

Kurt Weill Newsletter

VOLUME 30

NUMBER 2

FALL 2012



Lost in the Stars at The Glimmerglass Festival, starring Eric Owens as Stephen Kumalo

FEATURES

Street Scene Goes to School

The Prodigal Returns: Weill's Broadway Shows in Germany

On *Johnny Johnson*, Piano Reductions, and Eggs

IN THIS ISSUE

3 In the Wings - Upcoming Performances

FEATURES

4 *Street Scene* Goes to School

7 A Word from the Sponsor:
CCM Presents Year-Long Weill Festival

8 The Prodigal Returns:
Weill's Broadway Shows in Germany

11 On *Johnny Johnson*, Piano Reductions, and Eggs
John Baxindine

REVIEWS

Performances

13 *Happy End*
Theater Heidelberg
Andreas Hauff

14 *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*
Oper Leipzig
Jürgen Schebera

15 *Lost in the Stars*
Glimmerglass Festival
Mark N. Grant

18 *Magical Night*
Ravinia Festival
Hedy Weiss

Books

19 *Marc Blitzstein: His Life, His Work, His World*
by Howard Pollack
Carol J. Oja

SECOND LOOKS

20 "Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway?"
Stephen Hinton Redraws the Map
David Savran

21 *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*
Wiener Staatsoper
Larry L. Lash

NEWS

22 Lotte Lenya Competition

23 More Weill Festivals!

Cover photo: Stephen Kumalo (Eric Owens) solemnizes the marriage of Irina (Brandy Lynn Hawkins) and his son Absalom (Makudupanyane Senaoana) after Absalom is sentenced to death. Photo: Karli Cadel/The Glimmerglass Festival

Kurt Weill Newsletter

VOLUME 30

NUMBER 2

FALL 2012

ISSN 0899-6407

© 2012 Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

7 East 20th Street

New York, NY 10003-1106

tel (212) 505-5240

fax (212) 353-9663

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

A variety of opinions are expressed in the *Newsletter*; they do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. Letters to the editors are welcome (newsletter@kwf.org).

Staff

Kate Chisholm and Dave Stein, Co-Editors

Brady Sansone, Production and Circulation

Kurt Weill Foundation Trustees

Kim H. Kowalke, *President*

Philip Getter, *Senior Vice President and Treasurer*

Guy Stern, *Vice President*

Edward Harsh, *Secretary*

André Bishop

Victoria Clark

Joanne Hubbard Cossa

Susan Feder

Corey Field

Walter Hinderer

Welz Kauffman

Trustees Emeriti

Milton Coleman

Paul Epstein

Harold Prince

Julius Rudel

Honorary Trustees

James Conlon

Stephen E. Davis

Teresa Stratas

Websites

<http://www.kwf.org>

<http://www.threepennyopera.org>

E-mail

Information: kwfinfo@kwf.org

Weill-Lenya Research Center: wlr@kwf.org

Kurt Weill Edition: kwe@kwf.org

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Zaubernacht **The Seven Deadly Sins**

Landestheater Linz
Jochen Ulrich, director/choreographer; Dennis Russell Davies, conductor;
Marianne Faithfull, Anna I.
13 October – 30 January (12 performances)

Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

Oper Leipzig
Kerstin Polenske, director; William Lacey, conductor.
23 November – 31 May (6 performances)

The Seven Deadly Sins **Kleine Dreigroschenmusik** **Weill songs**

Symphony Silicon Valley, San Jose
James Holmes, conductor; Lisa Vroman, soprano.
12–13 January

Violin Concerto

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra
Edo De Waart, conductor; Steven Copes, violin.
17–19 January

Kurt Weill Week

Komische Oper Berlin
18–24 January (See p. 23 for details.)

Walt Whitman Songs

La Monnaie, Brussels
Ian Bostridge, tenor; Julius Drake, piano.
23 January

Symphony No. 2

Suite aus Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny **Weill songs**

WDR Rundfunkorchester, Köln
Niklas Willén, conductor; Charlotte Hellekant, soprano; Johanna Schall, moderator.
26 January

Street Scene

Young Vic/Opera Group production on tour
John Fulljames, director; Tim Murray, conductor.
Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, 25–31 January
Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, 1–5 March

Kurt Weill Fest

Dessau
22 February – 10 March (See p. 23 for details.)

Die Dreigroschenoper (concert)

London Philharmonic
Vladimir Jurowski, conductor; Ted Huffman, director.
28 February: Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris
2 March: Royal Festival Hall, London

Die Verheißung

Premiere of a new oratorio version of *Der Weg der Verheißung*
Anhaltisches Theater Dessau
Antony Hermus, conductor.
28 February – 1 March

Die sieben Todsünden

Orquesta Nacional España, Madrid
Lawrence Foster, conductor; Ute Lemper, Anna I.
8–10 March

Der neue Orpheus, op. 16

Weill songs
BBC Concert Orchestra, Southbank Centre
Keith Lockhart, conductor; Charles Mutter, violin; Ilona Domnich, soprano.
12 April

Der Jasager

Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Schiller-Theater Werkstatt), Berlin
Aniara Amos, director.
2–21 May (9 performances)

The Seven Deadly Sins

Oregon Symphony
Carlos Kalmar, conductor; Storm Large, Anna I.
3 May: Benaroya Hall, Seattle
4–5 May: Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland

The Seven Deadly Sins

Detroit Symphony, Carnegie Hall Spring for Music Festival
Leonard Slatkin, conductor; Storm Large, Anna I.
9 May

To learn about the many other Weill performances coming
up around the world, view the performance calendar at
www.kwf.org.

Street Scene Goes to School

Most Weill fans know that *Street Scene* has appeared much more frequently on the stages of U.S. opera companies in the last two decades. A less-noticed, but even more pronounced trend has been occurring at the same time: universities and conservatories have turned to *Street Scene* again and again in recent years. In 2008 alone, Manhattan School of Music, North Carolina School of the Arts, Colorado State University, University of Kansas, University of Tennessee, and Vanderbilt University all offered fully staged productions. This season, the opera departments of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) and the Eastman School of Music have chosen *Street Scene* for their students. And it's not just big schools and conservatories presenting Weill's Broadway opera; in the past five years, smaller institutions such as Pacific Lutheran University, Hardin-Simmons University, Hope College, and St. Olaf College have also selected *Street Scene* as a teaching tool. Recent conservatory productions in Canada, the U.K., and Germany indicate that *Street Scene* is gaining a foothold abroad as well.



Why is *Street Scene* so effective for training young singers and so appealing to such a broad spectrum of programs?

Conversations with performers, conductors, directors, and faculty who have been involved in student productions reveal some common themes. The bottom line, it seems, is that *Street Scene* deeply engages students both as actors and as singers. An American opera steeped in realism and performed in English, it offers a large cast of ethnically diverse characters, a tremendous variety of musical styles, and roles that require different levels of skill and experience. Jay Lesenger, who has directed the opera at the Manhattan School of Music (pictured above), Northwestern University, Chautauqua Opera, and New York City Opera, attests to the universal appeal of the work: "Young singers just love doing *Street Scene*. It is a distinctly American work with a great score. The plot and characters engage their imaginations. I've watched young performers grow so much through the process of producing it. And audiences love it!"

Polystylism

Perhaps the most obvious advantage of *Street Scene* as a teaching tool is its polystylism. Mark Gibson, who will conduct the work at CCM this fall, hails *Street Scene* as "one of the first and best examples of the 'crossover work'—an opera with dialogue written for a musical theater venue," and looks forward to exposing his students to "a variety of musical theater and operatic styles, including blues, jazz, arioso and ensemble singing." Assistant Dean Gordon Ostrowski of the Manhattan School of Music also cites it as a good work for students "because it involves legit

opera singing and legit musical theater singing." Singer-actress and teacher Judy Blazer, who played Rose Maurrant at Manhattan in 1976, notes that "it provides a wonderful exercise in how to make various styles seamless, how to make it one, cohesive piece, from a pizzazz-y Broadway number like 'Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway?' to Mrs. Maurrant's aria. It has everything but the kitchen sink stylistically, and it's good for performers to have to lean in those different directions artistically."

"*Street Scene* is the perfect choice for an academic production. It has a wide variety of roles, excellent vocal/dramatic challenges, and offers tremendous opportunities to young singers and actors."

— Jay Lesenger, director

This is especially true in the 21st century as more and more opera companies add Broadway musicals to their seasons and directors move away from highly stylized conventions of operatic performance. As Jay Lesenger points out, "Singers now more than ever have to be versatile if they want to succeed. Very few singers can afford to focus only on opera and operatic repertoire and hope to establish a career." Gretel Mink Hansen, who played Rose at Northeastern Illinois University in 2012, confirms that *Street Scene* opens a number of doors for young singers: "It bridges the gap between opera and musical theater because of its strong script and powerful orchestration. It made me feel like I could do both and be successful."

Acting Challenges

Originally billed as a “dramatic musical,” *Street Scene* is notable among operas for its realism and extensive dialogue, taking as its subject ordinary characters in a commonplace setting. Young singers must stretch more than their voices. Judy Blazer recalls how wonderful it was that opera students “were forced to act very, very true-to-life scenarios. When you’re in opera, you get so used to playing out of the realm, that you don’t remember how to play what’s in your back yard.” CCM Associate Professor of Acting Steven Goldstein, who is directing the opera this fall, points out that the equal importance of the dialogue presents an excellent acting challenge for opera students. And Jay Lesenger admires the large canvas of *Street Scene* because it offers a good opportunity to teach ensemble acting and characterization. Cast members must practice accents and must balance portraying ethnic stereotypes with fleshing out realistic, individual characters. They must learn to play off one another, and, as Goldstein puts it, “inhabit these parts fully so the emotional content at the end is realized.” Elmer Rice’s book and Langston Hughes’s lyrics carry the compelling story of the hopes and struggles of immigrants in New York and the American Dream, which “is still contemporary,” says Lesenger. “Students can relate to the action and motivations of these characters’ lives. They are always engaged by the material.”



“Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed” at the Manhattan School of Music, 2008.

PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG

Vocal Demands

Another factor that makes *Street Scene* ideally suited for opera and musical theater programs is that the music is “dramatically challenging but not technically difficult” (Ostrowski). Of course, the lead roles do require real operatic chops and must be reserved for the best voice students; there’s no way to reduce Anna Maurant’s first-act aria to a standard musical theater number, for example. But most of the cast will have the luxury of learning new styles without straining their voices, and, as James Benjamin Rodgers, a Lenya Competition winner who played Sam Kaplan at the Manhattan School in 2008, points out, without the expectation of singing in a voice stereotypically associated with the role. “It’s great for young singers to have a shot at something without Sutherland or Callas or Tebaldi staring over their shoulder.”

Casting

Street Scene, with its broad assortment of roles, does require a large cast. Mark Gibson sees this as an advantage when searching for titles to perform because it ensures that many students will get opportunities. The four leading roles are so demanding that they often are double-cast, offering more opportunities to student singers. Casting the children presents the possibility of collaboration with the community. At CCM, for example, undergraduate voice students will play the girls, while the boys are cast with young boys from the Cincinnati Children’s Choir.



James Benjamin Rodgers as Sam Kaplan at the Manhattan School of Music, 2008.

PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG



Posters from college and university productions of *Street Scene* (l to r): Pacific Lutheran University, 2007; Wichita State University, 2009; Hardin-Simmons University, 2010; Hope College, 2010; Boston Conservatory, 1986; Grand Valley State University, 2005.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Street Scene offers students and faculty the opportunity, as CCM Opera chair Robin Guarino puts it, to “cross the departmental divide,” thereby gaining valuable insight into styles and techniques they don’t usually encounter. “The CCM *Street Scene* cast includes singers and performers from Opera, Musical Theatre, and Drama; instrumentalists from Orchestral Studies and Jazz; and has an artistic team that is made up of students and faculty from Technical Design and Production. It is a truly synergistic collaboration.” Steven Goldstein told us, “It’s the first time we’ve done an opera at CCM with cross-pollination of all the different departments in this division, which is a good thing. It’s good for the singers to work with straight dramatic actors and see how they approach this material. It’s great for them to see the musical theater students, who just come out and belt out their song in a very free and easy way. And the musical theater and drama students see the emotional intensity that goes with the opera singing, and they know they have to meet that challenge in their acting.”

Requirements

And finally, there is the set. The unit set for *Street Scene*—the façade of an old tenement building—is an essential part of any production, but it stays in the background and allows students to concentrate on singing and acting without making it hard to navigate the stage. Judy Blazer: “Although the set is in many ways the star, it’s not about what the set *does*, and I appreciate that. I think that when you’re studying your craft, you don’t want to be doing *Spiderman*. The set doesn’t detract from the actors.” Steven Goldstein concurs: “The fact that it’s a unit set and doesn’t change means that the scenic department can focus on creating one

“Though a few of the roles are dramatic, overall, the vocal demands suit young singers well. The music is attractive and well crafted, the story varied and intense, and the social themes remain pertinent; *Street Scene* is ideally suited for university and conservatory programs that have the resources to stage and cast it.”

— Mark Gibson, CCM

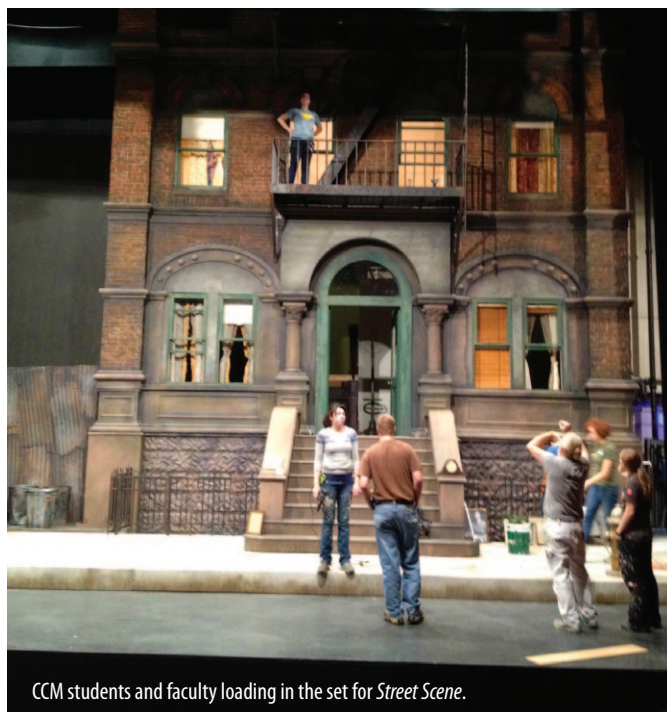


PHOTO: ROBIN GUARINO

extraordinary set instead of several small set-ups. Also, it gives a great realistic world for the performers to play in and on.” When it comes to costumes, the large cast poses less of a problem than it might appear; because of the time period in which *Street Scene* is set, most costumes can be pulled from collections.

James Rodgers identifies what may be the most fundamental reason of all for the value of *Street Scene* as a pedagogical tool. “In Weill’s work the two genres/skill sets/traditions of musical theater and opera coexist successfully because, whatever tradition Weill pulls from, he does so to tell the story in an engaging and provocative way. *Street Scene* teaches us that our skills as singers, dancers, actors, musicians, are only tools that serve us in telling great stories.” In other words, *Street Scene* is about what art is all about, and it exposes students to the most basic reality of theater or any other performing art. All the discrete skills and talents must be directed to one end, giving the audience a great story, powerfully told.

***Street Scene* at the Theaterakademie August Everding**

In February 2011, *Street Scene* was given at the Prinzregententheater in Munich with a cast of students from the Theaterakademie August Everding (pictured, left), but it was hardly an ordinary student production. The Theaterakademie cast from the departments of musical theater, voice, and acting. It was directed by Gil Mehmert, who has a long and distinguished resumé in the professional theater. The orchestra was composed of professional musicians from the Munich Radio Orchestra, conducted by Ulf Schirmer, Intendant and musical director at the Leipzig Opera. A co-production with Musiktheater im Revier in Gelsenkirchen, *Street Scene* is currently playing in repertory there, with a professional cast.



PHOTO: A.T. SCHAEFER

A Word from the Sponsor

CCM Presents Year-Long Weill Festival

The Kurt Weill Foundation is proud to announce a collaboration for the 2012–13 season with the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, more extensive and wide-ranging than any it has had before with an academic institution. Through its sponsorship program, the Foundation is offering funding, expert advice, and other assistance to CCM as it presents a season of stage productions, concert performances, cabaret evenings, master classes, and guest lectures, all built around Weill's works. The season is anchored by two major theatrical presentations: *Street Scene* (15–18 November) and *The Threepenny Opera* (28 February–10 March), directed and conducted by CCM Opera and Musical Theatre faculty. Both departments are nationally recognized for the stature of their programs and their success in launching students in professional careers.

Robin Guarino, chair of the Opera Department, has worked closely with the Foundation and with her colleagues at CCM to make the Weill season possible. "Many things happened at once," said Guarino. "I knew that the Opera Department at CCM had never produced *Street Scene*. This year marks our fiftieth anniversary as part of UC and it seemed the perfect moment to celebrate Weill's music while celebrating the uniquely synergistic nature of CCM. As the Opera Department was planning *Street Scene*, Musical Theatre faculty Aubrey Berg and Roger Grodsky were planning *Threepenny Opera*. That production will be very special because Tony Award-winning set designer John Arnone will come to CCM to work with students from the Department of Theatre Design and Production for a month-long residency.

"The Director of Orchestral Studies, Mark Gibson, has long wanted to collaborate with Professor Bruce McClung and me on a Weill project, and that's how the cabaret 'Speak Low' started. When Bruce got wind of what was going on in Opera and Musical Theatre programming, he responded by focusing his fall seminar course, 'Music in Culture,' on Weill's music theater. So the festival grew, and soon we had Dr. Earl Rivers, Director of Choral Studies, programming *Kiddush* and '*Ho, Billy O!*' Aubrey Berg and Roger Grodsky added another cabaret."

Cooperation among faculty members and entire departments and a willingness to look beyond the immediate resources offered by the school were essential to the growth of the festival. Guarino will direct Musical Theatre students in *The Threepenny Opera*, and the Opera Department has brought in cast members for *Street Scene* from both the Drama and Musical Theatre departments. As Guarino notes, "One of the things that the festival will do—and is already doing—is getting students to cross the 'departmental divide,' and the same thing is happening for the faculty." Aside from Professor McClung, none of the faculty members involved are Weill specialists, but they have been eager to explore options and to work together to create new opportunities for themselves and their students.

McClung's graduate seminar is an essential part of the festival at CCM, helping students to understand how Weill's stage works helped frame some of the twentieth century's central esthetic debates. Enthusiastic about the forthcoming season, he commented on the crucial link that the seminar provides to the performers: "Such collaboration creates a reflexive model of



PHOTO: CRIS DAVIS

education where students are able to study what they perform and perform what they study. It addresses different learning styles and multiple intelligences, and creates a higher level of engagement than if theory is divorced from practice." Indeed, the combination of studying Weill's music and theories of musical theater in the classroom and seeing them worked out in performance seems like an ideal way to absorb the full spectrum of the composer's work. Several cast members from *Street Scene* are taking Professor McClung's course, which is over-enrolled with thirty-one students.

Other visiting speakers and performers round out the academic components of the Weill season. Two respected scholars will give lectures coinciding with the stage productions: Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation, will team-teach McClung's seminar on *Street Scene* and give two public presentations during his residency; and Howard Pollack of the University of Houston, author of a new biography of Marc Blitzstein (see review on p. 19), will discuss *The Threepenny Opera*. Tony Award winner (and Foundation Trustee) Victoria Clark offers a master class in Weill interpretation in November; conductor and director Ted Sperling, long known for his interest in Weill's American works, will give a master class in performing Weill's works in January.

The Foundation's sponsorship program helps organizations plan festivals comprising several events, usually a mixture of performances and scholarly elements, such as symposia. Foundation staff members work with the sponsored organization from the early planning stages, offering guidance as well as financial assistance. Guarino describes the collaboration: "[Director] Carolyn Weber contacted me to make sure that CCM Opera and Musical Theatre were applying for financial support. How often does that happen?! After receiving our grant application, Carolyn suggested a sponsorship, if we could expand the two productions into an entire Kurt Weill Festival. She contributed ideas for guests and repertoire, and I set about working with my CCM colleagues to expand the festival." Weber encourages other schools to seek Foundation sponsorship: "CCM's schedule of stage productions, concerts, and ancillary activities, unprecedented in scope in an academic context, has inspired the Foundation to expand its sponsorship program to cover academic institutions in addition to professional performing arts organizations. We hope the CCM festival will set the stage for other such sponsorships in the future."

Press release and schedule: <http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=16709>

The Prodigal Returns

Weill's Broadway Shows in Germany

As the second decade of a new century begins, a new era for Weill's Broadway musicals in Germany is dawning, too. Two major Weill productions since June 2011, *Street Scene* at Dresden's Semperoper and *Lady in the Dark* at Staatsoper Hannover, have earned critical acclaim and audience enthusiasm. Dresden is scheduled to see a genuine rarity, *The Firebrand of Florence*, at the Staatsoperette in the fall of 2013, in a new translation by Roman Hinze, who prepared the German version of *Lady in the Dark* for Hannover. Long known for a lack of interest, not to say antipathy, to Weill's Broadway shows, the German theater is quietly evolving. The last two decades have shown a definite surge in productions of the Broadway shows, with more major stagings than the previous four decades combined.

Not just more stagings, but more works. *One Touch of Venus* was not professionally staged in Germany until 1994 (Meiningen); since then, it has been produced in Freiburg, Berlin, and Dessau. *Street Scene*, which all but disappeared from German stages after the 1955 premiere in Düsseldorf, has seen a succession of major performances since 1993, in Munich, Ludwigshafen and Berlin (co-production with Houston Grand Opera), Altenburg/Gera, Freiburg, Dessau, Aachen, Dresden, and currently in Gelsenkirchen, which has adopted a production of the Theaterakademie August Everding in Munich and cast it with professional singers. *Johnny Johnson* has found its way to Braunschweig, Berlin, Dessau, Hamburg, and Celle since 1995. Not all these productions have been unalloyed successes, but the numbers don't lie. More directors, more Intendants, more theaters, and more theatergoers are encountering Weill's Broadway shows on German stages. Before 1990, the scene was much different. A few adventurous theaters did take up a show now and then—*Knickerbocker Holiday* in 1948 (Essen) and 1976 (Hamburg); *Lost in the Stars* in Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Saarbrücken, and Munich in the early 1960s; *Lady in the Dark* in 1951 (Kassel) and 1976 (Lübeck); *Johnny Johnson* in 1973 (Bochum)—but there was no discernible upward trend in productions before 1990, the year of a major Weill festival in and around Düsseldorf that saw performances of *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Street Scene*, along with many broadcasts and recordings of Weill's works.

Weill's position vis-à-vis the German theater is probably unique. On the one hand, his name is well known and some of his German scores have never lost popularity. On the other, the invidious distinction between his German works and his Broadway works has been felt more strongly in Germany than anywhere else. Even while still active in Germany, Weill faced a similar dilemma, as certain highbrows dismissed him because some of his works were aimed deliberately at a wide audience. Stephan Kopf of the licensing agency Musik und Bühne makes this point: "In Germany there is an absurd separation of 'serious music' and 'light music.' At the same time that this separation



Winnie Böwe as Liza Elliott in *Lady in the Dark* at Staatsoper Hannover, 2011.

PHOTO: JÖRG LANDSBERG

was established in Germany, Kurt Weill proved with his works how preposterous it was." After Weill's death, the old prejudices reasserted themselves in Theodor W. Adorno's exchange with the late Horst Kögler (see p. 10) on the occasion of the German premiere of *Street Scene*. Kögler alone defended Weill's Broadway musicals (and Broadway in general), whereas Adorno's blanket dismissal of Weill's American output influenced the next two generations of German critics and directors.

Even now, the situation may not appear to have changed much. Ulrich Lenz, Chefdramaturg of Komische Oper Berlin, told us, "Unfortunately German audiences don't know much about the American Weill. They all know the works he created together with Brecht: *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Die sieben Todsünden*." Theater historian Wolfgang Jansen confirms this view: "Weill's American works simply do not appear frequently enough on German stages. There have been recent stagings of *Street Scene*, *One Touch of Venus* and *Lady in the Dark*, which garnered a lot of attention, and not only because the works hadn't been performed in a long time. But that doesn't make them 'popular' just yet." Yet the high-profile productions that Jansen cites create momentum: more performances in repertory, larger-scale stagings, and favorable press coverage suggest that change is in the air.

There are several reasons why Weill's Broadway musicals are getting more attention. For one thing, Weill's music is performed more often everywhere now; as more recordings (both audio and video) and performances have appeared around the world, more conductors and directors have boarded the bandwagon. The Kurt Weill Edition already has produced new performing materials for *The Firebrand of Florence* and *Johnny Johnson*, with more Broadway shows on the way. Large-scale celebrations of Weill's centenary in London (where *Firebrand* was recorded using Edition materials), Berlin, New York, and other cultural capitals played a role. The Kurt Weill Fest in Dessau, soon to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, has presented several of Weill's Broadway shows. But two broader trends specific to Germany are having a direct effect on Weill's reception, helping to drive the increase in significant productions of the Broadway works.

One is the growing popularity of Broadway musicals in general. While such recent Broadway shows as *The Lion King* or

Wicked draw the largest crowds, Wolfgang Schaller, Intendant of Staatsoperette Dresden, notes that such classics as *My Fair Lady*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Cabaret* have also enjoyed considerable success. Megamusicals are usually produced in private theaters, where they will run as long as they attract a paying audience. Older musicals are far more likely to appear in state-subsidized opera houses and repertory theaters, and Weill's shows are no exception (the inept, privately funded production of *Venus* at the Berlin Schlossplatz in 2001 did Weill's cause no favors). True, many German theaters can't draw on the same variety of talent that Weill did on Broadway in the forties, and such gaps can create problems with casting and direction. But these problems, which doomed several earlier productions, no longer loom so large, thanks to another trend: improved training in musical theater for young German performers.

Since the late 1980s, several significant musical theater programs in Germany have taken root and schooled a new generation of performers in tricks of the Broadway musical trade. The Universität der Künste in Berlin, the Theaterakademie August Everding in Munich, and the Folkwang-Hochschule in Essen, to name three, all have strong musical theater programs and have been producing graduates in performing, directing, and design for years now. As a result, a new landscape has taken shape in Germany. Young German singing actors start their careers with a better understanding of the requirements of Broadway shows, which in turn makes staging American musicals in Germany a more attractive proposition. (Alen Hodzovic and David Arnsperger, graduates of the Theaterakademie in Munich and the UdK respectively, both enjoy promising careers in Germany and have demonstrated their musical theater abilities by winning top prizes in the Lotte Lenya Competition.) Weill benefits from this broader trend as well. As Stephan Kopf put it, "Weill's American musicals are becoming more popular in Germany step by step because views of American musicals in general are changing."

The change has been gradual, but we know that some German producers are showing more interest in Weill, because they told us so. Several longstanding prejudices against Weill's American works are definitely on the wane. Stephan Kopf reports, "The latest successes of Weill's American shows (e.g., *Lady in the Dark* in Hannover) raised a stronger interest at least among critics and specialists, and hopefully among the producers too." Ulrich Lenz: "Whenever I propose one of Weill's Broadway



PHOTO: THOMAS RUTKE

shows I encounter open ears everywhere here at the Komische Oper." Most tellingly, Jürgen Hartmann of Musik und Bühne, who is working on the German premiere of *The Firebrand of Florence* at the Staatsoperette Dresden in 2013, tells us, "While preparing *Firebrand*, I met people who were a bit confused by the idea of a 'Broadway operetta' by Kurt Weill. Most of the people I talked to about *Firebrand* opened up after a while and when they heard some of the music, they were favorably impressed."

Recent critical responses to two productions in particular—*Street Scene* in Dresden and *Lady in Hannover*—evinced an enthusiastic embrace of Weill's Broadway art. From Dresden: Egbert Tholl of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was enthralled by the "great variety of musical styles within the fundamental unity of the score" and Weill's aptness in "[drawing] just the right sound direct from the streets of New York." Julia Spinola of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised an "entirely new musical world, in which jazz and show tunes are blended expertly with echoes of Bizet, Puccini, and Leoncavallo, and which tips its hat to the Gershwin of *Porgy and Bess* along with the European grand operatic tradition from Wagner into the twentieth century." Setting aside the ironies of linking Weill (or Gershwin) to the Wagnerian tradition, it marks a real change when a major German critic frames operatic history in that way. The news from Hannover is just as good. Winnie Böwe, who played Liza Elliott, told us, "The reviews were phenomenal. The audience applauded enthusiastically. Women especially were moved by the story." Manuel Brug of *Die Welt* called *Lady* an "intelligent and sparkling Weill jewel." Tholl reported, "One is astounded at how exactly this work fits our time" and "this performance justifies the hope that the view in Germany of Kurt Weill's American work can be changed."

The increase in major performances of Weill's Broadway shows since 1990 is a matter of record, and we see several reasons for optimism that the trend will continue. Stephan Kopf knows more about arranging performances of American musicals in Germany than just about anyone, and he professes "a confident hope that the American musicals of Kurt Weill will be produced more in the coming years." It may not be too early to say that *Street Scene* has established itself in the German repertory. What's next? Judging from some of our respondents, *One Touch of Venus* may be poised for greater exposure. Weill's biggest hit on Broadway, due to a rich score full of standards combined with an unusually witty book, has drawn favorable attention across Europe in the last decade, most recently in Dessau with Ute Gfrerer in the lead role. Both Ulrich Lenz and Jürgen Hartmann have indicated it is a piece they would love to produce. Perhaps the goddess will make a few more stops in Germany on her way back to Olympus.



PHOTO: MATTHIAS CREUTZIGER

Whenever a theater stages a Broadway musical in Germany, the decision must be made: present it entirely in German translation; book in German and songs in English; or entirely in English. We asked several German theater practitioners for their opinions, and the question drew a surprising variety of responses:

Dagmar Manzel (actress): *I think it's much better to perform them in English. When I played Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd, I had big problems with a very weak German translation. The songs in English are so strong that it is very difficult to convey them to the audience in German.*

Winnie Böwe (actress): *Book in German, songs in English seems to be the best solution. German song translations don't always match the music so well. An example: "Tradition" from Fiddler on the Roof. Germans emphasize the third syllable, English the second, so we had to start an eighth note earlier.*

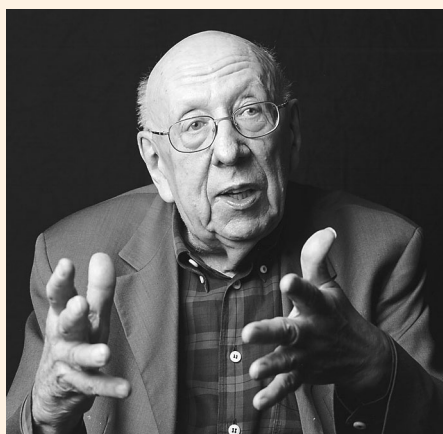
Wolfgang Schaller (Intendant): *I had a very good experience with a bilingual production of Anything Goes. The audience had no trouble following the dialogue, whereas the musical numbers in English retained all of their original wit and cleverness. I believe it's always better to present a brilliant original rather than a mediocre translation.*

Jürgen Hartmann (editor and Dramaturg): *It depends on the character of the musical. If it's a revue or an extravaganza, it might be good to translate only the book, not the songs. The integrated musicals Weill wanted to create should be, in my opinion, presented in a good translation as a whole.*

Ulrich Lenz (Dramaturg): *In my opinion it doesn't make sense to present dialogue in English for a German audience. Regarding the lyrics, I think it depends on the piece, on the plot, and not least on the author of the lyrics. In some musicals the plot continues to develop during the song or the musical number, or the audience must understand the content of the song in detail—Weill's Lady in the Dark, for example. In this case I would always be in favor of doing the whole show in German.*

Stephan Kopf (licensing agent): *I believe strongly that the best way to perform a musical in Germany is totally in German. This is the only way that an audience will be able to understand a show in all its aspects, as (especially with the works of Weill) music and lyrics are linked in a direct and intuitive way. I'm well aware that it's very difficult to translate lyricists of the quality of Ira Gershwin or Ogden Nash. But it is possible, proven most recently with the new translation of Lady in the Dark.*

Wolfgang Jansen (theater historian): *Entirely in German! When you have dialogue in German but the songs in English, the audience "checks out" during the songs and no longer follows the plot, because they don't understand enough of the lyrics. I think mixing languages is the worst option in presenting musicals. Why should any character switch languages without being prompted by dramatic reasons? The credibility of characters and plot suffers tremendously.*



In Memoriam

Horst Koegler: 1927–2012

The extraordinary opera and dance critic Horst Koegler passed away in Stuttgart on 11 May following a short illness. He began reviewing dance and theater in the early 1950s after studying acting and directing at the Theaterhochschule Halle/Saale. Koegler developed an encyclopedic knowledge of post-war dance and edited the *Oxford Dictionary of Ballet* (1977) and *Reclams Ballettlexikon* (1984), both standard reference works. He moved easily into the online world with a widely read blog, "koeglerjournal" on tanznetz.de, which he began writing in 2001.

Koegler contributed to the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* frequently; his first article appeared in Fall 1985, an extended history of post-war performances of dance works choreographed to Weill's music in Europe, which focused on *Die sieben Todsünden* but considered other works as well. His last appeared in Fall 2010, a review of the world premiere of Weill's reconstructed ballet-pantomime *Zaubernacht*. In between, he published ten more pieces in the *Newsletter*, including reviews of the

epoch-making revival of *Der Weg der Verheißung* (Chemnitz, 1999), and important performances of *Die Bürgschaft* (Bielefeld, 1998) and *Der Kuhhandel* (Hagen, 1999). In 2002, he granted an interview to the *Newsletter* on the impact of *Street Scene*.

In 1955, after the German premiere of *Street Scene*, Koegler spoke up for Weill when most German critics, following Theodor Adorno's lead, denigrated Weill's American works and American musical theater generally. Koegler took on Adorno and demanded respectful attention to American musicals and Broadway opera. He remained a devotee and a proud champion of Weill's music ever after, insisting on the power of Weill's American works when few German critics took any interest in them at all. Now American musicals—including Weill's—are produced all the time in Germany; audiences love them and critics take them seriously. We can thank Horst Koegler's pioneer spirit and irrepressible wit for that.

On *Johnny Johnson*, Piano Reductions, and Eggs

by John Baxindine



Jonathan Tunick, celebrated Broadway arranger, once compared orchestration to preparing deviled eggs. Construing the song itself as a raw egg, orchestration is “a way of enhancing a song . . . by taking it, mashing it up, adding some ingredients, mixing it, and putting it back together again.”¹ Put another way, the orchestrator does not merely transcribe the piano score, he recomposes it—and the composer who orchestrates his own music will often feel free to change his original piano draft in ways a professional arranger might not.

So, when explaining to friends that the Weill Foundation had hired me to create a new piano reduction of *Johnny Johnson*—i.e., to translate Weill’s elaborate orchestration into something a pianist could play—I quipped that my task would entail cramming Weill’s deviled egg back inside its shell without spoiling the flavor.

Previously, the only available vocal score of *Johnny Johnson* was a slapdash Samuel French publication from 1940. Carelessly engraved and overflowing with errors, it adapted Weill’s original piano draft to match the published script of 1937 without incorporating the many changes Weill made in orchestrating the work.² It represented, so to speak, the raw egg pre-devilment—presenting many songs in keys different from the final orchestral versions, with countless variations in rhythm, counterpoint, and even harmony. Now, in 2012, Tim Carter’s scrupulously edited full score of *Johnny Johnson* for the Kurt Weill Edition contains half again as much music, in Weill’s final orchestral arrangements—making a new piano/vocal score an urgent necessity.

Weill himself held strong views about such rehearsal scores. He repeatedly impressed upon his publishers that a piano reduction should be “so leicht spielbar wie irgend möglich” [“as easily playable as possible”]³ without distorting the music too severely. The task presents a challenge for the arranger, allowing considerable creative license while requiring rigorous fidelity.

To select a straightforward example from *Johnny Johnson*: Weill’s initial piano draft [Ex. 1], transposed in rehearsal, underwent substantial changes in the orchestration process (represented here as a piano/conductor score). [Ex. 2] Seventy-six years later, I reshelled the egg. [Ex. 3]

Weill orchestrated *Johnny Johnson* for a ten-piece combo, and in several respects his scoring

Ex. 1: No. 20, “Oh the Rio Grande,” mm. 34/4-38, 1940 vocal score

Ex. 2: No. 20, “Oh the Rio Grande,” mm. 34/4-38, piano/conductor score

is closer to current Broadway practice than to the traditions of his own day. In particular, the use of a Hammond organ anticipates the use of synthesizers to “beef up” the sound of a small ensemble. Where possible, I transferred Weill’s organ writing directly to the rehearsal score.

More traditionally for his time, Weill doubled the melody throughout vocal numbers—supporting the singers, but also allowing the orchestration to be reused as an instrumental interlude if necessary. Vocal doubling is not always helpful in a rehearsal piano part, and I frequently left it out. In the passage from “Oh the Rio Grande” quoted above, I included Weill’s elegant bass clarinet countermelody and dispensed with the melody (played by the alto saxophone). But when I reached No. 35—an instrumental interlude using exactly the same orchestration, sans vocal—I had to reinvent my previous reduction in order to include the melody at the expense of the bass clarinet line. Weill’s shortcut created additional work for me.

Rapid repeated notes presented a more challenging problem. While effective when played by an orchestra, they are often impractical on the piano. One passage from “In Time of War and Tumults” was going to be a headache for all concerned no matter what I did. [Ex.4]

The opposite situation appeared in the brief “Over in Europe”: there, the usual substitutes for rapid repeated notes do not work, and I tried four different solutions before resigning myself to the inevitable. [Ex.5]

Weill being Weill, even the seemingly “normal” songs contain traps for the unwary musician. It is easy to assume, on hearing “Mon Ami, My Friend” for the first time, that Weill has lapsed into predictability . . . but wait, did he really intend to juxtapose that D major chord in the guitar against the winds’ G minor triad in m. 8? He does it again in mm. 32 and 71, so the answer would seem to be yes: the F# and A need to be in the chord each time (though not in m. 48!).

As I write this, my work on *Johnny Johnson* is complete (apart from some minor proof corrections). The deviled eggs have been reshelled. I can only hope that my fellow musicians find the results useful, reasonably unproblematic, and friendly to the fingers.

Ex. 3: No. 20, “Oh the Rio Grande,” mm. 34/4-38, new piano reduction

Ex. 3: No. 20, “Oh the Rio Grande,” mm. 34/4-38, new piano reduction. The score shows a vocal line (PH) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a bass clarinet countermelody. The lyrics are: “Oh the Ri - o Grande, where the wind blows free and the sun shines so clear and bright, where the”.

Ex. 4: No. 31, “In Time of War and Tumults,” mm. 4-5

Ex. 4: No. 31, “In Time of War and Tumults,” mm. 4-5. The score shows a piano accompaniment with rapid repeated notes. The lyrics are: “(Orchestra) (sim.) etc.”.

Ex. 5: No. 2, “Over in Europe,” mm. 1-4

Ex. 5: No. 2, “Over in Europe,” mm. 1-4. The score shows a vocal line (MAYOR) and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features rapid repeated notes. The lyrics are: “O - ver in Eu - rope things are bad, a great big They say in France a mil - lion odd of souls have”.

NOTES

1. Zadan, Craig. *Sondheim and Co.* (Da Capo Press, 1994), p. 154.

2. At least, that seems to have been the original plan. However, Weill reinstated two songs absent from the script (“Song of the Goddess” and “Johnny’s Song”); there are also further, less obvious inconsistencies. Weill’s manuscript piano draft is now lost, but it seems to have served as the engraver’s model for the vocal score. Certainly the published version displays many characteristics of Weill’s drafts, and no other plausible source has yet come to light. (For a detailed discussion, see the KWE Critical Report, pp. 13–14.)

3. Weill to Universal-Edition, 12 Sept 1927. The phrase describes Weill’s wishes for the piano reduction of *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren*, and he later proclaimed himself delighted with Erwin Stein’s arrangement of that score. The results are hardly “leicht spielbar”—Weill’s music is far too complex for true pianistic ease—but Stein did not burden the rehearsal pianist with unnecessary difficulties. I have tried to follow suit in my work on *Johnny Johnson*.