

Thursday 14 June 7.30pm  
UNION CHAPEL

**KURT WEILL**  
**MUSIC THEATRE FROM PARIS**  
**AND NEW YORK**

THE MATRIX ENSEMBLE  
conductor ROBERT ZIEGLER

mezzo soprano  
ANGELINA REAUX  
mezzo soprano  
CYNTHIA CLAREY  
tenor DAMON EVANS  
baritone NICHOLAS FOLWELL  
baritone QUENTIN HAYES  
narrator IAN McDIARMID  
and ALMEIDA FESTIVAL CHORUS  
lighting SID MARCHANT, DENNIS BUTCHER  
sound HARDWARE HOUSE, VIC GODRICH



ROBERT ZIEGLER

**MARIE GALANTE**

Musical play (1934).  
Book and lyrics by Jacques Déval

*Suite Panaméenne*: Introduction et Tango – Marche de l'Armée Panaméenne – Tango-Habanera – Scène au Dancing (Fox-trot)

*Chansons et Choeur nègre*: Le Grand Lustucru – Les filles de Bordeaux – Le roi d'Aquitaine – J'attends un navire – Train du ciel

**WAR PLAY**

A Concert Sequence devised by David Drew from Paul Green's and Kurt Weill's musical play *Johnny Johnson* (1936)

Prologue: 1914 – USA 1917 – The Western Front – Armistice (Asylum Choruses)

**CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY**

A Concert Sequence devised by David Drew from *Lost in the Stars* (1949)

The Land – The City – The Trial – The Mines – The Judgement

Further performance 16 June

Presented with generous financial support from

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**Introduction to the Triple Bill**

After *Die Dreigroschenoper* Weill's music-theatre works divide into two distinct but functionally and thematically interlinked streams – on the one hand, those which are in effect 'through-composed' (eg *Mahagonny*, *Der Jasager*, *Die Bürgschaft*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *Street Scene*) and on the other, those which evolve and pioneer an extraordinary variety of mixed forms (eg *Der Silbersee*, *The Eternal Road*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Love Life*, and *Lost in the Stars*). Many of the latter have proved, in modern conditions, peculiarly resistant to revival, either because of the forces involved, or because of the dramatic style and content, or both.

Meanwhile the American and European developments in the world of small-scale music-theatre during the past three decades have created a demand for 'classical' repertoire which has principally been served by a mere handful of works by, for instance, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Milhaud, and, of course, Weill. In Weill's case, that demand harmonised with the perception not only that many important scores which Weill wrote for the theatre between 1928 and 1950 were still quite unknown, but also that almost every one of them contained latent or even manifest concert or concert-like forms. Theoretically these were excerptable without in any way pre-empting the revival of the original works (on the contrary), and therefore (as well as on principle) without attempting to simulate theatrical effects by the incorporation of characters, dialogues, or indeed story-line.

The first attempts at such excerpts were the 'Pantomime' from *The Protagonist*, the *Happy End* song-sequence, and *War Play* – all tried out in 1975

in the Berlin Festival. More recent is *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1988); and the latest is the suite *Panaméenne*, which receives its first public performance in today's programme. As for the songs for *Marie Galante*, they are a striking exception to the rule: interpolations conceived and composed after the completion of the play, they are more loosely connected than those of any of the related works, and are perhaps best presented in any order appropriate to the immediate context and to the forces available. Precisely for that reason, and probably for the first time since 1934, the little-known but (for Weill's future) important 'Train du Ciel' lament is tonight performed by the vocal forces for which it was conceived. DAVID DREW

**Suite Panaméenne**

Not until the late 1980s did the present suite of instrumental numbers become practicable as a result of two quite unconnected events: first, the unearthing of the autograph score of the orchestral *Tango-Habanera* (from which Weill's publishers had derived a popular song published in 1935 under the title 'Youkali'); and second, the discovery of an autograph piano reduction and three instrumental parts (one of them in Weill's hand) for a quite different Tango whose very existence was hitherto unknown. H.K. Gruber's reconstruction of this Tango is strictly and critically based on the autograph and non-autograph materials.

The form of the Suite is determined by the affinities and contrasts between the four numbers. Just as the *March of the Panamanian Army* is maliciously arrayed in the uniform of Austro-Hungarian and



CYNTHIA CLAREY



DAMON EVANS

Prussian operetta in order to affirm a characteristically Weillian view of political realities – in this case, Latin-American ones – so is the *Tango-Habanera* conceived as a kind of Ur-Tango whose synthesis of conventional materials deliberately avoids the harmonic and melodic idiosyncrasies of Weill's earlier tangos with a view to cracking open the genre itself, and rendering it newly expressive. Consequently it is not so much from the basic substance of the *Tango-Habanera* that Weill's unmistakable voice arises, as from the processes of composition and orchestral realisation.

The recently discovered Tango is of quite another kind, and its substance no less personal than its form. Indeed the piece as a whole is so strikingly redolent of the popular idioms Weill was developing in the months immediately before and after his flight from Germany in March 1933 that it could well be a reincarnation of some long-lost song such as *Tango Locarno* he is said to have composed in Berlin on a text by Gunther Weisenborn. In any case the Tango is clearly a companion piece to the inspired arrangement of the 'Song of the Hard Nut' from *Happy End* (1929) which Weill made for a Dance-Hall scene in *Marie Galante*, and which here functions as a finale.

Since none of the instrumental pieces owes anything specific to its immediate dramatic context, it is perhaps sufficient to mention three facts: that the action of *Marie Galante* is mainly set in Panama; that the atmosphere is one of corruption and ever-present danger; and that Déval's portrayals of European and Central American decadence are interwoven with elements of spy thriller and travel story in a manner akin to that of Graham Greene's lighter novels. DAVID DREW



**Marie Galante**

*Marie Galante*, a play by Jacques Déval adapted from his best-selling novel of the same name, was furnished with songs and incidental music at the suggestion of Weill's new publisher in France. Like *Happy End* (1929) it was essentially a commercial project; and like *Happy End*, it failed and was not seen again in Weill's lifetime.

While secretly relishing the effect of adapting one of the *Happy End* Salvation Army hymns to the macabre lyrics of 'Les filles de Bordeaux', Weill was primarily concerned with developing some of the Parisian chanson styles that flourished in the inter-war period and attracted several of the composers with whom he associated during his brief residence in France – notably Auric, Honegger and Jean Wiener. The cabaret idioms first cultivated by Erik Satie in the Chat Noir days had by the 1930s acquired a strong but deeply un-American 'blues' colouring. In 'Le Grand Lustucru', Weill foretells with uncanny accuracy the mood of France in the late 1930s and of the Left Bank ten years later. But the song is perhaps best known in the arrangement Luciano Berio made for Cathy Berberian in the 1960s.

Marie is a rather high-minded prostitute who has been abducted from Bordeaux and off-loaded at a South-American port. Her only desire is to return as swiftly as possible to her beloved France. But since officialdom proves indifferent to her plight she is forced to earn the price of her passage back to Bordeaux by the only means available to her. Unwittingly embroiled in an espionage intrigue, she is murdered on the eve of her longed-for departure.

'J'attends un navire' contains no premonitions of that end (as 'Le Grand Lustucru' certainly does). On the popular chanson level it is clearly intended as a counterpoint to the *Mahagonny* 'Alabama Song', whose refrain is just as firmly anchored to the tonic harmony. But in this case there is no irony and no cause for it. In a manner diametrically opposed to that of the savage-sounding introduction to the 'Alabama' refrain, the opening 'verse' frankly advertises the refrain's popular appeal. 'J'attends un navire' is the earliest of Weill's show tunes to have been conceived as a hit-song, pure and simple, and a hit it deservedly became.

And yet *Marie Galante* has had no professional production since the original one at the Théâtre de Paris in December 1934. The fact that commercial recordings and sheet music editions kept some of the songs alive in France for more than a decade may help explain some distant echoes of them in the work of such composers as Joseph Kosma. But if at times Weill's characteristic wizardry with a small 'pit' orchestra calls to mind the classic French cinema of Marcel Carné, Jean Renoir or Julien Duvivier, that is surely a tribute to Maurice Jaubert, the outstanding film composer of the pre-war era. Jaubert, however, was not in the first place a song writer; and song is the essence of *Marie Galante*. Paradoxically, the authentic *Quai des Brumes* atmosphere is first conjured up by 'Train du Ciel', which is in fact a chorus of black mourners, but one that anticipates not only the Old Testament world of *The Eternal Road* (1935-6) but also and especially that of Weill's score for Maxwell Anderson's adaptation (1949) of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

# THE WEILL EVENT

## War Play

A 'song-sequence' devised by David Drew  
From the score for Paul Green's play *Johnny Johnson*.

In September 1935 Weill travelled to America for the first time, in order to oversee the staging of his and Franz Werfel's biblical drama *The Eternal Road*, which was due to be performed early in the following year. Owing to the indefinite postponement of that production he decided to remain in New York for the time being. It was not until the summer of 1937 that he took the first steps towards American citizenship.



While trying to earn his keep in New York after the postponement of *The Eternal Road*, Weill consolidated his links with the Group Theater. In the spring of 1936 he was invited to collaborate with the Group Theater on a musical play whose subject he himself was to choose. He recommended an American version of Hasek's *Svejk*. With this in view the Group Theater introduced him to the distinguished playwright Paul Green, a life-long experimenter in new forms (and a pioneer of open-air theatre in North Carolina). The result of this collaboration was *Johnny Johnson*, which was written and composed in the summer of 1936 and staged for the first time that December, in New York.

Although the production was hardly more to the taste of the Broadway public than *The Threepenny Opera* had been three years earlier, the Press was highly favourable. Among the theatrical intelligentsia in New York Weill's already high reputation was consolidated. In recent years *Johnny Johnson* has found increasing acceptance as one of the 'classics' of American music theatre.

The fact that Weill's score, like the play, is far removed from the Broadway style of the day is as apparent as is the relationship with Weill's two 'Berlin' musicals for the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. Weill himself acknowledges this relationship by means of several brief and functional quotations – one from *The Threepenny Opera*, and the remainder from *Happy End*.

Though still composing as a conscious European, Weill affectionately recalls the American hits of World War I, and evokes the times when America was singing George M. Cohen's 'Over There' and sundry patriotic ditties with such titles as 'Good Luck to the USA', 'The Ragtime Volunteers are off to War' and 'Au Revoir but not goodbye Soldier Boy'. Weill's own 'Farewell Song' is characteristically double-edged – on the one hand a brilliant persiflage of such songs (and incidentally the first 'blues' he wrote on American soil) and on the other, the work of a composer who understood, as well as any, the manifold ironies of *Così fan tutte*.

*War Play* was devised in consultation with Paul Green as one of the elements in a so-called 'Kurt

Weill Portrait' mounted by the Berlin Festival in 1975. As the title suggests it was confined to those numbers in the original show which relate directly to the war theme; and it was specifically intended for the second of two 'War and Peace' programmes performed at the Berlin Academy of Arts by a group of soloists and the London Sinfonietta conducted by David Atherton.

*War Play* is designed to complement *Johnny Johnson*, not in any way to compete with it. Although its structure is independent of any 'dramatis personae' other than the historical ones, and any narrative

elements other than history itself, it follows the play's broad outline, since it is determined by the musical and poetic content of the musical numbers, including those relevant and important numbers, such as the 'Farewell Song', which were dropped by the Group Theater, or which, like 'Epitaph', remained in a voice-and-piano score. (The present scoring of 'Epitaph' is by Christopher Slow.)

If there is any respect in which *War Play* must be identical, in effect, with *Johnny Johnson*, it is with regard to Weill's and Green's fundamental thesis (which has been widely misrepresented in reference books and indeed in productions). Like most of us, Weill and Green are of course 'against' war. But each, in his different way, is no less against peace-mongering than against war-mongering – because each, from his different background, was already aware that war against fascism might be inevitable and would certainly be justifiable.



KURT WEILL



LOST IN THE STARS

## Lost in the Stars and Cry, the Beloved Country: The quest for a concert sequence.

By the time he and Anderson began work on their adaptation of Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Weill may well have guessed that he did not have long to live. But despite the manifestly valedictory character of the score's closing pages, it would be wrong to accord *Lost in the Stars* the status of a consciously pre-meditated 'last work'. Its true significance is no less remarkable, but of quite another sort. Almost as if the entire succession of Broadway scores from *Lady in the Dark* (1940) to *Love Life* (1947) constituted a single vast parenthesis occasioned by the special circumstances of World War II and its immediate aftermath, the 'musical tragedy', based on Paton, is unmistakably the direct consequence of, and the counterpart to, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the 'musical comedy' Anderson and Weill had based on Washington Irving a decade earlier. In both, Anderson's and Weill's American preoccupations vie with a powerful residue from Weill's European ones; and in both, the clash of ideas or ideologies underlines or overrides the individual drama.

The successor to *Knickerbocker Holiday* was to have been *Ulysses Africanus*, an adaptation of Harry Sitwell Edwards' epistolary novel about the wanderings of a faithful slave who is separated from his owners during the American Civil War. Originally offered to Paul Robeson but declined by him, the project was abandoned in the late summer of 1939, by which time Weill had written a considerable quantity of music. The idea of an all-black, or predominantly black musical, if possible with Robeson in a star role, continued to interest Weill, and in 1945 he and Anderson returned to the Ulysses material, and especially to two songs which they had published three years earlier – *Lost in the Stars* and a blues that was later to be entitled 'Trouble Man'. By now they had decided to make *Lost in the Stars* the title song; but once again the project foundered. Precisely at what point Anderson and Weill decided to insert no less than five of the Ulysses numbers into their adaptation of Paton's novel is not known, but the reasons for doing so, and for adding others in the same style, are clear enough. On the one hand their Andersonian philosophy provided a convenient substitute for the explicitly and complexly Christian commitments of Paton's novel; on the other, their frankly popular style was, for Broadway purposes, an indispensable and indeed life-saving ingredient in a show where every number that is directly or indirectly related to the social, political and economic themes of Paton's novel is relatively austere in character and predominantly dark in tone. It was while planning a variety of events for a Weill 'retrospective' at the 1975 Berlin Festival that I first examined the possibilities of extracting from *Lost in the Stars* a sequence of numbers whose structure and continuity would be convincing enough to justify concert performance without dialogue excerpts or narrations – hence, a sequence that would concentrate on the 'social' drama rather than on the individuals involved in it. Once the numbers directly or indirectly related to *Ulysses Africanus* had been set aside – to be returned to later, or perhaps to be kept for some other occasion – the extent to which

Weill had composed the remainder almost as if he were subconsciously preparing for some kind of theatrically-enhanced concert performance began to become apparent. Even so, the difficulty of finding solutions for certain formal problems without encroaching upon, or adding to, what Weill himself had written forced me eventually to abandon the project. When I reviewed my notes some thirteen years later the selfsame problems seemed as intractable as ever, and little progress was made with them. But in March 1988 I suddenly felt impelled to return to Paton's novel, which I had last read in 1960. To re-read it in any context is to discover that the significance of Paton's manifold achievement has only been illuminated by the passage of time and by the tragic course of events; but to re-read it with Weill in mind, and to do so at a single sitting, also revealed to me the obvious but hitherto elusive fact that Weill's first reading – to judge from other known examples – would have thrown up a series of quite specific musical images or concepts that predated the active collaboration with Anderson and must in some respects have influenced if not determined its nature. This implies that irrespective of the dramaturgy of the play, any musical number for which there is a clear pretext in Paton invites rigorous scrutiny in terms of the concert requirements. One such number is the unpublished boogie-woogie chorus, 'Gold'. Having previously and without much thought discounted it on musical and stylistic grounds, I now felt impelled to reconsider it in the light of the chapter that immediately follows the one describing the trial of the three blacks and the sentencing of Absalom Kumalo. It opens thus: 'There is little attention being paid to the trial of those accused of the murder of Arthur Jarvis of Parkwold. For gold has been discovered.' There follows a bitterly ironic account of the subsequent behaviour of the Johannesburg stock market and those who live by it. The main thrust of 'Gold' is precisely that of Paton's chapter: its processes are remorseless and purely mechanical until the very close, when Weill delivers – in the most extreme dynamic he had asked for since his Expressionist period – an indictment that is precisely congruent with Paton's. Heard as a consequence of the commercialism of the torch-song 'Who'll Buy?', 'Gold' is essential to the hidden dialectics of the score, and hence to the understanding of its opposite number in the same key, 'Big Mole', where Weill brilliantly reanimates a ballad-style he had begun to cultivate during the last years of the Federal Theater. Everything that had



seemed process-oriented in 'Gold' is now, so to speak, humanised, with the result that the truthful naivety of Anderson's child-like imagery is enriched by an adult awareness of the mine-workers' daily descent into 'hell'. Of the eleven numbers finally selected for the concert sequence, no less than six have sections that accompany, or were intended to accompany, spoken dialogue. Since it would be technically clumsy and artistically indefensible to leave fragments of dialogue embedded in a sequence of this kind, the most logical alternative, and the one closest to Weill's European background, would be the relevant reports and commentaries from Paton's novel. But because for various reasons it proved impossible to incorporate these in the first performance of the concert sequence (American

Composers Orchestra under Dennis Russell Davis, Carnegie Hall, October 1988), the formal coherence of the sequence becomes all the more important. The eleven numbers are arranged in a symmetrical form whose axis is the central lament. The first set of five numbers, like the second set, subdivides into 2 + 3, so that the total structure might be understood thus:

The Land ('Hills of Ixopo' and 'Train');  
The City ('Who'll Buy?', 'Murder'/'Fear'/'Trouble Man')  
The Trial ('Cry, the Beloved Country')  
The Mines ('Gold', 'Big Mole')  
The Judgment ('Wild Justice', 'A Bird of Passage', '4 o'clock')

The setting of 'A Bird of Passage' is the one that Weill originally sketched. Edited by myself and orchestrated by Christopher Slow, it has been chosen in preference to the final Broadway version for purely structural reasons. Its European manner, and the frankly Mozartian (masonic!) solemnity of its central chorale, were of course inappropriate to the closing phases of a Broadway musical in 1950, but are conclusive in a rather larger sense. Moreover: so clear are the intimations of mortality in this first version, and so firm are its musical links with the stasis of the final number, that one can better understand why, a few months later, Maxwell Anderson arranged for some lines from 'A Bird of Passage' to be carved on his friend's gravestone. One last word: the symmetry of the eleven numbers is offset by the final reprise. From Weill's tonal, harmonic and motivic procedures (all of which derive from his European practice and do so in a manner unprecedented in his Broadway works, it is clear that the final reprise he had originally had in mind was the precise opposite of the one that was eventually selected for Broadway purposes (in preference to the slightly less cheerful title song).  
DAVID DREW © 1990

**Alan Paton** was born in Pietermaritzburg on 11 January 1913, and died at his home near Durban on 12 April 1988. He wrote *Cry, the Beloved Country* while touring Europe and North America in his capacity as Principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory in Johannesburg. It was his first novel, and its publication early in 1948 brought him international fame. Since then it has sold more than 15 million copies in 20 languages, and has influenced the lives and thinking of countless individuals – for instance, Mary Benson, the white South African biographer of Nelson Mandela, who has said that it transformed her attitude to her black compatriots and determined her future political career.

**Kurt Weill** was born in 1900 in Dessau, where his father was chief Cantor in the synagogue. His family's German origins go back as far as the 13th century, and although he was brought up in the Jewish faith, racial barriers of any kind had been foreign to the intellectual traditions of his native town since the time of Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn. After completing his studies in Dessau in 1918, Weill went to Berlin where he studied with Humperdinck and others prior to his admission to Busoni's Masterclass in Composition. Already in 1922, while still a member of the Masterclass, he made his successful debut in Berlin with his score for *Zaubernacht*, a ballet for children seen in New York three years later. In January 1926 Weill married the actress and dancer Lotte Lenya. Two months later the highly successful premiere of his opera *The Protagonist* in Dresden won him a significant reputation outside the contemporary-music circles where he was already firmly established. A year later he began his collaboration with Brecht on the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, but interrupted it in 1928 to compose the score for *Die Dreigroschenoper* which was to make him a household name in German-speaking countries and relatively famous, or notorious, elsewhere.

With *Die Dreigroschenoper* Weill made a decisive and immensely influential break with the central Modernist tradition, while remaining very much aware of the fruitful tensions between his own work and that of the Second Viennese School on the one

side and the Hindemith School on the other. Despite and because of politically inspired opposition (which affected, without preventing, the success of the *Mahagonny* opera, but seriously inhibited the progress of its successor, *Die Bürgschaft*) Weill consolidated his reputation in Germany during the early 1930s, and won a new reputation in France, thanks in the first place to the French version of Pabst's *Threepenny Opera* film. It was to Paris that Weill fled in March 1933, after the Nazi seizure of power, and there (with interludes in London) that he completed his *Second Symphony* and composed the ballet-with-song *The Seven Deadly Sins* (his last completed collaboration with Brecht), the anti-fascist operetta *Der Kuhhandel*, and the original German-language version of *The Eternal Road*.

Weill's professional and exploratory visit to New York in 1935 was unexpectedly prolonged and led eventually to his decision to remain in the USA and apply for citizenship. On the basis of his initial work with the Group Theater and the Federal Theater he established a foothold on Broadway, where *Lady in the Dark* was to bring him, in 1940, a success commensurate if not exactly comparable with that of *The Threepenny Opera* in Berlin twelve years earlier. Although the score itself was widely misconstrued, the nature of the success was such that it lost Weill most of his remaining support among the musical intelligentsia, but allowed him to continue innovating and experimenting in a series of shows that is unique in the history of Broadway.

Weill died on 5 April 1950, two months after his 50th birthday, and was buried, without religious rites, in the cemetery at Haverstraw overlooking the Hudson River. DAVID DREW © 1990



KURT WEILL

**David Drew** has concentrated largely on 20th century music in his work as writer and broadcaster, recording director, programme consultant, and latterly as publisher (Boosey & Hawkes). He is a member of the committees of the Müritztaler Werkstatt and the Arts Council's Contemporary Music Network, and a Trustee of the Britten-Pears Foundation. His *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* was published in 1987 (when he also served as a consultant for the Almeida Festival's Austrian event) and he is currently completing a book on Weill's collaborations with Brecht, Neher and Kaiser.