

# Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny

## Staatsoper Berlin

Premiere: 6 June 2014

Germany's Staatsoper companies to this day have scarcely lived up to the well-known challenges posed by *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. The production by Berlin's Staatsoper (housed temporarily and somewhat inadequately in the Schiller-Theater while its house is under renovation) demonstrates yet again that these challenges are rooted in the opera's epic conception, in its montage form, in the score's ever-startling stylistic means, in the complex theme of a "city of snares," in a disorienting abundance of ideologically freighted interpretations of the meaning of Mahagonny, and not least in questions about variant versions of the work. These issues are all inter-related, and one would expect that new stagings would at least identify and make something of these cruxes, even if they can't offer solutions.

The most memorable part of Berlin's staging is Vincent Lemaire's set. By placing mirrors at the right and left edges of the stage, he blurs the usual distinction between stage and wings, nearly dissolving the outlines of the space. The stage proper is divided in half, front and back, by a curtain made of fine, transparent plastic strips (echoing Caspar Neher's famous half curtain), in the center of which stands a glass door. The curtain also serves as a screen for text projections and especially for clever, eye-catching play of colored lights, which, when the plastic strips ripple, represent inner and outer turmoil (hurricane scene!). Above the rather sparsely decorated stage, next to some stylized cloud formations, a cool green moon shines suggestively. All this lends a surreal (or unreal) aura to the production, reminiscent of paintings by Max Ernst or Gerhard Richter. Christian Lacroix's uniform for the men of Mahagonny—bowler hats, soiled black suits, and neckties—is an unmistakable allusion to surrealist paintings by René Magritte, particularly *L'assassin menacé*. The only props are tables, chairs, and a piano. Rather than riding onstage in a sputtering truck, Begbick, Fatty, and Trinity Moses bring a shopping cart; later on, Begbick—the perfect heartless capitalist—enthrones herself atop the doorframe, hugging a cash register on which she tallies every bit of income. For the most

part, Vincent Boussard's staging hits only on the most obvious ideas, so it was no surprise that the only audience reaction to the men lining up in their underwear outside the brothel came from a giggling group of schoolgirls sitting behind me.

Boussard populates the set—which avoids evoking any particular era—not with human beings so much as types who neither possess individuality nor form lasting relationships. Recognizable personality traits emerge only during scenes in which the text explicitly demands them, but the characters never display any consistency, probably because they are not asked to. Boussard seems to view human feelings as possibilities that prove untenable in real life. He places the "Crane Duet" for Jimmy and Jenny right after the brothel scene, and the jarring contrast instantly conveys a melancholy sense of love or tenderness. But this makes Jenny's flat refusal to bail out Jimmy later all the more perplexing. Michael König sings the demanding part of Jimmy in exactly the right style but also with real bravura, whereas Evelin Novak gives Jenny's "songs" too much gravitas—a weight that doesn't sit well on material originally conceived for soubrettes (in *Mahagonny Songspiel*). Gabriele Schnaut (Begbick) is past the zenith

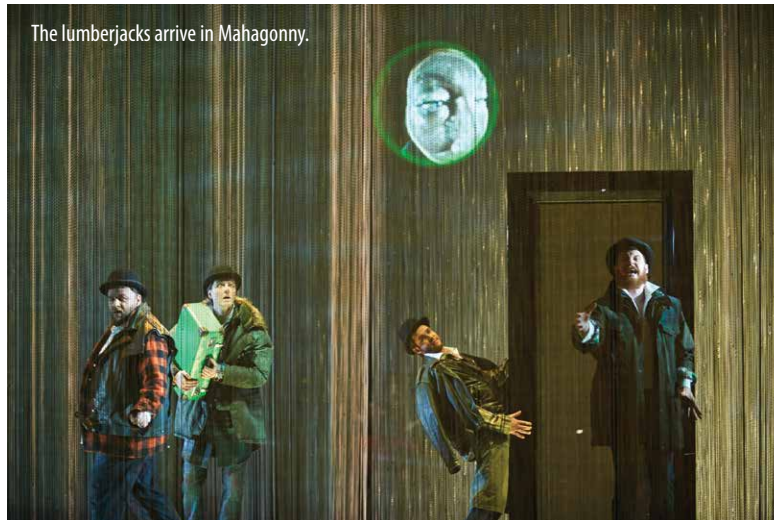
of her impressive career; the limitations and careful allocation of her vocal power become all too audible, and her characterization lacks depth, like all the others.

Certainly, conductor Wayne Marshall pointedly illuminates the series of scenes. He packs real punch into the prelude, forming a highly plausible counterpoint to the visuals, so that any impression of slick, refined estheticism is averted from the start. But such pointed phrasing risks sacrificing musical coherence. Yes,

Weill has created a montage of musical forms, but Marshall introduces further fragmentation by adding caesuras or *Luftpausen* within sections. As the evening progresses, the added pauses become more frequent and prevent the music from building momentum. And Marshall seems unable to take advantage of the potential of the Staatsoper's brilliant orchestra.

Weill summarized the "plot" of his opera as "the story of a city, its rise, its initial crises, the crucial turning point in its development, its heyday, and its demise." He wanted to offer "images of twentieth-century customs." Berlin's staging largely ignores his intentions. Boussard and Lemaire place the story in an imaginary, almost mythical time that keeps our era at distance. Whereas in the past many stagings of this opera have provoked by their crassness, the staging at the Staatsoper Berlin "provokes" mostly by taking the sting out of everything.

**Giselher Schubert  
Hameln**



The lumberjacks arrive in Mahagonny.

PHOTO: MATTHIAS BAUS

# Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny

Olympia Theatre  
Dublin, Ireland

Premiere: 13 June 2014

Unlike nearly every country in central and western Europe, Ireland does not have a dedicated permanent opera house or company in its capital city (the new opera house in Wexford, opened in 2008, is used in that capacity for only a few weeks each year, when it houses the Wexford Festival Opera). Instead, once or twice a year a number of companies organize week-long runs in theaters in Dublin or elsewhere, while traveling companies from other countries and student performances organized by Irish conservatories occasionally enrich the menu. For this production of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, two Irish companies—Rough Magic Theatre Company and Opera Theatre Company—joined forces, supported by the Irish Arts Council and a substantial grant from the Sky Arts Ignition program. The bulk of the grant seems to have been invested in a temporary re-design of the Victorian Olympia Theatre in Dublin's city center. Rough Magic's director Lynne Parker, who took charge of this production, had almost half the seats in the parquet removed and placed the orchestra in the resulting space (the original pit was too small to hold even the string section). Similarly, the left third of the seats in the two balconies was left unoccupied, instead being used (together with some boxes) by soloists as well as the chorus as part of an extended stage. While part of the audience's space had thus been surrendered to singers and orchestra, a grandstand had been added at the back of the main stage (offering the best views of the proceedings all over the house). The result was a complete breakdown of the fourth wall; the action surrounded the audience. We never knew from which side the next singer would appear, but we could always observe not just the singers but also a good part of our fellow spectators as well as the orchestra. One really felt part of what happened in Mahagonny.

This production was sung in English (translation by David Drew and Michael Geliot), with a single intermission after the first act. It included numbers which are sometimes omitted, such as the "Crane Duet," the "Benares Song," and "Gott in Mahagonny." Claudia Boyle as Jenny was the undisputed star of the evening. Her versatile voice switched almost imperceptibly from sultry seductress to angry or disappointed partner and successfully conveyed the character's alternation between intimacy and emotional distance. Julian Hubbard's happy-go-lucky Jimmy, by



The girls of Mahagonny look on from the boxes as David Brophy conducts from the parquet.

PHOTO: ROS KAVANAGH

contrast, acted his role well, yet his voice was a bit one-dimensional, well suited to the lyrical encounters with Jenny but less convincing when addressing the masses or triumphantly overturning the laws of Mahagonny: "Therefore why be bound by these laws? Tonight you can do what's prohibited." Anne Marie Gibbons presented a no-nonsense Begbick, truly a spider at the center of the web that is Mahagonny whom nobody would dare to disobey. John Molloy's Trinity Moses added muscles and fists to her brain, ably aided by cunning Fatty's (Ross Scanlon) powers of persuasion. Jenny's girls proved the highlight as far as the chorus was concerned, often appearing to flirt with members of the audience while prowling different sections of the theater. Yet the hard-drinking, love-making, fighting men of the male chorus were quite prominent as well.

The setup posed special challenges for the conductor, who faced away from the main stage. He did face the orchestra, but the singers could be anywhere—behind him, to his left or right, or above him (and often in several directions). David Brophy passed this test brilliantly, being at all times on top of the score and keeping his widespread forces together in an admirable and convincing way.

Part of the Sky Arts Ignition support manifested itself in an extensive PR campaign aimed particularly at people you would not normally expect to see in an opera house. Centered on the (fictional) story of Paul Gallagher, who retraces the steps of writer Kurt Furey who in turn went missing while searching for the City of Mahagonny—a distance-creating narrative chain worthy of the meta-fictions of Umberto Eco—its interactive presence on YouTube and Twitter (but also through radio and cinema ads) provided the means for a gradual geographical and mental encounter with Mahagonny, including maps, events, and characters (many of which do not appear in the opera at all but are derived more or less loosely from the world of Weill-Brecht).

Wolfgang Marx  
Dublin

# Lady in the Dark

## Staatstheater Mainz

Premiere: 17 May 2014

Shortly before the curtain went up on opening night, I spotted an ensemble member already in costume enjoying a final cigarette by the stage door. The striking costume, a splendid tailcoat, served as an appetizer for the extravagant production. Matthias Fontheim, the Staatstheater's departing *Intendant*, chose an ambitious work for his farewell staging, as *Lady in the Dark* requires substantial expenditures on cast, crew, and equipment. The work, which alternates straight-play scenes with through-composed sequences featuring singing and dancing, also offered an opportunity to show off different departments within the Staatstheater. Fontheim put on a visually impressive staging with imposing sets (by Stefan Heyne) and colorful costumes (by Valerie Hirschmann), placing the action in the early 1960s.

In contrast to the richness of the visuals, Fontheim does little with the text (in Roman Hinze's translation), retelling rather than interpreting the story of a businesswoman suffering from burn-out. Pascale Pfeuti (Liza Elliott) is especially good as a brusque patient and nervous boss in the straight-play scenes, which receive special attention from the director, so that they don't suffer by comparison with Liza's dreams depicted in the musical scenes. The dream sequences lack touches of surreal fantasy that certainly seem called for, but they are staged lavishly with impressive attention to detail. The highlight, no doubt, is the Circus Dream, which sports a host of acrobats and "wild animals" (choristers in masks) lovingly arranged and depicted as in a richly detailed reproduction of a painting in an old children's book.

The Mainz team handles the tricky scene changes between Liza's everyday life and her dreams very convincingly with the help of a unit set that looms over the show from beginning to end. The downstage area is bounded by a wood-paneled wall that looks distinguished but also oppressive. An upstage turntable is concealed behind the wall's slightly curved and movable center section; in front of the solid side pieces stand a desk on the left and a blue couch on the right. The desk and couch stay in place throughout the evening, marking Liza's and Dr. Brooks's offices, respectively (Marcus Mislin gives a firm and controlled portrayal of the analyst). The paneling's movable center section has eight openings on two levels. The lower ones serve as doors, the upper ones offer views into other offices, where, as silent sideshows, members of Liza's staff go about their business: lengthy telephone calls or touching up their makeup. It's a neat idea, neatly executed.

During the dream sequences, the center section opens up and reveals Liza's inner life, as it were. A rotating concatenation of stairs and mirrors standing on the turntable reminded me of drawings by M.C. Escher. The stairs and turntable are used in a variety of ways: Liza descends the stairs to make her grand entrance in the Glamour Dream, and the children perform on them during "The Princess of Pure Delight" in the Wedding Dream. Shortly afterwards, chorus members impersonate Liza's high school classmates here and there on the turntable.



Liza Elliott (Pascale Pfeuti) in the Glamour Dream.

PHOTO: MARTINA PIPPRICH

The set is suitable and works well, but it does take up most of the available space, especially when the chorus becomes involved (as it often does). While the confined space makes palpable Liza's feeling that she is trapped, it also forces the actors to move gingerly, especially during choreographed sequences, and dancing definitely gets shortchanged in Fontheim's staging. Half a dozen dancers show off some old-time hoofing in the Glamour Dream, and Liza's awkward dancing with Randy Curtis during "This Is New" in the Wedding Dream is surely meant as a parody. In the Circus Dream's "Dance of the Tumblers," we get pantomime instead of dance; various people in Liza's life (or their representations in her dream) come at her, while she gravitates almost against her will toward Charley Johnson, the man she really loves (played with casual rebelliousness à la James Dean by Henrik Richter).

Rosters of German state theaters seldom include performers who specialize in musicals, so nearly all the roles are cast here with actors, and the quality of the singing does not generally match that of the acting. A notable exception: Kammersänger Jürgen Rust (as Russell Paxton), who gave an effortless rendition of "Tschaikowsky" and mercifully resisted the temptation to overplay the part of the gay fashion photographer. Despite (or because of) the fact that its repertoire doesn't generally include Broadway musicals, the Philharmonische Staatsorchester Mainz led by Florian Czismadia displayed real enthusiasm and inspired playing, earning bravos after the *Entr'acte*. Generally speaking, the audience at the premiere simply loved the performance. The previous night, the theater held a soiree in memory of Weill's musical assistant Lys Symonette, a native of Mainz—a lovely gesture.

**Gisela Maria Schubert  
Hameln**

# Der Silbersee

## Kokkola Opera Summer

24–27 July 2014

West Coast Kokkola Opera, founded in 2004 in Kokkola, Finland, has mounted repertoire ranging from standard works to rarities, including some Finnish operas. This summer they took on *Der Silbersee*, certainly a brave choice. Musically, the production had many strengths, but other aspects of the production displayed numerous problems. One may expect less attention to staging than to music from a small opera company, but here plot, characters, and dialogue are submerged to such an extent that the unique qualities of Weill and Kaiser’s play with music almost get lost. Much of the score is indeed operatic, but *Der Silbersee* remains an unconventional hybrid of spoken drama and opera, so the director and conductor must think carefully about the emphasis given to music on the one hand and to the plot on the other.

Let’s take up the musical performance first. Finnish soprano Annami Hylkilä sings the part of Fennimore in all its different moods with stunning energy and vocal beauty, even with ugliness when required. Welsh contralto Hilary Summers makes her first appearance onstage with an impressive rendering of the “Lottery Agent’s Tango” (“Was zahlen Sie für einen Rat?”). Later, in a different costume as Frau von Lubber, she sings the first stanza of “Lied vom Schlaraffenland” as a solo in a departure from the original score. Terttu Iso-Oja and Minna-Sisko Mutanen give an excellent performance of the shopgirls’ duet (“Wir sind zwei Mädchen”), but tenor Lasse Penttinen does not always sound comfortable vocally as Severin.

Conductor Sakari Oramo has assembled an orchestra of highly qualified musicians who offer some outstanding solo playing. They handle Weill’s score with precision and a good sense of style. Unfortunately, the string section consists of only one player

on each part, which leads inevitably to balance problems in some *tutti* sections, especially the overture. The orchestra fills the rear half of the stage, leaving little room for sets, staging, or, indeed, acting.

Yet lack of space turns out to be a minor problem when it comes to the dramatic aspects of the production. First, the dialogue is cut to the bone, or beyond. Some pruning is customary, but in Kokkola dialogue is very often reduced to the bare minimum to get from one number to the next—sometimes so much is removed that even this basic standard is not met—which naturally distorts the work on every level. Furthermore, dialogue is rendered in Finnish, while the songs remain in the original German. These language shifts are rather jarring and contribute to the loss of connection between dialogue and music.

Her merits as a singer notwithstanding, Hilary Summers (Frau von Lubber) does not speak Finnish, so this very voluble character cannot deliver any dialogue at all. Her silence changes the role almost beyond recognition and makes the plot still harder to follow. Olim, one of the male leads, is actually played by an actress, Leea Klemola (baritone Juho Punkeri handles the role’s light singing chores quite well). She all but creates a new character which is impossible to take seriously; her much exaggerated acting sometimes smacks of cheap farce and does nothing to make Kaiser’s conception any clearer to the audience. Lasse Penttinen (Severin) acts the role of Olim’s foil without distinction. The complex character of Fennimore is less compromised than some others, but casting a visibly pregnant actress was ill-advised. It is not surprising that the chorus consists of the soloists, but when they remain in their characters’ costumes even when functioning as the chorus, it adds to the confusion.

If there were any sign of *Regietheater* here, one could at least credit directors Anu Komi and Juho Kuosmanen for developing a concept. However, such a concept is clearly absent. Some crucial plot points almost disappear due to the omission of dialogue and whole scenes. For example, none of the characters reacts to Fennimore’s “Cäsars Tod”—a breathtaking moment—or takes much notice of the song at all, despite Kaiser’s detailed dialogue, missing here, and stage directions. The finale, with its deliberate fairy-tale elements, is very difficult to present on any stage, much less half a stage, but there’s just no way the spectator in Kokkola can understand what is happening. Olim and Severin wind up sitting silent and passive on the edge of the stage as Fennimore (singing from behind the audience in a musically effective touch) and the chorus turn the ending into a concert performance.

**Esbjörn Nyström**  
Stockholm



Fennimore (Annami Hylkilä, standing) sings “Cäsars Tod” to Frau von Lubber (Hilary Summers, left), and Severin (Lasse Penttinen, center).

PHOTO: PÄIVI KARJALAINEN

Note: The publisher of *Der Silbersee*, Felix Bloch Erben, has informed the Foundation that the performing license issued to Kokkola Oper Summer prohibited the unauthorized changes mentioned in this review. Appropriate action has been taken to prevent a recurrence.

# Juno

**TimeLine Theatre Company  
Chicago**

Premiere: 1 May 2014

*Juno*, with music and lyrics by Marc Blitzstein and book by Joseph Stein, was based on *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O'Casey. The musical premiered on Broadway 9 March 1959.

"*Juno* not only was well worth waiting for, but TimeLine's altogether brilliant rendering of it makes you wonder: Why has this gem of a show, with its gorgeous, innovative score and richly limned characters, had such a hard time winning favor? Whatever the reasons, this production should secure its place on the musical theater map once and for all. It's a beauty. . . .

"The audience instantly takes up residence in the impoverished household, where the indomitable Juno (Marya Grandy in a portrayal of great truth, nuance and emotional variety), keeps the kettle boiling. It is not easy.

"Aside from her feckless husband, Juno must now care for her unemployable son, Johnny (Jonny Stein, who soars in a knockout dance sequence), who has lost a hand in the fight against the British. Her daughter, the brainy, romantic Mary (lovely Emily Glick, whose voice and manner are in the Jessie Mueller mode), is on strike at work. She also is busy fending off the fervent advances of Jerry Devine (Jordan Brown, so touching the audience audibly sighed for him when he sang 'One Kind Word'), a wholly decent fellow who adores her, but who lacks the essential magic she sings about so beautifully in 'I Wish It So.'

"So, there is no money and very little hope. But as the show's opening anthem proclaims, 'We're Alive,' and the stunning chorus of near-operatic voices comprising this cast leaves no doubt about that. (The superb music direction is the work of Doug Peck and Elizabeth Doran, who conducts the band from her piano.) . . .

"The Blitzstein score is fascinating in its variety, and in its ability to turn the colloquial into the richly dramatic, with everything from a hilarious husband-and-wife bickering song ('Old Sayin's'), to a confessional chat session for four women ('Poor Thing'); to a beguiling Irish folk tune ('Bird Upon the Tree'); to the impassioned 'Hymn.'

"*Juno* is a treasure. Discover it."  
— Hedy Weiss, *Chicago Sun-Times* (3 May 2014)



The Boyle family (l to r: Marya Grandy, Ron Rains and Jonny Stein) get life-changing news from Charlie Bentham (Peter Oylo, standing).

PHOTO: LARA GOETSCH

"*Juno* was clearly ahead of its time as far as subject matter, as *Les Misérables*, *Evita*, *Rent*, *Once* and many others have plot points that delve into raw, real, and truthful emotions. . . . The musical brings with it a glorious score by Marc Blitzstein. . . . *Juno* is quite a feast for the eyes and ears and TimeLine certainly has given this rare musical an emotional production that will stay with you for days and weeks to come."

— Michael Roberts, *Showbiz Chicago* (3 May 2014)

"Blitzstein's . . . inventive, multifaceted score yielded no standards, but it is lovely. The characters are well-crafted, and Stein's unvarnished book expertly balances both the comic and tragic elements of this survival tale. . . . In director Nick Bowling's savvy, fluidly staged production, the audience enters through Foley's Pub . . . [and] surrounds on three sides John Culbert's immersive set. . . . Bowling's first-rate ensemble . . . made me laugh out loud."

— Barbara Vitello, *Daily Herald* (9 May 2014)

"Blitzstein's music . . . is the main draw here. It blends Irish folk idioms with the kind of classically influenced arcing melodies one associates with the operas and art songs of Benjamin Britten and Gian Carlo Menotti. It's a refreshingly unformulaic sound, yet always accessible. Heading the uniformly excellent cast, Marya Grandy brings an interesting mix of charm and steeliness to *Juno*. Ron Rains is very much the blustery charmer as Jack; Jonny Stein as Johnny excels in the second-act dream ballet depicting the character's guilt and terror. Soprano Emily Glick sings beautifully as Mary—the mother-daughter duets she and Grandy perform together are the highlights of the evening—and Jordan Brown and Peter Oylo are fine as her suitors."

— Albert Williams, *Chicago Reader* (7 May 2014)



Mary (Emily Glick) sings of her dreams in "I Wish It So."

PHOTO: LARA GOETSCH

"Blitzstein counters the Boyles' declining fortunes with rollicking upbeat rousers like the wonderful musical party ('Music in the House,' 'It's Not Irish' and 'The Liffey Waltz'); wonderfully choreographed by Katie Spelman, it's this family's last big fling. . . . In the wonderfully harmonized 'Bird Upon the Tree,' tenderly crooned by mother and daughter, Blitzstein pays homage to Irish folk songs and sentimental blarney. In 'Poor Thing' four neighboring gossips (Caron Buinis, Kelli Harrington, Anne Sheridan Smith, and Kathleen Gibson) host a pity party to see who among them suffers most."

— Lawrence Bommer, *Stage and Cinema* (3 May 2014)

# One Touch of Venus

NBC Television broadcast, 1955

VAI DVD 4568

The release of the 1955 telecast of *One Touch of Venus*, based on a production at the Texas State Fair, offers a double confirmation. Kurt Weill's most conventional Broadway score, expertly tied to the flexible lyrics of humorist Ogden Nash, is a timeless delight; the book by Nash and first-timer S.J. Perelman has not held up as well. George Schaefer's spare production exposes the discrepancy.

Except for Weill, the original collaborators—producer Cheryl Crawford, director Elia Kazan, and Nash and Perelman, both recruited to Broadway from *The New Yorker*—were unimpressed with the premise: a statue of Venus is suddenly brought to life and forced to find her way in contemporary midtown Manhattan. For the composer, however, the story of an outsider confronting the customs of a foreign country carried a powerful charge, expressed most forcefully in the haunting “I’m a Stranger Here Myself.” Weill’s belief in the material proved justified. When it opened on 7 October 1943, seven months after *Oklahoma!*, wartime audiences embraced the show and gave Weill his biggest Broadway hit. Back then it struck a chord; seventy years on, the book, a mish-mash of low-comic characters, a half-baked satire on modern art, and such B-movie embellishments as prison and chase scenes, is merely a product of its time.

Nonetheless, buoyed by a sumptuous score and orchestrations, two beautifully integrated ballets by Agnes De Mille, and Mary Martin’s charming goddess, *Venus* was a “smart” show, a sophisticated musical with both popular and connoisseur appeal. In order to fit the show into 79 minutes for television, many cuts were required. The result is more faithful to the original than the 1948 film, to be sure, but it retains only a portion of the variety and richness of Weill’s score. We miss numbers that added texture, dimension, and Weill’s brand of Broadway showmanship: the smashing Act I production number “Doctor Crippen”; “Very, Very, Very,” a saucy secretary’s catalogue of the ways the very rich are very different—and a showcase for some of Nash’s cleverest rhymes and quips; the opening number, “New Art is True Art,” which establishes the show’s backdrop. De Mille’s ballets, “Forty Minutes for Lunch” and “Venus in Ozone Heights,” are present but reduced almost to incoherence.

As the television Venus, proficient and likable Janet Blair is strictly a road company Mary Martin. Venus needs to be a citizen of two realms, and Martin, herself an earthy type, had expert guidance in developing an otherworldly aura. She didn’t accept the role until Mainbocher agreed to design her wardrobe, lend-

ing her a sleek elegance that set her apart from the mortals. With Kazan and ballerina Sono Osato, she worked out a style of movement—flowing, legato, stately—suitable for a goddess. Blair did not have the same expert help. Her costumes are mundane; her movements are earth-bound. On Broadway Martin’s finest moment was when she brought a chair down to the footlights, sat on it backwards, and delivered the homey lyrics of “That’s Him” directly to the audience. Schaefer didn’t help Blair to place the song: instead of looking directly at the camera, singing to each viewer at home, she seems distracted and unfocused, so the impact of this can’t-miss number is undercut.

Russell Nype is exactly right as the male lead, the put-upon, nebbish barber Rodney Hatch. When he expresses a vision of bourgeois contentment that terrifies Venus in “Wooden Wedding,” Nype exudes an aw-shucks sweetness and naiveté. He is the show’s most assured vocalist. In truth, all the actors look a little rushed and under-rehearsed, as was not unusual in live telecasts. In particular, George Gaynes as art patron Whitelaw Savory, drawn to Venus because she reminds him of a lost love, is especially ill at ease, as if the camera is spying on him before he is ready to be observed.

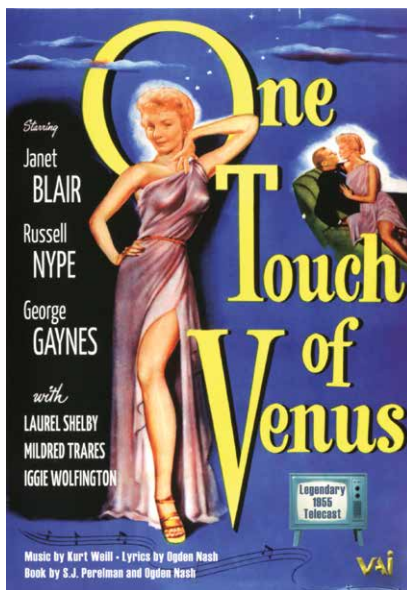
The original production struggled to find a visual frame for the airy material, and the Broadway set design never fully realized the show’s two-world settings. Visually, the telecast is even more deficient: bargain-base-

ment “realism,” about on the level of the kitchen set in *The Honey-mooners*, on the one hand, and on the other a vague “nowhere” with forlorn statues to signify the world of the gods. In both locales the *mise-en-scène* is too stingy for song and dance. The one time the production kicks into high gear is “Catch Hatch,” Weill’s *opéra-comique* pastiche. All of a sudden, in marked contrast to the no-frills design elsewhere, the show leaps to visual life with fades, cross-cuts, a spinning camera.

Despite its deficiencies, the telecast is a welcome and valuable record of Weill’s biggest American hit. And even in a visually and for the most part vocally undernourished presentation, the infectious melody, inventiveness, and generosity of Weill’s score—his melting waltz, “Foolish Heart”; his rousing barber-shop quartet, “The Trouble with Women”; his yearning ballad, “Speak Low,” as moving as “September Song” as a bow to time in its flight—come across as delightful.

**Foster Hirsch**  
New York

Foster Hirsch is the author of *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway*.



# Sounds of War: Music in the United States During World War II

by **Annegret Fauser**

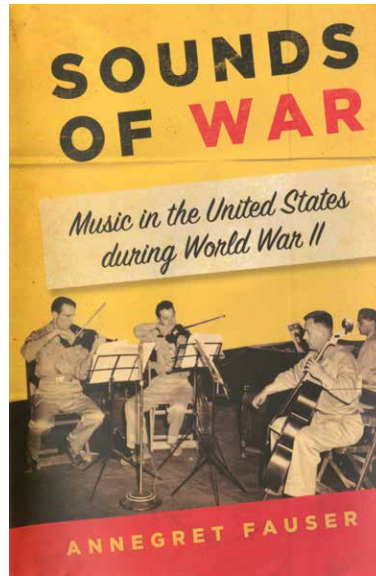
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 366 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-994803-1

When Barack Obama took office in 2009 as Americans continued to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, he chose Copland as a musical backdrop. In her eminently readable, meticulously documented book, Annegret Fauser shows us why. Copland was the dean of American composers during what is now called America's "good" war, where the U.S. forged a "positive musical identity" that could be powerfully invoked by later generations. World War II was unique in its broad and aggressive enlistment of music as a propaganda tool.

It may startle us that classical music was at the center of the effort. "We, as musicians, are soldiers too," Serge Koussevitzky remarked in 1942; in the ranks were Arturo Toscanini, Samuel Barber, Elliott Carter, Carlos Chavez, Henry Cowell, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, and many others. The Office of War Information, the United Service Organization, and other interconnected agencies regarded symphonic music as "an effective weapon" in the war against the Axis powers (106), a morale booster and a counter to the Nazi claim that America was "a barbaric country without culture or taste" (86). Millions of records were sent out to bases and posts, not only of American music, but European as well, showing that unlike the Fascists, freedom-loving Americans were unafraid of other cultures. Beethoven, for example, was hailed as "a champion for freedom" who "has furnished us with a strong symbol in the present war" (120). Officers supplied their men not only with records, needles, and phonographs, but with program notes.

One of the peculiar delights of this book is the image of Marines reading annotations for Franck's Symphony or Schumann's Piano Concerto and crowding eagerly into their tents to hear the music "over and over again" (123). Given America's current culture—where metal, hard rock, and rap provide entertainment and "torture playlists" for its never-ending wars—Fauser's account is hard to believe. Yet the voluminous charts, memos, memoirs, and statistics she compiles demonstrate the "quite extraordinary" reality that American soldiers greatly preferred classical over boogie-woogie and other pop music of their day. It gave them, said Army Special Services, "spiritual encouragement . . . something to hang onto" (108, 118).

*Sounds of War* is full of intriguing twists and paradoxes, some inspiring, others disturbing. Jazz, promoted by Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, and other emigrés as distinctively American music, became in some eyes a contamination of the "true folk music of



America," which was deemed "entirely white and British" (146). Critics admired *Porgy and Bess* but rejected it as a model for a national opera because of its "exceptionality" (168). Marc Blitzstein's ambitious *Airborne Symphony* celebrates the triumph over Fascism, yet it ends with a narrator intoning "Warning!" over its victory chimes. What began as overt propaganda turned into a Mahlerian hybrid considerably less strident than the symphonies of Blitzstein's "blatantly nationalist colleagues Harris and Barber" (264).

The most striking questions of identity involve Kurt Weill. Driven from his native land by the Nazis, he fired back with all his artistic guns blazing, reinventing patriotic songs like "America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," composing film music for the Office of War Information, and writing songs to boost military morale for "Lunchtime Follies," song and dance shows designed for war workers. "For the 'formerly German' Weill," Fauser writes, "his new musical identity had to be consistent with musical Americanism, perhaps even more than in the case of any native composer" (63). His work on "Lunchtime Follies" compounded his sense of urgency; before he received U.S. citizenship in 1943, he was forbidden to supervise the shows because they were staged in defense plants.

Weill's Americana broke new ground: *Where Do We Go From Here?*, a movie musical, included "the longest vocal number recorded thus far for the silver screen and thereby head[ed] toward Weill's ideal of a through-composed musical for Hollywood" (62). Weill's Walt Whitman settings affirmed his American identity—Whitman, after all, was the quintessential American poet—but what strikes us now is their daring. Though Fauser writes that they hark "back to German art song" (59), "Dirge for Two Veterans" sounds not like a formal European dirge but a Broadway love tune—a bracing and original twist on one of Whitman's most somber war poems.

In an eloquent coda, Fauser writes that the end of World War II marked the end of the whole notion of a national music: "The soldiers cheering Lily Pons in an Asian jungle, the sailors listening to string quartets on the afterdeck, the flyers thrilling to the sounds of airborne symphonies—they may or may not have known what they were hearing, but they understood what it represented. Music mattered" (271). It has not mattered that much since. The "sounds of war" detailed in this book are now used only for inaugurals or sporting events. Unless another "good war" emerges to inspire music worthy of its cause, they will probably remain so.

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**Jack Sullivan**  
Rider University

# Lotte Lenya Competition News

## 2015 Competition Now Open



**First Prize \$15,000 | Total Prizes \$50,000+**

**APPLICATION & ELIGIBILITY:** Open to singers aged 19-32 worldwide. Auditions available: October 1, 2015. Deadline: January 5, 2015.

**THREE AUDITION ROUNDS:** Performances may be live and submitted electronically to the competition in New York City. Auditions are offered in three rounds: January 16, 2015; March 13-14, 2015; and April 18, 2015.

**FINALS:** Finalists will be invited to audition in New York City. Auditions will be held at the Eastman School of Music. Auditions are offered in three rounds: April 18, 2015; May 13-14, 2015; and June 18, 2015.

**WINNERS:** Finalists will be invited to audition in New York City. Auditions will be held at the Eastman School of Music. Auditions are offered in three rounds: April 18, 2015; May 13-14, 2015; and June 18, 2015.

**PRIZES:** Total prizes are awarded to winners, runners-up and finalists.

**CONTACT:** [www.kwf.org/LLC](http://www.kwf.org/LLC)

**THE LOTTE WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC**

**"No other vocal contest better targets today's total package talents." — OPERA NEWS 2014**

The Lotte Lenya Competition seeks exceptionally talented young singer/actors who excel in a wide range of musical theater styles for the 2015 contest, which opened on 1 October. Contestants will compete for top prizes of \$15,000, \$10,000 and \$7,500; total prizes awarded will exceed \$50,000.

The 2015 Lotte Lenya Competition is open to singer/actors of all nationalities, ages 19-32. Applicants may compete in the preliminary

round of auditions by uploading a video; thus the first round is universally accessible. Travel stipends are offered to contestants in the semi-final and final rounds.

Contestants are required to prepare a program of four selections, which must include: one theatrical selection by Kurt Weill (any genre); two songs from the American musical theater repertoire (one pre-1968 and one from 1968 or later); and one aria from the opera or operetta repertoire. They will be judged not only on their vocal talent, but on their ability to create believable characters in a variety of dramatic situations.

To enter the 2015 Competition, contestants must submit an online application by **5 January 2015**. Preliminary audition videos may be submitted electronically (due 2 February 2015), or contestants may audition live in New York City on 24 January 2015. Semi-finalists will be invited to audition in New York City on 13 or 14 March 2015. Finalists will each receive an award of \$1,000 and compete for top prizes at the Finals on 18 April 2015 at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, USA.

## Lotte Lenya Competition Winners on Stage

Lotte Lenya Competition winners regularly play leading and featured roles on Broadway, in regional theaters and national tours, and in major opera houses and concert halls around the world. Here are a few highlights of their current and upcoming performances:

- Liam Bonner:** Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* (Los Angeles Opera)
- Doug Carpenter:** Billy Kosteki in *Dirty Dancing* (National Tour)
- Ginger Costa-Jackson:** Cat in *El Gato con botas* (Gotham Chamber Opera)
- Christopher Herbert:** New recording *Sing Thee Nowell* with Grammy-nominated ensemble New York Polyphony
- Alen Hodzovic:** Marius in *Les Misérables* (Landestheater Linz)
- Zachary James:** Soloist in Handel's *Susanna* (The Collegiate Chorale)
- Erik Liberman:** Clopin in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (La Jolla Playhouse)
- Lucas Meachem:** Figaro in *The Ghosts of Versailles* (Los Angeles Opera)
- Jonathan Michie:** Valentin in *Faust*; Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* (Leipzig Opera)
- Ariela Morgenstern:** Diana in *Next to Normal* (Baltimore Center Stage)

## Lotte Lenya Competition Featured in Opera News

The August 2014 issue of *Opera News* magazine spotlighted the Lotte Lenya Competition in a lively two-page feature by arts writer Barry Singer (*New York Times*, *New Yorker*). Having attended the finals in April, Singer described the 2014 competition in detail and pinpointed the reasons the Lenya Competition is unique.

"The Lotte Lenya Competition asks singers to do the impossible," he writes. "And why not? Musical theater, whether on an operatic or a Broadway stage, is an impossible construct, a teetering musical mass levitated by artistry, energy and alchemy. While other vocal competitions just ask singers to sing, the Lenya Competition asks its contestants to create their own one-person musical narrative out of found materials and make us believe that it is all true. . . . Disparate numbers must be woven into a dramatic whole by the performers—acted, as well as sung, with consummate believability. It is this requirement that distinguishes the Lenya Competition from all others. In an age of hyper-HD scrutiny, with the demand for acting ability and sheer telegenic attractiveness ever more decisive in opera, no vocal contest better targets today's total-package talents."



**"No vocal contest better targets today's total-package talents."**

**Lotte Lenya Competition guidelines and applications: [kwf.org/LLC](http://www.kwf.org/LLC)**

**Kyle Scatliffe:** Enjolras in *Les Misérables* (Broadway)

**Katie Travis:** Christine in *The Phantom of the Opera* (25th Anniversary National Tour)

**Jacob Keith Watson:** Amos Hart in *Chicago* (National Tour)

**Maren Weinberger:** 2014–15 Fort Worth Opera Studio artist

**Lauren Worsham** (2014 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Featured Actress, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*); *Not the Messiah* (The Collegiate Chorale at Carnegie Hall); Lisa in *Dog Days* (Fort Worth Opera, Los Angeles Opera)

**Justin Hopkins, Megan Marino, and Lauren Michelle** (finalist): Soloists in *The Road of Promise*, a concert adaptation of Kurt Weill and Franz Werfel's *The Eternal Road*, with The Collegiate Chorale and the Orchestra of St. Luke's (The Collegiate Chorale, Carnegie Hall)



Ariela Morgenstern as Diana in *Next to Normal* at Baltimore Center Stage.



# Foundation News: Sponsorships

## “Weill Week” at Oberlin

Two weeks of performances and lectures highlighted “Weill Week” at Oberlin College and Conservatory in November 2014. Four performances of *Street Scene* by the Oberlin Opera Theater anchored the series, which also included a cabaret of Weill songs interpreted by voice students from the Conservatory, guest lectures by Weill scholars Bruce McClung and Kim H. Kowalke, a screening of the film based on Elmer Rice’s original Pulitzer Prize-winning play, and a related art exhibit at the Allen Museum. Faculty members at the Conservatory worked closely with the Foundation in planning the events, and the Foundation provided financial assistance in the form of a sponsorship.

Colleges and universities are encouraged to apply for grants covering single Weill performances, or for sponsorships covering multiple events. Applicants should contact Janice Mayer, Director of Programs and Promotion (jmayer@kwf.org), at the Kurt Weill Foundation for more information; those pursuing sponsorships should consult her early in the planning stages.

## National Music Theater Conference

As part of its commitment to nurturing talent, particularly in the creation and performance of musical theater, the Foundation awarded a \$10,000 sponsorship to the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s 2014 National Music Theater Conference. NMTC Artistic Director Paulette Haupt describes the development program, which opened in 1978, as “an incubator for new work, not a hit-machine.” Two or three musical writing teams are selected each year from over 200 entrants in an open, highly competitive application process. Winners participate in an intensive two-week workshop, free of commercial pressure, in which they work with a dedicated group of actors and theater professionals to advance works in progress. Drawing on extensive feedback, writers and composers are encouraged to revise their work continuously. Dramaturgs, librettists, composers, and orchestrators act as mentors and work closely with the creators. NMTC has helped to launch musicals such as *Avenue Q*, *In the Heights*, *Nine*, and *Violet*, as well as Tan Dun’s opera *Marco Polo*.

The Foundation’s award was directed partly toward underwriting the participation of this year’s teams, Jim Bauer and Ruth Bauer (authors of *The War Dept.*) and Avi Amon and Julia Gytri (*The White City*). In interviews with the Foundation, all four creators spoke glowingly of the Conference: its supportive staff, the quality of the mentors, and the freedom to forge ahead engendered by the focused environment and valuable advice from the other participants. Amon noted, “Everything we got at the conference—support, the space, the actors, director, musical director—is magic.” The Foundation also provided funding for orchestration mentors Michael Starobin and Bruce Coughlin. Composer Jim Bauer commented, “I’ve never received such a useful critique before, or so many helpful observations that really change my approach.”

Ruth Bauer called the process at the O’Neill “the gold standard for how theater should be made”; Gytri summed it up in five words: “Creativity, openness, generosity, support, freedom.”



Ben Edquist (center) as Jigger in *Carousel* at Glimmerglass.

PHOTO: KARLI CADEL/GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL

## Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Glimmerglass Young Artist

Ben Edquist, First Prize Winner in the 2014 Lotte Lenya Competition, went on to be the first Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Glimmerglass Young Artist last summer, in a new collaboration sponsored by the Foundation. Ben found that his experiences in the Competition and in Cooperstown reinforced the same essential lesson. The semi-finals coach/adjudicator, composer Jeanine Tesori, advised him to “eliminate extraneous gestures and to move with a purpose.” At Glimmerglass, Ben got the same advice as he prepared for *Carousel* with director Charles Newell. “He encouraged me to be sure that every movement has a goal—if you move in character you should know why.”

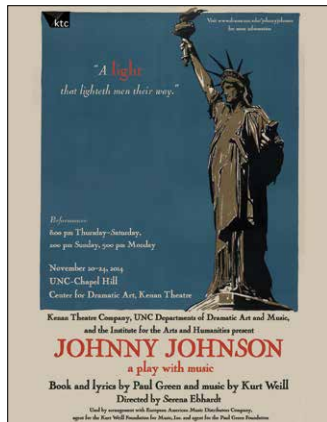
Francesca Zambello, Artistic and General Director of the Glimmerglass Festival, reflected on the Young Artists Program: “Two of the great things about summer are watching my little vegetable garden take root and (even better) watching the Young Artists in our program change overnight, just like a tomato plant that started as a seed and now bears fruit. We were all fortunate to watch a new star rise up in front of our eyes. Ben Edquist was cast as Jigger in our production of *Carousel* and performed in a number of concerts and cabarets. He developed a real flair for communicating through song, and his blazing eyes penetrated and communicated with many hearts. It was clear to me that the collaboration with the Kurt Weill Foundation helped all of us make our gardens grow.”

Next on the horizon for Ben is a role in Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* at the Shepherd School of Music. It’s hard to imagine a work more different from *Carousel*, but Ben notes that “once the vocal and technical requirements are met, then everything else comes from the character,” a principle that holds regardless of the period or type of composition.

Flexibility and versatility are expected in today’s opera and music theater performers, which is precisely why the Lotte Lenya Competition rewards those qualities. As Tony nominee and Competition judge Rebecca Luker puts it, “The Lotte Lenya competitor must have it all: acting and singing chops from a wide variety of theatrical and musical realms and also that certain something—charisma, star-quality, call it what you will—that puts them above all others.” Ben Edquist indeed has it all.

## Kurt Weill Edition: *Johnny Johnson* debuts at UNC

The Kenan Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill presents five performances of *Johnny Johnson*, a play with music by Kurt Weill and Paul Green, in November 2014. It was Weill's first show on Broadway, produced by the Group Theatre in 1936. The performances at UNC mark the first staging using materials derived from the critical edition of the work, published in 2012 as part of the Kurt Weill Edition. Evan Feldman conducts; Serena Ebhardt directs. The performances are funded in part by the Foundation.



A more appropriate location for the debut of the critical edition would be hard to imagine. Paul Green taught at the University for many years, and a theater that bears his name remains a campus landmark. Tim Carter, editor of *Johnny Johnson*, is currently David G. Frey Distinguished Professor of Music at Chapel Hill. His work on *Johnny* was honored with the 2013 Claude V. Palisca Award of the American Musicological Society for an outstanding

scholarly edition or translation. His research ranged widely, not only through the papers of Weill and Green but through the archives of the Federal Theatre Project, which tapped *Johnny Johnson* for two separate productions in 1937. The FTP version served as the basis for the critical edition.

### College/University Performance Grants

**Application Deadline: 1 June 2015**

For performances taking place during the Fall 2015 semester.

**See [kwf.org](http://kwf.org) for details.**

## Lady in the Dark Takes the Stage in Texas

The Lyric Stage in Dallas, which prides itself on staging Broadway shows in their original orchestrations, will present Weill's *Lady in the Dark*, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin and book by Moss Hart, from 24 April through 3 May 2015. Audiences will hear Weill's orchestrations as established in the forthcoming critical edition of the show, prepared by Professor Bruce McClung of the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

*Lady in the Dark* took Broadway by storm in the early forties, with three separate runs and a national tour. Formally, the show was not like anything that came before: the book consisted of dialogue scenes, while the music was concentrated in three mini-operas that depicted the main character's dreams, which were analyzed by her psychiatrist in one of Freud's earliest invasions of Broadway. Source of hits like "This Is New," "My Ship," "Tchaikowsky," and the immortal "Saga of Jenny," this one-of-a-kind show still grabs audiences.



## Susan Graham sings Weill with the LA Phil

Just before the *Newsletter* went to press, we got some exciting news from the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The previously scheduled program for the weekend of 7 November 2014—Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*—has been replaced by a program entitled "Visions of America." Mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, already engaged to appear in the Berlioz, has opted to perform a selection of Weill's

songs with Conductor Laureate Esa-Pekka Salonen. (Other works on the program: Herrmann's Suite from *Psycho*, Salonen's *Foreign Bodies*, and Varèse's *Amérique* with video by Refik Anadol.) It's the first time Graham has taken on Weill, and her program includes "My Ship," "One Life to Live," "September Song," "Speak Low," "I'm a Stranger Here Myself," and "The Saga of Jenny."

## New Weill Documentary on BBC Radio

BBC Radio 4 will broadcast a half-hour documentary on Kurt Weill in December 2014. Llinos Jones, an independent producer who has created over twenty features for Radio 4, including programs on Bryn Terfel and Lewis Carroll, will produce. The documentary, titled "Speak Low, Speak Weill," will feature interviews with HK Gruber, Stephen Hinton, James Holmes, and Kim H. Kowalke. Cabaret star Ute Lemper will narrate. Date and time had not been announced when we went to press; the program will be available on BBC iPlayer (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer>) for two weeks after broadcast.

## Weill Songs Featured in *Phoenix*

German director Christian Petzold (*Jerichow*, *Barbara*) has created another acclaimed film that explores a highly charged story set in the ruins of 1945 Berlin. Two Kurt Weill songs, "Speak Low" (from *One Touch of Venus*, 1943) and "Berlin im Licht" (1928) form part of the soundtrack. *Phoenix* takes on Germany's Nazi past at the same time that it delves into complicated questions of fidelity and personal identity.

The film opened the Festival du Cinéma Allemand in Paris and has earned rave reviews at festivals in Toronto and San Sebastian. *Variety* called it "one of the most anticipated German titles of the year." Weill's songs do more than contribute a sense of period. "Speak Low," with its wistful evocation of love's tenacity but also its fleeting nature, plays over decisive moments in the action.



## In Memoriam Julius Rudel (1921–2014)

In 1980 Julius Rudel and I were among the group of six that Lenya invited to join the all-but-dormant Board of Trustees of the Foundation: Hal Prince (who had directed Lenya in *Cabaret*), Lys Symonette (Weill's musical assistant after 1945 and Lenya's accompanist), Guy Stern (Germanist scholar and translator), and Henry Marx (editor of *Aufbau* who had recently mounted a Weill exhibition at Lincoln Center). They had all witnessed firsthand the Theater de Lys *Threepenny* and knew Lenya well. At 32, a newly minted Yale Ph.D., I was most definitely the new kid on the block, awestruck in such distinguished company. Most of all by the Maestro, whose first impression remained with me unmodified for the three decades we worked together: *elegance*—in manner, appearance, conversation, collaboration, and, above all, music-making.

After Maurice Abravanel moved to Utah and largely left behind his role as Weill's foremost conductor-champion, Rudel had assumed that mantle. As general director of New York City Opera, he introduced Weill into the American operatic repertory: *Lost in the Stars* in 1958, *Street Scene* the following season, a German-language *Threepenny Opera* in 1965. (In 1989 he would also conduct the ill-fated Broadway revival of that show.) Shortly before our first Board meeting, the Prince-Wheeler adaptation of *Der Silbersee*, *Silverlake*, had been Julius's choice as his valedictory production at City Opera. As an orchestral conductor, he

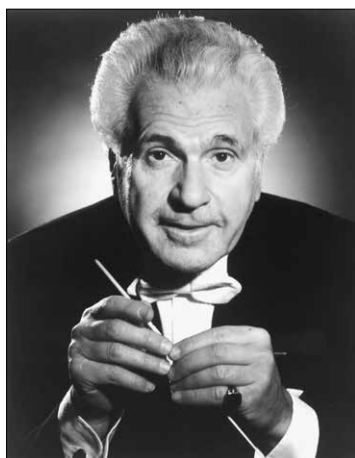


PHOTO: DON HUNSTEIN

helped restore the Second Symphony to the repertory and later recorded it.

In 1999, Julius realized his longtime desire to conduct *Die Bürgschaft*; the Spoleto Festival's production launched the worldwide Weill centenary celebration. Overwhelmed by its impact, I decided it had to be preserved, and on a week's notice, with characteristic efficiency, diplomacy, and equanimity, Julius recorded an extraordinary performance in just two studio sessions for EMI. A year later, after his performance of *Der Jasager* in New York, it was my privilege to present him with the Kurt Weill Distinguished Achievement Award—he was its fifth recipient; Abravanel had been the first.

Now in his eighties, Julius was still going strong. He still wanted to conduct *Mahagonny*. I asked him why he hadn't. He said that no one had asked him to. But he had, in fact, been asked to conduct a wider array of operas than virtually any other conductor of his generation—more than 150 by his own count. I once inquired how he could walk into the pit at one of the world's great opera houses and, without any rehearsal with either orchestra or cast, lead a performance. "That's what's so exciting," he replied, "you never know what's going to happen." I also inquired about his favorite moment in Weill. "The final scene of *Lost in the Stars*," he said. "I could never look up at the stage because I'd fall apart and be unable to finish the performance." How fitting that we bid farewell to Julius with an image of Weill's farewell to the stage.

Kim H. Kowalke

## In Memoriam Stanley Chase

Producer Stanley Chase (1927–2014), who enjoyed a long career in theater, television, and film, passed away in October. Chase's first big break remained his greatest coup, the off-Broadway staging of *The Threepenny Opera* in Marc Blitzstein's adaptation. The production opened in Greenwich Village in 1954 and changed New York theater forever. Ultimately it ran until 1961, setting a record at the time for the longest-running musical.

Chase and his partner Carmen Capalbo were novice producers who shared a love of *The Threepenny Opera*, which they had learned through Lotte Lenya's German recordings. They won out over a number of competitors because Lenya and Blitzstein were persuaded by their unwavering commitment to the work and their refusal to make any changes.

The team produced several other plays on and off Broadway before Chase moved to Hollywood and began a long career in film and television. His projects included producing *The Threepenny Opera* for the silver screen as *Mack the Knife* (1989), with Raul Julia, Richard Harris, Julia Migenes, and Roger Daltrey in the cast.

We extend our condolences to Chase's family, friends, and associates as we mourn this vital figure in the history of *The Threepenny Opera* in America.



PHOTO: ZACHARY FREYMAN

## Soiree for Lys Symonette

Lys Symonette, Vice President and Musical Executive of the Kurt Weill Foundation until her death in 2005, was recently remembered in her hometown of Mainz, Germany. The evening before the premiere of *Lady in the Dark* on 17 May 2014 (see review on p. 15), the Staatstheater held a soiree in Lys's honor. Press officer Christine Villinger gave a talk on Lys's life and work, which began in Mainz, where Lys acquired a solid musical foundation before escaping Nazi Germany and emigrating to the U.S. in the late 1930s. The timing was apt, because *Lady in the Dark* was the first Broadway show Lys ever saw, and it convinced her of the importance of American musical theater. It also reintroduced her to the music of Kurt Weill, whom she had admired as a young woman in Germany. Only a few years later, in 1945, Weill hired her as rehearsal pianist for *The Firebrand of Florence*. Lys worked on all of Weill's Broadway shows from then on; after his death, she went on to help Lotte Lenya with Weill-related projects before taking on a key role with the Weill Foundation in 1982 after Lenya's death. Lys's devotion to Weill and to her work was legendary, and the State Theater in Mainz did honor to itself by honoring her.



PHOTO: KURT WEILL FOUNDATION

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