

# Die Verheißung

Anhaltisches Theater Dessau

Premiere: 28 February 2013

The sensational world premiere of the biblical “drama with music”—nobody could ever agree on a proper genre classification—*The Eternal Road* on 7 January 1937 in New York was perceived mainly as a gigantic spectacle. The contributions of set designer Norman Bel Geddes and director Max Reinhardt attracted far more attention than Franz Werfel’s libretto and Weill’s music. Involving more than 300 people and a gargantuan five-level set, the production required a massive renovation of the Manhattan Opera House, which caused the opening to be delayed several times. Under Reinhardt’s overblown concept of a “dramaturgy of the visible,” Weill’s score probably suffered the most: nearly all of his music was pre-recorded and could be heard only through loudspeakers, as the lowest tier of the set had claimed the orchestra pit. In an attempt to curtail running time, part of Act III and nearly all of Act IV were cut. After all that, the work was not seen again until 1999, thanks to the meticulous reconstruction of the performing materials by Ed Harsh, in a fully staged production at Oper Chemnitz. Even then, problematic staging weighed heavily on the work’s reception: in light of the Holocaust and the founding of the state of Israel, there was much discussion of the proper historical setting of the work’s narrative frame, in which a Jewish community, threatened by pogroms, seeks shelter in a synagogue.

Ed Harsh reports that his intense experience of that staging steered his attention toward the work’s “richness of meaning in cultural, religious, and human terms” and led him to adapt the stage work as an oratorio with the well-chosen title *Die Verheißung* (The Promise). He set out to retain all the important musical numbers essentially unaltered, but also to keep the narrative frame. The frame consists of the speaking roles, always with musical underscoring, of the naively curious Thirteen-Year-Old, the constantly carping “Widersprecher,” and the Rabbi (who must also sing, of course). The stories, all closely connected to the frame, come from the Old Testament: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, culminating in the promise of the Messiah. They are presented seamlessly in fourteen numbers grouped into two parts. Harsh deserves the highest praise as an adapter, and there was much more to his labors than simply plucking movements from the original work. (See Harsh’s essay on pp. 10–11 for further commentary.)

Weill’s music seems to find its true calling only through this transformation into an oratorio, which fully conveys its historical importance, its attractiveness, and its esthetic and stylistic richness. Weill establishes a melodically unobtrusive connection to religious music of Jewish and Protestant provenance, he continues to develop the musical styles of *Der Silbersee* and *Die*



Antony Hermus conducting *Die Verheißung* with the Anhalt Philharmonic, Albrecht Kludszuweit as the Rabbi (standing), and Carl von Wölfersdorff as the Thirteen-Year-Old (seated).

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN GÜNDEL

*Bürgschaft*, and he also explores entirely new musical idioms that he would not take up again. And for all the traces of Mahler, Wagner, or Honegger that can be found in this music, we also hear occasional yet unmistakable anticipations of Britten and Shostakovich. Weill never again quite equaled the magnificent choral music of the dance around the golden calf (no. 6) or the massive double chorus “Entscheide” (no. 13). The touching duet between Rachel and Jacob (no. 3) seems to foreshadow *Street Scene*, whereas the powerful orchestral music accompanying the construction of the temple (no. 11) finds no match in later works; Weill unfortunately did not develop it further in symphonic efforts. This vast musical wealth is held together by the theme of the promise, which has the character of a leitmotif, placed at the beginning and reiterated in nos. 8, 11 and 14, and also by the solemn march theme, which, in conjunction with the opening fanfare in the brasses, frames the work. The music comes across as extremely vivid, evoking the biblical imagery in a veritable “dramaturgy of the audible.” With a sidelong glance at Wagner, one might even speak of an “invisible theater” that unfolds through the music’s “tangible” character.

The world premiere of this adaptation at the Anhaltisches Theater proved an overwhelming success, despite considerable obstacles: most notably, the singer playing the Rabbi fell ill only a day before the premiere. Albrecht Kludszuweit stepped in and proved to be fully up to the considerable demands of the part. The eight solo singers, the three choruses, and the Anhaltische Philharmonie made such a strong impression as an ensemble that it would be unfair to single out individuals. Antony Hermus, the music director of the house, conducted the performance, displaying great skill and energy to match. He seemed fully aware that this adaptation of Weill’s score would add a “new” work to the canon of the most important oratorios of the era, ranging from Honegger through Stravinsky, Bartók, Schoenberg, and Hindemith all the way up to Eisler.

**Giselher Schubert  
Hameln**

# “New York, New York” (Opening Concert)

## Kurt Weill Fest Dessau

22 February 2013

After dedicating the last two festivals to Berlin and Paris, Dessau’s annual Kurt Weill Fest completed its journey through Weill’s artistic career this year. With a focus on New York, the programming highlighted the epicenter of American musical theater, which offered Weill a workplace with creative opportunities when he emigrated to the United States. Weill needed remarkably little time not only to learn how Broadway worked but also to enlarge its language, means, and scope, so that he could continue to pursue his artistic goals.

The festival’s opening concert successfully placed Weill in his American context. The program presented selections from his American catalogue ranging from *Johnny Johnson* (1936) to *Street Scene* (1947), mixed with songs by his contemporaries, chosen from such classics of the genre as Richard Rodgers’s *Oklahoma!*, Cole Porter’s *Kiss Me, Kate*, and Frank Loesser’s *Guys and Dolls*. The concert’s title, “New York, New York,” did not come from Kander and Ebb’s song, popularized by Frank Sinatra, but referred to the song from Leonard Bernstein’s *On the Town*. Also titled “New York, New York,” the number opens Bernstein’s show, introducing three exuberant sailors ready to take full advantage of a 24-hour shore leave in New York. For this concert, the number likewise served as the powerful beginning of a tour of New York’s musical theater in the 1930s and ’40s.

Bernstein’s day in the city actually provided bookends for the program: With “Some Other Time,” a slightly melancholy number in which the sailors realize their day is coming to an end, the concert also signals that its end is near. And yet another number from the show, “Lonely Town,” matched up admirably with two other songs of loneliness: “Lonely House” from *Street Scene* and “Lonely Room” from *Oklahoma!*. The program offered considerable variety, but its structure was far from arbitrary. Another good idea, at least conceptually, was to bracket the intermission with two instrumental pieces. The Symphonic Nocturne from *Lady in the Dark*, a concert suite richly arranged by Robert Russell Bennett, came over so well in a reading by the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, conducted by this year’s artist-in-residence at the Fest, James Holmes, that the audience demanded encores then and there. The choice of Aaron Copland’s Suite from *Appalachian Spring* before intermission proved less effective; the piece, although thematically a nice counterpart to the songs from *Oklahoma!*, did not fit very well into the wider context of the evening. Following on the heels of Gershwin’s “Oh Lord, I’m on My Way,” the hymn-like finale from *Porgy and Bess*, Copland’s Suite came across as an anti-climax. It didn’t help that the orchestra was not playing its best.

But that didn’t detract from the evening’s merit and merriment, as James Holmes led the orchestra with such energy and irresistible verve that nobody would have been surprised if he had broken into a tap dance or joined the soloists for a round of singing. Speaking of the evening’s soloists—Richard Todd Adams, Maria Failla, Analisa Leaming, Michael “Tuba” McKinsey, and Jacob Keith Watson—they were all prizewinners in the Lotte Lenya Competition between 2003 and 2012. The Competition, now in its fifteenth year, focuses not only on singing but also on presenting convincingly acted renditions of songs. And



Jacob Keith Watson (above) sings “Lonely House”; Analisa Leaming and Richard Todd Adams (below) perform “People Will Say We’re in Love” with the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, conducted by James Holmes.



PHOTOS: ANDREA'S BURKHARDT

indeed, all five soloists, though offering different vocal types and characteristics, possessed great versatility and stage presence. Depending on the musical number, they also formed various duets and ensembles as needed, cleverly staged by Danny Costello with scintillating variety.

To highlight only the most recent (2012) winners: Maria Failla did justice not only to the finesse and sophistication of Weill’s “That’s Him” but also, joined by Analisa Leaming, to the comedy of Loesser’s “Marry the Man Today” and even to the operatic intensity of “Remember that I Care” from *Street Scene*. Her partner in that duet, Jacob Keith Watson, seems to be at home on both the musical and the operatic stage. Right after the *Street Scene* duet, his performance (as a soloist) of Loesser’s “Sit Down, You’re Rockin’ the Boat” became the evening’s showstopper and had to be encoored. At last, the evening’s finale, the title number of *Oklahoma!*, united all five soloists in a highly energetic performance and again stirred the enthusiastic audience, which wouldn’t stop applauding until it was granted another encore.

**Gisela Maria Schubert  
Hameln**

# Down in the Valley & Five Songs from Huckleberry Finn

## Kurt Weill Fest Dessau

8–9 March 2013

This year's installment of the Kurt Weill Fest placed the composer's American years in the spotlight. For the role of *spiritus rector* and artist-in-residence, the festival organizers engaged the British conductor James Holmes, a bona fide Weill expert (and more), who conducted not one but several programs: the opening gala concert with the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, a Broadway revue for three singers, and—a high point—a semi-staged production of the one-act folk opera *Down in the Valley* that Weill conceived for amateur groups.

Holmes led a diverse group of truly outstanding young performers, collaborating for the first time, to a remarkably unified achievement that was interrupted time and again by applause and greeted at the end with a thunderous ovation; the sold-out program became one of the must-see events of the festival. The applause, of course, also celebrated Weill and his librettist, Arnold Sundgaard, as *Down in the Valley*, surely an unknown work for the vast majority of the audience, unfolded all of its assets in this enthralling performance: a moving plot with both lyrical and dramatic qualities, flawless orchestration, marvelous Weillian songs and ensemble numbers, and of course wonderful traditional folk songs, especially the title song that recurs several times and is instantly hummable.

Three of the soloists were former prizewinners at the Lotte Lenya Competition: the beguiling lyric soprano Analisa Leaming (Jennie Parsons), glorious tenor James Benjamin Rodgers (Brack Weaver), and Jacob Lewis Smith (Thomas Bouché), a bass with a knack for acting; they were joined by Swedish baritone Eric Ander (Preacher). Everybody in the youthful cast took palpable joy in fleshing out his or her character, yet they all exuded an aura of seasoned stagecraft. The small orchestra consisted of members from the Frankfurt-based International Ensemble Modern Academy, and the choral parts were taken by the chamber choir Cantamus from nearby Halle—Handel's birthplace. Holmes drew a compelling performance from the young artists, with impeccably chosen tempos, precise and clear rhythms, and infallible sensitivity to the intricacies of Weill's orchestral writing.

Director Danny Costello has led many musicals at the Theater des Westens, and it showed. Seldom have I witnessed a semi-staged work of musical theater in which spoken dialogue and singing alternated as seamlessly as they did here. Working without a set, Costello staged the action only by means of ingenious blocking and lighting. Not only that, he took on the (speaking) role of Jennie's father. Other actors joined in, and, the cast unfolded the story of Brack and Jennie with excellent pacing and at times breathtaking suspense. One of the evening's gems—in addition to Jennie's great songs "Brack Weaver, My True Love" and "The Lonesome Dove"—was the scene in the Shadow Creek



James Benjamin Rodgers  
as Brack Weaver and  
Analisa Leaming as  
Jennie Parsons in *Down  
in the Valley*.

PHOTO: SEBASTIAN GÜNDEL

Café, where the ensemble number "Hoe-Down" starts out in a bluesy mode and builds to an increasingly exuberant chorus. It could hardly be a criticism that the choir from Halle, experienced in the repertoire of madrigals, Bach, and Handel, could not always execute the American rhythms perfectly. Their approach seemed too Lutheran and reserved, especially in the title song, even though Holmes never stopped trying to coax a more passionate performance from them. Perhaps the musical idiom was simply too unfamiliar.

The 40-minute *Down in the Valley* requires a companion piece; instead of *Der Jasager*, Weill's other opera for amateurs, which might have made an intriguing complement, we heard the five songs that Weill drafted for his last project, an adaptation of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, which Weill and his collaborator Maxwell Anderson began in 1950, just before the composer's untimely death. The five songs, "River Chanty," "Come in, Mornin'," "Apple Jack," "This Time Next Year," and "Catfish Song," consisted only of "very swiftly written" piano-vocal drafts (according to David Drew), which Robert Russell Bennett orchestrated in the 1950s for a concert performance. With permission from the Kurt Weill Foundation, Holmes created a new scoring for three soloists and chamber ensemble. He placed his versions of the songs at the beginning of the program, and although lovingly conducted by Holmes, lovingly sung by the three Competition winners, and lovingly played by the International Ensemble Modern Academy, the result was decidedly mixed. For my taste, the arrangements overwhelmed the folk-like simplicity of Weill's songs with too much bustle and filigree, and the orchestration came across as rather fussy in places. In a nutshell, I found Holmes's instrumentation too artful to be convincing. That impression was only heightened when we heard Weill's own orchestrations (for *Down in the Valley*) after intermission.

Jürgen Schebera  
Berlin

# Der Kuhhandel

## Komische Oper Berlin

18, 22 January 2013

When Barrie Kosky became Intendant of the Komische Oper last fall, he aimed to return the house to its roots—Mozart, baroque opera, and operetta—augmented by contemporary works. Two concert performances of *Der Kuhhandel* (1934) provided the centerpiece of the Komische Oper's Kurt Weill Woche (which included revivals of stage works, orchestral concerts, and song evenings) and demonstrated Kosky's determination not only to devote a full week to performances of Weill's work but more generally to mine the German lyric theater for its treasures.

*Der Kuhhandel*, with a libretto by Robert Vambéry, represents an ironic take on *mitteleuropäische* operetta and on Offenbach (whose work is itself an ironic take on *opéra-comique*) and makes considerable musical and dramatic demands. Throughout the piece, Weill engineers a collision between an operetta-style romance plot and a mordant, topical, anti-war satire. He uses this collision to dramatize the struggle between individuals and the state of Santa Maria, which demands that its citizens sacrifice everything, including their marriage plans and their cows, to wage war on the neighboring land of Ucqua. The cows—replicas of which were placed in each of the Komische Oper's six stage boxes—are more than a gimmick; they are the protagonists' livelihood, suddenly subject to confiscation by a war-mongering state. (Might this blackmailing of vulnerable individuals have sounded familiar to Germans in 1934?) The dynamic tensions Weill creates between characters and between musical styles bring to mind his own observation about Offenbach: "With all masters of this genre, from Cervantes to Chaplin, satire is another form of expression for serious, philosophically motivated content, which, in topsy-turvy fashion, appears with utmost concision." The Komische Oper's program note rightly acknowledges *Kuhhandel*'s textural and generic complexities and contradictions, noting that it is an operetta that "plays with fire." Unfortunately, this concert performance rarely caught fire and only intermittently realized those complexities.

Conductor Antony Hermus elicited a precise, spirited, and richly colored performance from orchestra and chorus. Weill's Latin rhythms had the required snap, his love duets the necessary sensual languor, and his ceremonial and military numbers a cynical grandeur that correctly equivocated between pomposity and genuine brilliance. The program credited Wolfgang Berthold with "Szenische Assistenz und Spielleitung," but he never found a consistent or convincing style for Weill's most "operettic"



Vincent Wolfsteiner



Ina Kringelborn



Daniel Schmutzhard

work, in which every number is multilayered, marked by the ambivalence and quicksilver irony that typifies Weill's theater. The singers, in particular, seem to have been left entirely to their own devices.

The performance started winningly with the entrance of the mischievous Max Hopp, sporting waspish charm and a Clark Gable mustache. Hopp served as a captivatingly oily master of ceremonies and also portrayed Felipe Chao, the American arms dealer, a provocative casting decision that pointed up the magnetism and the menace of the capitalist wheeler-dealer. Hopp may have chewed the scenery a little too mercilessly, but he did keep the irony in play. Among the other singers, Vincent Wolfsteiner (Juan) stood out; he sang the romantic hero a bit too earnestly but with ardor and musicality. He was not, regrettably, matched by his Juanita, Ina Kringelborn, whose tone lacked focus and whose singing was as colorless, stiff, and smug as her acting. The other lead, Daniel Schmutzhard (General García Conchaz), sang heroically despite battling a cold. The other singers were more than adequate to Weill's considerable vocal challenges, except for Stefan Sevenich, who mugged and camped his way through several secondary roles like a manic schoolboy trying desperately to please his teachers. Unfortunately, both his out-of-control performance and Kringelborn's self-satisfied non-acting undermined *Kuhhandel*'s political message and, in Siegfried Kracauer's words, "the revolutionary function of frivolity, parody, etc." They were symptomatic of a *Spielleitung* that never established a consistent tone or point of view, never plumbed the piece's depth, never conveyed the life-and-death struggle depicted in the plot, and never mastered the precarious balance that Weill strikes between romance and irony.

It is perhaps unfair to let my reservations about the staging overshadow the performance's very real musical achievements and the Komische Oper's willingness to program one of Weill's least-known works. The chorus, directed by André Kellinghaus, sang vigorously and gave the Santa Maria citizenry palpable musical and theatrical power. But perhaps the performance's greatest strength was its tacit acknowledgment of the pivotal position of *Kuhhandel* in Weill's output. None of Weill's other European works reflected quite so ironically on operetta or provided Weill with so much source material for the music he would write in the U.S. I felt an undeniable *frisson* hearing "Juans Lied" begin as if it were "September Song" but then turn into a very different number that produces a completely different effect. And hearing the magnificent "Die Ballade von Pharao" (omitted from the 1990 recording), which seems almost to anticipate Leonard Bernstein's Jewish music. This performance of *Der Kuhhandel*,

as well as the increasing visibility in Germany of Weill's Broadway shows, provides further evidence that the power and diversity of his output continues to earn recognition and appreciation in his native land.

David Savran  
New York

# BBC Concert Orchestra

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

12 April 2013

Alex Ross's book *The Rest is Noise* has inspired a year-long concert series exploring 20th-century music at London's South Bank Centre. Weill has taken a significant part in the series, understandably so given the sympathy with which Ross writes about him, or at least about his European career. Predictable works have made an appearance—*Dreigroschenoper*, *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Sieben Todsünden* among them—but this all-Weill program conducted by Keith Lockhart and entitled “Berlin to Broadway” spread the net a little wider. It was a pleasure to see that the hall was sold out, and there were many more young people in the audience than usual in London's concert halls. They responded with boundless enthusiasm, which was very encouraging to the more elderly among us. Kurt Weill is alive and well in London.

The evening opened with Symphony no. 2. As great orchestras from the Concertgebouw to the Vienna Philharmonic have found out, this is no pushover. The notes may look simple on the page, but that very simplicity—as with Rossini—means that the slightest flaw is immediately apparent. Fluffs you could get away with in the turmoil of Mahler won't wash here. Lockhart ensured that there weren't any. The hypercritical might have wanted more “ache” in the trombone solos in the second movement, more honey in the sound of the upper strings, and more cheeky humor in the repeated wind-band section of the finale, but this was a very compelling reading. However often you hear it, it remains a simply astonishing work, with its counterpoint of Bach-like inventiveness and its homage to the whole 19th-century tradition of symphonic writing—not least in a manipulation of basic thematic material worthy of Haydn. And yet for all that homage it could only have been composed by Weill.

Next up was *Der neue Orpheus* in a performance that erased memories of the worse than disappointing Capriccio recording (2004), thanks to Lockhart's careful preparation—orchestral textures were wonderfully clear and incisive—and two outstanding protagonists. The soprano Ilona Domnich boasted bright, clear tone and excellent diction, which is crucial in a work where Yvan Goll's words count for almost as much as Weill's notes. The violinist Charles Mutter brought a muscular approach to his playing, and communicated as effectively as Domnich; they interacted just as the composer wanted them to, abstractly yet curiously closely as people. Another astonishing work. Some might think it odd that a composer as concerned throughout his life with the here-and-now of the human condition should write a surrealist piece, but in this sister-work to *Royal Palace* he did, and both are utterly original. Weill's output is versatility writ large.

The second part of the concert took us to the USA, with an hour-long program of 14 songs from the Broadway shows of 1938–49 selected by Kim Kowalke and Lockhart, and sung by a quartet of young soloists. There were one or two problems here. First, the singers were mic'ed, and the amplification was handled so poorly that it served to muffle rather than enhance clarity of text. Perhaps it was necessary because the orchestra was on stage; even though Lockhart hewed to the original Broadway charts, the



Keith Lockhart conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra.

PHOTO: CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU

singers may have needed some help to be heard. But the combination of that built-in imbalance and careless engineering meant that the words were blotted out rather too often. When the concert was broadcast later on BBC Radio 3, the balance was better managed, nice for radio listeners, less nice for those who had paid to hear it live.

No two Weill enthusiasts will agree on which songs give fair representation of the composer's American period, but the choice here seemed slightly odd. The program notes rightly tended to reject the notion of the “two Weills,” along with the insulting “sold out to Broadway” canard of the 1960s. But Lockhart—who had to emcee the whole concert because there were no BBC presenters—did use the words “complete transformation” in his introduction, and he favored a brassy, big-band sound which suggested just such a seismic shift. It would have been better to choose songs that demonstrated a continuous musical and indeed socially conscious dramatic line from Berlin to Broadway. More, for instance, from *Johnny Johnson* (only the brief “Hymn to Peace” and “Farewell, Goodbye” in a less than spontaneous encore), more from *Lost in the Stars* than just the unrepresentative title song, beautifully though it was sung by Justin Hopkins. The sopranos Susanna Hurrell and Kathryn Martin and tenor Paul Curievici were tested by repertory stretching from “musical” musicals like *Venus* to near-operatic numbers from *Street Scene* and *Love Life*. By the end, the program did indeed suggest “two Weills,” and I would argue that it needn't and shouldn't have.

**Rodney Milnes**  
London

In an interview with the Foundation on 27 February 2013, Keith Lockhart had this to say about *Der neue Orpheus*:

“I've been a Weill fan for a long time, and I've done quite a few works of his over the years, but I have to say that *Der neue Orpheus* was a piece totally unknown—unknown to a lot of audiences, and to a lot of musicians, for that matter. But when I started studying it, I thought it was fascinating, a wonderful revolutionary piece. It definitely shows the young composer exploring novel forms—a cantata with a violin solo, and all that. It's funny, I know a *lot* of music, and this piece is totally unique. I don't know another piece quite like it.”

# Johnny Johnson

Kurt Weill Edition, Series I, Volume 13

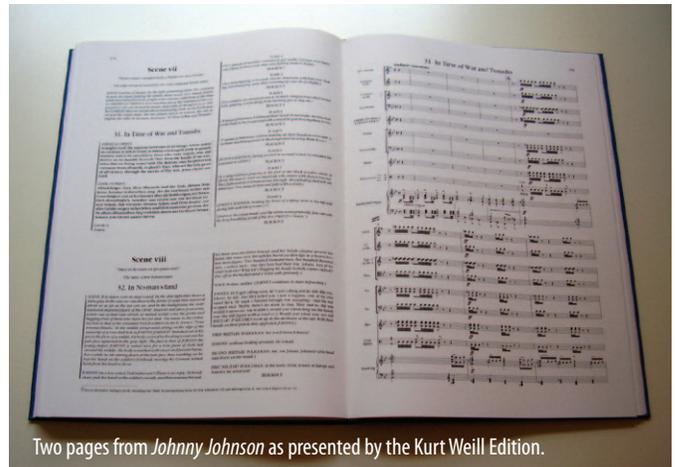
Edited by Tim Carter

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The Group Theatre, described by Ethan Mordden as “the only successful leftist theatrical entity of the time and, in the long run, the most influential American theatre entity, period” produced one musical (against twenty-three plays) during its brief but important reign. The musical was *Johnny Johnson*, the story of a lowly soldier in the Great War diagnosed as insane for his pacifism. Weill’s first American show opened on Broadway, 19 November 1936, and closed 68 performances later on 16 January. By comparison, the more centrist Theatre Guild, prior to its greatest successes in the following decade (*Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*), similarly managed to produce only one musical during this period, *Porgy and Bess* (1935). While neither the Group nor the Guild was particularly interested in producing musicals, *Johnny Johnson*, like *Porgy and Bess* the previous year, seemed a worthy exception, especially when the Group could take advantage of the services of Kurt Weill, newly arrived in America to seek his artistic fortune (and livelihood).

The Group-think held that Paul Green, a poet and playwright who had provided the company with its first play, *The House of Connelly* (1931), could write successful lyrics. Although Green’s book is almost certainly a little long for a “play with music in three acts,” it offers a fresh and still timely approach to the folly and absurdities of war. As Malcolm Goldstein writes in *The Political Stage: An American Drama and the Theater of the Great Depression* (1974), “Green’s point in the play is that Johnny, the ordinary man who abhors war and tries to stop it, is wiser and better balanced than the allegedly sagacious persons who declare and wage war and send him to a sanitarium for his pacifism.” Although *Johnny Johnson* is a long show, it is not a problematic one such as *The Firebrand of Florence*, and over the years many have shared Marc Blitzstein’s judgment printed in *Modern Music* during the show’s opening run: “Kurt Weill has written some of his best music.” Tim Carter’s meticulous and thoughtful edition ought to inspire theater companies to mount this fascinating show for new generations of audiences.

Cheryl Crawford, one of the Group’s managerial troika along with Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg, appreciated Weill’s talent from the beginning and would go on to produce two Weill shows, *One Touch of Venus* and *Love Life*. The young actor Elia Kazan, who played two of the sixty-nine speaking roles in *Johnny Johnson*, was deemed too inexperienced to direct Weill’s first show, and a reluctant Strasberg assumed this role. An impressive number of the many bit players in *Johnny Johnson* would eventually gain stardom in theater, film, and television, including Lee J. Cobb, the first protagonist in *Death of a Salesman* (directed by Kazan), the future directors and teachers Robert Lewis and



Two pages from *Johnny Johnson* as presented by the Kurt Weill Edition.

Sanford Meisner, and John (then Jules) Garfield. Phoebe Brand (Minnie Belle) was probably the only trained singer in the Group, but near the end of his long career, Luther Adler, who sang “The Tea Song,” would achieve brief musical prominence when he filled in for Zero Mostel in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Weill’s musical contribution may have been more substantial than Paul Green and Lee Strasberg had in mind, and the Group’s vocal limitations are well attested. Yet *Johnny*’s downfall was most likely the result of its venue. For some reason, Crawford was able to book only the 44th Street Theater, a 1500-seat barn designed for operettas. Judging from contemporary reviews and subsequent memoirs and interviews, the sweet but small, non-operatic, and unamplified Group voices, which sounded fine in rehearsals at the Belmont (a theater one-third the size of the 44th Street), could not be heard properly in the cavernous new space. Critical reception suffered accordingly.

Strasberg’s solution was to make *Johnny Johnson* less of a musical by deleting one song after another. Internal notes suggest that Minny Belle’s “Farewell, Goodbye,” one of the first casualties, was dropped “because of its sentimentality” (“Introduction,” p. 16). Carter also gleaned from production notes that “Aggie’s Song,” in I.ii and “Song of the Wounded Frenchman” in II.i were dropped for their lack of effectiveness in the larger theater. The original and often-praised “Song of the Goddess,” sung by the Statue of Liberty herself as Johnny goes to France to fight and wordlessly reprised upon his return, “was cut after the Monday run-through because the words could not be heard” (15). Crawford reports in her memoir *One Naked Individual* that the Goddess’s music was heard on opening night, but Carter bases his counter-claim on the presumably more reliable internal notes prepared during the run-throughs. Another candidate for the scrapheap, the powerful and frequently commended “Song of the Guns,” sung by a trio of cannons raised above the barricades, was ultimately spared.

An editor under strict instructions to consider only the Broadway production of *Johnny Johnson* would have to decide what to do about the deleted songs, internal cuts within retained songs, and the substitution of speech for song in the delivery of “Oh the Rio Grande (Cowboy Song)” and “Mon Ami, My Friend.” Fortunately, a few months after the show closed, the Federal Theatre Project offered a more musically complete production and a more palatable option for an editor wishing to create a scholarly edition seventy-five years later. Although the FTP cut some songs, most significantly “The Song of the Goddess,”

this song and even “Farewell, Goodbye” were retained for the version of the play published by Samuel French, supporting Carter’s inclusion of “Goddess” and placement of “Farewell” in an appendix.

Both Green and Weill preferred a *Johnny Johnson* that for the most part preserved the work in its pre-run-through state. Since the script and music used by the FTP in its Los Angeles performance generally follows this version, it is fair to say that Carter decided sensibly in taking the script and music of this production as a point of departure. Fortunately, despite a lack of communication between Green and Weill after November 1936, their respective script and music agree on many of the crucial details; even when these details are fuzzy the basic picture is clear. Thus in Carter’s edition the FTP libretto constitutes the privileged source for the play (designated **Tt4**), and Weill’s holograph full score of 1936 (**Fh**) serves as the central musical source.

Carter’s insight and thoroughness, demonstrated in his approach to the numerous and intricate problems that remain, inspires confidence. A crucial example, as the editor explains in both his generous “Introduction” and his meticulous “Critical Notes,” is “Farewell, Goodbye,” which poses a number of editorial challenges. In the absence of corroborative source or other evidence that warrants including this song in the main musical text, Carter offers it in an Appendix. The only other item in the Appendix is a longer version of “Aggie’s Song,” a song that indisputably belongs in the main score. Thus only with “Farewell, Goodbye” is the presence or absence of an entire song at stake.

In the full score of his edition, which helpfully includes all the dialogue and stage directions, Carter offers a footnote (99) to indicate the option in I.ii that best corresponds to the text published by French (**Tp1**). This text offers a somewhat shorter version of “Farewell, Goodbye.” A second and for Carter the most likely option can be found later in the score (152) where he suggests that the song (numbered A15) replace the “Interlude after Act I, Scene v.” In the Critical Report Carter notes that there is sufficient source evidence “to enable its use in I.ii, which is where Green finally placed the song (in **Tt4** and **Tp1**), though Weill never endorsed it there” (98). Carter also calls attention to unmistakable references to this song in a pencil note on **Tt2** and on an interpolated “loose sheet,” in which the song is cued for I.v.

Carter argues that “having Minny Belle appear in I.v makes some dramatic sense (it also gives her more to do in Act I)” (Critical Report, 100). He also notes that since the Group Theatre abandoned “Farewell, Goodbye” “early in the run-throughs,” its placement in I.v “does not have any justification in the musical sources” (101). For this reason, Carter, who considers the song meritorious (as do I), is nonetheless faced with the untenable (albeit desirable) conclusion that “including ‘Farewell, Goodbye’ (and its continuation in I.v) in a production of *Johnny Johnson* would mean ignoring choices made by, or at least forced upon, Green and Weill during the rehearsal process—and therefore run counter to the principles of the Edition” (100).

Phoebe Brand, the first Minny Belle, recalled more than sixty years later in an interview with Foster Hirsch that “over the years whenever we’d meet, Kurt would tell me that Lee had cut the best song in the show.” But if Lee Strasberg had cut this best song during the run-throughs and Green reinstated it for the published edition, Weill apparently was willing to sacrifice his favorite song for the greater good of the show (and perhaps in the process preserve the principle that even major characters, at least in this musical, are not entitled to more than one musical

number). Minny Belle sings “Oh Heart of Love” in I.ii, after which her musical presence fades away (although her song is retained in Johnny’s musical memory), and Minny appears in only three more scenes. More unusual still, perhaps unprecedented in a musical, is Johnny’s musical reticence and delayed entrance. He sings not much more than Nathan Detroit and is almost as late in arriving. Johnny’s lone song is foreshadowed instrumentally on several occasions—in some later versions and recordings he is allowed to introduce his song earlier in the evening—but in the Group Theatre and Federal Theatre Project productions and Carter’s edition, Johnny does not sing until the end of the play. At this long-awaited moment Johnny, now in his fifties and appearing much older but with his dignity intact, momentarily stops hawking toys next to a “lightless iron lamppost” and “suddenly he begins to sing to the empty air.”

Weill’s *Johnny Johnson* score offers a potpourri of self-borrowing, quotation and allusion, and pastiches of various song types, the latter ranging from patriotic marches, hymns, and French cabaret to a cowboy number. The first of two extended self-borrowings from the European years is the waltz “Das Lied vom Branntweinhändler” from *Happy End*—transformed from triple to duple meter but otherwise unchanged—which appears near the outset of the instrumental Introduction and recurs on other occasions. The other conspicuous self-borrowing is the melody of the refrain of “Youkali,” which appears at the conclusion of the “Song of the Goddess.” A short list of allusions to other composers might include the accompaniment figure of Schubert’s “Ständchen” that supports the ironic serenade of the cannon trio in “The Song of the Guns,” the ironic snippets of “La Marseillaise” in the “The Allied High Command,” and the popular World War I song “You’re in the Army Now” in “Interlude after Act I, Scene iii.” New instances are still being discovered in this fertile and unplowed field. For example, Stephen Hinton has noted in his recent study, *Weill’s Musical Theater* (2012), that before the unmistakable appearance of “Branntweinhändler” from *Happy End* in the trombone, Weill opens the Introduction by using the *rhythm* of another portion of the song. While preparing this essay I noticed a quotation of the lick that opens and closes jazz violinist Joe Venuti’s once-popular “Doin’ Things” (1927) in “The Dance of the Generals” (now scored for trumpets rather than a violin) and that the opening four notes of the waltz “Oh Heart of Love” offers an identical match to the opening of the verse of “After the Ball,” the late nineteenth-century waltz ballad given new life in *Show Boat*.

Carter negotiates the rugged terrain of his sources with great skill, and the level of scholarship exhibited in this edition, as with other Weill editions, is admirably high. Carter consistently complements his impeccable scholarly standards with a practical touch. Recognizing, for example, that directors who stage *Johnny Johnson* are faced with a daunting amount of material (“some seventy minutes of music and quite extensive spoken dialogue”), Carter devotes significant space in the final section of his “Introduction” to practical advice on reducing the show to a more manageable length. And of course directors are free to perform an appendectomy and take advantage of the opportunity the Edition provides to resurrect “Farewell, Goodbye.”

My only significant suggestion is that future editions of Weill’s Broadway shows provide full cast and song lists from the original productions. In the present edition only the first three of the 69 characters who speak at least one line make it to the first page of the playbill reproduced on page 46. A careful reading of

Carter's "Introduction" makes it possible to create a song list for the Group Theatre production, but readers interested in quickly finding what was sung on opening night, a major milestone in a fluid genre, should not need to expend so much effort to see how the work changed between the New York production and the FTP Los Angeles "List of Musical Numbers" (55). My only disagreement with the masterful "Introduction" is Carter's characterization of *On Your Toes*, Rodgers and Hart's innovative, imaginative, and in its day an *unconventional* integration of dance (choreographed by George Balanchine, no less) and story, as an example of "conventional musical fare" (16).

One hopes that the representatives of Broadway due to appear in the series "Music in the United States" (*Porgy and Bess* and *Follies*) will match the standards set by the Kurt Weill Edition. *Johnny Johnson* is the second of Weill's Broadway shows

to appear (the first was Joel Galand's exemplary edition of *The Firebrand of Florence*). Lest one think the Foundation has made an effort to publish these shows in reverse order of popularity (*Firebrand* lasted 43 performances followed by *Johnny's* 68), the next three projected volumes include Weill's two biggest hits, *One Touch of Venus* (567 performances) and *Lady in the Dark* (462), followed by *Love Life* (252). It is probably too much to wish for, but comparable scholarly editions of other Broadway creators, or even selected landmark shows, would make an enormous contribution to Broadway scholarship. Let Tim Carter and the Kurt Weill Foundation's edition of *Johnny Johnson* show the way.

Geoffrey Block  
University of Puget Sound



## Love Song: The Lives of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya

by Ethan  
Mordden

New York: St. Martin's Press,  
2012. 334 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-312-67657-5

*Love Song* contains no original research or interviews. Nor does it have a fresh point of view about either the lives or the work of its subjects. As biography, it is often sketchy; as musical or theatrical analysis it tends to be random and casual. I can't claim, as the author of *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway*, to have learned anything new, nor did I feel challenged to re-think conclusions I had drawn during my research and writing.

Nonetheless, *Love Song* has one attribute that makes it essential reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in its subjects: the jaunty, irrepressible author himself, a masterful guide and established chronicler of the American musical theater. Like an auteur director, Ethan Mordden has a distinct signature—crisp, conversational, richly opinionated, and spiked throughout with delicious, unexpected adjectives, verbs, and turns of phrase. Familiar stories acquire luster when he tells them. The author is diligent—he has read and listened widely and he comments on his sources in bibliographic and discographic essays (full disclosure: he calls my book "indispensable")—yet he eschews a sober academic tone as he translates his research into text with a lilt and swagger all its own. He's a racy, quick-sketch artist, by turns enthusiastic and indignant.

Although *Love Song* is billed as a dual biography, it is clear that on a personal level Mordden warms to Lenya far more than to Weill. How he relishes her sardonic wit and irony, her candor, her survivor's pluck. He evokes the cadence and pitch, the purr-

ing sexuality, of Lenya's one-of-a-kind voice in both speech and song. Mordden can be counted among Lenya's many conquests, and smitten, he glosses over her faults: her stinginess, her abrupt about-faces, her withering sarcasm. Ignoring, or at least downplaying, her almost startling homeliness, he enthrones her as a continental beauty, a seducer in the same league as Dietrich or Garbo. Lenya, to be sure, was a unique artist, but Mordden presents her as a more prominent performer in Berlin and New York than she really was.

More masked than Lenya, Weill is less accessible to Mordden, and he doesn't enjoy the composer in the same way that he dotes on the composer's muse. Too easily, I think, he defines Weill as a man in control of his destiny, and in one of the many leitmotifs that endow his galloping prose with a beguiling musical quality, he likens Weill to Julien Sorel, the hero of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*. The literary analogy feels imposed and prevents Mordden from looking more closely at Weill's contradictions, his singularity. Weill, like Lenya, had extraordinary survival skills, but he did not adapt to new environments quite as easily or swiftly as Mordden suggests. Weill was more complicated than the compulsive, monkish figure presented here. He was more droll, more cranky, altogether sexier and more fun—and more acidulous than Mordden's work-obsessed esthete. He falls back too often on the composer's infamous riposte, "But, Lenya, you know you come right after my music!"

The author underplays a fact evident in the letters between Weill and Lenya—the two adopted a caustic attitude toward other people and shared contempt for almost everyone. Even close friends—Maxwell Anderson, Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin—were not always exempt. Surely their shared disdain for others' follies bound them together through divorce, re-marriage, and extra-marital affairs. They were two against the world, suspicious of the motives of others.

Unfortunately, Mordden often seems more engaged by a supporting character than he does by Weill. (If he shortchanges

Weill, he gets it right in a shrewd assessment of Lenya's second husband, George Davis, instrumental in orchestrating the renewal of Lenya's career and Weill's reputation. Mordden's depiction of Davis as a culturally omnivorous, well-connected gay man is keenly drawn.) Brecht and his wife, Helene Weigel, are the arch-villains of the story. Mordden limns Brecht as a political hypocrite, a fake Communist (Mordden is a rabid anti-Communist who decries Soviet tyranny and barbarism), a low-down, belligerent, cocky, greedy, unwashed, repugnant Machiavel—and Weigel, in the gospel according to Mordden, is every bit her husband's equal in political and financial foul play. (Nor does the biographer spare Brecht's ever-obstreperous son, Stefan.) Mordden reluctantly grants the writer stature as a poet with the gift of transforming the 'contributions' he steals from others into his own pungent authorial voice. Every time Brecht appears, Mordden interrupts his narrative with another series of poison-dart invectives, piling diatribe on insult in a delirious display of spleen. It all takes up more space than it should in a biography of Weill and Lenya, but who would want to stop Mordden in mid-rant? (In a minor key, sniveling Franz Werfel and his imperious wife Alma also incite Mordden's scorn.)

Mordden makes the common-sense point, now widely if not universally accepted, that strict separations between the European and American phases of Weill's career are outdated, unwarranted, and a little foolish. One of the author's leitmotifs, chanted throughout, is Lenya's claim that there were many more than two Kurt Weills. As Mordden sagely contends (and proves), there were indeed numerous Kurt Weills in both acts of his career, as the composer changed his tune from work to work, first in Germany, then in exile in Paris, London, and New York. Succinctly, with unflinching deftness and finesse, Mordden charts Weill's non-stop experiments in transgressing traditional barriers between opera and musical theater, between classical and popular, between "high" and "low" styles in his genre-bending odyssey across two continents.

Mordden's technically rigorous musical analyses are conducted with relish. But they are brief and highly selective; the author pauses to consider a few songs in each show and skips the rest. He cites *Street Scene* as the fulfillment of Weill's long-held intention to compose a Broadway opera, but then slights much of the score. He is disappointingly stingy on *Love Life*, the *ur*-concept musical, and rushes through *Lost in the Stars*. Mordden's headlong pace gives the book a non-stop fizz, but his musical insights are so knowing, and delivered with such offhand aplomb, that the reader is left wanting more. Handling technical matters as asides, the author gives much more weight to narrative momentum; he quickly pulls back from closeups on Weill's music-making to provide panoramic long shots of the politics and cultural context of Weimar Germany and of Broadway and Hollywood.

*Love Song* exists not because it opens up new territory or offers insights unavailable elsewhere, but because Ethan Mordden, maestro of the synoptic history of the American musical theatre, wanted to write it. There may be those for whom Mordden's quirky, hit-and-run, mandarin style, punctuated with capitalized words, chatty detours, and a sometimes audacious mixture of high and low diction, does not work. It works for me.

**Foster Hirsch**  
New York

# Foundation News

## Kurt Weill Foundation Expands Grant Program

In addition to existing categories funding performances of Weill's musical works, scholarly research, and educational initiatives directly related to Weill and Lotte Lenya, financial support will now be awarded in the same categories for projects directly related to Marc Blitzstein, including performances of his musical works. The Foundation administers Blitzstein's musical and literary estate.

The Foundation has also added a new mentorship category to the Grant Program, entitled "Kurt Weill Mentors." Under this program, performing arts organizations and educational institutions may request financial support to engage performers, conductors, directors, and scholars who have been designated "Weill Mentors" by the Kurt Weill Foundation, to aid in the preparation of Weill or Blitzstein stage or concert performances, present workshops or lectures, or participate in scholarly symposia. Such requests may be considered even when the relevant performances would not otherwise be eligible for support under the Foundation's grant program. Applicants should contact the Foundation for further information, and the Foundation will recommend appropriate Weill Mentors for specific projects.

### 2013 Grant Recipients

#### Sponsorship

Symphony Space, New York, NY. All-Weill gala concert.

#### Professional Performances

Gotham Chamber Opera, New York, NY. *Mahagonny Songspiel*.

Thessaloniki Concert Hall, Thessaloniki, Greece. *Der Jasager, Mahagonny Songspiel*.

#### University Performances

Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI. *The Threepenny Opera*.

Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover, Hannover, Germany. *Street Scene*.

Harrower Summer Opera Workshop, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. *Street Scene*.

Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, FL. *Street Scene*.

King's College, London, England. *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

Manhattan School of Music, New York, NY. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

#### Broadcast

WXXI Public Broadcasting, Rochester, NY. Series of three Kurt Weill programs.

#### Professional Development

*Previous Lenya Competition winners may apply for financial support for specific projects to help advance their careers as singer/actors. This year's awards, which supported German language study, voice lessons, repertoire coaching, acting classes, dance classes, and travel to auditions, went to:*

Matthew Grills

Christopher Dylan Herbert

Justin Hopkins

Zachary James

Analisa Leaming

Erik Liberman

Megan Marino

Ariela Morgenstern

James Benjamin Rodgers

Jacob Lewis Smith

Jacob Keith Watson.

## Weill Festival at CCM

The Foundation-sponsored year-long Weill Festival at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) received glowing reviews throughout the year:

**Threepenny Opera:** “A gangbusters production... [director Robin] Guarino fearlessly goes back to the musical satire’s sociopolitical roots in 1920s Berlin.... Guarino pushes the principal cast to the kind of performances that would fit right in with the popular entertainment of the era, the melodrama of silent film, the caricature of the vaudeville stage. I imagine the student cast will remember this as one of the most challenging and enlightening projects of their college careers. Everything about *The Threepenny Opera* carries out Guarino’s vision, as the cast prowls scenic designer John Arnone’s industrial set of catwalks, with the small orchestra (in costume) perched at the top. Musical director Roger Grodsky asks much and gets all from singers and musicians.”

– *Cincinnati Enquirer* (1 March 2013)

**Street Scene:** “A ravishing and engrossing production conducted by Mark Gibson and directed by Steven Goldstein... Their company of singers and musicians delivers a production that will stand as a high point of the Cincinnati stage season... Goldstein does wonderful work in establishing character and relationships.”

– *Cincinnati Enquirer* (16 November 2012)

**Into a Lamplit Room: The Songs of Kurt Weill** (revue): “Aubrey Berg has lovingly created a Weill sampler, avoiding clichéd chronology or tiresome geography, instead grouping songs thematically: *Peace and War*, *Women and Song*, *How Can You Tell an American?*, *Vive la Différence*, *Into a Lamplit Room*. With musical director Julie Spangler and choreographer Joey Dippel in sync with his vision, Berg delivers style in spades, exercising curatorial attention to the intent and spirit of [over 40 of] Weill’s songs... Some numbers... Spangler has turned into ensembles—stunningly so in the case of ‘Lonely House’ and the closing ‘Lost in the Stars.’”

– *Seen and Heard International* (5 March 2013)



CCM productions of *The Threepenny Opera* (above) and *Street Scene* (below).



### LoveMusik now available for licensing

*LoveMusik*, Harold Prince and Alfred Uhry’s 2007 musical suggested by the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, is now available for licensing from Rodgers & Hammerstein. Originally directed by Prince with a book by Uhry, it boasts an all-Weill score, consisting of a varied selection of twenty-seven songs from one end of his career to the other.

This is how R&H describes the show: “*LoveMusik* follows the lives of the unlikeliest of lovers—the brilliant, intellectual German composer Kurt Weill and a lusty girl from the streets of Vienna who became his muse and star, Lotte Lenya. *LoveMusik* is an epic romance, set in Berlin, Paris, Broadway, and Hollywood, spanning 25 years in the lives of this complicated couple. From their courtship and early collaborations in Europe, through their journey to America and the debut of the landmark musical *The Threepenny Opera* [after Weill’s death], *LoveMusik* gets deep inside this fascinating, complicated partnership. The musical features some of Weill’s best-loved songs, including ‘Speak Low,’ ‘Surabaya Johnny,’ ‘It Never Was You,’ ‘Mack the Knife,’ ‘September Song,’ and ‘Pirate Jenny.’”

# 2013 Lotte Lenya Competition

## Extraordinary Talents Win Top Prizes

It was an exhilarating day of exceptional performances as twelve finalists from four continents competed in the 15th Anniversary Lotte Lenya Competition, held on 13 April 2013 in Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Two filmmakers, hired by the Kurt Weill Foundation to produce a short documentary on the Competition, discreetly roamed the theater, capturing the day's events.

For the final round during the day, each contestant presented a diverse program that included an opera or operetta aria, two American musical theater songs (one from the pre-1968 "Golden Age" and one from 1968 or later), and a theatrical selection by Kurt Weill. That evening, they each performed two selections before a packed house in a festive concert. The panel of judges consisted of acclaimed soprano and 2010 Opera News Award winner Patricia Racette, British opera and musical theater conductor James Holmes, and Theodore S. Chapin, President of Rodgers & Hammerstein and Vice-Chairman of the American Theater Wing.

The audience burst into applause as each of the winners was announced. Baritone Douglas Carpenter of New York won the \$15,000 First Prize; the Second Prize of \$10,000 went to soprano Maren Weinberger of New York; and two Third Prizes of \$7,500 each were awarded to soprano Alison Arnopp of County Cork, Ireland, and soprano Lauren Roesner of Cincinnati.

Making an unexpected entrance stage left as if he had just arrived in Camelot, Carpenter began his dynamic program with a charming and funny rendition of Lancelot's song, "C'est moi," from the Lerner & Loewe classic. He followed with a moving performance of "Pierrot's Tanzlied" from Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, sung in German, "This is New" from *Lady in the Dark*, and a thrilling "Molasses to Rum" from the musical *1776*. Judges praised Carpenter for his "beautifully assembled program, completely invested interpretive choices, focused responses to both music and text, and wonderfully rich material delivered at an absolutely professional level."

Weinberger captivated the judges and audience by transitioning with ease from a very touching and conversational contemporary number ("Toll" by Jeff Blumenkrantz) to a terrifically sung "Chacun le sait" from *La fille du régiment*. The judges were especially impressed by her "wonderful storytelling, her fluent technique at the service of the material, and for making vocal fireworks mean something." Arnopp, whose highlights included "Adelaide's Aria" from *The Enchanted Pig* and "A Little Bit of Love" from *Wonderful Town*, delivered—as the judges put it—"a committed performance of a wide range of material that was both funny and moving, with acting choices that seemed invented in the moment." And Roesner, who gave "assured, detailed perfor-



2013 Lotte Lenya Competition winners (back row, l to r) Alison Arnopp, Rachel Kara Cordeiro-Pérez, Douglas Carpenter, Lauren Roesner, Maren Weinberger, Ginger Costa-Jackson and judges (front row, l to r) Ted Chapin, Patricia Racette, and James Holmes.

PHOTO: KURTWEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC

mances" that were "courageous and risk-taking, both vocally and dramatically," dazzled with her "Barbara-Song" and "Tom" from Michael John LaChiusa's *Hello Again*.

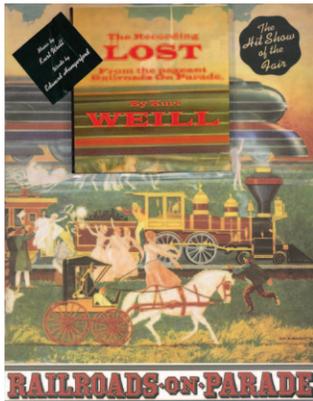
Soprano Rachel Kara Cordeiro-Pérez of Brooklyn, New York, and mezzo-soprano Ginger Costa-Jackson of Sandy, Utah, were honored with Lys Symonette Awards of \$3,000 each, named for Weill's musical assistant on Broadway. For Outstanding Performance of an Individual Number, Cordeiro-Pérez won for her heartfelt rendition of Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Breathe" from *In the Heights*, and Costa-Jackson for her show-stopping performance of the hilarious "Alto's Lament" by Marcy Heisler and Zina Goldrich.

The remaining six finalists each received an award of \$1,000: Daniel Berryman, tenor, of New York; Christian Ketter, tenor, of Chicago; Mingjie Lei, tenor, of Hengyang, China; Erin Mackey, soprano, of Astoria, New York; Heather Phillips, soprano, of Philadelphia; and Christy Sullivan, mezzo-soprano, of Sydney, Australia. Finalists had to make it through two rounds of auditions to reach the stage at Kilbourn: a preliminary video round followed by live performances at the semi-final round in New York before adjudicator/coaches Jeanine Tesori and Rebecca Luker.

The Kurt Weill Foundation distributed a record \$61,500 in prizes this year. Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$500,000 to exceptionally talented young singer-actors, many of whom are enjoying successful careers in musical theater and opera.

**Winners' performances may be viewed at:  
[YouTube.com/KurtWeillFoundation](https://www.youtube.com/KurtWeillFoundation)**

# Recent Recordings



## Railroads on Parade • Zaubernacht

In the last eight months, two all but unknown Weill works have been issued: the ballet-pantomime *Zaubernacht* (1922) in February and the World's Fair pageant *Railroads on Parade* (1939–40) last October. Two more dissimilar works would be difficult to imagine.

The *Railroads* recording, issued on Transcription Recordings, Inc., has received considerable attention on two continents. In addition to a notice in last Fall's *Newsletter*, the recording was written up in the *New York Times* (21 October 2012) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (23 October). On 8 December, ARTE Television, an arts network that broadcasts in Germany and France, offered a six-minute feature on the new recording as part of the "Metropolis" program. The feature included original silent footage of *Railroads* as staged at the World's Fair and commentary from former *Newsletter* editor Elmar Juchem. Weill's mammoth score, in some ways his deepest plunge into Americana, is still making waves seventy years later.

The original score of *Zaubernacht* rested unpublished until 2008, when the Kurt Weill Edition produced it, based on a set of original performance materials found at Yale University. The work has since seen several successful stagings and is rapidly entering the repertory. In February 2013, the German label CPO released a complete recording with the Arte Ensemble—a group of virtuosos from the NDR Radio Philharmonic—and soprano Ania Vegry. We will review both *Railroads* and *Zaubernacht* in our next issue.

Finally, the ground-breaking 1963 recording of *Lady in the Dark* with Risë Stevens, conducted by Lehman Engel, is newly available as mp3 files on amazon.com. Load up your iPods today!

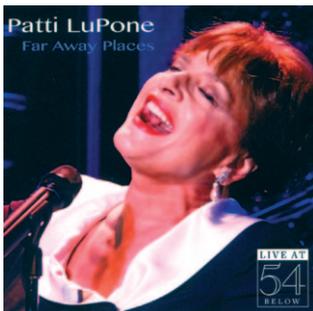
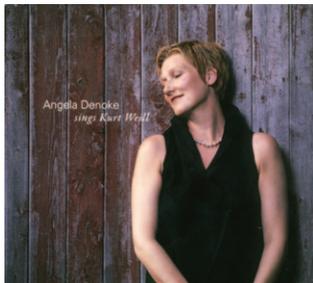


## Angela Denoke • Patti LuPone • Dick Hyman

The story does not end with these essential new Weill recordings. For decades, the discography has brimmed with singers cutting records that included Weill songs, and nothing has changed in recent years. Opera star Angela Denoke came out with an all-Weill CD in November 2012 with fifteen tracks arranged by Tal Balshai for voice, keyboards, and woodwinds. A surprisingly eclectic collection, the disc features songs from Weill's European and American periods, with hits like "Alabama Song," "September Song," and "Denn wie man sich bettet" rubbing elbows with "Is It Him or Is It Me?" (from *Love Life*), "All at Once" (*Where Do We Go from Here?*) and "Don't Look Now, but My Heart Is Showing" (from the film version of *One Touch of Venus*).

Queen of Broadway Patti LuPone, whose predilection for Weill is well-known, recorded her latest club act, "Far Away Places," built around the theme of travel to exotic locales; it was issued by Broadway Records in January 2013. She included four Weill numbers: "Bilbao Song," "Ah, the Sea Is Blue" (Sailors' Tango), "Pirate Jenny," and "September Song." LuPone continues to tour this act after a successful debut at New York's 54 Below last June; in fact, she will bring it to Carnegie Hall in November 2013.

Legendary pianist Dick Hyman started recording Weill long before it was fashionable; he put out an LP of Weill songs arranged for piano solo in 1952 (now available on CD from the Proscenium label). He's still going strong. Working with vocalist Heather Masse, his new CD, *Lock My Heart*, features "September Song" and "Lost in the Stars" (Red House Records).



## Cello Sonata (Et Cetera) • Violin Concerto (Naxos) • Violin Concerto (Sono Luminus)

And finally, Weill's instrumental music has also been well represented in the past year. Two new recordings of the Violin Concerto, with soloists Anton Miller (Naxos) and John Gilbert (Sono Luminus), appeared last fall. And the first new recording of the Cello Sonata issued in ten years teams noted Dutch cellist Quirine Viersen with pianist Silke Avenhaus. The CD, on the Et Cetera label, groups Weill's early chamber work (1920) with sonatas by Hans Pfitzner and Samuel Barber.



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