

# Kurt Weill Newsletter

VOLUME 37

NUMBER 2

FALL 2019

CHERYL CRAWFORD presents

# LOVE LIFE

Book and Lyrics by ALAN JAY LERNER • Music by KURT WEILL

Directed by ELIA KAZAN

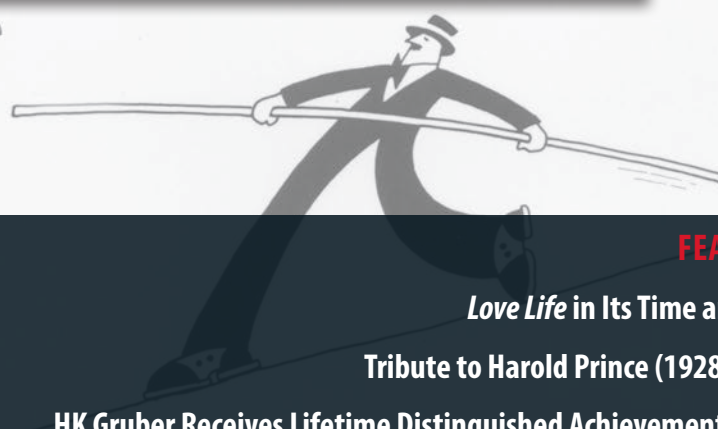
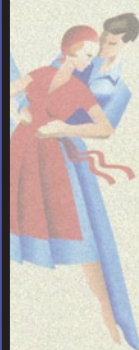
MICHAEL KIDD

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*Love Life* in Its Time and Ours

Tribute to Harold Prince (1928–2019)

HK Gruber Receives Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award

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Cover photos: Posters from productions of *Love Life* (clockwise from top left): Broadway (1948), Opera North (1996), American Music Theater Festival (1990). Center: *Encores!* (2020)

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Published twice a year, the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* features articles and reviews (books, performances, recordings) that center on Kurt Weill but take a broader look at issues of twentieth-century music and theater. With a print run of 4,000 copies, the *Newsletter* is distributed worldwide. Subscriptions are free. The editor welcomes the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for consideration.

A variety of opinions are expressed in the *Newsletter*; they do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. Letters to the editor are welcome.

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## Teresa Stratas: Diamond Jubilee

On 20 November, the Metropolitan Opera Guild paid homage to soprano Teresa Stratas on the sixtieth anniversary of her company debut, along with Martina Arroyo. Stephanie Blythe, Ailyn Pérez, and Matthew Polenzani offered tributes both spoken and sung before a host of distinguished guests. Stratas made her mark on many of the world's great opera stages, but her association with the Met was particularly long and fruitful, encompassing her role debut as Jenny in *Mahagonny* (1979), through which she met Lotte Lenya. With Lenya's encouragement, she began an equally fruitful engagement with Weill's music, resulting in further performances as well as a number of audio and video recordings that preserve her unique and thrilling approach. Ms. Stratas has judged the Lenya Competition Finals eleven times and received the Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award in 1998.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

With a brand-new production of *Love Life* coming up at City Center *Encores!* in March 2020, our feature was an easy choice. This issue complements the feature from Spring 2017, which focused primarily on the creation and original production of the show and on preparations for the most recent staging in Freiburg. This time around, we review the productions that came in between, discuss social and theatrical issues inevitably associated with *Love Life*, and present a range of viewpoints about the show and its influence. The feature wraps with a word from Victoria Clark, director of the *Encores!* presentation. Before you start chewing on all that, be sure to pause over the next page, where we offer the latest Kurt Weill Edition news.

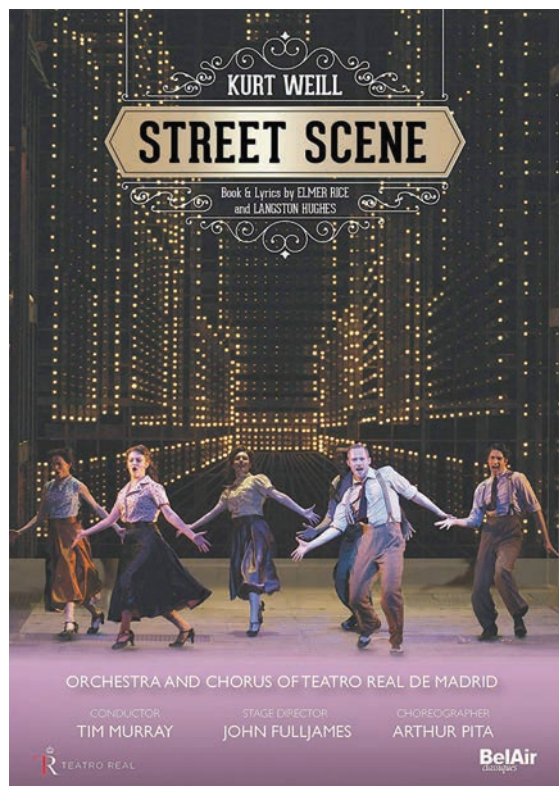
Stephen Hinton, editor of *Die Dreigroschenoper* for the Kurt Weill Edition, breaks down a new film that has set tongues wagging all over Germany, *Mackie Messer: Brechts 3Groschenfilm*. The news section relays Foundation updates—changes to the grant program, new resources for Lenya Competition contestants, and three new Blitzstein-related videos on YouTube—and the latest from the wide world of Weill. We embrace the opportunity to celebrate the career of Harold Prince, who passed away on 31 July, and his work on behalf of Weill, Lenya, and the Foundation in particular, with a tribute from Kim H. Kowalke.

Dave Stein

## Street Scene DVD Newly Released

Just out: a new addition to the Weill videography! Bel Air Classiques has issued both DVD and Blu-ray releases of the Teatro Real Madrid production of *Street Scene* (2018) directed by John Fulljames and conducted by Tim Murray. The production, greeted with rapturous reviews in Spain, has already had a run at co-producer Oper Köln and moves on to Opéra Monte-Carlo in February 2020, where the original leads—Patricia Racette (Anna), Paulo Szot (Frank), Mary Bevan (Rose), and Joel Prieto (Sam)—will reunite. Find out what you've missed by getting the disc. If you subscribe to BroadwayHD, you don't have to wait; you can stream it right now.

Previously, Bel Air Classiques issued the 2010 Teatro Real *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* with Measha Brueggergosman and Michael König, directed by La Fura dels Baus and conducted by Pablo Heras-Casado.



## HK Gruber Earns Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award

The Foundation has declared HK Gruber the eighth recipient of its Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award. Gruber joins an illustrious group of previous winners, including Maurice Abravanel, Teresa Stratas, Julius Rudel, and other dedicated champions of Weill's artistic legacy. Over the last thirty years, Gruber has been an inspired conductor, arranger, and performer of Weill's works in innumerable productions and recordings, including his close collaboration on the CD *Berlin im Licht* with David Drew, another past winner.

Foundation President and CEO Kim H. Kowalke presented the award on 21 September at a gala reception following the world premiere of Gruber's new version of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (*Die sieben Todsünden*) for fifteen players, prepared in collaboration with Christian Muthspiel. Gruber's conducting of the premiere, added to his imaginative and faithful rescoring of one of Weill's masterpieces, is only the latest milestone of a career in which Gruber's attention to Weill's musical and artistic principles has paid dividends for everyone. Gruber's own work as a composer honors the tradition established by Weill's artistry; as he put it in a 1997 *Newsletter* interview, "I feel so close to [Weill] as a musician."

# Indispensable Kurt Weill Edition Resources Now Online

The Kurt Weill Edition ([www.kurtweilledition.org](http://www.kurtweilledition.org)) continues to produce and publish authoritative critical editions of Weill's works. Beginning in December 2019, the Edition presents essential elements of all published volumes free of charge online, including introductory essays and critical reports, as well as corrigenda sheets to track any errors or changes that have been identified after publication.

The introductory essay offers a detailed history of each work from inception through composition, rehearsal, and first performance, along with further production history, while addressing larger editorial and performance issues. Prepared by the volume editor, each essay presents a trove of detailed information that will expand the knowledge of any reader—performer, casual fan, or seasoned scholar. The Critical Report spells out all the editorial decisions made in the course of preparing the score, as well as thorough descriptions of source material, revealing the process of creating each critical edition in detail. Corrigenda sheets list passages in the scores in which errors have been discovered after publication—sometimes revealed by new source evidence—and supply corrections.

These resources will be linked from a new page on the Edition web site and also from pages dedicated to Weill's works on kwf.org. Making these essential scholarly materials widely accessible will help to amplify the purpose and thrust of the Edition as a whole while providing useful information and commentary on individual works, fostering appreciation and knowledge. We encourage everyone to visit the new pages to learn more about Weill's oeuvre and about the Edition, which seeks to preserve his music in rigorously edited yet appealingly presented scores, suitable both for scholars and performers.

**Next from the Kurt Weill Edition: Weill, Brecht, and Hauptmann's *Happy End* (Series I, Volume 6), edited by Stephen Hinton and Elmar Juchem, is now in press and expected to appear early in 2020.**



The tops of two facing pages from the tenor saxophone part for "Surabaya-Johnny" reveal a crucial change to the scoring made during rehearsals. As Weill remarked in an interview with *Berlin am Morgen*, 6 September 1929: "It occurred to me that the violin could be accompanied by a clarinet playing an octave lower. I had the jazz [i.e., pit] band stop, changed the score, and the resulting sound has benefited greatly. This would be impossible with a large orchestra." The manuscript has been cropped to show the violin line added to the tenor saxophone part; the clarinet line doubling it is not shown. Weill made no bones about the value of his work in the theater for his own development as a composer. He wrote to Theodor Adorno on 30 August 1929: "In terms of orchestration I am still trying out completely new things that I have been working on with the orchestra for hours on end. It's very time-consuming, but enormously instructive. I am convinced that a student of composition could learn more at such a rehearsal (about form and instrumentation) than in a three-year course of study." The original part is located in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, Series 18, folder 73.

# Love Life in Its Time and Ours

*Love Life*, as nearly everyone knows by now, was a forerunner of the concept musical, perhaps the most prominent development in American musical theater between 1965 and 1990. Several giants of the genre—Fred Ebb, Bob Fosse, Harold Prince, Stephen Sondheim—attended performances of *Love Life* during its original run (1948–49) and acknowledged its precedent. Scholars have pointed to telling resemblances between *Love Life* and a number of shows written by Sondheim or Kander & Ebb and directed by Prince, demonstrating a clear chain of influence. What of *Love Life* today? As we look ahead to a new production at City Center *Encores!* next March, we review production history and consider the ways in which *Love Life*, far ahead of its time in 1948, remains vital in today's theater. For historical and sociological background, we rely on Joel Galand, editor of the complete score and script of *Love Life* which will appear in the Kurt Weill Edition. We've asked Victoria Clark, who will direct the *Encores!* presentation, for a contemporary perspective.

## Synopsis

by Mark N. Grant

**Note:** Alan Jay Lerner described *Love Life* as a cavalcade of American marriage. The unusual structure of the show alternates scenes chronicling the Cooper family's progression through successive periods of American history starting in the 1790s with vaudeville-style acts that comment on the main story. The two types of scenes do not overlap until the end of Part II. The Coopers' ages do not change despite the 150-year lapse of time.

### Part I

The curtain rises on a magic show. The magician saws a woman in half and levitates a man. The man and woman start a conversation. She points out that her current state reflects her whole life; her desires and responsibilities are always uncomfortably divided. "Where does that leave me?" asks the man. "Right where you are, in mid-air," she replies. We learn that the man and woman are married—unhappily—to each other.

The scene shifts to a small New England town in 1791. Curious townspeople gather around a new store ("Who Is Samuel Cooper?"). Sam, the levitated man from the previous scene, enters and gives an account of himself; he has moved with his wife, Susan, and two children, Johnny and Elizabeth, to the town from Boston to practice his carpentry trade. Sam tells Susan (previously sawed in half) that he never wants to leave their new home ("Here I'll Stay"). As the scene ends, a male octet assembles in front of the curtain to sing about the effects of economic development on human relationships ("Progress").

We return to New England in 1821. Factories dot the landscape, and Sam decides to close up shop and join the industrial labor force. Sam and Susan reminisce about the first chair he made for her ("I Remember It Well"). Susan asks Sam to join her at the springtime dance ("Green-Up Time"), but Sam has to work late in the shop. Next a male quartet sings about the conflicts between love and money ("Economics"). Then—in a number dropped from the original Broadway production but commonly performed in revivals—they take a sympathetic look at Susan's actual life contrasted with her longings ("Susan's Dream").

Now it's 1857 and the Coopers have moved. Sam is about to go to work for the railroad. Susan fears that he will be away from home all the time and tells him she wants another child, but Sam puts her off. As that scene ends, three children enter and comment on Susan's state of mind ("Mother's Getting Nervous"), which segues into a ragtime/Dixieland-style dance as a trapeze artist performs overhead.

Next we see the Coopers in the early 1890s. Sam relaxes on the front porch ("My Kind of Night"). But as Johnny and Elizabeth wonder when Susan will get home from her suffragettes' meeting, the lights fade out on Sam and come up on the women's rights rally. Susan and the suffragettes insist on equality for women ("Women's Club Blues"). Then a hobo comes out to sing his message that love, not progress or economics, is the only answer, but nobody listens ("Love Song").

The scene shifts to New Year's Eve in the 1920s; Sam and Susan are on a Caribbean cruise. Sam spends his time shmoozing and proclaims that he will do anything to advance his business ("I'm Your Man"), while another businessman makes a pass at Susan. Then Sam himself is tempted by a young blonde. But Sam and Susan wind up together, rather sheepish and not particularly happy, as the evening ends.

### Part II

New York City, 1948. Sam now works at a bank and Susan has taken a management job at a department store. One night in the Cooper apartment, Sam, Susan, Johnny, and Elizabeth are arguing about which radio program to listen to. The children leave and Sam and Susan, finding nothing to talk about, retire to separate rooms. Next, a chorus materializes and performs an Elizabethan-style *a cappella* madrigal about modern anxiety and neurosis ("Ho, Billy O!"). Then Susan helps Sam pack a suitcase as he prepares to move into a hotel; they have agreed to divorce. After a reminiscence of happier times, Sam departs. Susan wonders who's to blame for their marital troubles ("Is It Him or Is It Me?"). The proceedings play out in a satiric ballet scene in *commedia dell'arte* style ("Punch and Judy Get a Divorce"). Sam moves into a hotel room, where he exults in his newfound bachelor freedoms, though he also misses his kids and has moments of loneliness ("This is the Life").

The final scene is a "minstrel show" in which the interlocutor and minstrels review some foolish responses to love and marriage ("We're Sellin' Sunshine"): using astrology to find the right mate ("Madame Zuzu"), avoiding love altogether ("Takin' No Chances"), and insisting on unattainable perfection, which inspires Susan to sing about her own ideal man ("Mr. Right"). But when the minstrels urge them to face reality, Susan and Sam, now freed of illusion and determined to make their marriage work, inch toward each other on a tightrope as the curtain falls.



# Birth of a Concept

by Joel Galand

Writing to his parents ten days after the New York opening, Kurt Weill described *Love Life* as “an entirely new form of theater.” The show’s designer, Boris Aronson, would have agreed, recalling in 1973 that the show was some two decades ahead of its time: “There were enough ideas in this show for twenty musicals. ... In many ways, this show may have been the forerunner of today’s so-called ‘concept’ musical.” Aronson anticipated what has become a critical commonplace. Since 1949, there have been three English-language productions of *Love Life*, prompting roughly three dozen reviews, the majority of which inform us that Weill and Lerner anticipated such shows as Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret* and *Chicago*, the Sondheim-Prince musicals (*Company*, *Follies*, *Pacific Overtures*), Michael Bennet’s *A Chorus Line*, Bob Fosse’s *All That Jazz*, and, in some of the later reviews, Sondheim’s *Assassins*.

Like *Love Life*, these successors are generally organized around a central concept or idea; their musical numbers often comment on and even guide the audience towards an understanding of that idea; their books abandon Eugène Scribe’s ideal of the well-made play—an ideal to which Rodgers and Hammerstein largely subscribed—in favor of looser structures, such as a series of vignettes that may or may not be presented in chronological order and that may cut across several historical epochs. Some “concept musicals” share thematic concerns with *Love Life*, notably by presenting anatomies of marriages or friendships in a decidedly non-linear fashion (e.g., *Company*, *Follies*, and *Merrily We Roll Along*). Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, a relatively early musical exploration of post-war marital estrangement, has other features reminiscent of *Love Life*: commentary numbers by a vocal trio, a locker room scene, and a song ironically extolling Hollywood-derived illusions as panacea. Several concept musicals follow *Love Life* in using revue-like theatrical genres as a frame. Kander and Ebb, notably, channel cabaret in *Cabaret*, vaudeville in *Chicago*, and minstrel shows in *The Scottsboro Boys*.

In 1955, Lerner said, “[I] will always draw on *Love Life*.” He did so, superficially, in *Gigi*, by reworking the lyrics to “I Remember It Well.” But, more substantially, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* shares with *Love Life* the conceit of allowing characters to remain the same over several historical epochs in the service of delivering a broad socio-political critique. This time racism was the object, so Lerner could also have been inspired by the Jule Styne show *Hallelujah, Baby!* (lyrics by Comden and Green, book by Arthur Laurents). Both *Hallelujah, Baby!* and *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (music by Leonard Bernstein) feature a black couple who do not age over time. Instead of vaudeville, Lerner uses the framing device of the play within a play; *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* is partly about putting on *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. The actor who plays all ten presidents also serves as an emcee of sorts. The high point of Act Two is Lerner’s depiction of the Garfield administration as a minstrel show.

To be sure, the concept of “concept musical” has a venerable history. Some of its characteristics were already in place in older shows, notably those belonging to the revue genre. (Stephen Banfield has cited Offenbach’s *Tales of Hoffman* as a precursor to the “concept musical,” and built-in commentary on the action of a play goes back to the ancient Greeks.) But *Love Life* provides a direct link because of Aronson and because many of the other creators associated with the concept musical (Prince, Sondheim, Fosse) saw the original production and acknowledged at least some degree of influence, though not necessarily without reservations. Prince, for example, while citing the influence of both *Lady in the Dark* and *Love Life* on the concept musical, also suggested that the latter might have been better off without the commentary numbers: “Why was there a tightrope? Why wasn’t it all simplified to ‘Let’s follow these people through American history’? Why did it have to have the extra stuff? I thought it just got too complicated. But it’s wildly talented.”

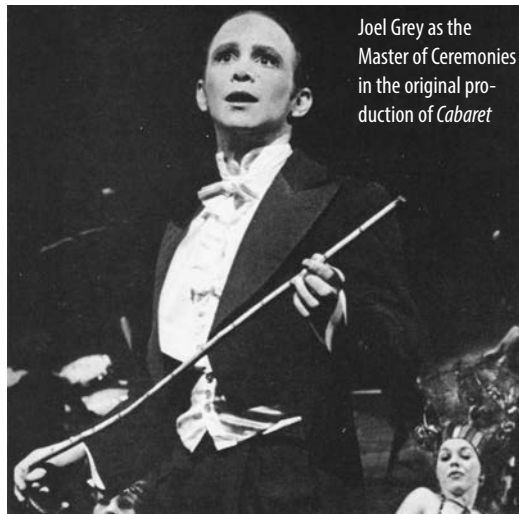
Like *Love Life*, concept musicals, while enjoying a *succès d’estime* based on their formal innovations, have encountered resistance from a broader public ambivalent about their abstraction, emotional remoteness, and lack of appealing characters. The show’s choreographer, Michael Kidd, thought that even though

*Company* “probably” worked more successfully than *Love Life*, both shows left the “audience longing for some kind of romantic involvement.” In an oral history interview, Kidd explained that the show’s form made it difficult for the audience to make emotional connections with the show and its characters:

I think the form was so progressive for its time that audiences were a little confused by it. ... Ordinarily, in a musical comedy, one scene leads to another and it’s a hangover of an emotional content, an emotional reaction, you’re waiting for the new turn. This was almost revue-like in its form where there was no carry-over. Each time a new scene came

on, they had to readjust their thinking. ... [In] one scene we identify with the characters on stage. In the scene that follows we are now required to identify not with the characters we see before us but with the authors’ concept of what progress was. I think it throws a monkey wrench in the audience’s thinking process. Do they identify with the characters on stage or do they identify with the author’s comment upon what went on the stage? And I think that confused them, they didn’t know how to take it ... . Are we listening to the characters on stage *as if we were part of their life* or do we dismiss that and listen to the author’s editorial comment upon what the characters on stage went through?

Of course, this was precisely the point: by requiring audiences to “readjust their thinking,” Lerner and Weill were impeding that uncritical identification with on-stage personae so characteristic of conventional theater. But this very impediment was also what led even the show’s producer Cheryl Crawford to complain that *Love Life* “had no heart, no passion. The audience couldn’t get emotionally involved in the marital problems of the



Joel Grey as the Master of Ceremonies in the original production of *Cabaret*

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE WEILL-LERNER RESEARCH CENTER

couple.” That *Love Life* (like some of the later concept musicals) resists emotional involvement has become another critical commonplace, but some degree of emotional distance was necessary for what Weill and Lerner were after. Sam and Susan are less individual subjects than nexuses of socially-conditioned desires. Susan may blame Sam for everything that has happened to their family over 150 years, but Weill and Lerner are interested in calling into question the very notion of personal agency. Sam and Susan do not so much act as they are acted upon, and their fates stand for a more global process. The book scenes form a loose “sequence of ‘morality pictures,’” as Weill described *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*: “The fate of the individual is depicted only where it exemplifies the fate of social institutions in general.” In replying to *Love Life*’s critics, Weill could have repeated his suggestion to Hans Mersmann on how to approach *Die Bürgschaft* (1932): “[P]erceive ‘economic conditions’ ... as a concretization of what the ancients called ‘fate.’” Like the dancing Anna in *Die sieben Todsünden* and Juan and Juanita in *A Kingdom for a Cow*, the Coopers’ love life is shaped by conjunctures beyond their control.

## What Was the First Concept Musical?

We think of *Love Life* primarily in terms of its influence on Broadway shows that came later, but even this groundbreaking musical had ancestors. One predecessor, not often mentioned, is Weill’s own *Lady in the Dark* (1941), written with Moss Hart and Ira Gershwin. The author of *Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical*, Bruce D. McClung, explains:

“Eschewing any subplot or secondary love interest, *Lady in the Dark* is actually the progenitor of the first type of concept musical. The relationship between the book scenes and the dream scenes is dictated by the topic of psychoanalysis. The costume designs of tailored monochrome suits and colorful ball gowns were motivated by her drive to become both sexes. A woman choosing among three men representing the roles of father, lover, and husband is a Freudian conceit. The turntables and plastic furnishings attempted to capture the cinematic quality of dreams. All of the elements of the production reflected the central concept of psychoanalysis” (p. 165).

John Kander and Harold Prince experienced *Lady in the Dark* on Broadway as teenagers:

**John Kander:**

“I saw *Lady in the Dark* on Broadway during the first trip I ever made to New York with my folks. Danny Kaye had left the cast by the time I saw it, but it was a major, major theater experience for me. I was in love with it. (Later I saw *Street Scene*, and I was in love with that, too.)”

**Harold Prince:**

“*Lady in the Dark* was a huge forerunner. It again changed the way musicals were done, but its structure today, to me, doesn’t seem modern enough, bright enough. The score is dazzling ... When I first saw it, I was knocked flat. It was one of the most amazing experiences I ever had in the musical theater.”

## On Love Life: The Creators

“I did *Love Life* with Kurt Weill. That was a little adventure-some—I was young in the theater. Now, that show I remember as being really in many ways monumental. It was a history of America, really. And that one beautiful, beautiful song, ‘Here I’ll Stay.’”

--Alan Jay Lerner, book and lyrics (from interview with Lehman Engel)

“*Love Life* required a light touch, charm, humor, and pure theatricality. ... I followed the vaudeville approach by designing a variety of sketchy scenes and vaudeville drops, each making a comment of its own.”

--Boris Aronson, set designer, quoted in *The Theatre Art of Boris Aronson* (Knopf, 1987)

“And so *Love Life* is one show that is really a milestone in the American theater—musical theater—which has been imitated by a lot of people and is not recognized as yet for the influence it had.”

--Lys Symonette, rehearsal pianist (from interview with Suzanne Goldklang)

“Lotte Lenya, who had been married to Kurt Weill, appeared in *Cabaret*. I first saw *Cabaret* up in Boston. I went backstage and I said to her, ‘They finally did it. Kurt and Alan tried to pull it off and it didn’t quite work. Now they’ve used the same basic idea and it worked.’ And she said, ‘You’re absolutely right, Michael. It was the idea that Kurt tried to do a long time ago.’”

--Michael Kidd, choreographer (from interview with Margaret Sherry)

“[Weill told me] ‘I’m aware that it’s a new time, I’m aware that it’s a new country’ ... He said, ‘I have to move with the times; I have to be up with the times.’ ... His music was a little ahead of his time, even though he was coming from another place.”

--Nanette Fabray, female lead (from interview with Margaret Sherry)

In a note to a fan from 24 August 1982, Fabray names *Love Life* as one of her favorite shows (photo courtesy of the Weill-Lenya Research Center).



# Love Life: A Brief Production History

**7 October 1948 – 14 May 1949 (252 performances): Original Broadway production, following tryouts in New Haven and Boston. Director: Elia Kazan; conductor: Joseph Littau**

"*Love Life* is subtitled 'a vaudeville,' and a touch of that virtually extinct genre is present. Actually, this musical comedy is a chronicle and leans towards the cavalcade type of drama, but with a difference, since both its vaudeville and chronicle character are in the service of that kind of documentary and pedagogic drama that used to be called a *Lehrstueck* in Germany. ... [*Love Life*] is pregnant with possibilities for intelligent non-realistic theater."

--John Gassner, *Forum*, February 1949



PHOTO: COURTESY WEILL-LEIVA RESEARCH CENTER

**16–19 April 1987 (4 performances): University of Michigan. Director: Brent Wagner; conductor: Mitchell Krieger. First revival, mounted the year after Lerner's death. Reinstated "The Locker Room," which was cut during Broadway tryouts.**

"It was something like discovering a Renoir that had been kept under wraps for 40 years. ... One of the intriguing questions raised by the Michigan production is what would have happened if Weill and Lerner had remained a team."

--Paul Salsini, *Milwaukee Journal*, 26 April 1987



PHOTO: DAVID SMITH

**10–24 June 1990 (16 performances): American Musical Theater Festival, Philadelphia. Director: Barry Harman; conductor: Robert Kapilow. Additional book materials by Thomas Babe. First professional revival. Reinstated "Susan's Dream," which was cut during Broadway tryouts.**

"The most conspicuous change is the creation of a new principal character by Thomas Babe ... L.L. Swank, a red-nosed clown in a tattered mation jacket who valiantly strives to get the increasingly disenchanted Coopers back together, serves as magician, illusionist, commentator and participant ... Swank helps provide clarity and cohesion to the proceedings, but he is given little to do that jibes with his merry makeup."

--Hari, *Variety*, 20 June 1990



PHOTO: MARK GARVIN

**24 January – 3 February 1996 (7 performances followed by 8 performances on tour): Opera North, Leeds, England. Director: Caroline Gawn; conductor: Wyn Davies. U.K. premiere. Reinstated "The Locker Room."**

"Equally crucial to the success of any American musical is the style. The Opera North chorus here steps its way politely through the raunchy 'Women's Club Blues,' giving us neither the real thing nor an amusing send-up. That said, the vaudeville numbers were in general more striking than the intermingled episodes tracing the marriage of Sam and Susan Cooper ..."

--Geoffrey Norris, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 January 1996



PHOTO: CLIVE BARDA



18 November 2000 (1 performance, followed by 1 performance at the Kurt Weill Fest Dessau, 4 March 2001): Hochschule der Künste, Berlin. Director: Peter Kock; conductor: Stanley Walden; translator: Rüdiger Bering. German premiere. Reinstated "There's Nothing Left for Daddy but the Rhumba" and "You Understand Me So," which were cut before the Broadway opening.

"The family goes through historical stages with songs and dances that comment upon them ... . As in Brecht's epic theater, the audience gains insight into social conditions, but here they are delivered with so much wit and humor that we never feel like we are sitting through a Lehrstück. Weill provides solid entertainment while maintaining critical distance. Beautifully done."

--Torsten Enge, *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, 29 November 2000

9 December 2017 – 13 April 2018 (13 performances in repertory): Theater Freiburg, Germany. Director: Joan Anton Rechi; musical director: James Holmes; conductor: Daniel Carter; translator: Rüdiger Bering. Revived for 7 performances in Bern, Switzerland, September 2018.

"The revolving stage is a screening room in the front and a vaudeville theater in the back. Susan and Samuel Cooper watch their lives on a movie screen. The commentary numbers are staged as charming homages to Hollywood: the male octet tricked out as tap-dancing Charlie Chaplins [for 'Progress'] or the four snaky-hipped Frankensteins warning about the effects of industrialization on love [in 'Economics']."

--Georg Rüdiger, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 December 2017

Note: Each photo depicts "Women's Club Blues" from Part I of *Love Life*.

### One that got away

On 29 December 1948, Weill wrote to Maurice Abravanel, recently installed as conductor of the Utah Symphony after ten years spent in New York conducting Broadway shows by Weill and others: "I told Alan [Lerner] and Cheryl [Crawford] about the offer of the Utah University to produce *Love Life* next summer for a run of 8 or 10 performances and we all agreed that it sounds like a good idea and we are willing to give our okay. ... We will have a complete piano score which can be used as conductor's score and there [are] extra copies of the different numbers. I am sure that *Love Life* will close here some time before the summer so that the orchestra material will be available. The book is being printed and will be available in a couple of months." (Neither score nor script was ever published.) No further correspondence survives to explain why the performance fell through, but the first revival might have taken place within a year of the Broadway opening, rather than waiting almost forty.

### The cast recording that wasn't

When the show opened in October 1948, the American Federation of Musicians was in the midst of a job action in which they refused to participate in recordings; as a result, *Love Life*'s original cast never went into the studio, as they almost certainly would have otherwise. Cast recordings had by then become an important complement of any successful Broadway show (*Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Street Scene* had all been immortalized by members of their original casts). There is little doubt that a recording made at the time would have drawn more attention to *Love Life* and made the show less mysterious to later generations.

In the late 1980s, conductor John McGlinn, noted for complete recordings of classic Broadway shows in original orchestrations, began preparations to take on *Love Life*. He arranged to recopy the entire piano-vocal score as well as scores and parts for most of the individual numbers, working from the original Broadway performing materials. The project was aborted, and to this day, the complete score has never been commercially recorded.

# Love Life and the Family

by Joel Galand

Weill and Lerner's portrait of an American family in 1948 does not seem so foreign today. Modern audiences need no introduction to families headed by two working parents, buffeted by stress from outside the home, trying to control the sway of media (radio, movies, and nascent television in 1948; a much more bewildering variety now) over their own lives and those of their children. The first book scene (or "sketch") from Part II continues to speak to us.

The postwar years ushered in the apotheosis of the nuclear family, an era that lasted until the 1960s and today is remembered nostalgically as a golden age. In the "Radio Night" sketch that opens Part II of *Love Life*, the radio has broken down because the Coopers failed to maintain it; they were saving for a television set. Television was soon to provide Americans with idealized depictions of family life that continue to inform our self-image today (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* premiered on 4 October 1952). That idealization of the family provides a context for *Love Life*.

At the outset, the Magician returns the Coopers to a society on the verge of industrialization, a Connecticut in which furniture shops are still domestic enterprises. Sam and Susan look back on this time as a point of perfection: "We had it then." The love-based marriage arose in the wake of those same economic forces that gradually undo it over the course of *Love Life*. Kazan, for one, seems to have understood that the subsequent 1821 scene, in which industrialization is already well underway, actually marks "the high moment of their love together," and not the earlier, pre-industrial scene:

Both think the change necessary, in fact inevitable and desirable ... but both know intuitively that they are giving up something more valuable. So since they are about to part ... since they both sense the end of something good they had together, they cling more to each other. This is the high moment of their love together. *In scene 2 [i.e., 1791] they are not aware of being in love ... . They are simply necessary to each other [italics added].*

The Coopers start out firmly within a community, but that sense of belonging to a larger social order that transcends the individual family dissipates over the course of the show. "Green-Up Time" notwithstanding, even the early scenes focus on the couple. "Here I'll Stay" is very much a romantic ballad. (In its initial orchestration, Weill emphasized its sensuality by using a sultry beguine beat to accompany their duet iteration of the refrain. Evidently, he thought better of this and reorchestrated the passage using a more conventional "folk operetta" texture.) In "I Remember It Well," details are forgotten, the one certainty being that "I did love you so." Weill and Lerner's model family seems to be the nuclear one, bound primarily by the faintly eroticized, companionate marriage—in short, the post-war ideal in which men were the sole economic providers and women faced the challenging, and often unfulfilling, dual roles of nurturing mother and wife-mistress. There is a dialectic at work in *Love Life* between the critique of industrialization and a celebration of the kind of love to which industrialization gave rise.

The uncut version of "My Kind of Night" makes a crucial point when it shows Sam as the very picture of the self-satisfied mid-level businessman, contentedly singing "Nicest little fam'ly a fellow ever had/The earth is humming a happy song," even as he ignores his lonely, emotionally starved children. Sam has, in Kazan's words, "No connection now at all. He finds his only peace in 'nature' and he needs 'peace' now, not love. She's got to do something with her energy—his happiness comes from knowing that the 'house and lot are his' and that 'he has a little salted away,' and he doesn't understand 'Mommy's night with her girlfriends.' The kids are wandering around unconnected too." During try-outs, "My Kind of Night" was abridged, so that only Sam sings. Originally the children entered singing Sam's tune, eager to spend time with a father who is finally home, but he sends them off to play with the neighborhood kids ("Tomorrow. I want to relax to-night."). By the Broadway opening, Sam's two exchanges with the children were cut, saving three minutes of running time, but at the price of obscuring the disconnectedness that Kazan observed.

It is precisely Sam's waywardness that drives Susan to feminism in the first place. Earlier, the vaudeville number "Economics (Is Awful Bad for Love)" aptly introduces the "New Baby" sketch, in which Sam, now a traveling representative for a railroad company, refuses to sleep with Susan because any resulting birth would take place inconveniently during a future business trip. The next vaudeville act, "Mother's Getting Nervous," more than hints that the nervousness in question results from sexual frustration and that Mother will need to seek another outlet for all those pent-up urges. The trapeze artist's last stunt, performed while opening a large book that proves to be none other than Susan B. Anthony on women's rights, tells us what that outlet will be. Lerner and Weill seem to suggest that the female's search for parity with the male arises from psychological maladjustment (shades of *Lady in the Dark*).

When Sam, whose daughter has shamed him for having a working wife, angrily tells Susan, "You don't have to work and you know it," she bitterly replies, "Oh! Now I don't have to! A couple of years ago, they said it was patriotic." By 1948, Susan Cooper would have been among the mere 17% of married women who were still employed. Kazan suggested that Ray Middleton play up the gender inversion in the modern apartment scene, after Susan comes home from work: "He stands in apron holding coffee as she bawls him out! Like scolding a servant! ... [He] wants to chatter like a woman ... should remind audience of wives." References to impotence abound in an early version of the script; most of them were removed, such as this one, from the cut "Rhumba" number:

There's nothing left for daddy but the rhumba;  
And how often it takes him off the spot.  
For when he brings a girl  
Home from a rhumba whirl,  
She's so worn out she doesn't ask for what he hasn't got.  
There's nothing left for daddy but the Rhumba;  
It's the one thing that daddy can do.

The critic for the *Wall Street Journal* offered an unusually lucid summary of the show: "The Coopers are shown breaking up housekeeping under dimly convincing circumstances ... . The reconciliation was on the sound note of skepticism, reversing the normal musical comedy formula, a point very much in its favor." Ultimately, *Love Life* may have been too "dimly convincing" for comfort.

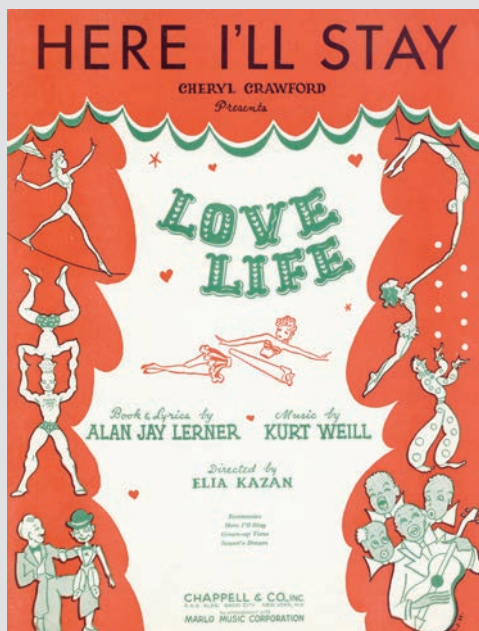


## "Here I'll Stay" How Standard Is It?

"'Here I'll Stay' is a magnificent song."  
--John Kander

It's the second song in the show, and one of the most enduringly popular—one of the few songs from *Love Life* recorded by pop artists in 1948, when Buddy Clark and Jo Stafford both released it, and by far the best seller among the eight numbers from *Love Life* published as sheet music (see cover below). Wyn Davies, conductor of the Opera North production in 1996, said "it ought to be a standard." Actually, it is, judging by the number of artists who have recorded it over the decades. Here is a selective alphabetical list:

Julie Andrews  
Dee Dee Bridgewater  
Diahann Carroll  
Bobby Darin (unreleased until the CD era)  
Sammy Davis, Jr.  
Thomas Hampson (with Jeanne Lehman)  
Coleman Hawkins  
Liza Minnelli  
Anthony Newley  
Esther Ofarim  
Steve Ross  
Bryn Terfel  
Mel Tormé  
Caterina Valente  
Julie Wilson



## On Love Life: Those Who Followed

"*Love Life* and *Allegro* were the first concept musicals. They were the first of their kind. Subconsciously, when I first saw them, I noted that they were shows driven by concepts. They didn't work, though I was too young at the time to realize that. (Weill's score is swell, by the way.) Were the shows upstaged by their concepts? In both cases you were so aware of the concept and the craft."

--Harold Prince, quoted in Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage from Berlin to Broadway* (Knopf, 2002)

"*Company* is overtly experimental, in that it's an attempt to blend the revue and book forms, although you could say that Weill and Lerner's *Love Life* had that in it, too. The whole point about experimental shows ... is that they are only important if they are successful in some way and influence what goes on after. If they're failures, nobody picks up on them, because nobody gets a chance to see them. If *Love Life* or *Allegro* had been smash hits, the musical theatre might very well have accelerated in terms of experimentation."

--Stephen Sondheim, *American Theatre*, April 2011

"But you could say that *Allegro*, in that sense, was the first commercial concept musical. And another one was *Love Life*. ... Most people didn't see them, so they don't think of them as having the kind of impact that *Oklahoma!* had. But I think they did."

--Stephen Sondheim, quoted in Steve Swayne, *How Sondheim Found His Sound* (Michigan, 2005)

"A marvelous piece and a major influence. I was amazed it wasn't a bigger success."

--Fred Ebb, quoted in *Kurt Weill on Stage*

"I think *Love Life*'s script is far and away the best thing Alan Jay Lerner ever wrote for the stage. It is totally original, and it has a remarkable vision of how to use musical theater as dramaturgy to make a philosophic point."

--Miles Krueger, quoted in Gene Lees, *Inventing Champagne* (St. Martin's Press, 1990)

"It is simultaneously one of the least well-known and most influential of his works, a paradox that can be explained by the fact that it had a big effect inside the profession but was not well remembered by the public."

--Eric Salzman, in *The New Music Theatre* (Oxford, 2008)

"We consider this evening in the theater the most beautiful and powerful that we have seen, along with *The Madwoman of Chailot* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It is almost impossible to imagine the effortless precision of such a combination of music, lighting, dance, and humor produced back home [in Germany] now or in the foreseeable future."

--Friedrich Luft, letter to Weill, 14 May 1949

"The best numbers combine lyrical catchiness with the keen harmonic and instrumental inventions that give Weill's music its distinctive, 'insidious' quality."

--Andrew Porter, *The New Yorker*, 9 July 1990

"In a modest but genuine way, Lerner and Weill's concept musical became a conversation piece among Broadway professionals and sophisticated theatregoers, generating debate about its ambitious form and content."

--Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage*

## Directing *Love Life* in the 21st Century

by Victoria Clark

Strictly from a practitioner's standpoint, I can say *Love Life* is the most challenging and exciting project I have ever worked on. No stranger to Golden Age revivals, "revisals," or new work, I have delighted as both actor and director in taking on assignments that require focus, knowledge, and perseverance. However, *Love Life*'s specific demands and requirements are inviting me to dig even deeper and search for the most satisfying and meaningful approach to this puzzling historic work.

Let's look at the challenges first. *Love Life* is often hailed as one of the first concept musicals and the grandmama of such shows as *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Pippin*, *Company*, and *Follies*. This list could go on. Even its title is edgy and a bit of a concept. It was originally intended to have an extra space between the two words as if to say "Love" OR "Life," or "Love" AND "Life." Weill and Lerner boldly set out to tell dual stories simultaneously, one about the Cooper family, and one about America, and their two parallel histories, their promise of fulfillment, their demise, and the faintest hint of possible healing and reconciliation. The show flashes back to 1791 and skips through time to "the present." But so much has happened in America and the world since 1948. How do we embrace the original chronology while offering an opportunity to see this as a rare timeless piece of writing that applies to America in any age, including the future?

And the questions keep coming. How do we envision Sam and Susan Cooper as a living, breathing entity, as a couple and as individuals, when so much of the story revolves around the *changes* they face and not the *people* they are and are becoming, for better or for worse? Why are we afraid of change? What is the origin of greed? At what point did we go from being a people who make things, to a people who buy and sell things? Where did the craftsman/artist go? I am deeply interested in the conflicts within the family and the impact they have on the children, Johnny and Elizabeth. In fact, they are for me the motor of the piece and the *Encores!* production, as they have the very most at stake for what happens in the marriage between Sam and Susan.

As for the America through-line, Weill and Lerner chose to tell our country's story through a series of witty, satiric vaudeville acts which crash through the Cooper storyline like eager guests coming the wrong night to a party. They are disruptive, disturbing, funny, and at times gauche. Sometimes they go on a bit long and make us uncomfortable. They leave reluctantly. When seen together, they tell the story of a brash, greedy country who wasn't paying enough attention to its core, the heart of a nation.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for modern audiences is the final vaudeville act which was originally conceived as a Minstrel Show. For the *Encores!* production we have chosen to eliminate references to the minstrel show and present it as a Finale. The minstrel show had all but disappeared as a form of entertainment by 1948, and besides the structural elements of two end "men" (Sam and Susan) and the Interlocutor (as marriage mediator), can anything be gained from perpetuating these tropes today in this particular context?

What excites me about *Love Life* today? That score. And the unbelievably beautiful orchestrations which paint the interior landscape of a marriage so brilliantly, from the lush romanticism of "Here I'll Stay" to the painfully self-reflective "Is It Him or Is It Me?" For the vaudeville numbers, audiences can revel in a panoply of American musical styles and idioms: brassy and sardonic "Progress," teasing "Mother's Getting Nervous," and the unabashedly forceful and emotional anthem "Love Song."

But what excites me just as much is to collaborate with some of today's greatest artists: Brian Stokes Mitchell (Sam), Kate Baldwin (Susan), Rob Berman (musical director), and JoAnn Hunter (choreographer). Moreover, what could be more fulfilling than the opportunity to rehearse with actors and discuss our country's past and future in 2020, an American presidential election year? What a glorious, terrifying time to be alive, and what an incredible privilege to give our passion back to this prescient 1948 work, and re-examine what it means to be an American. Although *Love Life* famously looks back in time, it also looks into the future. *Love Life* offers modern audiences an opportunity to take a good look at ourselves as people and as a nation, and asks in a refreshing and startlingly relevant way, who *were* we, who *are* we, and who do we want to *become*?



PHOTO: KATEBALDWIN.COM



PHOTO: PARADIGM

### ***Love Life* Comes to City Center *Encores!* in New York City, 18–22 March 2020!**

**Directed by Victoria Clark; conducted by Rob Berman;  
choreographed by JoAnn Hunter**

**Sam and Susan Cooper will be played by Brian Stokes Mitchell and Kate Baldwin**