The Threepenny title proved ironic, for at the climax of the third and seemed the gangsters were simply gangsters, and none of the characters had a gift from the gods that many were successful matinee-filler. Unfortunately, everyone wanted an- d was a brave drama critic. No matter! A brave drama critic does not desert his post even in the face of music, and on this last refrain, with the piano’s beautifully shaped counter-melody. Lastly, a word as to the general character of the Happy End score. A widespread misunderstanding of Weill’s ironic and pathetic methods in other works had led to the impression that his music expresses, however brilliantly, an attitude that is fundamentally cynical. To believe this is to miss the whole point of his art, which is its humanity. In truth, the game of parody has a very minor role in Weill’s work. Happy End makes a useful introduction to Weill, for the expressive issues are not complicated by this metatheatrical purpose. Max Marshack rightly discerned a certain melancholy in the music, but it is equally important to notice its frank and appealing gaiety. “The Hard Nut” is high comedy, and what little parody one finds— notably in the “Song of the Brandy Merchant” and the chorus “Der Jugend Gold’Nem Schimmer”—is unmistakably affectionate. The object of affection, of course, is the idea of the Salvation Army. The Devil, we know, usually has the best tunes, but Weill does not begrudge a few for the Salvation Army. Although he shows its comic side, he does so with a good conscience and without malice. The more lighthearted of Weill’s corner-melodies and the integration of melody and text achieves a greater flexibility with less strict repetition than in The Threepenny Opera. In the full version of “Surabaya Johnny,” recorded for the first time on this disc, the listener will find that at each return of the verse and refrain, the accompaniment changes and becomes more complex, but in the last refrain, with the piano’s beautifully shaped counter-melody.

This, for the Berliners and especially for the critics, was both provoking and enigmatic. No one could trace either Dorothy Lane or her magazine story. Furthermore, certain coincidences prepared the way for dangerous comparisons. The premiere of The Threepenny Opera had taken place almost exactly a year earlier at the same theatre, under the same producer (Ernst Josef Aufricht) with the same stage directors (Erich Engel and Brecht himself), the same designer (Caspar Neher), the same musical director (Dolben) and the same orchestra (led by Lewis Ruth band). The subject of Happy End likewise concerned the doings of the Underworld, and Elisabeth Hauptmann was again announced as being responsible for the adaptation from an English text. The stage seemed set for the appearance of a younger brother of The Threepenny Opera. Nevertheless, the play could not hope to survive the murderous onslaught of the critics...