

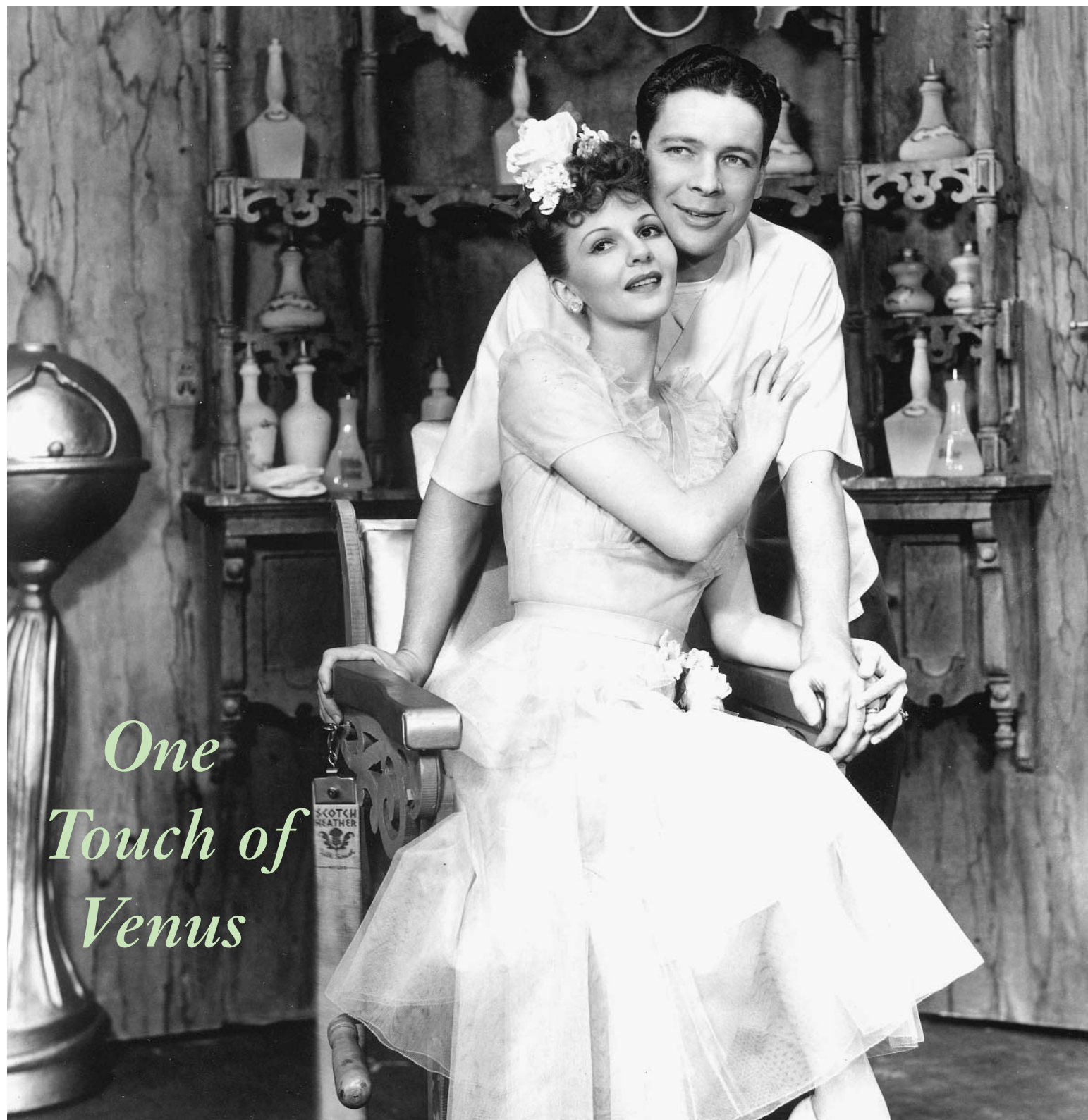
Kurt Weill

Volume 28

Number 1

Newsletter

Spring 2010



*One
Touch of
Venus*

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Kurt Weill

Newsletter

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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.

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Cover photo: Venus (Mary Martin) with Rodney Hatch (Kenny Baker) from the original production of *One Touch of Venus*.

Correction

In the Fall 2009 issue of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, Mark N. Grant's review of Steven Suskin's book, *The Sound of Broadway Music*, contained a misstatement that Mr. Grant has asked us to correct. The original sentence on p. 14 read, "Yet Rodgers was so annoyed when some newspaper critics took note of the orchestration that he never hired Spialek again." It should have read, "Yet Rodgers was so annoyed when some newspaper critics took note of the orchestration that he never hired Spialek as supervising orchestrator again." [Spialek's last Rodgers show in that capacity was *Pal Joey* in 1940; he later "ghosted," possibly without Rodgers's knowledge, some of the orchestrations for *Carousel* and *The King and I*.]

Note from the Editor

"It can be played in London, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow." On 27 November 1943, less than two months after *One Touch of Venus* had opened on Broadway, Weill imagined that one day his latest work could be staged in major cities abroad—cities where he had once lived (except for Moscow), but which had since become sites of horrific warfare. Weill was anything but oblivious to the war, as his efforts to raise awareness of the Holocaust or those in support of the Allies attest, but he already longed for a world where *Venus* could "become an international operetta." Yet Weill would not live to see this dream come true: in January 1950 he observed that some countries were still not "equipped to do justice to a piece like *Venus*," and three months later he was dead.

What was then a musico-dramatic novelty, at least outside the Anglophone world, we might now consider a "typical" Broadway musical. In this issue we trace the show's path from vanguard to classic. And it seems that Weill was right. Slowly but surely *One Touch of Venus* is catching on around the world. Most recently, his hometown of Dessau, Germany mounted a full-scale production of the work, and—as this issue goes to press—the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake in Canada presents a lengthy run of the piece.

We note with sadness that three frequent contributors to these pages passed away earlier this year. Music critics Alan Rich of Los Angeles (see obituary on p. 5a) and Patrick O'Connor of London, and Josef Heinzelmann, dramaturg, translator, and Offenbach specialist, who also worked on pivotal productions of Weill's *Der Silbersee* and *Der Kuhhandel*. Not just the Kurt Weill Foundation but lovers of music and theater everywhere will feel the loss of these men who did so much to shape our taste and uphold our highest standards.

Elmar Juchem

A shot of the barbershop scene from the current production of *One Touch of Venus* at the Shaw Festival. Photo: David Cooper



One Touch of Venus: An Appreciation

by Mark N. Grant

It ran longer than any other Weill musical, made Mary Martin a star, and yielded one of his great standards, “Speak Low.” Yet for theater connoisseurs, *One Touch of Venus* is the problem piece among Weill’s American works, because it is his one generic musical comedy apparently devoid of significant innovations. A fresh look discloses that *One Touch of Venus* was more than just another George S. Kaufman-style show. *Venus* is golden age Broadway’s reply to the racy sex comedy of filmmaker Ernst Lubitsch; nearly all its best numbers are love songs, and in quantity and quality of risqué humor *One Touch of Venus* arguably outstrips every other show of its era. (Cleverness, too—some of Ogden Nash’s acerbic lyrics are perhaps too sophisticated to understand even on second hearing.) For all its wisecracking the script has an almost Goethean subtext based on the eternal Madonna/whore theme. Weill’s score outdoes even *Lady in the Dark* in displaying symphonic mastery of American pop/vernacular idioms. And *Venus* is perhaps the first show where the composer became the “muscle”—a case study in backstage *Realpolitik*, with Weill outflanking the director and guiding not only the creative team but ultimately the show itself.

The germ of the project came from an obscure British novella that costume designer Irene Sharaff (*Lady in the Dark*) suggested to Weill. *The Tinted Venus* (1885) by F. Anstey tells the whimsical tale of a statue of Venus in England who, Galatea-like, briefly comes to life, and expresses her disgust at love’s debasement to the furtive, repressed sex-

uality of Victorianism. “F. Anstey” was the pen name of Thomas Anstey Guthrie (1856–1934), a lawyer

turned journalist, novelist, and humorist for *Punch*. The fantasy-like story spoke to Weill, who envisioned it as a neo-Offenbachian operetta, and in 1942 he interested Cheryl Crawford in producing it. (Crawford had produced *Johnny Johnson* and the successful 1942 “revisal” of *Porgy and Bess*, on which Weill had been an uncredited score doctor.) Crawford tried to woo Ira Gershwin, then Arthur Kober, to adapt *The Tinted Venus*, but both passed. Then she secured Bella Spewack, who with her husband Sam had written Cole Porter’s 1938 *Leave It to Me* (and would later write the book

for Porter’s *Kiss Me, Kate*), along with Ogden Nash, versifier extraordinaire but a Broadway novice (except for a few songs in a forgotten 1932 revue), to do the lyrics.

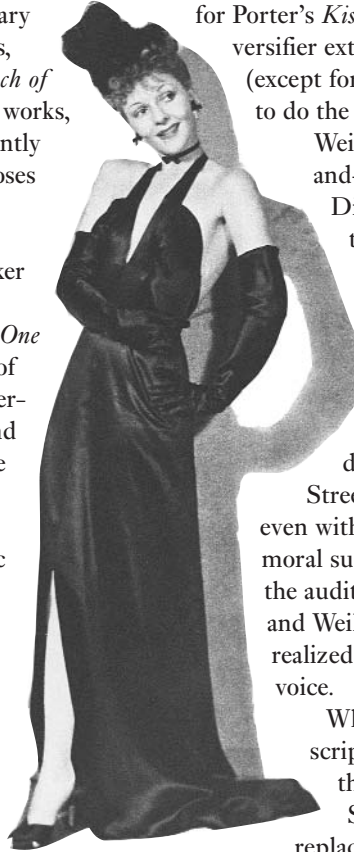
Weill at once initiated what became a cat-and-mouse game to persuade Marlene Dietrich, whom he had known in Germany, to make her Broadway debut in the title role (“Speak Low” was clearly written with Dietrich’s voice in mind). At their first meeting in Hollywood Dietrich was interested; eventually she went so far as to try on various Venus costumes in New York, sign a contract, and even do an audition from the stage of the 46th Street Theatre. Crawford later recalled that, even with her lover Jean Gabin in the audience for moral support, Dietrich was frightened during the audition. Sitting in the third row, Crawford and Weill couldn’t hear her over a mere piano and realized they’d need to find a way to amplify her voice.

When Bella Spewack presented her final script, Crawford, Weill, and Nash all agreed that it was hopeless (upon being fired, Spewack fainted twice). Crawford replaced Spewack with Nash’s friend and fellow *New Yorker* contributor (and former Marx Brothers scriptwriter) S.J. Perelman. Perelman’s new book jettisoned the Victorian setting and set the story in modern-day New

York, adding highly sophisticated, not to say leeringly suggestive, dialogue. That was too much for Dietrich; she read the Perelman script and rejected it out of hand as “too sexy and profane,” saying she couldn’t play

such a part onstage. Weill was so furious he resorted to German to bawl her out. To be fair, she was right about the script: it boasts even more sexual innuendo than *Pal Joey*, which had scandalized critics and theatergoers only three years earlier. Perelman’s *Venus* says, “Love is the triumphant twang of a bedspring.” Another character mocks the timorous male lead with a plumbing double entendre: “Your trouble’s in the cellar! Your Bemis valve is clogged, brother.”

The search for a Venus recommenced, but Ilona Massey, Vera Zorina, and Gertrude Lawrence all declined. Then



“It is a pleasure to attend a new musical comedy that is adult, professional, often comic and genuinely musical. It is a long time since we have heard a new and modern score in musical comedy that struck us as something at once popular and unusually fine.”

– New York Post (1943)

casting against type proved inspired: Crawford contacted young Mary Martin, who after her splashy Broadway debut singing “My Heart Belongs to Daddy” in *Leave It to Me* had not fared well as a siren in a few Hollywood B movies. Martin liked the songs but couldn’t imagine herself playing Venus, until her husband Richard Halliday took her to the Metropolitan Museum and showed her that the goddess appears in a great variety of shapes and sizes. The 5’ 4-1/2” Martin wore stiletto heels, dyed her hair pink, and took advice from lead dancer Sono Osato on how to stand regally. Director Elia Kazan helped her to evolve a slow, legato gait that contrasted with everyone else onstage, especially in hectic dance numbers. Crawford’s masterstroke came in hiring the couturier Mainbocher to create Venus’s gowns (contrary to some sources, it was not Mainbocher’s first Broadway assignment). “Every time I



“The musical show we have all been waiting for.... There is style in the Perelman-Nash libretto, humor in the Nash lyrics, felicity in Kurt Weill’s score.... The Weill music is a source of continual delight.” – New York Herald Tribune (1943)

walked on stage as Venus there was applause—for Main’s clothes,” Martin later recalled. Photo spreads of Martin’s gowns in *Vogue*, *Life*, and other top magazines catapulted her to fame.

Once Perelman finished revamping the plot, Weill, who had already composed several songs, now had to further Americanize the sound. For some time orchestra contractor Morris Stonzek had been taking Weill around town to meet musicians and sharpen his knowledge of swing styles of wind playing. He arranged *Venus* for a 28-piece orchestra with a sizable string section and resisted Crawford when she suggested cutting the number of musicians to save money. The production numbers in the score sound like a much larger Hollywood orchestra, as if Max Steiner and Glenn Miller had been cross-bred. Weill displays a mastery of American idioms: light swing (“One Touch

of Venus”), Irving Berlin-style ragtime (“How Much I Love You”), barbershop (“The Trouble With Women”), “hot” blues (“I’m a Stranger Here Myself”). Even the waltz “Foolish Heart,” though it starts out Viennese, culminates in a dance number based on “What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?” There are also sly homages to both Broadway and operetta genre-pieces: “Way Out West in Jersey” recalls Lorenz Hart’s lyric for “Way Out West on West End Avenue” from *Babes in Arms* (1937). The Bowery waltz “The Trouble with Women” harks back to “Women Women Women” from Lehár’s *Merry Widow* even as it presages “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” from *Kiss Me, Kate* (indeed, Harry Clark, one of the quartet, became one of the two thugs who sang the number in the later show). In “New Art,” a catalogue-of-painters song, Weill nods to “Tchaikowsky” (a catalogue of composers) from *Lady in the Dark*. The production numbers “Catch Hatch” and “Doctor Crippen” anticipate by a generation

the Music Hall-Grand Guignol style of *Sweeney Todd*. The full score badly needs a complete modern recording.

No musical detail was too small for Weill. Choreographer Agnes de Mille recalled that he would go “to the back of the auditorium where he can hear a balanced sound from the orchestra and voices. This will not be exact because a full audience will change all the acoustics, but he knows

how to correct for the difference. He will instruct the stage manager which of the singers to amplify on the over-all sound system. He will edit on the spot orchestration for audibility of speech and vocal balance.” Weill had his influence on the text, too; he suggested the key line from *Much Ado About Nothing* (“Speak low, if you speak love”) to Ogden Nash. By all accounts, Weill played a greater role than Elia Kazan, who later described himself as an overpaid stage manager. Kazan tried hard—he made copious

notes on the script—but doesn’t really seem to have understood the show. He later credited its success to Weill, de Mille, Mary Martin, and dancer Sono Osato. De Mille’s judgment that he “lacked visual sense” seems fair, and it’s also clear that he did not have the right sense of humor to appreciate Perelman’s and Nash’s efforts.



Every Broadway show brought out the workhorse in Weill, and *Venus* was no exception. A month after the show opened Weill wrote to his parents, "During the seven weeks before the show's opening I never slept more than two or three hours a night, because I had to be at rehearsals during the day and had to orchestrate at night." Even then, Lenya was alarmed about Weill's fearsome schedule and high blood pressure. He was by far the hardest-working composer

*"Weill's music is the loveliest this side of heaven."
– New York World Telegram (1943)*

on Broadway—Richard Rodgers's labors were nothing compared to Weill's—and he maintained a similarly punishing schedule through all his subsequent Broadway shows, which no doubt contributed to his early death.

For other essays on Weill's Broadway shows by Mark N. Grant, please visit www.kwf.org. The site also features a full synopsis of *Venus* and other shows by Mr. Grant.

One Touch of Venus: The Rest of the Story

After the Broadway run ended, a road tour (sadly shortened by Martin's illness) and the prospect of a Hollywood film (Mary Pickford bought the rights in September 1944) kept the fire burning. The film (1948) had some success, mostly due to the young Ava Gardner's performance as Venus, even though it revamped the book and cut Weill's score to the bone. And the show lived on through numerous stock and regional productions—notably the Starlight Operetta in Dallas (1948, with Vivian Blaine and Kenny Baker), the St. Louis Municipal Opera (1953, with Russell Nype), and the Texas State Fair (1955, with Janet Blair and Russell Nype). The last was made into a 90-minute television spectacular on NBC, which was much more faithful to the original than Hollywood's effort.

Then, as Broadway and popular music underwent profound changes, *Venus* was eclipsed like so many shows from Broadway's golden age. But theater pros remembered it fondly, and its renaissance began with a remarkable concert reading at New York's Town Hall in 1983. A stellar cast included Paige O'Hara, Ron Raines, Peggy Cass, Susan Lucci, and best of all, Paula Laurence reprising her role in the original

production. The performance served as a wake-up call to the New York theater world and set the stage for a full-blown revival at Goodspeed Opera House featuring Lynnette Perry in 1987. Ten years later, another concert rendering in New York was rapturously received when Melissa Errico played



Venus at Encores! in 1996. If you had to sum up critical reaction in one sentence, you could do a lot worse than Aileen Jacobson's judgment: "the magical

musical with a dream-team pedigree."

Europe discovered *Venus* in the 1990s as well. 1994 saw productions in Sweden and Germany (a national premiere), where it shows signs of settling into the repertory now that it has received about half a dozen productions, most recently in Dessau with Ute Gfrerer as Venus (see review on page 18). In the last five years, major stagings in England (Opera North) and France (Opéra de Lyon/Théâtre de la Renaissance) have received extensive praise and generated sufficient interest to warrant tours. Opera North took its production to the Ravenna Festival in Italy and to Sadler's Wells in London with great success. And again, the critics raved. No less than John Allison wrote in the *Times*, "it is surely time to acknowledge that his American works represent the peak of Weill's achievement. . . . *One Touch of Venus* confirms again his mastery of the musical theatre."

Yet there have been surprisingly few opportunities lately to catch *Venus* in the U.S. Although regional productions have continued, there has never been a Broadway revival of one of Weill's finest musicals. However, *Venus* has begun a summer-long run of 80 performances at the Shaw Festival just across the border in Ontario. Now plenty of people can see for themselves why Lewis Nichols of the *New York Times* called the show "a near approach to heaven" back in 1943.

"Such numbers as 'Speak Low,' 'Foolish Heart,' 'I'm a Stranger Here Myself,' 'Wooden Wedding' are gems of their kind and as rendered by Miss Blair and Mr. Nype reminded the viewer of the indestructible quality of the late composer's showtunes." – *Variety* (1955)





Opéra de Lyon, 2006

"Weill makes fun of bourgeois mentality and of the art world, and **the satire still works well today**, especially in this clever mise en scène." – Franck Mallet, *Classica Repertoire* (2006)



King's Head Theatre, London, 2001

"The plot has **all the manic intensity of a Marx Brothers farce**. . . . If there is any justice, *One Touch of Venus* should be sure of a long West End life." – Sheridan Morley, *The Spectator* (2001)



Encores!, New York, 1996

"As the love goddess who fell to earth in the charming concert version of *One Touch of Venus*, Melissa Errico is, in a word, divine. . . . Where else does one get to see a show that combines the singular talents of Weill, Nash, and Perelman? **The old boys deliver some delicious goods.**" – Ben Brantley, *New York Times* (1996)

"Weill was the greatest composer ever to work on Broadway. **The score is clever and lovely**. . . . S.J. Perelman, aided by Ogden Nash, contributed a **sweetly sexy book**. . . . A Victorian novella here given a dry Manhattan twist." – Clive Barnes, *New York Post* (1996)



Dessau, 2010

"[Ute Gfrerer's] gracefully nuanced performance of 'That's Him' was unforgettable." – David Savran, *Kurt Weill Newsletter* (2010)

"**A joyous, witty entertainment**, distinguished by sassy performances. Best of all are conductor James Holmes and the orchestra, who know exactly what they're doing with the score and could transfer to Broadway tomorrow." – George Hall, *Independent* (2004)



Opera North, 2004

Goodspeed Opera House, 1987



"In contrast to many other musicals of past eras, **the show is ageless**. The Weill score is as varied as it is melodic, with waltzes and ballads sharing the stage with a barbershop quartet."

– Mel Gussow, *New York Times* (1987)

"One can only marvel at the melodic riches of the score, with **one catchy tune succeeding the next**, setting the audience tapping its feet. . . . It all added up to a gorgeous performance." – Horst Koegler, *Opera* (1999)

Freiburg, 1998



A review of the Shaw Festival *Venus* will appear in the Fall issue. Here are some early press reactions:

"Ryan De Souza's musical direction and [Paul Sportelli's] re-orchestration of the music, played by a first-rate band, is as close to perfection as it gets. Not only does it sound wonderful, it sounds correct: 1943 come to life." – Richard Ouzounian, *Toronto Star*

"You get a lot of music from a 10-piece orchestra but it is a compromise. How much better would it sound with 28 instruments in a large theatre!" – James Karas, *The Greek Press*

"As Rodney Hatch, the unassuming barber who inadvertently brings *Venus* to life, the loose-limbed Kyle Blair is a natural, charming fit, while Julie Martell tackles the role of his declassée fiancée with jarring enthusiasm. Meanwhile Mark

Uhre and Deborah Hay stop just shy of stealing the entire show in a pair of delightful performances as modern art maven Whitelaw Savory and his long-suffering girl Friday, Molly Grant, respectively." – John Colbourn, *Toronto Sun*

Shaw Festival, 2010



Feature photo credits:

p. 4: Mary Martin as Venus (Broadway, 1943)
p. 5, top: Paula Laurence as Molly and John Boles as Savory (photo: Vandamm)
p. 5, bottom: Ruth Bond as Gloria, Teddy Hart as Taxi, and Kenny Baker as Rodney, (photo: Vandamm)
p. 6, right: Robert Walker as Eddie and Ava Gardner as Venus (film version, 1948)
p. 6, bottom left: Janet Blair as Venus and Russell Nype as Rodney
p. 7, top left: second from left, Jacques Verzier as Savory (photo: Franchella/Stoffleth)
p. 7, top right: Maxine Howe as Mrs. Kramer and Gina Murray as Gloria (photo: Ash Scott Lockyer)

p. 7, center: Andy Taylor as Rodney and Melissa Errico as Venus (photo: Gerry Goodstein)
p. 7, bottom left: Ute Grerer as Venus (photo: Thomas Ruttko)
p. 7, bottom right: Loren Geeting as Rodney, Carole Wilson as Mrs. Kramer, and Jessica Walker as Gloria (photo: Stephen Vaughan)
p. 8, top left: Dale O'Brien as Taxi, Michael Piontek as Rodney, Richard Sabellico as Savory, and Nick Corley as Stanley (photo: Norman Glasband)
p. 8, top right: Fabrice Dalis as Rodney and Sabine Schmidt-Kirchner as Venus (photo: Klaus Fröhlich)
p. 8, bottom: Robin Evan Willis as Venus and Kyle Blair as Rodney (photo: David Cooper)

Books

“...dass alles auch hätte anders kommen können.” Beiträge zur Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts

Hrsg. v. Susanne Schaal-Gotthardt, Luitgard Schader u. Heinz-Jürgen Winkler

Mainz: Schott, 2009, 349 pp. (Frankfurter Studien. Veröffentlichungen des Hindemith-Instituts Frankfurt/Main; Bd. XII)
ISBN: 978-3-7957-0649-4

Festschriften have always occupied a minor corner within the realm of scholarly writings, including music history. These often wide-ranging miscellanies, held together only by the interests of the dedicatee or even just what colleagues and friends might feel like offering, generally have modest appeal beyond a small circle of admirers and academic libraries. In fact, the expense of publishing such free-standing books has made more common in recent years the practice of releasing celebratory writings as special issues of journals. Nevertheless, the urge to honor leading figures in musicology has not ceased, and thus, despite the expense, unique volumes like “... dass alles auch hätte anders kommen können” continue to be published.

This collection is dedicated to Giselher Schubert on his 65th birthday in 2009. (It is not called a *Festschrift*, although it serves that function. Perhaps Dr. Schubert, out of modesty, preferred to avoid such a formal honor.) Readers of this *Newsletter* will know him as a member of the Editorial Board for the Kurt Weill Edition, but Weill forms only one facet of a prolific career that began with a dissertation on Schoenberg. Schubert is perhaps better known as the Director of the Hindemith Institute in Frankfurt a.M., where since 1991 he has prepared over twenty editions of Hindemith’s music, edited several volumes of Hindemith’s letters and papers, and overseen the work of numerous other scholars. More broadly, the central theme of Schubert’s career has been the music of the twentieth century, chiefly the rise of Modernism and especially the concept of *neue Sachlichkeit* associated with Hindemith, Weill, and others. Beyond Hindemith, however, Schubert has published over 120 articles and reviews on such composers as Brahms, Reger, Debussy, Delius, Ives, Korngold, Milhaud, Toch, and others, in fields that range from music theory and composition through sketch studies to discussions of editorial principles (an extensive bibliography is given on pp. 327–338).

The seventeen items in this volume are nearly all connected directly to Schubert’s own broad interests, and they are arranged in roughly chronological order. These include essays on the composers Ernest Chausson, Engelbert Humperdinck, Hans Pfitzner, Max Reger, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Walter Leigh, Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein, and Michael Tippett. Still other chapters deal with the writings of Theodor Adorno, the song “Lili Marleen,” and the music of mechanical birds.

Diverse as this list might seem, there is a unifying theme of sorts hinted at in the volume’s title, drawn from a quotation by the



German philosopher Karl Löwith (1897–1973): “Der Gedanke, dass alles auch hätte anders kommen können, ist nicht hinweg zu denken” (The idea that everything could have turned out differently is not to be overlooked) (p. 7). The phrase suggests both the multiplicity of stylistic paths found in twentieth-century music and also the variety of ways that an individual piece or perhaps even a moment in time might be reinterpreted in light of new facts or hypotheses. This is not to say that these essays engage merely in wild speculation, but that the history of twentieth-century music is always open-ended. Thus, the element of “what if” looms in the background of several of these essays.

While anyone concerned with the music of the first half of the twentieth century should be able to find something worthwhile in this volume, those interested primarily in Weill’s music will turn first to two essays by Stephen Hinton and Kim H. Kowalke. Beyond these items, readers will be guided by their own particular interests.

For many composers in the early twentieth century, the techniques and especially the theories of Richard Wagner were obstacles that needed to be overcome one way or another. One thinks immediately of Claude Debussy and other French composers whose new directions in style seem an outright rejection of Wagner. Even among Germans of the late nineteenth century, like Strauss, Wagner was as much an impediment as an inspiration, no matter how close the sonic resemblances. For Weill and his musical compatriots, roughly two generations later, the issue was less about materials and techniques than ideas and philosophies. As Stephen Hinton writes in “Weill Contra Wagner: Aspects of Ambivalence,” by the 1920s, “Wagner embodied the spirit to be denied rather than ignored” (p. 169). “Denial” did not mean complete disengagement, however, so Wagnerian influences continue to turn up throughout Weill’s career.

Hinton notes that Wagner was part of Weill’s education and cites the manuscript of a lecture on *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* that Weill gave in his final school year. Around the same time, Weill also participated in a recital in which he performed from memory the “Liebestod” from *Tristan und Isolde*, and he later remarked in a letter to his brother that “a decent *Tristan* performance will always be something special for me.” It was only after Weill switched teach-

ers, from the Wagnerian Humperdinck to the more independent Ferruccio Busoni, that he began to distance himself from the “Bayreuth master.” As a young critic, Weill wrote respectfully about the impact of Wagner’s music, but also about its epigonal nature in the mid-1920s. Yet despite Weill’s public disavowals of Wagner’s poetics, his own music contains occasional references to Wagner, including ironic quotations from *Tristan* that appear in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and *Die sieben Todsünden*. Moreover, that influence did not abate, as Hinton shows with three examples from Weill’s American years. *One Touch of Venus*, *Street Scene*, and *Love Life* make use, respectively, of a Wagnerian quotation, leitmotivic technique, and an elusive reference to a *Tristan*-esque sonority. As Hinton concludes, Weill was never as clearly anti-Wagnerian as some of his contemporaries, notably Hanns Eisler and Hindemith, and thus Wagner remained a significant influence in Weill’s theatrical works, regardless of what he might have written or said.

In contrast to Hinton’s retrospective look at *Love Life*, Kowalke’s essay, “Today’s Invention, Tomorrow’s Cliché: *Love Life* and the Concept Musical,” examines the show’s later influence on Broadway after a disappointing 1948–49 run. Weill and his lyricist, Alan Jay Lerner, took a novel approach to the structure of the musical show in their only collaboration. The story follows the Coopers, a typical American family, from 1791 to the then-present of 1948. Even as the historical moments in which the story is told progress through time, the four family members do not change, but age only slightly in each new setting. Framing these scenes is a series of vaudeville numbers played “in one” (in front of the main curtain) that comment on the lives of the Coopers and reflect on the economic and social developments of 157 years of American history. The novelty of such an approach, not surprisingly, was a challenge for all involved, and the show closed after 252 performances, not quite a failure, but not having secured a place in the repertoire, either. Weill died less than a year later, Lerner remained fundamentally indifferent to the show, and so *Love Life* disappeared, not to be revived for nearly forty years.

Although *Love Life* was not a commercial success, Kowalke affirms the show’s importance in the evolution of Broadway through the effect it had on figures like Michael Kidd, Fred Ebb, Stephen Sondheim, and others. With its non-linear storytelling, *Love Life* was one of the first “concept” musicals, paving the way for Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret*, Sondheim’s *Company*, and similar shows in the 1960s and 70s. Although the ties to later shows are not always made directly, they may be inferred from Kowalke’s thorough description of *Love Life*, which is most welcome, since the show has had only four revivals (all since 1987 and all seen by Kowalke) and neither a recording nor a score is currently available. Kowalke also notes some of the difficulties that Lerner and Weill faced during pre-Broadway tryouts, and how an ASCAP embargo and the “Petrillo ban,” both of which prevented commercial recording and broadcasting of the show’s songs during its run, contributed to its failure to win wider fame. Financial or critical successes at the premiere are not the only measures of a show’s impact, however, and so Kowalke’s essay is a useful corrective to Broadway’s usual historical narrative.

Although those are the only two items in this collection connected directly with Weill, at least one other essay will demand attention from readers of this *Newsletter*. The late David Drew, a legendary figure in Weill studies for more than a half century, contributed “North Sea Crossings: Walter Leigh, Hindemith, and English Music” to this volume. Prolific as he was, Drew nevertheless left an immense corpus of unpublished work, and this essay

may have been the last that he sent to the publisher in his lifetime. He examines the brief life of Leigh, who died during World War II in North Africa only ten days before his 37th birthday, against the background of Anglo-Germanic musical interactions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Drew focuses on Leigh’s work as an advocate and facilitator for his teacher Hindemith during the latter’s visits to England in the 1930s, and some of Leigh’s own works and his series of lectures on new music at Cambridge are also discussed.

Among the remaining essays, two should appeal particularly to scholars of musical theater and popular song. In his discussion of Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide*, Wolfgang Rathert explores issues of genre and the tensions between high and low cultures in that work. He concludes by noting that Voltaire’s story of an attempt to find truth, knowledge, and individual prosperity in an irrational and brutal world is a thoroughly modern one, especially in light of the horrors of the twentieth century, a point emphasized by Bernstein’s closing number, “Make Our Garden Grow.” Albrecht Riethmüller’s study of “Lili Marleen” traces the history of that song, composed by Norbert Schultze in 1938 and subsequently recorded by Lale Andersen, forgotten for a few years but then popularized by radio broadcasts to German troops at the front, where it was also heard and appreciated by Allied soldiers. After the war ended, the song was used with some frequency to evoke the war, and by the time of Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s film of the same name (1981), the song had all but achieved the status of a folk song of unknown origin.

The remaining dozen essays cover a wide variety of topics, most falling within the first half of the twentieth century and several dealing with German historiography. Among the more interesting are Susanne Popp’s discussion of two works composed by Reger during World War I and the tensions between patriotism and pure composition, and Ann-Katrin Heimer’s study of Humperdinck’s incidental music for Max Reinhardt’s staging of Maurice Maeterlinck’s *Der blaue Vogel* (*L’oiseau bleu*). Essays by Laurenz Lütteken and Michael Heinemann deal with two of Strauss’s operas—*Der Rosenkavalier* and the question of its modernity, and the creation of *Friedenstag* under Nazi dictatorship—respectively. Still other essays ask for reappraisals of specific works: Hermann Danuser for the revised version of Hindemith’s *Cardillac* and Ian Kemp for Tippett’s *The Mask of Time*. Style-critical studies include the late Wolfgang Osthoff’s look at Stravinsky’s neo-classicism after *L’histoire du soldat* and Herbert Schneider’s somewhat sterile explanation of Chausson’s settings of texts from Maeterlinck’s *Serres chaudes*. Three more authors approach their topics from an aesthetic or philosophical viewpoint: Andreas Eichhorn on Pfitzner’s *Palestrina*, and Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen and Ferdinand Zehentreiter on the writings of Adorno. The volume concludes with Walter Salmen’s essay on mechanical birds and their songs, written especially for Schubert, who has a passion for ornithology.

Like most *Festschriften*, this volume taken as a whole lacks a narrow focus, but that is not a complaint. Readers who dip into the volume for one essay may well find something valuable in another, and in these days of hyper-specialization, that is not a bad thing.

Scott Warfield
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Recordings

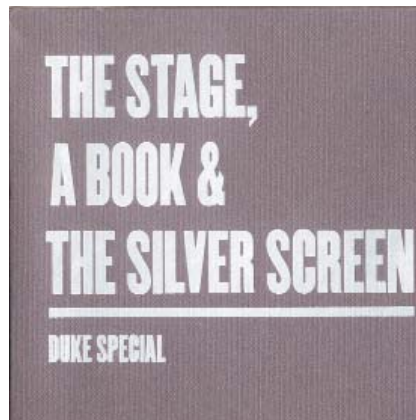
The Stage, A Book & The Silver Screen (*Mother Courage, The Silent World of Hector Mann, Huckleberry Finn*)

Duke Special

Reel To Reel R2R4

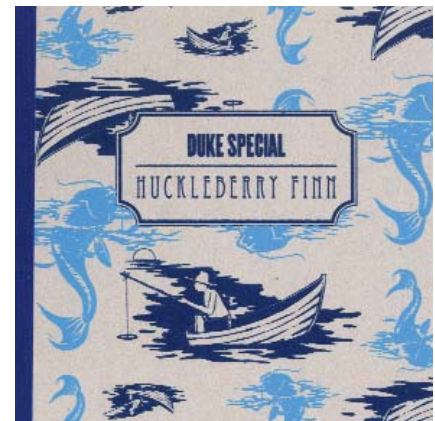
"It's at the interfaces between the arts that things get interesting," writes Peter Wilson, the Belfast singer-songwriter known as Duke Special, in his liner notes. Quite so, and inside the handsome retro-packaging of this ambitious three-disc set the interfacing is even more involved than the already well-demarcated title suggests. Behind "the silver screen" lies a book, and behind "a book" one of twentieth-century music's most significant figures at the very end of his career. As for "the stage," the first CD shows Special—a self-confessed theatrical novice—confronting one of its giants.

Anyone familiar with Deborah Warner's National Theatre production of *Mother Courage* will probably already have an opinion about his songs for the play, recorded here, and whether they truly serve the often vicious energy of Brecht's text, or their prevailing lyrical quality proves a bit too "alienating." The question is not so important for judging this disc. One is most struck on first hearing by the variety of idioms deployed, from the swaggering strut of Eilif's song of the soldier and his wife, through the almost Latin sway of Yvette's "Song of Fraternization," to the Cook expounding on the futility of virtue in brisk tango tempo—while through it all *Mother Courage* peddles a motif of timeless modality over the incessant *ostinato* of her cart. This remarkable range of styles provides a certain sense of detachment along with its vivid sense of character, and Special's lyrical gifts show up especially well in the homespun front-porch guitar of the Farmhouse Song, or in the touching simplicity of *Courage's* final lullaby over her dead daughter. Though he cites both Rufus Wainwright and Tom Waits among his influences, his voice is breathier, less edgy



than the former, less lived-in than the latter; at any rate it seems to suit both the music he writes, with its arching vocal lines and splashes of unexpected (at times almost Weillian) harmony, and the intelligent, vivid, but not excessively raucous quality of Tony Kushner's translations. Of course Paul Dessau's original score better captures the play's innate brutality, but perhaps there is also a case to be made for counterpointing it through contrast.

Special reaches "the silver screen" by way of Paul Auster's novel *The Book of Illusions*, which examines—through the story of David Zimmer, a bereaved New England don who recovers by discovering a forgotten genius of silent cinema—the nature of reality and deception alongside a vivid portrayal of grief and the art of comedy as an agent of its redemption. Zimmer unearths twelve lost movie gems in *The Silent World of Hector Mann*, and Special has here commissioned eleven contemporaries to join him in writing a song to match the title of each. There is plenty of scope for their imaginations: Auster sometimes leaves these titles without elaboration, while for others he provides anything from the barest outline to a full-blown synopsis of "Mister Nobody" (which prompts Special himself to supply a bittersweet elegy for the "old world of train tracks and tramps"). Some of the resulting songs seize on a given or imagined plot; some (notably Clare Muldaur Manchon's "You'll Be Detective") seem more interested in the character of Hector Mann himself, who conjures laughter with every twitch of his supremely thespian mustache; others fur-



nish a more abstract response. As a performer who frequently makes use of the sound of vaudeville and music hall, Special is more comfortable here than the Thirty Years War allowed, and the universal use of pre-rock 'n' roll styles, with a limited instrumental palette centered on clarinet and piano, lends a sense of unity both to the material and the conviction of the performances. Inevitably, the appeal of each song will vary from listener to listener—but it's a good bet many will be struck by the tumbleweed key changes of Réa Curran's "Old Folks and Cow Pokes" and the impish pastiche of "Wanda, Darling of the Jockey Club," spiked with typical half-rhymes from *The Divine Comedy's* Neil Hannon. In any event, while having read Auster's novel probably adds to enjoyment of the disc, not having read it shouldn't prove too much of a hindrance.

Both these CDs merit further and fuller consideration than that given here, but in the present context the "book" disc, though much the shortest (an EP, in effect), is also the most interesting. The five songs written by Weill and Maxwell Anderson for *Huckleberry Finn* were left orphaned by the composer's death, and being (like the eponymous hero) a little uncertain of their roots they are perhaps particular candidates for adoption in unlikely quarters. Giving them a disc to themselves grants them more prominence than they would have if buried in an anthology; but it also trains a spotlight on the presentation. There are no extremes of tempo here (all five are marked *Moderato*, although the indication was not Weill's), and in seeking

to provide a sense of variety in these songs, the performer must not lose sight of the openness, innocence, and honest simplicity with which Weill and Anderson imbued them. Special's voice—its color more whiskey than stout and with a sure and confident sense of its own identity and intonation—seems well-matched to the material in that respect. It's also clear from the outset, unashamedly lacing the boatman's warnings that begin "River Chanty" with his native vowels over a distinctly Celtic-flavored drone, that—in the cause of uncomplicated and direct expression—he is staying true to his own roots, too.

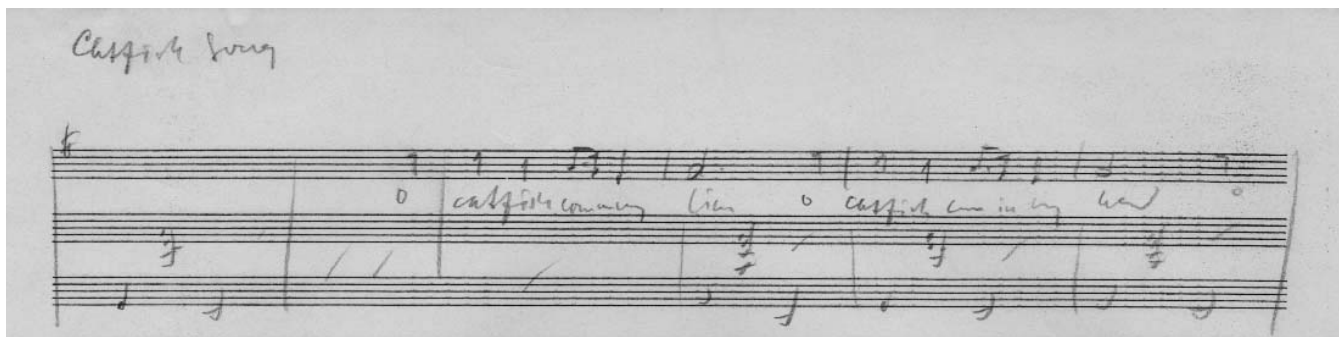
The set is bookended by the two songs most directly linked to the Mississippi, and their clear, immediate appeal is well rendered. "River Chanty" takes on a country flavor from backing vocals and high piano chicks, while the emphatic and slightly effortful keel laid by its triple-time rhythm suggests—not wholly inappropriately—a work song. Perhaps some of the sense of the wonder and mystery of nature conveyed by the lyric goes missing in the process, but the final reprise of the boatman's cries is effectively backed by whispered spoken echoes of "quarter less twain, mark twain"; like theaters, rivers have their ghosts. The perky "Catfish Song" seems on the one hand to look back to "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" and on the other, forward to "Bless Your Beautiful Hide": Special casts its trailing pentatonic lines in duet with the pure, almost boyish, tones of one of his female backing singers over a jaunty accompaniment flecked with accordion, brass fills, and gurgling clarinet. There is an attractive innocence and sense of fun in the air.

The three numbers in between, however, show clearer signs that *Huckleberry Finn* was intended to be a Broadway show, and a performer's way with these aspects of the material may be more prone to divide listeners. "Apple Jack" is narrative, a less sophisticated country cousin of "Jenny" and "Dr. Crippen": like them, it has a vocal line kinked with blue notes and notated in that mix of even and dotted eighths that often suggests swung rhythm. Here the melodic quirks are slightly glossed over, and notwithstanding the presence of sax and trombone, the line stays resolutely straight (even when written otherwise), to the point that the narrative loses momentum and vividness. We hear again a rigorous, almost too obtrusive rhythmic undertow in the two flanking ballads, both taken resolutely in four where a two-beat *alla breve* approach might have yielded more ebb and flow. The arrangement of "This Time Next Year," colored with chapel organ and brass chorale, lends it a touch of fervent solemnity, but Special's vocal seems a little short-winded and lacking the last ounce of sweep. Huck's song "Come in, Mornin'," brightened with a splash of zither, is beguiling in its simplicity, although the lazy upward stretch of Weill's vocal line is studded with glottal stops and left a little too fragmented as a result. Though Special stays pretty close to the printed versions throughout the set, here the climactic "Come in sun," where the distinctive rising fifth of the melody finally finds the tonic key, is somewhat fudged (if not actually misrepresented); and elsewhere, the simple scalar third line of "This Time Next Year" is replaced with the more chromatic version of its reprise, thereby

forfeiting a potential increase in intensity. While of course such departures are not apparent to the listener without a score, one still might speculate as to whether they diminish the performance.

It's true that these songs were left as skeletal drafts, and we will never know what Weill finally intended for them (or for *Huckleberry Finn* as a whole, for that matter). As a result, they are sometimes cited as inferior, the product of a creative energy dimmed by encroaching darkness; but they can also be heard as Weill's final affirmation of his love of wide-open spaces, the sun, and simple ideals enshrined in the country he came to call home. In that light, and in spite of incidental quibbles, this rather individual but sincere new version can confidently be asked to make itself at home. This prevailing sense of an honest approach to the material on these discs ultimately unifies the disparate "interfaces" of the overall project.

James Holmes
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The first few measures of the draft of "Catfish Song," showing only the melody line and initial gestures at harmony, convey the state in which Weill left all five of the songs for *Huckleberry Finn*. The original manuscript is held in the Weill-Lenya Papers in the Yale University Music Library.

Music

Zaubernacht

Kurt Weill Edition, Series I, Volume 0 Edited by Elmar Juchem and Andrew Kuster

New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music; European American Music Corporation, 2008. 220 pp. (Critical Report 68 pp.)
ISBN: 978-0-913574-65-2

Popular Adaptations 1927–1950

Kurt Weill Edition, Series IV, Volume 2 Edited by Charles Hamm, Elmar Juchem, and Kim H. Kowalke

New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music; European American Music Corporation, 2009. 320 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-913574-67-6

I am very grateful to the editors of the *Newsletter* for inviting me to write about the two latest volumes of the Kurt Weill Edition: the critical edition of *Zaubernacht*, edited by Elmar Juchem and Andrew Kuster (Series I, Volume 0, published 2008); and *Popular Adaptations 1927–1950*, a representative selection of sheet music and other versions of Weill's songs published in his lifetime, presented in facsimile and edited by Charles Hamm, Elmar Juchem and Kim H. Kowalke (Series IV, Volume 2, published 2009). Like the volumes that precede them in the Edition, these are models of clarity. The editors provide informative discussions of the source material on which they are based, the editorial methodology applied, and the criteria for specific decisions, all prefaced with illuminating and meticulously documented Introductions. Such a presentation should appeal equally to at least three constituencies: scholars and performers, who will find the volumes attractive and easy to navigate; and musically literate listeners will also find the volumes easy to use, if rather expensive. Finally, the scores themselves represent a crowning achievement in the modern printing of music.

The two volumes admirably demonstrate the flexibility of approach that this collected edition demands. The edition of *Zaubernacht* is a more traditional kind of publication, based on authoritative sources in the hand of the composer himself or created under his direction, all documented with historical precision. The facsimile volume, however, calls on a different set of principles. Edition subscribers will not need the music published in this volume because it will all eventually appear in edited form elsewhere in the collection. But the sheet music reproductions testify to the variety of strategies Weill, in collaboration with his publishers, embraced to promote his music, and more important, the stage works and films that featured them. This volume will provide the indispensable starting point for research into this aspect of Weill's

career, and it exemplifies an argument I make throughout *The Critical Editing of Music*, that every edition constitutes a special case.¹

Articles by Elmar Juchem and Suzanne Eggleston Lovejoy in the Fall 2006 *Newsletter* recount the recovery of the piano-vocal score prepared for the 1925 New York production of *Zaubernacht* and the instrumental parts used for both the New York and the 1922 Berlin productions—a cautionary tale indeed, not just for librarians, but also for prospective donors, who would hope that their gifts do not disappear for decades! So the current edition makes available for the first time the score of Weill's first dramatic work, a pantomime for children, based on a scenario created by Wladimir Boritsch.

Juchem provides in his Introduction much detail about Boritsch's life and creative activities, the genesis of *Zaubernacht*, its critical reception at both the Berlin premiere and the New York production, and the patronage that made the latter possible. Unfortunately, Juchem does not discuss sources of financial backing for the Berlin premiere, although he states, “the production apparently achieved a considerable degree of professionalism” (p. 14). Presumably evidence is lacking; despite Juchem's extensive research, many mysteries remain. For example, a complete scenario does not survive, and the one printed at the end of the Critical Report (pp. 61–63) was extracted from the piano-vocal score; little is known about the origin of the German text for the song that opens the work.

The editors complement this splendid Introduction with a judicious selection of plates offering reproductions of musical sources, a playbill from the Berlin premiere and the only known photograph of that production. My one reservation concerns the treatment of Weill himself. Some users of the edition, particularly those who do not specialize in his music, would benefit from more information about his professional circumstances in 1922 and more discussion of the relations between this work and his other music composed around the same time. Weill experts and *Newsletter* readers may not need such context, but it would help everyone else.

Turning to the score, we continue to find evidence of the editors' sound judgment. For example, many cuts were implemented in the Berlin and New York productions. The editors have wisely decided to print all the musical material and indicate the cuts in the Critical Notes that make up the bulk of the Critical Report. Thus, directors and conductors have all the available music at their disposal and may cut according to their own needs and taste. The editors could not fully restore one item, the closing song. The instrumental parts survive intact, but the only evidence for the vocal line or lyrics consists of cues in the piano part. As a result, they reconstruct the score as fully as possible in the Critical Report (pp. 56–58) and show a suitable cut that would render a performable ending.

I would raise a couple of points regarding details of presentation and editorial decisions. First, in accordance with the established practice of the Edition, Juchem and Kuster signal a handful of variant readings in footnotes within the score. The editorial guidelines for the Edition state, “Because the notation of editorial activity in the musical text itself would result in a dense and confusing tangle of markings, documentation in the score is restricted to information of immediate importance and relevance to performers. In such cases, a footnote is provided to present the salient facts and to refer to the more extended consideration in the critical report.”² In practice, the footnotes in the score are redundant because they convey information presented in the Critical Report. Perhaps they are

intended to entice readers to turn to this separate volume, in which case I find them unnecessary. Even non-scholarly users will find the Critical Report welcoming—better organized and easier to use than those of many other editions.³ The lone difference between the footnotes and the Critical Report is the use of musical notation in the former, while the latter employs it only for rhythms, not for pitches. Second, the footnotes create some difficulties. Four notes, unfortunately, do not provide measure numbers: p. 131 Br, referring to m. 895; p. 149 Fg, m. 1031; p. 189 strings, m. 1478; and p. 210 strings, m. 1668. Clearly, the editors assume that most users will work from the score to the footnotes, and not the other way around.

Finally, two readings require comment. At mm. 83–86 (p. 53), the editors regularize the timpani part to include a staccato mark on the eighth note that falls on the third beat in each bar. The manuscript percussion part (reproduced as Plate 6, p. 30; also in the *Newsletter*, Fall 2006, p. 4) provides the staccato in m. 83 alone, omits it in m. 84, and uses the one-bar repeat mark for m. 85 and 86. The alternate reading given in the footnote indicates the absence of the staccato in m. 84 and omits it in mm. 85 and 86, while simultaneously rebeaming the third beat. The problem with the score, the footnote, and the comments in the Critical Report (p. 18) is the suppression of the tie that clearly joins the roll on the second beat to the eighth note on the third beat in both mm. 83 and 84. Some would say that the tie is otiose, but it seems likely that either Weill or the copyist wished to ensure that the roll continued without break to the inception of the third beat, where (in m. 83 at least) the staccato occurs.

A second reading is even more puzzling. A significant structural articulation occurs at m. 911 (rehearsal letter II) with a cadence on D major (p. 134). To the pre-cadential chord in m. 910 (p. 133), the editors supply a D# in the right hand of the piano part from the manuscript parts (**Im**, discussed in the Critical Report, p. 36, where the reference to the third beat of m. 911 must be a misprint for the third beat of m. 910; the footnote in the score is confusing because it does not give the full spelling of the chord, omitting the E in the left hand of the piano part). Without the D#, the chord becomes a conventional dominant thirteenth chord in D major with the thirteenth (F#) in the top voice (flute and first violin, doubled at the octave below in the viola and the top voice of the piano) and the leading tone (C#) in the second highest voice (second violin). The D# adds an augmented eleventh to the mixture. I do not know whether that dissonance is characteristic of Weill's writing, but it seems strange to me that he would bury so pungent a note in the middle range of the chord, in the middle voice of the piano, the instrument with the least distinctive timbre of the ensemble. The retention of this pitch requires stronger justification than that provided in either the footnote or the Critical Report.

One last point links the *Zaubernacht* volume with the collection of facsimiles, namely the question of collaboration between Weill and his various partners. The Foreword that appears in every volume of the Kurt Weill Edition, signed by the Editorial Board (whose members are named in each volume), states, "Works for the musical theater are, to varying degrees, collaborative ventures; more often than not, their genesis does not precede but is rather inextricably bound up with the process of creative realization for specific events" (p. 8). They go on to note the complicated interactions between the piece as a composed and performed object, but end their treatment of collaboration with this statement: "Editors draw on all available sources relating to the period between the start of the production process and the end of the composer's involvement"

(p. 8). As a policy, this seems reasonable enough, as some of Weill's pieces were mounted later without his participation, even during his lifetime, and efforts to treat all the resulting changes could rapidly become unmanageable. But it does prioritize Weill's contributions to the collaboration.⁴

Zaubernacht constitutes an interesting example of the application of this editorial policy. Juchem begins his discussion by characterizing it as the "brainchild of its scenarist, Wladimir Boritsch" (p. 13), and the critical reception to the piece certainly confirms this perception in that it devotes little attention to Weill or his music. Unfortunately, Juchem cannot go far beyond this assertion because of the lack of surviving source material, most notably, as mentioned above, a complete scenario. The tension between the editorial policy mentioned above and the sources of *Zaubernacht* becomes palpable, however, with the treatment of the New York production of 1925, mounted without Weill's participation by Boritsch after his emigration to the United States. Strictly speaking, Juchem and Kuster should ignore the materials that properly belong to this production, specifically the piano-vocal score prepared for it.

Those sources, however, indicate that this production incorporated numerous cuts, and, instead of ignoring them, the editors handle these changes differently from those associated with the Berlin production. "Conversely, revisions to **Im** [manuscript parts] written in English or otherwise known to have been made for the New York performance are not incorporated in the Edition and are described in critical notes only when they may inform readings based on more privileged sources" (Critical Report, pp. 10–11). "Cuts by later hands in **Vm** [manuscript piano-vocal score] (which may also appear in **Im** and **Vh** [autograph piano-vocal score]) were made for the New York performance without Weill's input; their locations are indicated only in the critical notes" (CR, p. 13).

These statements steer a middle path between the concept of collaboration as expressed by the Editorial Board and Juchem himself, and the policy of the Editorial Board to consider only those sources that demonstrate the direct participation of the composer. By placing the New York sources on a decidedly lower tier, the editors of this volume devalue the contribution of Boritsch to the piece's genesis. If, however, the cuts and revisions undertaken for the New York production were executed either by Boritsch himself or with his knowledge (nothing contradicts this assumption), and if the piece is really his "brainchild" (Juchem), and if music theater really is collaborative (the Editorial Board), then these cuts and revisions should receive the same treatment as any that occurred during the Berlin production. The remedy I would suggest is minimal: a separate list of those cuts and revisions in the Critical Report so that scholars and those interested in mounting a production could consult them all together in one place instead of having to excavate them from the Critical Notes.

Collaboration also figures largely in the other volume considered here, *Popular Adaptations*. In place of the author Boritsch, we have a legion of lyricists, arrangers, publishers and song pluggers to whom I shall turn presently. The main body of the volume presents photographic facsimiles of some thirty-eight songs in arrangements and adaptations, nearly all from Weill's music theater pieces. There are some real gems here, such as the signed and annotated presentation copy of "Bilbao-Song" from *Happy End* he sent to T. W. Adorno, an arrangement of "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen" from *Berliner Requiem* for male chorus, and "Barbarasong" from *Die Dreigroschenoper* printed in the Berlin weekly *Jede Woche Musik*, as well as some disappointments, like the absence of "Moritat von Mackie Messer," also from *Die Dreigroschenoper* and probably his

most famous song (although it does appear in a potpourri from the work published in the collection *Musikalische Edelsteine*) and the lascivious “Jenny” from *Lady in the Dark*.

The editors present all these in full-size reproductions, including front and back covers, inside and outside. They also provide full bibliographic and copyright data, as well as full-color reproductions of the covers of all known publications of these popular adaptations issued during Weill’s lifetime in reduced size, but extremely valuable nevertheless. Bibliographers will especially appreciate that the editors identify the specific copies used for the reproductions, a detail that scholars sometimes overlook when dealing with printed sources.

All this visual material provides a rich overview of the publication history of these songs, including the cover art and advertising. These tell a tale about the presentation and promotion of the music, a subject Hamm addresses in passing in his essay, but does not discuss fully. To be fair to Hamm, the essay, which Kowalke and Hinton aptly judge “magisterial” (p. 14), concentrates with great success on historical and musical issues, drawing on the author’s profound knowledge of American music from mid-century.⁵ So, far from faulting Hamm for not dealing with the visual material in more detail, I suggest it remains a fruitful area for exploration. For example, the advertising in the first few publications from Universal-Edition indicates Weill’s increasing popularity from the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The first two back covers (from “Alabama-Song” and “Tango-Ballade,” pp. 96 and 101, respectively) list a “selection from the catalogue” in which Weill’s music barely figures. (The back cover of “Alabama-Song” shows one piece by Weill, *Frauentanz* Op. 10; the “Tango-Ballade” none at all.) The back cover of “Kanon-Song,” conversely, lists only Weill’s music (p. 106). This volume, then, will greatly facilitate further research in this area.

I return now to Weill’s collaborators in these publications in order to address what appears to be a certain level of discomfort on the part of those responsible for the volume. Kowalke and Hinton state that the impact of these adaptations “has given rise to all manner of misconceptions about Weill’s music” (p. 13). Their principal objection would seem to stem from Weill’s aim to integrate his songs fully into their dramatic contexts. Outside those contexts, the songs make little sense. Concomitantly, Kowalke, Hinton, and Hamm (in the Introduction), stress that Weill had no ambition to write hit songs. All these points are well-taken in that Weill saw himself as primarily a composer of musical theater.

Nevertheless, all three admit, and Hamm offers detailed documentation, that Weill went to some trouble to ensure that his publishers issued and promoted the sheet music for these songs extracted from their dramatic contexts. Hamm shows that he embraced this strategy with *Die Dreigroschenoper* (pp. 44–45) and continued through his American period (pp. 73–74 on the songs from *Lost in the Stars*). Weill or his publishers delegated arrangers to prepare his songs, detached from their dramatic functions, for publication: they simplified melodic and harmonic elements, streamlined the forms and rendered the piano accompaniments playable by amateurs, all to encourage sales of the sheet music and to promote both the songs and the shows and films that featured them. Whatever “misconceptions” may have arisen from these publications, Weill was a willing participant in them.

Hamm touches on the issue of revenue, which may illuminate Weill’s motivations for encouraging such publication of his music. Hamm shows that Weill realized relatively little income from royalties on sheet music sales or from performing rights fees collected by

ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), but earned the bulk of his income from royalties accruing from theatrical productions of his shows and the sale of their motion picture rights (pp. 74–75). Why, then, should Weill devote so much energy to these publications if the potential income was so meager and they so significantly compromised the artistic integrity of his music? I believe the answer lies in the structure of these revenue streams.

The publication of these songs promoted the shows of which they formed a part, as the cover art unequivocally demonstrates. In virtually every case, the name of the show figures prominently on the cover, sometimes in larger print even than the title of the song, and always more conspicuously than the name of the composer or any of his collaborators. Moreover, for many of the shows, the publisher designed a single cover used for each song from the show, changing only the song title in each case. Thus, promotion of the show took precedence over promotion of the individual song. Increased sales of sheet music and exposure of the songs on the radio would lead to higher ticket sales and, ultimately, more income for Weill. One might also argue that greater attendance allowed more people to hear Weill’s music as he intended it, as an integral part of the drama.

The second stream of income—the performing rights fees collected by ASCAP—raises more complications. Hamm offers some details in his study of American popular music, *Yesterdays*.⁶ Briefly, ASCAP collected fees for public performances of songs, including radio and film presentations, which it then distributed to the composers, lyricists, and publishers that it represented. So, when Weill reports that he heard “My Ship” and “Jenny” from *Lady in the Dark* playing “all day long” on the radio (p. 63), he was also hearing the cash register ringing over at ASCAP. But here, the structure of the ASCAP distribution becomes a significant factor. ASCAP paid half its fee to the publisher, while the songwriter and lyricist received the balance, usually divided equally. So, Weill received only 25% of the ASCAP payout on any one of his songs, another 25% going to the lyricist, and the rest to the publisher. The income of \$38,000 Hamm reports Weill received from ASCAP for the period 1941–50 (p. 74) thus represents a total payout approaching \$160,000 for all parties.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Irving Berlin, and many others since, formed their own publishing companies, not for the purpose of publishing the sheet music, which they could job out to commercial publishers and printers, but to collect the publisher’s share of the performing rights fee.⁷ Berlin, of course, also wrote the lyrics for most of his songs, and so for those, he received 100% of the performing rights fee. To estimate the kind of money on the table, adjusting for inflation as necessary, we need only consider the fate of the Northern Songs catalogue, consisting of most of the Beatles’ songs written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, for which Michael Jackson famously outbid McCartney, and which formed, in the various refinancing deals negotiated between Jackson and Sony Music, the key asset.

Weill, however, needed to generate four times as much income from ASCAP in order to receive the same payout as Berlin because he did not control his own publishing. That situation, I believe, explains in large part Weill’s insistence that publishers and song pluggers promote his work. Everyone involved had to work much harder for Weill to get anything approaching the same return as Berlin. I suspect the distribution of the performing rights fees also lay behind Weill’s attempts to establish his own publishing company for *Lost in the Stars* (p. 73). One would like to know more about

the arrangement and whether it materially affected his income for that show. High Tor Music, the name of Weill's company, does not appear on the cover of the large-format publications of the songs from that show, but only on the smaller-format arrangements. Weill, therefore, needed the active participation of all these collaborators, lyricists, arrangers, publishers, and song pluggers to promote these songs for the purpose of attracting larger audiences to the shows themselves and to generate income.

Just as Charles Hamm does in his essay, I cede to Lotte Lenya the last word. "You hear it coming out of bars, juke boxes, taxis, wherever you go. Kurt would have loved that. A taxi driver whistling his tunes would have pleased him more than winning the Pulitzer Prize" (p. 76). If she is not describing a hit song, I'm sure I don't know what she's describing.

James Grier
University of Western Ontario

Notes

1. James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Theory, and Practice*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

2. "Kurt Weill Edition," in *Editionsrichtlinien Musik: Im Auftrag der Fachgruppe Freie Forschungsinstitute in der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Musikwissenschaftliche Arbeiten*, 30 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), p. 419.

3. See the comments of Philip Brett, "Text, Context, and the Early Music Editor," in *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 97–98.

4. The editors of *Peer Gynt* in the Grieg edition sought to establish a text that realized the composer's ideal for the score, regardless of issues that arose in the various productions that took place during Grieg's lifetime. See Finn Benestad and Rune Andersen, "A Case Study: *Peer Gynt*, Op. 23," in *Nordic Music Editions: Symposium 1–2 September 2005*, ed. Niels Krabbe (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 2006), pp. 51–57.

5. I would offer one historical correction. In discussing the reception of *The Firebrand of Florence*, Hamm states, "Perhaps the relative lack of success of *The Firebrand of Florence*, and of the songs extracted from it, may have had something to do with the fact that spring 1945 was hardly a propitious time for a frothy costume piece set in Italy, with which the United States was still at war and where some of the most deadly fighting had taken place" (p. 68). No one would argue with the last statement, but Italy had been aligned with the Allies since the armistice of September 1943 and so was no longer an enemy.

6. Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 339.

7. Hamm, *Yesterdays*, p. 334.

Performances

Der Silbersee

Folkoperan
Stockholm

Premiere: 23 February 2010

In creating works for the musical stage, Weill always strove for drama that succeeds on musical, literary, and theatrical levels while forming a coherent whole, and his high standards can be difficult to meet when staging his works. This applies not least to *Der Silbersee*, first performed in 1933, a peculiar hybrid in almost every respect. This play requires performers with great acting skills who can also sing at a very high level. It's not just a matter of finding the right performers. The hybrid nature of the work is traceable in thematic and dramaturgical aspects, in Georg Kaiser's dialogue, and perhaps most of all in musical and stylistic aspects.



Severin (Daniel Frank) develops a thirst for revenge in Act II. Photo: Mats Bäcker

Nevertheless, Folkoperan in Stockholm made this surprising choice for its spring season. This production is part of what might be labeled a small *Silbersee* boom in Sweden, since the piece was also staged as a student production at the Academy of

Music and Drama in Gothenburg in the fall of 2009. Folkoperan, founded in 1976, originally made its name by taking a more adventurous approach than Stockholm's established Royal Swedish Opera. In some respects, the distinctions between the two



Olim (Torkel Petersson) performs acrobatics on the staircase for the benefit of Frau von Luber (Ulrika Tenstam). Photo: Mats Bäcker

houses have not persisted, but it seems unlikely that a more traditional house would have had the courage to take on this rather risky piece. By performing the work in Swedish (translated by Iwar Bergkvist), the company makes it somewhat less intimidating.

In Stockholm, the vocal roles were all taken by opera singers, if we don't count the part of Olim, who sings only once. Torkel Petersson handled that moment impressively, and he rendered a very sensitive Olim, with a good deal of broad, physical acting for contrast. Edita Stundyte's choreography sometimes seemed to parody

popular dances of the 1920s and often had a slapstick feel. Petersson offered some spectacular and seemingly hazardous acrobatics on the large metal structure that completely dominates the set designed by Peter Lundquist. This structure, composed of a central spiral staircase and several straight staircases with intermediate platforms on either side of the stage, serves as the castle of Olim during the central part of the play but works more as a symbolic device at the beginning and at the end (when Olim and Severin did not cross the lake, but instead climbed to the top of the stairs, each on his own side, where they

stood next to each other, still separated by a door).

Olim's antagonist, and ultimately counterpart, was played by tenor Daniel Frank, who made a most convincing Severin both vocally and dramatically. He sang the aria, "Erst trifft dich die Kugel," with magnificent precision, yet every syllable boiled with rage; in the Odysseus aria, his approach was more cautious and tentative. Both times his performance matched text and music perfectly.

Fennimore is no doubt one of Weill's most complex characters: the poor, bullied niece, the involuntary seductress, the revolutionary of "Cäsars Tod," the loyal helper who reunites Severin with his comrades, and ultimately the visionary voice of the Finale. Soprano Ulrika Mjörndal handled the difficult part remarkably, bringing human warmth, steady conviction, and vocal brilliance to her performance.

For Frau von Luber, costume designer Kajsa Larsson created an obvious but effective contrast with Fennimore. The costume, complemented by mezzo-soprano Ulrika Tenstam's acting, made Frau von Luber into some sort of demon, visually resembling Morticia Addams of the Addams Family. Tenstam's deliberately exaggerated acting style almost overemphasized her villainy.

Lithuanian director Oskaras Koršunovas (working through an interpreter) seems to have been most successful at imparting detailed instructions to the cast, and as a theatrical whole this performance worked magnificently. He added one device: big projection screens to display images and film clips that comment on the action. However, thanks to Torkel Blomkvist's lighting, which effectively focused on the singers, these projections did not distract the audience too much.

It is utopian to believe that many opera houses will follow the Folkoperan in daring to stage *Der Silbersee*. But this production presents utterly convincing evidence that the difficulties inherent in this piece can be surmounted, and with excellent results.

Esbjörn Nyström
Tartu

Performances

One Touch of Venus

Anhaltisches Theater Dessau

Premiere: 5 March 2010

Although *One Touch of Venus*, Weill's sole musical comedy, has been performed in Germany several times since its 1994 German premiere, its production as the centerpiece of the 2010 Kurt Weill Fest Dessau marks an important event in the continuing reclamation and legitimization of Kurt Weill, the Broadway composer. Given the checkered history in Weill's homeland of musical comedy (as opposed to operetta and megamusicals), *Venus* was a bold choice to begin the tenure of the new Intendants of the theater, André Bucker (who selected it), and of the festival, Michael Kaufmann. Yet against all odds, the production, directed by Klaus Seiffert with musical direction by James Holmes, managed to capture a good deal of the spirit of Weill at his most *amerikanisch*. (*Venus*'s first number, "I'm a Stranger Here Myself," has been enshrined—for better or worse—as the minor-key theme song of Weill's years in exile.)

Originally mounted in 1943, *Venus*, about the return to earth of the Goddess of Love, is unmistakably in the tradition of the late 1930s masterpieces of Rodgers and Hart and Cole Porter, and Weill accordingly uses the standard verse-refrain form (with embedded release) more frequently

in *Venus* than in most of his other pieces. Centered on the discovery and loss of love, *Venus* achieves an almost startling depth in Weill's bittersweet settings of Ogden Nash's witty, emotionally charged lyrics. The play is both silly and sophisticated, trivial and richly evocative. Its story of a protagonist who journeys far from her homeland clearly suited the tense wartime mood, and it became the longest running of Weill's Broadway shows. With its deceptively light comedy and score, *Venus* might just be the greatest musical Cole Porter never wrote.

Unlike many German productions of American plays (or the Komische Oper's unfortunate *Mahagonny* that I saw the night before), *Venus* was staged relatively traditionally, its book scenes realistically acted (in German) and its songs performed (in English) in the presentational style long associated with musical comedy. (There were supposed to have been German supertitles but they were not operational on opening night.) Holmes's musical direction was wonderfully idiomatic—the songs and ballets were beautifully shaped—while perhaps the greatest thrill of the evening was hearing Weill's original orchestrations in all their glory. It was worth the trip to Dessau just to hear the luscious, seductive syncopations in the low strings in the accompaniment to the show's best-known song, "Speak Low."

Besides Holmes, the two greatest assets of the production were the Austrian soprano, Ute Gfrerer, as Venus and Australian-born tenor, Angus Wood, as her barber



Rodney (Angus Wood) with Venus (Ute Gfrerer). Photo: Thomas Ruttke

suitor, Rodney Hatch. Gfrerer is a marvel. A vibrant actress and fine musician with a clean, evenly produced tone, she consistently used her head voice to magical effect while avoiding the belting to which too many popular singers resort to signal intensity or earthiness. Her English is excellent, and her gracefully nuanced performance of "That's Him" was unforgettable. While Wood may not quite be her match dramatically, he sang with precision and ardor. The two other principals, Ulf Paulsen as Savory and Ulrike Mayer as Molly, were less comfortable with the Broadway idiom and tended to overplay their hands. But they were clearly local favorites and were enthusiastically applauded by an audience that knew it was witnessing an important cultural event.

If I leave a discussion of the *mise-en-scène* to last, it is because it was the most problematic and uneven aspect of the show. Although Seiffert clearly understands the conventions of musical comedy, he was saddled with a set design which, except for a couple of scenes, was frankly ugly and far less workable than it should have been. To be fair, the designer, Imme Kachel, opted to use the theater's turntable, which facilitated rapid scene changes but mandated that all the settings be the same size, from the main gallery of a spacious museum to Rodney's humble flat. The unattractive sets, moreover, were too brightly and frontally lit which accentuated their billboard-like two-dimensionality. Kachel was more successful with her costumes which, except for Savory's iridescent burgundy



"Forty Minutes for Lunch" ballet. Photo: Thomas Ruttke



Gloria (Kristina Baran), Mrs. Kramer (Ulrike Hoffmann), and Rodney (Angus Wood) at the bus station.

Photo: Thomas Ruttke

suit, nicely suggested the early 1940s as imagined by musical comedy. The most consistently successful part of the mise-en-scène was the choreography by Mario Mariano, which accomplished the nearly impossible task of evoking Agnes de Mille's uniquely highbrow-meets-lowbrow style that was a highlight of the original production. The ballets, "Forty Minutes for Lunch" and "Venus in Ozone Heights," the interludes of neoclassical dance for the Olympian pantheon, as well as the first-act finale, the arty melodrama "Dr. Crippen," were among the best realized parts of the production. Throughout, Mariano's juxtaposition of different ballet styles with 1940s popular dance idioms succeeded in giving the production real vitality and period flair. Besides the theater's well-trained corps de ballet, much of the dancing and choral singing was ably performed by a highly skilled cohort of students from the Musicals Department of the Universität der Künste Berlin.

Although a substantial part of Weill's genius was his knack for rethinking, revising, and sometimes undermining the conventions of music theater, both in Germany and the United States, *One Touch of Venus* is unique in its insistent and subtle disruption of the formulas of musical comedy. Using the song types common to 1940s musicals (ballads, novelty songs, charm songs, etc.), Weill equivocates restlessly between major and minor modes and uses distinctive accompaniment figures more boldly than his contemporaries, all the while ensuring that *Venus* remains unmis-

takably a musical comedy. Opening six months after *Oklahoma!*, it differs from that musical (denounced by Lenya as "that Hillbilly show") by its insistent modernity. Savory's museum, after all, is a foundation devoted to modern art, and on the stage of the Anhaltisches Theater, the museum walls were hung with fake Kandinskys and Picassos. There was an unmistakable incongruity in the return to Dessau (which is also the site of the Bauhaus) of one of Weill's wartime musicals, playing in a theater building with a brutally neo-classical façade that opened in 1938 with Hitler and Goebbels in attendance.

If the Anhaltisches Theater epitomizes a kind of nostalgic, regressive modernism that seeks to reinvent the architectural practices of ancient Greece and Rome, then *One Touch of Venus* must be seen as its pro-

gressive antithesis. Like so many modernist plays, it takes as its theme the displaced modern subject ("I'm a stranger here myself"), epitomized by a goddess/human who also happens to be a statue, an inanimate object. And both the ballets are about the hazards and anxieties of living in a modern world that depersonalizes and standardizes human beings, turning them into machines, ejected from office buildings and "swirl[ing] mechanically about, their faces strained and abstracted," and living side by side in identical suburban houses like sardines in a can. Not only the play's narrative but also Weill's score dramatize this modernist conundrum. "Forty Minutes for Lunch," after all, represents a modernist refiguration of "Stranger Here Myself," the latter's pungent, syncopated rhythms turned into machine-like ostinatos above which soars a sweet harmonization of Venus's song. Weill was not the first writer to use Broadway as a forum for advancing the cause of a modernist music theater, but no one before or after has done so with such power, grace, and ingenuity. That *One Touch of Venus* should finally find a home in a theater that is a mediocre example of Fascist architecture is one of the countless—and bitterest—ironies in the continuing and long overdue reclamation of the Broadway Weill in the country of his birth.

David Savran

The Graduate Center, CUNY



Interlude danced by the Ballettensemble des Anhaltischen Theaters. Photo: Thomas Ruttke

Performances

Street Scene

Opéra de Toulon

Premiere: 12 March 2010

Weill composed *Der Jasager* and *Down in the Valley* deliberately as “school” operas, but a case can be made that *Street Scene* belongs in the same category, and not only because its large cast makes it ideal for student productions. The mix of musical and performing styles that Weill deployed are choice ingredients in the melting pot that was—in his day—the American musical theater, but that are now increasingly unfamiliar to performers and audiences alike, especially in other countries. “Wouldn’t You Like to Be on Broadway?” is more than a come-on, it’s a razzmatazz showstopper of a kind that most people don’t know how to put across. But they can learn by doing, and *Street Scene* is chock-full of such lessons.

The French do know a few show tunes as jazz riffs, but in their original context, the same songs yield mixed results, as we’ve seen in a spate of recent national premieres of works by Bernstein (*Candide* and *On the Town*), Rodgers (*The Sound of Music*), and Sondheim (*A Little Night*

Music), all at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Opéra de Lyon introduced French audiences to Weill’s *One Touch of Venus* (2006) and *Lady in the Dark* (2008); now Opéra de Toulon has mounted France’s first *Street Scene*. Stage direction of all these shows has suffered to varying degrees from a typically European excess of “concept” that either mistrusts the original work or misses its point, and that confuses New York and Hollywood performing styles (the latter being relatively familiar here, the former largely unknown) while failing to integrate them with local conventions. Musical direction has labored to minimize the damage. Weill’s works compound the challenges, because his scores embrace such a variety of styles, and this is especially true of *Street Scene*.

Toulon’s production gave the book and lyrics in the original language, and so, for most of the local artists, just getting the words out took precedence over stylistic niceties. The audience’s eyes fixed on the projected titles (in excellent French translation), and sometimes mine did, too, when familiar lines proved unrecognizable. Engaging several native English speakers for the cast, including a number of veterans of a recent British production, helped keep the show moving, but it also squandered the educational opportunity.

Conductor Scott Stroman, who took the helm successfully for Lyon’s *Venus* and *Lady*, gave further proof of his uncanny comprehension of Weill’s music. Perhaps because, like Weill, Stroman hails from two

nations (the U.S. and Britain) and from two musical traditions (jazz and classical), he avoids the rigid dichotomies that have so often conditioned the commonplace view of Weill; Stroman is more interested in uniting “the two Weills” than in isolating them. That there are dozens of Weills—and also just one—demonstrates the necessity of Stroman’s approach. Indeed, while I’ll always regret that Weill didn’t live long enough to refine his vision of “Broadway opera,” Stroman’s interpretation left me feeling that the composer came awfully close to hitting the mark the first time.

As expected, Stroman played the hell out of “Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed,” opening wide a fiery furnace, then pulling back at the last minute to let us cool down. More surprising was his sensitivity in the quasi-verismo portions of the score, his attention to nuance and to lyrical sweep. Numbers that sometimes strike me as perfunctory or manipulative here revealed refreshing sincerity and poignancy. “Remember That I Care,” an almost conventionally “pretty” song that never elicited any emotional reaction stronger than impatience from me, brought tears to my eyes; Langston Hughes’s on-the-nose lyrics never seemed more truthful. All the while, Stroman respected the composer’s instinct for dramatic irony, too. Sam and Rose share nothing but a street address and the desire to move away from it; their love is doomed, because they really *don’t* belong together. Stroman and English soprano Ruby Hughes’s wistful reading made clear that Rose sees this from the start.

Stroman’s performance was undercut somewhat by the Toulon Opera orchestra. Like the Opéra de Lyon ensemble, from whom Stroman coaxed such superb playing for *Lady* and *Venus*, the Toulonnais perform a varied repertoire; ultimately, however, they’re a less polished ensemble. They managed a tight-knit, proficient reading, with only occasional lapses (“Ain’t It Awful, the Heat”), but generally ignored the conductor’s efforts to modulate the volume. Several singers who attempted dynamic shadings were drowned out for their pains. It didn’t help that stage director Olivier Bénézec and set designer Valérie Jung pushed the tenement façade far upstage.

Generally, Bénézec doesn’t seem to have fully grasped the work’s stylistic foundation, which didn’t keep him from chipping away at it, and he tried too hard to enliven the work’s urban realism. In the “Ice Cream” sextet, for example, a fully



The “Ice Cream” Sextet. Photo: Olivier Pastor

stocked soda counter sailed onstage, and the cast juggled gigantic plastic ice cream cones while wearing even bigger plastic hamburger hats. (This number wasn't fun enough already?) And while dressing Harry Easter in top hat and tails for "Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway?" was a nice touch, Bénézech pushed the fantasy too far shortly afterwards when Emma Jones entered, dressed as Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*. "Wrapped in a Ribbon" came off as sappy, because the audience wasn't forced to confront its terrible irony: a celebration on the eve of the Hildebrand family's eviction. Bénézech seemed not to understand this plot point, or much of anything else that drives *Street Scene*: the different worlds of nighttime and daytime, New York summer heat, Maurant's alcoholism, etc.

Nowhere did the director exploit the seemingly obvious artistic ties between Elmer Rice's book and the classic French films of the 1930s. Marcel Carné's *L'Hôtel du Nord*, for example, could provide a complete blueprint for *Street Scene*'s tragicomic urban architecture. And particularly in Toulon, a Mediterranean port city that has seen waves of immigration and of hard times, this opera's depiction of an ethnically mixed, economically challenged community might have resonated strongly—had Bénézech paid more attention to it.

To no particular effect, Jung's unit set mixed images of present-day skyscrapers and an architectural drawing with a relatively realistic brownstone façade. Frédéric Olivier's costumes ranged from apt (Emma Jones's print dress) to cartoonish (George Jones's undershirt and moustache) to wrongheaded (too many coats for a heat wave). Régis Vigneron's lighting scheme contributed little to the atmosphere.

Thus it was left to individual performers to bring shape and clarity to *Street Scene* as a stage work; most succeeded better with the music than with the drama. Though the director encouraged British soprano Elena Ferrari to indulge in a broadly declamatory acting style that had disappeared from Broadway long before Weill's day, she revealed soaring purity and emotional conviction in her singing. As "Franck" Maurant, French baritone Laurent Alvaro boasted passable English; under Stroman's guidance, he delivered "Let Things Be Like They Always Was" with a tender lyricism that helped to flesh out the underdeveloped, under-directed character. (To make Maurant something



Mae Jones (Amélie Munier) and Dick McGann (Djamel Mehnane) in "Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed."
Photo: Olivier Pastor

more than a plot device, it would help to season his brutishness with a dash of Scarpia-like charm or of Sophoclean doom.) Ferrari and Alvaro returned at the end of the opera as prospective tenants for the Hildebrands' vacant apartment; since they still looked like the Maurants, this was jarring.

Several roles were double-cast, most daringly—and successfully—in the case of singing virgin Jenny Hildebrand and dancing tramp Mae Jones. French soprano Amélie Munier turned these characters' contrasting scenes into a mini-*Seven Deadly Sins*. (Sadly, Caroline Roëlands is yet another choreographer who doesn't know or doesn't care that "Moon-Faced" is a jitterbug.) Sébastien Lemoine's Harry Easter pleasingly channeled Georges Guétary in *An American in Paris* (not Broadway, but close); fey, tongue-tied Frenchman Thomas Morris bungled the hitherto foolproof "When a Woman Has a Baby." Young Jonathan Manzo, as Willie, and the "specialized children's chorus" of the CNR Toulon Provence Méditerranée struggled hardest with their English but had evident fun in the "Games" number.

As Henry Davis, American Lawrence Craig mustered a winning "I Got a Marble and a Star" but, like Ferrari, inhabited his character only sporadically. By contrast, English soprano Charlotte Page relished every second of Emma Jones's delicious odiousness, showcasing a smart Brooklyn accent, deft timing, and a lush, agile voice;

she managed to be equally funny and completely different as one of the Nursemaids.

Ruby Hughes made a timid, homely Mrs. Hildebrand but a vibrant Rose Maurant who combined willowy beauty with crystalline diction, shimmering color, and characterful phrasing often lost under the crush of the orchestra. Hers was one of the more affecting renderings of this role I've witnessed and, with Page's Mrs. Jones, the evening's most satisfying performance. Australian tenor Adrian Dwyer has played Sam before, but his interpretation went awry; Sam isn't a fraidy-cat, he's a *firebrand* bookworm, scion of revolutionaries, and the play's social conscience. Dwyer didn't give us any of that in his acting, and in his singing, he let his voice ring free only in "Lonely House."

I left simultaneously applauding and regretting the company's courageous decision to use the original English: both audience and cast had to work much too hard. If the Germans perform this opera in translation, can't the French? To judge from the projected titles in Toulon, there was at least the start of a good French text available. Yet the packed house and generally enthusiastic response on opening night confirmed that much of the work's appeal came across—and underscored *Street Scene*'s power to communicate its lessons far from its Broadway birthplace.

William V. Madison
Paris

Performances

Four Walt Whitman Songs

Douglas Webster, baritone

Pacific Symphony

Carl St.Clair, conductor

Costa Mesa, California

4–6 February 2010

According to musicologist Richard Taruskin, the existence of national traits in music does not constitute nationalism. Rather, nationalism is an attitude. American nationalism served as the focus for the 2010 Pacific Symphony's annual American Composers Festival celebrating "The Greatest Generation," a term denoting those who grew up during the Great Depression and lived through World War II. To illustrate predominant attitudes that defined this period—thrift, sacrifice, strength in adversity, and the urge to move the country forward—artistic advisor Joseph Horowitz created an effective program for the festival's centerpiece featuring music by Aaron Copland, Bernard Herrmann, Kurt Weill, and Morton Gould, ending with a newly commissioned work by Michael Daugherty.

The Pacific Symphony took this opportunity to salute World War II veterans from the community. The audience included octogenarians decked out in military uniforms accompanied by proud family members. Photographs of these veterans taken during their time in military service were projected above the orchestra during much of the concert. These visual representations, along with the playing and singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner," gave the proceedings an immediate context and emotional connection to historic events.

The first three works on the program featured responses by composers to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent American mobilization. Conductor Carl St.Clair perfectly pitched his reading of Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942) to the sentiments of the evening. He eschewed the brash and bombastic interpretations common in recent years for one of introspection and respect—more honor than celebration. St.Clair segued almost immediately into Herrmann's *For the*

Fallen, a work commissioned by the League of Composers for the New York Philharmonic in 1943.

The program seemed to be built around the West Coast premiere of the orchestral version of Weill's *Four Walt Whitman Songs*, which closed the first half of the evening. Kim H. Kowalke has demonstrated the relationship between these settings and Weill's stage works: "Like virtually every one of his works for the stage, the *Whitman Songs* are hybrids, negotiating the notoriously ill-defined boundaries between 'serious' and 'popular,' . . . 'cultivated' and 'vernacular' . . . Not 'rousing' enough to be patriotic anthems, not 'folklike' enough to be baubles of Americana, and not 'arty' enough to stand next to sets of Schumann and Brahms."

This hybrid nature becomes all the more apparent when comparing the piano version and the orchestral version. The songs fit fairly comfortably in the art song tradition when performed with piano. The accompaniment is spare and supportive, and the lyrics take on added intimacy. With Weill's orchestrations, however, the cycle is transformed into a broader humanitarian and patriotic statement communicated forcefully within a sound world particularly reminiscent of *Johnny Johnson* and *Street Scene*.

Of the four Whitman texts, Weill composed three in 1942 for voice and piano: "Oh Captain! My Captain!," "Beat! Beat! Drums!," and "Dirge for Two Veterans." He probably created the orchestrations the same year for a proposed recording by John Charles Thomas, a highly successful baritone who specialized in light opera. Weill composed "Come Up from the Fields,

Father" in 1947 and reordered the four songs into a more dramatic cycle for a recording by tenor William Horne and pianist Adam Garner. This added song remained unorchestrated until six years after Weill's death, when the Spanish-born American composer Carlos Surinach undertook the task, using Weill's 1942 orchestrations as a model. Surinach caught the obvious references from *Street Scene* in the song, and effectively recreated the lyrical sweep of the Lilac Scene and the intimacy of "A Boy Like You."

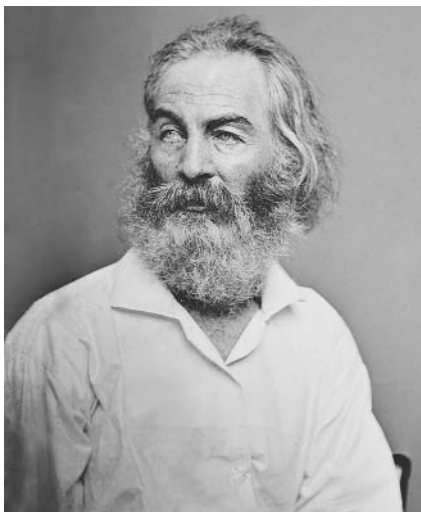
St.Clair and the Pacific Symphony—which comprises mostly top-notch film studio musicians—achieved a perfect balance between a vernacular style and the seriousness demanded by the text. They would do a wonderful job with any of Weill's Broadway musicals. Baritone Douglas Webster, too, has extensive experience singing "popular" and "serious" idioms, but for this performance he seemed to be in lieder mode. His shadings were too subtle to be heard over an orchestra in a big hall. Nor did he seem particularly comfortable with the tessitura of the songs. Still, the performance provided a rare opportunity to hear a committed orchestral performance of the *Whitman Songs* placed within a meaningful historical context.

Two works closed the concert: *Amber Waves* by Gould, an orchestral fantasy on "America the Beautiful" composed in 1976 for the U.S. Bicentennial, and the world premiere of *Mount Rushmore* for chorus and orchestra, composed by Michael Daugherty, the only living composer represented on the program. (Mount Rushmore is the site of monumental sculptures of the faces of four famous American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.) The Pacific Chorale (John Alexander, artistic director) enhanced the performance with exceptionally strong singing.

Daugherty based his text on letters and writings by the four presidents and drew musical inspiration from shape-note singing, patriotic tunes, Carl Orff, and John Adams. For the finale Daugherty pulled out all the stops—soaring themes, massive choral sound, loud organ—to create epic music reminiscent of Miklós Rózsa's score for *Ben Hur*. Thus ended a well-executed program steeped in patriotism and infused with thought-provoking nationalism.

David Farneth

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles



Walt Whitman. Photo: Matthew Brady

Performances

The Broadway Musicals of 1948

*Town Hall
New York*

22 March 2010

For the tenth season of “Broadway By the Year,” a series in which each concert focuses on shows that premiered during the year given in the title, creator and mastermind Scott Siegel assembled a talented group of ten singers to perform selections from eight (out of more than a dozen) new musicals from 1948. Some of the shows are entirely forgotten today or just barely remembered, even by those who were around at the time. Many of Siegel’s loyal fans became regular theatergoers a half-century ago, during Broadway’s Golden Age, and there is always an appreciative audience for these popular one-performance-only events.

Love Life, Weill and Alan Jay Lerner’s 1948 vaudeville musical, has never had a New York revival or an original cast recording, so Siegel and Town Hall deserve credit for making sure it was represented. Three of the four songs on the bill belonged to the lead characters, Susan and Samuel Cooper, with one song drawn from the vaudeville numbers.

Each number was introduced by the host with some information about the song or show. Since Siegel is celebrating songs from a bygone era, one might expect that he would provide his audience with some idea of how they were originally performed, difficult as that might be in some cases. That didn’t always happen, and many of the numbers were divorced from their original contexts. An example was the evening’s first *Love Life* offering, “Economics,” sung by Kristen Dausch. She did a nice job articulating Lerner’s satirical lyrics, which the audience generally found amusing, but the full power of this jive-inspired song didn’t come across. Since it was composed for male quartet and originally performed in a vaudeville style,

“Economics” was deprived of the variety of solo voices during the witty verses and of four-part harmony in the refrain.

One wonders why Siegel chose “I Remember It Well.” A pleasant number, yes, but surely it ranks a few notches below others not represented, such as the boldly macho “This Is the Life,” or the jaunty “Green-up Time,” or the sentimental duet “Here I’ll Stay.” Presumably, “I Remember It Well” got the nod because it gave Siegel a chance to startle uninformed spectators by telling them that Lerner reworked the lyrics (to fit Frederick Loewe’s music) ten years later for the film *Gigi* (and with more popular results). Who could resist telling such a story? No matter, Bobby Steggert and Farah Alvin, an attractive and appealing young couple, sang delightfully about memories of youthful courtship, even though they looked and acted much younger and more innocent than we would expect from Sam and Susan. The duo did not perform the song’s darker reprise lyrics.

Kristen Dausch was vocally more comfortable with her second *Love Life* song, “Mr. Right,” successfully using her strong voice with just the right amount of Broadway belt and comic flair for this satir-

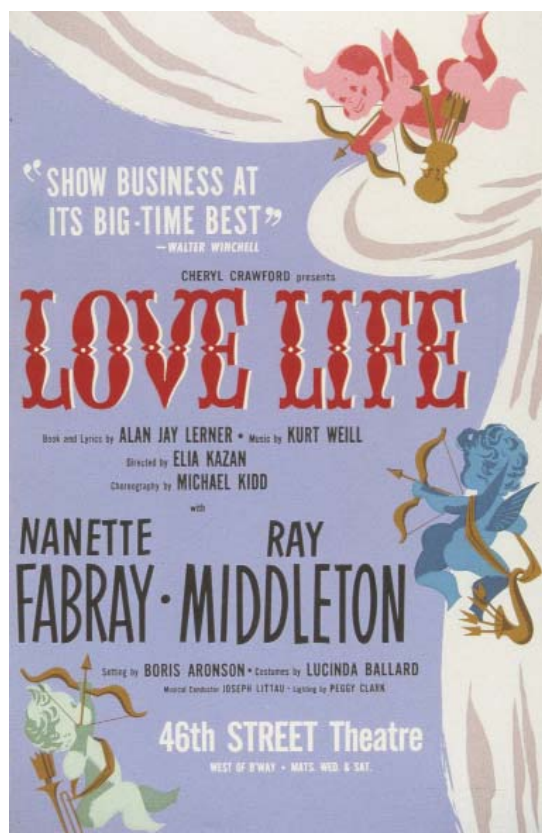
ical torch song. The show’s other torch song, the more serious “Is It Him or Is It Me?” was also pleasantly handled, this time by Farah Alvin. She chose to add an overlay of angst to this rather simple lament, creating a purposeful and sympathetic character that could work quite well as Susan onstage.

Siegel offered a curious *Love Life* tidbit: Beatrice Lillie was among the actresses originally sought to play Susan. Really? I’ve never come across this bit of information anywhere, and it seems like a genuinely odd choice. Perhaps Siegel meant to say Gertrude Lawrence, who was indeed offered the part but turned it down because she refused to perform during the summer months—which, according to Siegel, is why Lillie did not accept the role.

Love Life fared only moderately well on Broadway, racking up 252 performances. A few days after it opened, Frank Loesser’s considerably more successful *Where’s Charley?* debuted. We were treated to a few of that show’s popular selections, most notably “Once in Love with Amy,” which was wonderfully sung and danced in character by Noah Racey (who has played the lead role to great acclaim several times). Another show that overshadowed *Love Life* in 1948 opened on 30 December, just barely in time to qualify, Cole Porter’s *Kiss Me, Kate*. During the evening, the cast presented seven familiar *Kate* numbers. Baritone William Michals made the strongest impression with “Where Is the Life that Late I Led?” and “So in Love.” (How I would have liked to hear him sing “Love Song” from *Love Life*!)

Siegel rounded out the program with selections from three revues, *Make Mine Manhattan*, *Lend an Ear*, and *Inside USA*; and two other shows, *Magdalena* and *As the Girls Go*. The roster of other first-rate performers included Melissa Manchester, Erin Denman, Jeffry Denman, John Easterlin, and Josh Grisetti. As he has done for the past ten years, Ross Patterson provided excellent musical support as arranger and pianist with his Ross Patterson Little Big Band.

**Joe Frazzetta
New York**



Poster from original production of *Love Life* on Broadway, 1948.

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