

topical Weill

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A supplement to the Kurt Weill Newsletter

news & events

The countdown continues . . . for the Roundabout Theatre Company's Broadway revival of *The Threepenny Opera* at Studio 54, with previews beginning 24 March 2006 and the official opening night on 20 April. Scott Elliott directs a high-voltage cast, including Alan Cumming, who starred as the M.C. in the 1998 Broadway revival of *Cabaret*, as



Macheath; Edie Falco, leading lady of the television series *The Sopranos*, as Jenny; and 21-year-old singer/songwriter Nellie McKay as Polly. The most recent addition to the cast is veteran stage and screen actor Jim Dale as Mr. Peachum. The production features a new translation by Wallace Shawn and musical direction by Kevin Stites.

Threepenny's Cumming, Falco, and McKay.

Successful stagings of *Die Dreigroschenoper* return to the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin (from 1 October) and Hamburg's St. Pauli Theater (28 December–15 January 2006). The work is hard to miss during the 2005–2006 season, with productions in Stuttgart, Bonn, Leipzig, Hannover, Münster, Memmingen, Coburg, Potsdam, Ingolstadt, Hof, Kiel, Rudolstadt, Bad Hersfeld, Bautzen, Kassel, and Ravensburg, as well as Innsbruck, Austria. Another omnipresent Weill/Brecht work, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, can be seen in Madrid, Basel, Dresden, Berlin, Saarbrücken, Ulm, and Dessau.

After its highly acclaimed July run at Italy's Ravenna Festival, this fall Opera North's production of *One Touch of Venus* takes up residence on the Sadler's Wells stage in London (3–12 November). Conductor James Holmes continues his Weill series at Opera North with a spring 2006 British tour of *Arms and the Cow* (*Der Kuhhandel*), directed by David Pountney: Bradford (30 March–1 April), Nottingham (27 April), Norwich (6 May), Salford Quays (13 May), Newcastle (18 May), Hull (24 May), and Sheffield (3 June).

Upcoming Concert Highlights

Created thirty-six years ago by Weill's musical collaborator Maurice Levine, the Lyrics and Lyricists series at New York's 92nd Street Y departs from its usual format this November with *Kurt Weill in America*, celebrating Weill as composer along with his lyricists. Andrea Marcovicci hosts a program with seven other cabaret artists (five performances, 12–14 November). Following the seven-week San Francisco run of her *Here Lies Jenny* Weill revue, on 19 November Bebe Neuwirth begins a U.S. orchestra tour singing Weill songs; 2005–2006 season performances take her to Buffalo, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Key Largo, Tampa Bay, Providence, Las Vegas, Green Bay, and Waterbury, Connecticut.

Weill's *Symphony No. 2* can be heard in performances by the New Haifa Symphony Orchestra with conductor Ori Leshman (29–31 October), the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under André de Ridder (4 November, Glasgow; 5 November, Edinburgh), Sinfonieorchester St. Gallen with Michael Sanderling (24 November), Victoria Symphony with Yannick Nézet-Séguin (29 and 30 January 2006), and Orchester Musikkollegium Winterthur with Petri Sakari (1–2 February). HK Gruber leads the Svenska Kammarorkestern Örebro in *Symphony No. 2* and *Öl-Musik* on 17 November. Upcoming concert performances of *Die sieben Todsünden* are scheduled by the Münchner Rundfunkorchester under Lawrence Foster (with Mísia as Anna I, 16 October), the Florida Orchestra under Stefan Sanderling (Lisa Vroman and The Hudson Shad, 22–24 October), Nederlands Kamerorkest conducted by Yakov Kreizberg (Noemi Nadelmann, 19 November), the Duisburger Philharmoniker under Lawrence Foster (Heidi Brunner, 15–16 March 2006), and Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna conducted by Carlo Rizzi (Ute Lempert, 7 April).



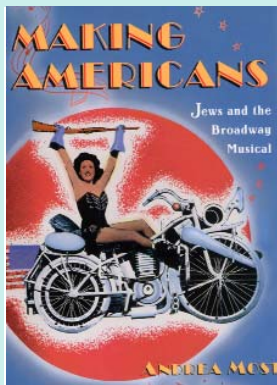
Lenya Sings Weill on DVD

The 29 June 1958 broadcast of the CBS television series *Camera Three*, hosted by James Macandrew, featured Lotte Lenya singing songs by Weill. This historic broadcast is now available on DVD. Video Artists International's *Lotte Lenya and Gisela May: Theater Music of Brecht and Weill* packages together the *Camera Three* broadcast

along with footage from two other Weill interpreters: Gisela May in a 1972 television broadcast and Martha Schlamme in songs filmed in 1963 (with Will Holt) and 1970.

Kurt Weill Foundation Programs

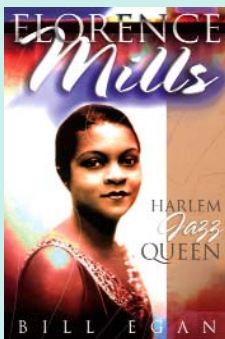
2005 Kurt Weill Prize Awarded to Andrea Most



Andrea Most of the University of Toronto has been awarded the 2005 Kurt Weill Prize for her book, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Harvard University Press, 2004). In an examination of Broadway theater in the period 1925 to 1951, from *The Jazz Singer* to *The King and I*, Most maintains that the process of Jewish acculturation in America and the development of the Broadway musical are inextricably joined. Most receives an award of \$2500. Also singled out by the prize panel for honorable mention in the book category was Bill Egan, for his book *Florence Mills: Harlem Jazz*

Queen (Scarecrow Press, 2004), a biography of a remarkable African-American entertainer of the 1920s. The panel did not award a prize in the article category.

The Kurt Weill Prize is awarded biennially for distinguished scholarship on twentieth-century musical theater. The four-member selection panel consists of representatives from the Modern Language Association, the American Musicological Society, the American Society for Theatre Research, and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. Scholarly work first published in 2005 and 2006 may be nominated for the 2007 book and article prizes. Nominations, including five copies of the nominated work and contact information for the author, must be received by 30 April 2007 at the offices of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003.



In an interview with *Willamette Week's* Steffen Siflis, Anne Jeffreys recounted how she came to play Rose in the premiere of *Street Scene*:

"I was performing Tosca at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. After a performance, there were two men waiting outside my dressing room. One was a tall man with big glasses [Maurice Abravanel], and the other was a small man with big glasses. They introduced themselves, and, of course, the smaller man turned out to be Kurt Weill. They came in, and Kurt said that he wanted me to play one of the leads in his new show. I told him that I was under contract at RKO in Hollywood, and that I had to get back to the studio. 'Well,' he said, 'would you just come and listen to the music?' Now, who can say no to Kurt Weill? So I went along to the Adelphi Theater and went into this cold office, and there was Kurt at a piano, and he started playing



Anne Jeffreys in 2005

the score and singing in his squeaky little voice, and I was thrilled. It was the loveliest music. He said, 'Would you play Rose?' and I said, 'Let me call Hollywood.'"

2006 Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers

Applications must be received by 16 January 2006 for the ninth annual Lenya Competition. Artists born after 31 December 1973 and before 1 January 1987 are eligible to apply, and regional auditions will be held at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music (4 February 2006), the Lyric Opera of Chicago (15 February), Boston University (25 February) and Dicapo Opera Theater, New York City (3 and 4 March). Each regional contestant will be asked to prepare two contrasting theatrical selections by Kurt Weill, plus two non-Weill selections—an opera/opera aria and a selection chosen from the American musical theater repertoire. All selections must be performed in their original language. Contestants who are unable to attend any of the regional auditions may instead submit a good-quality videotape of all four selections. Finalists will be selected from the regional auditions to participate in the competition finals, to be held on 22 April 2006 at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester. Regional winners will each receive an award of \$500, plus a \$500 stipend to pay for travel to the finals in Rochester. The finals judges will award prizes of \$7500, \$5000, and \$3000, and winners will also be presented in a concert in New York City on 18 May 2006.

Past Lenya Competition Winners Attain Success

The 2005 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World is Nicole Cabell, a member of the Chicago Lyric Opera Center for American Artists and a special award winner in the 2002 Lenya Competition. Peter McGillivray, who won Second Prize in 2001, has won the Second Prize in the 2005 Montreal International Singing Competition. A member of the Ensemble Studio of the Canadian Opera Company, McGillivray also recently won the Bernard Diamant Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts. Raquela Sheeran, Second Prizewinner in the 2001 Lenya Competition, was praised by the critics for her performance as Clorinda in Rossini's *Cenerentola* at the 2005 Glyndebourne Festival.

Mid-Year Professional Performance Grants

Upon the recommendation of the independent grant review panel, the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation has awarded two Mid-Year Professional Performance grants for 2005. Winners were the Singapore Lyric Opera, for two concerts of *Street Scenes*, and the Florida Orchestra, for *The Seven Deadly Sins* in concert.

Critics Celebrate New Weill Recording

Symphony no. 1, Symphony no. 2, Symphonic Nocturne from *Lady in the Dark*, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop, conductor. Naxos 8.557481

“Although Kurt Weill turned his talents more prolifically to works for the stage, the two surviving symphonies, completed in 1921 and 1934 respectively, show that he could pack a powerful punch in abstract music as well. Anyone familiar with the style of *The Threepenny Opera* or *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* will recognize the same Weill in the symphonies, particularly the Second. The cutting edge is sharp, and the tenor of his melody—for instance in the Second Symphony’s slow movement—has that sardonic, slightly despondent air of impending catastrophe and gathering threat that imbues his theater pieces. The First Symphony, mixing bold, exciting, expressionist dissonance with sinuous lyricism, is one continuous movement; the Second is divided into three. But both play for just under half an hour and share a structural economy and a strong dramatic impetus and shape. The ‘Symphonic Nocturne,’ drawn by Robert Russell Bennett from the 1940 musical *Lady in the Dark*, shows how Weill adapted, rather than compromised, his style to meet the demands of Broadway. It is hard to imagine this music executed with more brio, incisiveness, precision of instrumental color, and evocative atmosphere than in these knock-out performances by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop.”—Geoffrey Norris, *The Daily Telegraph* (3 September 2005)



Marin Alsop

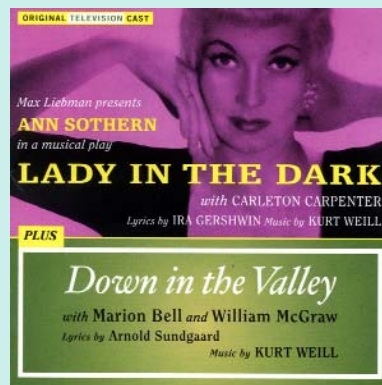
“[The Second Symphony] concludes with a breathtakingly original finale featuring inverted recapitulations of the first movement’s opening bars intertwined the *Threepenny* theatricality—a whirling dervish of acerbic, cabaret-style march tunes that eventually erupt in a manic coda. Hot stuff for jaded musical palates. Filling out this generous disc is a ‘Symphonic Nocturne’ of tunes from Weill’s *Lady in the Dark*, a musical collaboration including Weill, Moss Hart, and Ira Gershwin. Arranged by Robert Russell Bennett, these tracks are enjoyable and less demanding than the symphonies, but still highlight the composer’s acid-etched signature style. Kudos to Naxos, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and Maestra Alsop. This is a killer disc.”—T. L. Ponick, *The Washington Times* (27 August 2005)

“Weill is not usually thought of as a symphonist, but he produced two such works, both about 30 minutes long: the first a richly textured, post-Mahlerian single movement, the second an absolute masterpiece. Synthesizing such irreconcilables as biting neoclassicism, 19th-century symphonic grandeur, and Weill’s bittersweet theater idiom, it is full of poignant tunes, dizzying propulsive-ness, and breathtaking dramatic gesture. The central largo, with its defiant, funeral tread, is like athrenody for 20th-century horrors past, and others yet to come, and one of the greatest slow movements in music. Both are marvelously played.”—Paul Driver, *London Sunday Times* (21 August 2005)

“Weill completed his first symphony in 1921, when he was 21; it was never performed during his lifetime, and the score, thought lost, didn’t turn up until 1956. The 27-minute, one-movement work is dark and dour, which becomes its attraction; a note of irony prefigures the later and more famous Weill. . . . The ‘Symphonic Nocturne’ serves as dessert, an orchestral reprise of some of the famous episodes in the show, including ‘My Ship,’ ‘This is New,’ and ‘Saga of Jenny.’ Alsop is completely on top of the various styles required, and she commands the craggy, formal terrain. The band plays with strength and purpose for her.”—Richard Dyer, *The Boston Globe* (19 August 2005)

Down in the Valley Re-released

In January 1950, Kurt Weill’s and Arnold Sundgaard’s *Down in the Valley* was the first televised production aired by the newly formed NBC Opera Theatre. Shortly after the broadcast, Marion Bell (Jennie), William McGraw (Brack), Kenneth Smith (Leader/Preacher), and Ray Jacquemot (Bouché) recorded the work with conductor Peter Herman Adler and the RCA Victor Orchestra. The resulting audio recording has long been out of print, until Sepia Records remastered and re-released *Down in the Valley* this year. Sepia 1052 pairs the work with a remastered version of *Lady in the Dark* derived from a 1954 NBC television adaptation that starred Ann Sothern as Liza, with James Daly (Charley Johnson) and Carleton Carpenter (Russell Paxton). Weill’s music was adapted by Clay Warnick and Mel Pahl, with orchestrations by Irwin Kostal. Although the audio recording made in 1954 was never released on CD, an AEI CD of *Lady in the Dark* (AEI-CD 041) was created from the kinescope of NBC’s television broadcast in 1997.



Performance Reviews

***Judgment of Paris*, Rambert Dance Company; New Theatre, Oxford (27–30 April 2005) and Sadler's Wells, London (24–28 May 2005). Tour performances continue in the 2005–2006 season.**

“Antony Tudor’s 1938 *Judgment of Paris* [set to songs from *The Threepenny Opera*] may be short and even slight, but it’s gorgeously suggestive of how racy Rambert once could be. Where the Greek myth tells of three goddesses who compete for a golden apple, Tudor’s version centers on three dejected old tarts in a sleazy bar. Their dances—and the comedy—hinge on the idea that although they are ostensibly competing for the custom of the bar’s one sozzled patron, none of their hearts are really in it. The only prize they lust for is his pocket watch.”—Jenny Gilbert, *The Independent* (29 May 2005)



Rambert Dance Company.
Photo: Anthony Crickmay

“We looked back to Rambert’s early years with two contrasting works by Antony Tudor. *Judgment of Paris* turns the mythical goddesses Juno, Venus, and Minerva into clapped-out floozies with creaky joints, flaunting their weary charms at a drunkard in a sleazy bar. Angela Towler is funny forcing her limbs through a hoop, as is Polley’s suffering pelvis lock while attempting the splits. But the piece feels slack and dated, good though it is to hear the Kurt Weill music and to see Hugh Laing’s décor re-created.”—David Dougill, *London Sunday Times* (29 May 2005)

“In a picturesquely lurid *boite de nuit* three bone-weary prostitutes, a pianist, and the world’s most slatternly waiter wait for someone to come. The drunk who does is treated to three bitterly hackneyed solos and robbed of his gold watch. Originally the robustly built little Agnes de Mille was Venus, who squeezes herself through little hula hoops, and it was then believable that the veteran Minerva would fail to achieve the splits. But at Oxford’s New Theatre, Rambert’s dancers were too physically superb and not dramatically versatile enough to remake themselves as lumpy, dumpy rumpy-pumpy fodder. Weill’s songs, bashed out by a seedy pianist in white tails, sound acid as hell and sleazy as a sweaty mattress; leaden silences and bitterly amused resignation are what the ‘goddesses’ should transmit, even if they can’t do sagging flesh.”—Ismene Brown, *The Daily Telegraph* (29 April 2005)

Weill Songs: Sarah Connolly, mezzo-soprano, and Eugene Asti, piano, Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York (16 May 2005)

“Sarah Connolly is an intelligent singer, with a fine technique, and a first-class voice. . . . Accompanying her at the piano was Eugene Asti, who was equal to his singer. . . . It is simply a joy to be in the company of musicians who know what they’re doing. To conclude, they did four Kurt Weill songs, two from *Lost in the Stars* and two from *One Touch of Venus*. Triumphant, again, was Ms. Connolly’s judgment, for she did not oversing them, nor ham them up—they were a hundred times more effective that way. The song ‘Trouble Man’ had real power, vocal and theatrical. And lots of singers like to talk their way through ‘I’m a Stranger Here Myself.’ But Ms. Connolly actually sang it. Remarkable.”—Jay Nordlinger, *The New York Sun* (18 May 2005)

“Ms. Connolly was at her best and most original in the Hahn and Weill groups. . . . The Weill songs, drawn from the composer’s American period, included selections from *Lost in the Stars* and *One Touch of Venus*. One thing she brought them was a touch of an English accent, which made the blend of comedy and seduction in ‘I’m a Stranger Here Myself’ all the more alluring.”—Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times* (18 May 2005)

***Die Dreigroschenoper*, Freilichtspiele Schwäbisch Hall (10 July–21 August 2005)**

“The locale of Weill’s and Brecht’s *Dreigroschenoper* is pretty much the opposite of what the historical surroundings of the “Grand Stairs” in Schwäbisch Hall suggest: spruced-up burghers’ houses instead of the demimonde’s morass, picturesque and dreamy wealth of a long-ago time instead of a shark pool’s restless greed. . . . The characters appear to spring from a feverish Biedermeier dream. Peachum (Udo Zepezauer) is a brash small-town goblin with a top hat; his companions are allegories of misery clad in gray felt—a material which has spurred much of the imagination of set designer Katrin Busching. There are all kinds of sashes, beetle-like suits of armor, cloaks with oversized collars behind which Mackie’s petty thugs can go into hiding at any time to escape their—otherwise rather pale—boss’s wrath (Karl Heinz Herber). Director Christoph Biermeier interprets Brecht’s anti-naturalist dramaturgy through the means of typical folk theater. Commedia dell’arte, grand guignol, pantomime, and a visionary aesthetic à la Shockheaded Peter are condensed into a world of images in which the old and evil songs sound as if they were settings of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*—despite the musicians’ solid performance under the baton of Patrick Schimanski.”—Stefan Kister, *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (19 July 2005)



© Freilichtspiele Schwäbisch Hall. Photo: Jürgen Weller

2004 Productions Reach New Audiences

One Touch of Venus, Opera North at the Ravenna Festival (15, 17, 21 July 2005)

“Save for *Street Scene*, seen some years ago in Turin, the American Weill is practically unknown to us. Moreover, he was condemned without trial for ostensibly having betrayed, for the sake of money and easy compromises, the pledge and the ideology upon which he and Brecht created *The Threepenny Opera*. True? False. This was demonstrated by the first Italian *One Touch of Venus*, which the Ravenna Festival commendably premiered last night at the Teatro Alighieri in an exemplary and splendid production. . . . There’s a brilliant and impeccable orchestra, delicate and rousing, led by James Holmes with a smile on his lips. . . . The hassles of urban life are represented in a ballet of gray unthinking robots set to dissonant music. ‘Westwind,’ a song telling us about Savory’s failed romances, is ‘dramatic’ or sentimental but with tongue in cheek, like a caricature of Puccini, and between lyrics and music we encounter again that Brecht/Weillian *Verfremdung*. . . . ‘Speak Low,’ on the other hand, the show’s most famous number, has the timid, woeful, and melancholy air of reflections on love and the transitoriness of life. And at such topics one doesn’t poke fun, as Weill—from his love of Mozart—knows perfectly well and shows in masterly fashion.”—Alberto Cantù, *Il Giornale* (17 July 2005)



Savory (Ron Li-Paz) and Molly (Christianne Tisdale).
Photo: Stephen Vaughan

“The protagonist is Venus, the goddess of beauty—perfectly portrayed by the superblonde Karen Coker . . . The orchestra of Opera North, directed by James Holmes, has brought Weill’s score into the limelight, and he proves once again to be a superb melodist . . . The singers—Ron Li-Paz, Christianne Tisdale, Eric Roberts, and Loren Geeting—are all legitimate singers but tackle the Broadway style with perfect ease, and they’re having a ball.” —Paolo Gallarati, *La Stampa* (22 July 2005)

“In Weill’s Broadway score you’ll find all the characteristics of top-level composing: masterful orchestrations with a great variety of timbres and dynamics, an infallible theatrical tempo in every musical interpolation, and most of all the irresistible melodic inventiveness of his songs (it will suffice to mention the famous ‘Speak Low’) . . . but what is eye-catching about Opera North’s interpretation, inspired by the 1940s style of the original, is the perfect joining of its elements. Scenery, stage direction, music, singing, acting, and dancing blend into an indivisible unity; the result is breathtaking.”—Susanna Venturi, *Corriere di Ravenna* (17 July 2005)

Here Lies Jenny, Post Street Theatre, San Francisco (1 May–19 June 2005)

“The elusive transformation Bebe Neuwirth’s character undergoes is only part of the considerable appeal of *Here Lies Jenny*, the impossible-to-categorize musical revue/dramatic song cycle/tone poem that opened Tuesday at Post Street Theatre. The musical genius of the immortal Kurt Weill is a principal asset—as is Neuwirth’s remarkable affinity for Weill’s poignant, gritty,



Photo: Carol Rosegg

bawdy, haunting melodies. But no less vital is the capably creative restraint of Roger Rees’ direction and Ann Reinking’s choreography. . . . Diane Hidy (replacing Leslie Stifelman as accompanist) rushes down the stairs and pounds on the door with bladder-bursting urgency as Martin Vidnovic’s casually perverse bartender takes his time opening for what little business the joint is likely to get. As Hidy settles in at the piano and Vidnovic sings a lovely bit of ‘Berlin im Licht,’ a burly Dennis Stowe and insidiously laid-back Angelo Fraboni, in Kaye Voyce’s apt street-macho costumes, burst in like a blast of unmitigated testosterone. . . . It’s hard, given the theme, to understand the omission of the harrowing ‘Pirate Jenny.’ But there are lovely, oft-neglected selections, too, such as Weill and Maurice Magre’s trenchant ‘Je ne t’aime pas.’ . . . Neuwirth brings the piece to a dynamic climax with ‘Surabaya

Johnny’ from *Happy End*, plunging into Brecht and Weill’s wickedly abrupt shifts in tempo and tone—in one of the most beautiful and aching depictions of enduring heartbreak ever written—with rich, raw emotional intensity. It’s a stunning rendition, all the more so when she switches from Feingold’s affecting English to the penetrating clarity of Brecht’s German. Sure, *Jenny* isn’t perfect. But it’s hard to argue with a catharsis like that.”—Robert Hurwitt, *The San Francisco Chronicle* (5 May 2005)

Festivals

Weill Cycle at Opéra de Lyon

Opéra de Lyon will present the French premiere of *One Touch of Venus* (*Signé Venus*) on 1 June 2006, leading off a month-long series of Weill performances. Directed by Jean Lacomberie and conducted by Scott Stroman, *Signé Venus* stars Héléne Delavaut as the goddess, Jacques Verzier as Whitelaw Savory, and Gilles Vajou as Rodney Hatch. Performances will run through 11 June, followed by a double bill of *Le vol de Lindbergh* (*Der Lindberghflug*) and *Les sept péchés capitaux* (*Die sieben Todsünden*), which plays 24 June through 4 July. Roberto Minczuk conducts and François Girard directs; the cast includes Kurt Streit as Lindbergh and Gun-Brit Barkmin as Anna I. Lyon's Weill cycle will be rounded off by two performances of *Celui qui dit oui* (*Der Jasager*), performed by Nouveau Studio de l'Opéra de Lyon, conducted by Jérémie Rhorer and directed by Richard Brunel (7 and 10 June).

2006 Kurt Weill Fest: Weill & Brecht

Dessau's fourteenth annual Kurt Weill Fest will open on 24 February 2006 with a new production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (conducted by Golo Berg and directed by Helmut Polixa) at the Anhaltisches Theater Dessau, and the theater's 2005 *Happy End* (Herbert Olschok, director; Golo Berg, conductor) will be revived on 25 February. The festival continues with *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Das Berliner Requiem* in concert with musikFabrik Köln, Stefan Asbury, conductor (25 February); Dominique Horwitz in *Best of Dreigroschenoper* (26 February); Dessau school children in a production of *Der Jasager* (28 February); and soprano Barbara Hendricks in a recital including Weill songs (3 March). The 5 March closing concert will feature *Die sieben Todsünden* with the MDR Sinfonieorchester (Helen Schneider, Anna; Fabrice Bollon, conductor). Singer and actress Salome Kammer will be the festival's Artist in Residence.



Anhaltisches Theater's *Happy End*. Photo: Claudia Heysel

In Memoriam

Trude Rittmann (1908–2005)

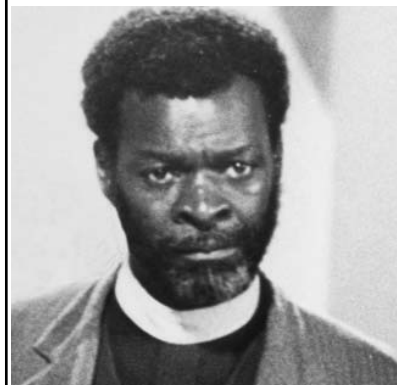
Composer, arranger, and pianist Trude Rittmann died on 22 February 2005 in Lexington, Massachusetts. Born in Mannheim, Germany, on 24 September 1908, Rittmann studied at the Cologne Musikhochschule, where Philipp Jarnach—who had been Weill's counterpoint tutor—was her composition instructor. Some of her early works were broadcast by German radio and reviewed by Theodor W. Adorno, with whom she had a friendly relationship. Rittmann graduated in 1932 and fled Germany the following year. After brief stints in France, Belgium, and England, she arrived in the U.S. in 1937, when Lincoln Kirstein engaged her as a concert pianist for George Balanchine's Ballet Caravan, replacing Elliott Carter. By the time the troupe disbanded in 1941, she had been promoted to music director and had worked with Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Stefan Wolpe. In the early 1940s she became Agnes de Mille's piano accompanist of choice, and it was in this capacity that she became involved in *One Touch of Venus*, where she rehearsed Weill's dance arrangements, noting that Weill didn't let anyone interfere with his music. De Mille later recalled that Rittmann had created music for the "Bacchanale" in order to develop the choreography, but Weill subsequently replaced it "with his own music, quite original, to the exact counts. Now that is remarkable!" (In 1948, Weill did let her "interfere" when she created an arrangement of "September Song" for piano solo in E-flat that was published as sheet music.) Rittmann went on to become one of Broadway's foremost dance arrangers, working for such luminaries as Richard Rodgers, Frederick Loewe, Jule Styne, and Leonard Bernstein, all of whom held her in the highest esteem.



Photo: John Gruen

Brock Peters (1927–2005)

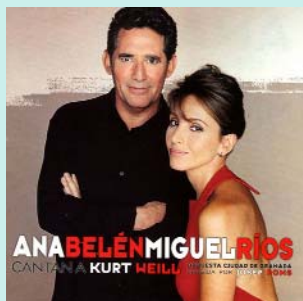
Brock Peters, 78, who starred in the 1972 Broadway revival of Weill's and Maxwell Anderson's *Lost in the Stars*, died on 23 August 2005 at his home in Los Angeles. Nominated for a Tony Award for his portrayal of the South African minister Stephen Kumalo and the winner of Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for outstanding performance by an actor in a musical, Peters repeated his role in the show's 1974 film adaptation.



Brock Peters as Stephen Kumalo

Weillian Fusion

Weill projects in London, Madrid, and Montreal unite rock and pop singers with symphony orchestras



In one of two 2005 “Symphonic September” gala concerts at Madrid’s Auditorio Nacional, on 14 September Orquesta Nacional de España presented Spanish singing stars Miguel Ríos and Ana Belén in an evening of Weill songs conducted by Orquesta Nacional Artistic Director Josep Pons, with the participation of the Lluís Vidal Trio. The concert was a recreation of the aforementioned artists’ hit two-CD set released on RCA (1999), which was also the repertoire of a nine-stop fall 1999 tour with Pons conducting the Orquesta Ciudad de Granada.

Along with chamber music by Haydn and Schubert, Britain’s Brodsky Quartet featured jazz singer Jacqui Dankworth (daughter of Cleo Laine and John Dankworth) in an arrangement of “Speak Low” by her father (Brodsky Quartet with Jacqui Dankworth, St. George’s Concert Hall, Bristol, 16 September 2005).

Meltdown: Homage to Bertolt Brecht, Royal Festival Hall, London (23 June 2005)

“Patti Smith was almost right when she said it would be impossible to fill Lotte Lenya’s shoes. The Austrian chanteuse’s cracked, guttural voice established a sound still synonymous with pre-war songs by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. For this *Meltdown* show, Smith picked from their *Threepenny Opera*, *Mahagonny*, and *Happy End*, and conceived a revue involving singers with intriguing and downright original voices from a spectrum of styles and ages.



Antony

towards high-pitched male voices. The Tiger Lillies, in Edwardian check suits and bowlers, are led by a sinisterly charismatic singer and accordionist who possesses a chilling, strident falsetto. But it was the tall, young American boy called Antony [of Antony and the Johnsons] who stole most hearts. With his white cherubic face, long black hair and wonderfully weird voice, in and out of falsetto, he is magnetic. He mourned ‘Surabaya Johnny,’ a sailor who abandoned him, then enacted with Martha Wainwright (sister of Rufus) a lost love affair between a pimp and his whore.” —Sue Steward, *The Evening Standard* (24 June 2005)



Patti Smith

Backing them was the London Sinfonietta, directed by James Holmes. . . . Smith, surprisingly flirtatious in a black dress, dramatically reinvented ‘Mack the Knife’ with Lenny Kaye’s guitar and James Crabb’s brilliantly minimal accordion. It was a definite challenge to Lotte Lenya. . . . The program was definitely biased



The Tiger Lillies

Kurt Weill, Diane Dufresne, vocals, Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor, ATMA Classique ACD2 2324

“We can thank Yannick Nézet-Séguin for having the nerve to program an all-Weill orchestral concert—the starting point of this CD—and for bringing Diane Dufresne on board. Only *la grande Diane* could have risen to the challenge of Weill’s songs, with their hard-hitting lyrics. These songs demand an interpreter who always goes to the limit, who sings them from the gut, as if they were written for her. . . . Diane Dufresne, still in top form at sixty. Perfectionist that she is, she worked like a Trojan to prepare what could have been just one night’s extravaganza, but which fortunately is preserved on this CD. The loveliest moments are the two songs accompanied by Nézet-Séguin on the piano, when her voice and emotions are at their freest. In the remarkable ‘Je ne t’aime pas,’ she keeps surprising us right up to the very last note. The CD also gives us Weill’s Symphony no. 2, one of his instrumental pieces. This most worthy work (particularly the second movement) would make a fine object of a guessing game, if we did not know already who composed it.” —Véronique Robert, *L’actualité* (12 May 2005)



“Whether the song is about Jenny, the pirate’s bride, or Marie pleading with the sailors in ‘J’attends un navire,’ or even the 17-year-old kid who falls for Surabaya Johnny, we believe her. We believe her because Diane Dufresne comes from the street, and her experiences make everything she sings real. Her roots in the lowest rungs of society, even the occasional hint of madness, serve her well. Dufresne was every bit as much in charge when she sang with the orchestra as when she sang ‘Je ne t’aime pas’ and ‘Nannas Lied’ with Nézet-Séguin alone at the piano.” —Sylvain Cormier, *Le Devoir* (10 March 2005)

New Publications

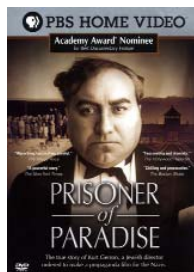
ARTICLES

O'Connor, Patrick. "August 31, 1928," in *Gramophone*, June 2005, pp. 44–45.

Schumacher, Ernst. "Brandstiftung am 'Hotel zum reichen Mann,'" in *Dreigroschenheft 2/2005*, pp. 32–39.

DISSERTATIONS

Baumgartner, Michael. "Exilierte Göttinnen: Die Darstellung der weiblichen Statue in Othmar Schoeck's 'Venus,' Kurt Weill's *One Touch of Venus* und Thea Musgrave's *The Voice of Ariadne*." Universität Salzburg, 2005.



VIDEOS

Lotte Lenya and Gisela May: Theater Music of Kurt Weill, VAI DVD 4319 (includes Lenya's appearance on *Camera Three* in 1958 and May's appearance on German television in 1972).

Prisoner of Paradise, PBS Home Video 705014 (documentary on the life of Kurt Gerron).

Beyond the Sea, Lion's Gate Home Entertainment 17231 (fictionalized biography of Bobby Darin).



RECORDINGS

Symphony no. 1, Symphony no. 2, Symphonic Nocturne from *Lady in the Dark*, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop, cond., Naxos 8.557481.

Lady in the Dark and *Down in the Valley*, re-issues of Ann Sothern television soundtrack (RCA LM-1882) and Marion Bell's 1950 recording (RCA Victor DM 1367) respectively, Sepia 1052.



Kurt Weill, Diane Dufresne, vocals, Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, cond., ATMA Classique ACD2 2324 (includes eight songs and Symphony no. 2).

Travis Shook Plays Kurt Weill, Dead Horse Records DHR 2720 (jazz versions of six songs).

Blood and Feathers, Ute Lemper live at the Café Carlyle, DRG 91490 (includes "Pirate Jenny," "Bilbao Song," and "Moon of Alabama").

The Spinning Girl, Felicja Blumental, piano, Brana Records BR0014 (includes solo piano arrangement of "Tango-Ballade").

The Young Rebel, Charlie Mingus, Proper Records, Properbox 77 (4-CD set; includes "September Song").

Cécile Verny, *European Songbook*, Minor Music 801115 (includes "Mack the Knife" and "Lost in the Stars").

Dave Van Ronk, *The Mayor of MacDougal Street: Rarities 1957–1969*, Multicultural Media MCM 4005 (includes "As You Make Your Bed").

Concerto for Violin and Wind Instruments, Anthony Marwood, violin and cond., Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Hyperion CD A67496 (includes Vasks's Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra).

