnati Music Hall's stage, a visual motif carried through all three works. (Muni's creative team included Dany Lyne, design, and Thomas C. Hase, lighting.) The ramp, which was the site of a car crash for Muni's film-noir concept of *La voix humaine*, was also the backdrop for Anna's seven-year odyssey across the United States in pursuit of the American dream. In a surreal touch, the audience viewed the scene through the curve of a windshield, with video projec-

tions on a large, hanging "rear-view mirror."

Where Brecht's text was a commentary on American capitalism, Muni's interpretation commented on American cultures. He set his *Sins* vaguely in the present, with references to current events and even television commercials, although the costumes gave it a 1950s aura. The sky rained money, and each sin (cleverly announced in English in the "mirror") was saturated in cartoon color: "Wrath" was red; for "Lust," Anna was bathed in hot pink; and "Envy," of course, was green.

Malfitano's fusion of chanteuse and dancer was seamless. Sporting a crisp white dress and long brown tresses, she projected a youthful *joie de vivre*, as she took Polaroids to record her journey and twirled her white suitcase. Although Malfitano didn't attempt the smoky delivery of Lotte Lenya, she drew upon a wide palette of expression, delivering the German text for maximum impact, with clarity and dramat-



The family, grouped behind Anna I (Catherine Malfitano), impersonates the last four presidents. Photo: Philip Groshong

ic timing. (Malfitano sang the original key, not Lenya's transposed down version from the 1950s.)

Muni surrounded Anna with a dizzying array of activities, which, while entertaining and clever, strayed from Brecht's 1933-style satire. He depicted the Family as iconographic symbols of American culture. The Family (Dean Peterson, Andreas Conrad, Mark Panuccio, and Craig Verm) was introduced in "Sloth" as Mount Rushmore. Their mock-serious quartets were quite funny, whether appearing as United States presidents (Reagan, Clinton, and both Bushes), pop icons (Marilyn Monroe, Michael Jackson, Madonna, and Mae West), Boston priests praying for Anna's soul in "Lust," or a family watching

the famous Anna on TV. (I doubt that tenor Panuccio ever dreamed he would be crawling around the opera stage in a diaper and pacifier.)

Muni's staging was both spirited and provocative. In "Wrath," set in Los Angeles, Anna stopped the Rodney King incident, with four cops beating a cardboard "body." In "Greed," she was projected on the big screen—in the tabloids, in the news, and in commercials. (Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble's Swiffer ad got a big laugh.)

She concluded her journey in San Francisco ("Envy"), where she was an analyst in a black pantsuit, seeing patients on a couch. The little house in Louisiana rolled in, complete with picket fence, golf course, pool, and pink convertible.

Lucinda Childs' choreography was arresting, and Malfitano displayed great moves, whether bumping and grinding in a sleazy Memphis nightclub ("Pride"), performing a steamy pas de deux ("Lust"), or twirling a little tap dance with her suitcase. Rene Micheo and Gregory Schoenwolf made excellent dance partners. In the pit, Brian Salesky conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra crisply, irresistibly navigating Weill's sophisticated cabaret music.

Taking on both the practical Anna and the impulsive, idealist Anna raised some intriguing questions. Did it, for instance, obscure the very essence of the piece that Weill and Brecht intended—that of Anna as split personality? Malfitano, who could be alternately innocent or sizzling, nevertheless had to work to make it clear to the audience which Anna she was portraying at any given moment. (Muni represented Anna II with photographs; Anna I stashed the pictures in her suitcase, and took them all out at the end—a lot of business that was hard to comprehend.) Secondly, the absence of a dancing alter ego seemed to place the work less in the realm of *ballet chanté* (originally choreographed, after all, by Balanchine) and more in that of musical theater. Nevertheless, it was a memorable company premiere of one of Weill's greatest works, and it enchanted the Cincinnati audience.

Janelle Gelfand
Cincinnati

Performances

Happy End

Shaw Festival

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

5 August – 31 October 2003

(43 performances)

The 328-seat Royal George Theater at the Shaw Festival is a bijou former vaudeville house with Edwardian gilt moldings and red wallpaper. Here the Shaw has presented fairly insipid small-scale musicals in the past. But the intimate venue provides a perfect setting for their production of the Weill/Hauptmann/Brecht/Feingold *Happy End*, which is not in the least insipid.

As if to underline the unusual nature of mounting such a “daring” work, the director Tadeusz Bradecki has an actor announce during the prologue, “*Happy End*—at the Shaw Festival!?” with ironic raised eyebrows. Bradecki frames the production with reference to its own staging, having the cast come on in rehearsal clothing, with bits of scenery visibly raised at the start or falling down at the end, and interpolating another announcement into the finale: “Ladies and gentlemen! Bertolt Brecht—1929!” I’m not sure if these sophomoric gestures towards foreground-

ing the signifier could make the grade as alienation effects, and the final line is very funny in a way not intended, given what Brecht was actually up to in 1929. All the same, Bradecki, a Polish director who has consistently mounted some of the Shaw’s most interesting productions, has put together a very satisfying and intelligent version of this problematic work. He respects its fun, gives proper weight to its social criticism, and most of all, aided by the theatre itself, avoids the horrors of reprocessing it as a musical.

Unlike last year’s deafeningly amplified *Threepenny Opera* at Stratford, this *Happy End* is blissfully unplugged. The show begins with a bang-up delivery of the Foxtrot “Hosannah Rockefeller” denouncing the robber barons of American Industry, but the bang is the intimate one of cabaret, most suitable for “Dorothy Lane’s” modest attempt to provide a framework for the wonderful songs.

In his notes Paul Sportelli, the music director, speaks of the miraculous sound Weill achieves with a small jazz band and the thrill of being able to perform a piece at the Shaw for the first time as it was originally orchestrated. Hence his loving attention to rhythm, dynamics, and detail, so that even subtle touches, like the deliciously slushy Hawaiian guitar in “Surabaya Johnny,” often unheard, make their proper effect.

Blythe Wilson as Lieutenant Lilian Holiday plays her conflicted character with an amusingly knowing innocence. She sings her two major songs with great musicality, even managing in the higher register to

echo the sub-Fritzi Massary warbling of Carola Neher. Unfortunately, she cannot resist belting out the climaxes, especially the “shitting” and “pissing” in “The Sailor’s Tango” that so offended Alfred Kerr in 1929 (one imagines Neher delivering this with a more amusing, arch *pudeur*). And Wilson’s rage in “Surabaya Johnny” is nearly as hysterical as Teresa Stratas’ shrieks in the same song. This emotional engagement reveals that she is singing in the first person. But like many of Brecht’s songs, they are in fact about people other than the character performing them. They are also cautionary tales that require the subtle menace Lenya always conveyed. This cautionary quality is much more likely to make itself known when the songs are approached in the third person. The lack of menace in Wilson’s delivery weakens the terrifying vision of the drowning sailors in “The Sailor’s Tango,” for example.

The tough, menacing tone is well captured by Glynis Ranney as the Lady in Grey in her “Ballad of the Lily of Hell,” and by Jay Turvey doing a clever Peter Lorre imitation, complete with Japanese accent, as the sinister Dr. Nakamura in the “Song of the Big Shot.” Benedict Campbell as Bill Cracker in a reprise of the same number also strikes the correct tone. The “Mandalay Song” takes off like a rocket under Sportelli’s direction, and Neil Barclay as Sammy, in drag as Mother Goddam, resists camping it up, so that the hard-driving song has a grotesquely brutal power.

Mike Nadajewski as Captain Hannibal Jackson treats the Temperance parody, “The Liquor Seller’s Dream,” with the same deadpan, goofy seriousness as the rest of his performance, and is therefore genuinely funny—as is the rest of the Salvation Army team, with particularly effective comic business from Trish Lindstrom and Jenny L. Wright in the comparatively minor roles of Sister Mary and Sister Jane.

Bradecki strikes the right tone throughout—his production has coherence and wit. This modest *Happy End* is exhilarating and delightful. What is missing is a darker, tougher edge. But to hear the score in an ideal environment, delivered for once with refinement, energy, and real musicality is quite enough to be grateful for.

Maarten van Dijk
University of Waterloo



Bill Cracker (Benedict Campbell) lights a cigarette for the Lady in Grey (Glynis Ranney) in the third act; Baby Face (Jeff Lillo) looks on. Photo: David Cooper

Performances

Die Dreigroschenoper

Williamstown Theatre Festival

25 June – 6 July 2003

Watching Melissa Errico standing in front of a large, purloined landscape painting, wearing a filmy white dress, sporting a black fedora and cane, and superbly singing “Surabaya Johnny” as Polly Peachum in the Williamstown production of *The Threepenny Opera* made even the long trip to the northwest corner of Massachusetts worth every mile. Director Peter Hunt had obtained permission to add the *Happy End* song to this production, replacing “Pirate Jenny” in the wedding scene as a number to entertain Macheath and his boys. The new lyrics, although credited to Michael Feingold in the program, were of a rather mysterious origin, as were a number of others in the usually familiar Marc Blitzstein adaptation. Hunt, a former artistic director of the festival who has done this work there before, brought a knowing hand to the staging. Producer Michael Ritchie had provided him with a star-studded cast including, besides Errico, David Schramm as Peachum, Randy Graff as Mrs. Peachum, Jesse L. Martin (of TV’s *Law and Order*) as Macheath, Karen Ziemba as Lucy, Jack Willis as Tiger Brown and Betty Buckley as Jenny. As a wonderful reminder of the heritage of performances of this work, the roles of Filch and Victoria’s messenger were performed by William Duell, who performed the same roles in the 1954 Theater de Lys production. Musical director and conductor James Sampliner brought a taut, stylistically smart sense of pace and bite to Kurt Weill’s score.

Set on John Conklin’s industrial three-story steel pile of platforms and stairs, christened “Bert’s Garage 1928” for the wedding scene and with the orchestra tucked away up center on the second level, this production was given a gritty, rusty look. Into this environment, Laurie Churba’s magnificently seedy costumes fit perfectly. With the stage level used for actual settings; second story for entrances, exits and crosses; and third for hangings, the space was abuzz with movement. There was no act curtain, only a large poster of

Queen Victoria morphed into Adolf Hitler against which one heard the “Moritat” sung in German before it flew out and the accomplished, stylish Laurent Giroux as the Street Singer delivered an exciting, nasal “Mack the Knife.” The German version would return at the end as a coda to the evening.

In general, the production was an olio of styles ranging from the histrionic through the naturalistic to the vaudevillian. Overplayed, but effectively so, was the avuncular Schramm’s Peachum; his burly appearance effectively contrasted with the slighter, harder-edged and more sardonic Mrs. Peachum of Graff, who rendered with phantom lyrics and eerie bravado an unbelievably raunchy “Ballad of Dependency.” Overwrought as Tiger Brown, Willis proved a willing accomplice and then a sorrowful foil to Macheath, whom Martin adamantly underplayed. His passivity was remarkable in that it diminished the very basis of the plot which makes Macheath’s arrest and execution the important event over which so much passion is vented. On the positive side, Martin was able to bring a credible sound to his singing of the part.

As Jenny, Betty Buckley, the longtime Broadway performer, was perhaps too old to be a credible lover of this boyish Macheath, but, that aside, she delivered a show-stopping version of “Solomon’s Song” using a hat and cane that mirrored Errico’s in “Surabaya Johnny” in the first act. Singing the usurped “Pirate Jenny” in the brothel scene, Buckley displayed the unique voice on which she has made her career, but could perhaps have used more hatred to provide a more chilling effect.

The remarkable Polly Peachum of Errico and the Ziemba’s exciting portrayal of Lucy Brown provided performances one could only wish were preserved as examples of complete characterization, musicianship, and stage presence in these roles. Errico gave the audience not only a magnificently nuanced performance—being faux naïve when called for and hard and sardonic when needed—but also an absolutely exquisitely sung Polly as well. The contrast



Image of Queen Victoria mutating into Adolf Hitler.

Photo: Richard Feldman

between the emotional drain of her fresh-faced vision of “Surabaya Johnny” and the mask of death and flint-like sound of the Act One Finale was stunning. No less riveting was Ziemba, seated and almost motionless, riveting the audience with “The Barbara Song.” When the two came together in the “The Jealousy Duet,” murderous sparks dipped in acid intonation flew from the stage, igniting the audience in an electric moment.

This solid production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the Williamstown Festival was a long way from the consistent use of most of the conventions and effects of epic theater. The performers relied heavily on real emotion and realistic acting styles to make their characters appeal to the audience. But appeal they did. On a warm night in the mountains in a two-week summer stock run, an effective representation of the work was given, appreciated and enthusiastically applauded.

John Lucas
Brown University

NEWSLETTER RESPONSE FORM

Name _____
 Institution _____
 Address _____
 Telephone _____

_____ Add my name to mailing list
 _____ Delete my name from mailing list
 _____ Update listing

Detach and mail to: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003-1106; or call (212) 505-5240; or fax (212) 353-9663

ORDER FORM

The Foundation has a limited number of the following books for sale. All books will be shipped by U.S. mail in the United States and by surface rate to Europe.

No. of copies	Title	Price	Total
	Books		
_____	Weill. <i>Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition</i> . Metzler, 2002.	\$50.00	_____
_____	Weill. <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> . Schott, 2000.	\$48.00	_____
_____	Farneth/Juchem/Stein. <i>KW: A Life in Pictures</i> . Overlook, 2000.	\$75.00	_____
_____	Farneth/Juchem/Stein. <i>KW: Ein Leben in Bildern</i> . Ullstein, 2000.	\$65.00	_____
_____	<i>Speak Low: The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya</i> . California, 1996.	\$50.00	_____
_____	Weill/Lenya. <i>Sprich leise, wenn du Liebe sagst</i> . Kiepenheuer, 1998.	\$37.50	_____
_____	Juchem. <i>KW und Maxwell Anderson</i> , Metzler, 2000.	\$37.50	_____
_____	Weill. <i>Briefe an die Familie</i> , Metzler, 2001.	\$37.50	_____
_____	Drew. <i>Kurt Weill: A Handbook</i> . Faber, 1987.	\$50.00	_____
_____	Farneth, ed. <i>Lenya the Legend</i> . Overlook, 1998.	\$45.00	_____
_____	Kowalke, ed. <i>A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill</i> . Yale, 1986.	\$28.50/18.00 (pbk)	_____
_____	Kowalke and Edler. <i>A Stranger Here Myself</i> [essays] Olms Verlag, 1993.	\$40.00	_____
_____	Schebera. <i>Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life</i> . Yale, 1995.	\$45.00	_____
_____	Schebera. <i>Kurt Weill</i> . Rowohlt, 2000. [in German]	\$10.00	_____
_____	Taylor. <i>Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World</i> . Northeastern, 1991.	\$18.00 (pbk)	_____
_____	Kortländer, ed. <i>Vom Kurfürstendamm zum Broadway</i> . Dröste, 1990.	\$18.00	_____
_____	<i>A Guide to the Weill-Lenya Research Center</i> .	\$5.00	_____
	Music		
_____	<i>Down in the Valley</i> . Piano-vocal score. Schirmer.	\$18.00	_____
_____	<i>Four Walt Whitman Songs</i> . Piano-vocal score. EAMC.	\$12.95	_____
_____	<i>Lady in the Dark</i> . Piano-vocal score. Chappell.	\$40.00	_____
_____	<i>Lost in the Stars</i> . Piano-vocal score. Chappell.	\$40.00	_____
_____	<i>One Touch of Venus</i> . Piano-vocal score (selections). TRO.	\$8.95	_____
_____	<i>Street Scene</i> . Piano-vocal score. Chappell.	\$35.00	_____
_____	<i>The Threepenny Opera</i> . Critical edition, piano-vocal score. EAMC.	\$40.00	_____
_____	<i>The Threepenny Opera</i> . Songs; Blitzstein. Warner.	\$11.95	_____
_____	<i>Sechs Songs aus der Dreigroschenoper</i> . Arr. Marino Formenti. UE.	\$15.00	_____
_____	<i>The Unknown Kurt Weill</i> . For voice and piano. EAMC.	\$19.95	_____
	Lenya Centenary 11-CD Edition		
	<i>Lenya</i> . Bear Family (add \$10.00 for shipping)	\$225.00	_____
	New York residents, please add 8.625% sales tax.		_____
	Postage and Handling: \$3.85 per item (USA, Canada), \$7.00 elsewhere.		_____
	TOTAL AMOUNT		_____

Detach and mail with payment to: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003-1106.

THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.
 7 East 20th Street
 New York, NY 10003-1106

PRSR STD
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 NEW YORK NY
 PERMIT #4032