

MASTERMIND

'Life and Music of Kurt Weill'

Page references are identified as follows:

RS = Ronald Sanders, The Days Grow Short. (The Life and Music of Kurt Weill); DD = David Drew, Kurt Weill. A Handbook. The grades of difficulty of the questions are assessed thus:

E = easy, M = moderate, D = difficult.

1. Q. What was the profession of Weill's father during the first 18 years of Weill's life?
A. Albert Weill was Cantor in Dessau, where Weill was born in 1900 and where eight years later the Jewish Community celebrated the dedication of the new synagogue. (RS7, E)

2. Q. With which famous composer was Weill studying composition in Berlin in 1918?
A. Engelbert Humperdinck (RS27 E), the composer of Hansel and Gretel

3. Q. What was the first music of Weill's to be heard in a Berlin theatre?
A. His score for the dance-pantomime Zaubernacht (Magic Night), first performed at the Theater am Kurfürstendamm in November 1922 (RS51, DD140, M)

4. Q. To whom did Weill dedicate the score of his first published opera?
A. Lotte Lenya (DD158, M). The opera was Der Protagonist, first performed in 1926 in Dresden. (DD158 M)

5. Q. In which opera of Weill's is the singing in a seduction scene accompanied only by a gramophone recording of a tango?
- A. "The Tsar has his photograph taken" (DD170, M) a comic opera with text by Georg Kaiser first performed in Leipzig in 1928. The 'tango angele' was composed by Weill himself and recorded by a jazz orchestra under his direction.
6. Q. Which famous English play, in a German translation by Elizabeth Hauptmann, had a crucial role in the careers of Weill and of Bertolt Brecht?
- A. John Gay's 'The Beggars Opera'. The Hauptmann translation was the basis for Die Dreigroschenoper or The Threepenny Opera, the first work of either Weill or Brecht to win international acclaim, and also the first to be filmed. (DD194 E).
7. Q. There was a riot at the first performance at which opera by Weill and Brecht?
- A. Rise and Fall of Mahagonny City (Mahagonny will do, German title of course preferable) (DD58, E)
8. Q. The first successful flight across the Atlantic was commemorated and commented upon in which work?
- A. The Lindbergh Flight or Der Lindberghflug (Ozeanflug is acceptable with explanation) for soloists, chorus and orchestra, composed in 1929 (DD212, 223, E), text by Brecht subsequently revised by him several times, and finally (January 1950) retitled Der Ozeanflug, with the name of Lindbergh expunged throughout. (DD 225)

9. Q. Which major work had its simultaneous premieres in three different German cities less than a fortnight before the Nazi seizure of power?

A. Der Silbersee, The Silverlake, first performed on 18 February 1933, ["A Winter's Tale" with text by Georg Kaiser] (DD59,238,M). A Nazi demonstration at one of the later performances, led to the withdrawal of all three productions. Weill left Germany in March 1933 and never returned.

10. Q. In which city did Weill find a temporary home after leaving Germany in March 1933?

A. Paris (DD59, M). Seven months later Weill ^{made his home} ~~set up house~~ in the village of Louveciennes, outside Paris.

17. Q. Which internationally celebrated film actress of European origin did Weill visit in Hollywood with a view to persuading her to play the role of Venus in his musical based on FJ Anstey's short novel "The Tinted Venus"?
- A. Marlene Dietrich (DD 328, E). There were various hold-ups in the project which prevented Dietrich's participation, and when the musical finally emerged as the hit show One Touch of Venus the title role was played by Mary Martin.
18. Q. The Hollywood musical "Where do we go from here?" has a Second World War setting and a hero who is rejected by all three armed services on medical grounds. Scorned by his girlfriend, he has to content himself with collecting scrap metal. How does he become involved with Christopher Columbus and George Washington?
- A. Through the agency of a friendly but incompetent genie who is released from a magic lamp discovered by the hero. (DD 336, D). The genie promises to whisk the hero (played by Fred MacMurray) to the battlefield, but makes three errors with the date before finally getting him into the Marines.
19. Q. During the early War years Weill devoted much time and energy to an enterprise known as "Lunch Time Follies". What were its objectives?
- A. Entertaining and instructing munitions workers during their midday break, (RS, 316-17, D). Sponsored by The American Theater Wing and based on the experience of the British organisation ENSA, "Lunch Time Follies" drew on the work of leading Broadway writers and composers, who contributed specially-written material on themes connected with the allied war effort

20. Q. Lotte Lenya appeared in only one of Weill's Broadway shows. Which?
- A. The Firebrand of Florence (DD 344-46,M). an operetta first produced in 1945 and based on a play about Benvenuto Cellini by Edwin Justus Mayer.

Alternative formulation for Question 20

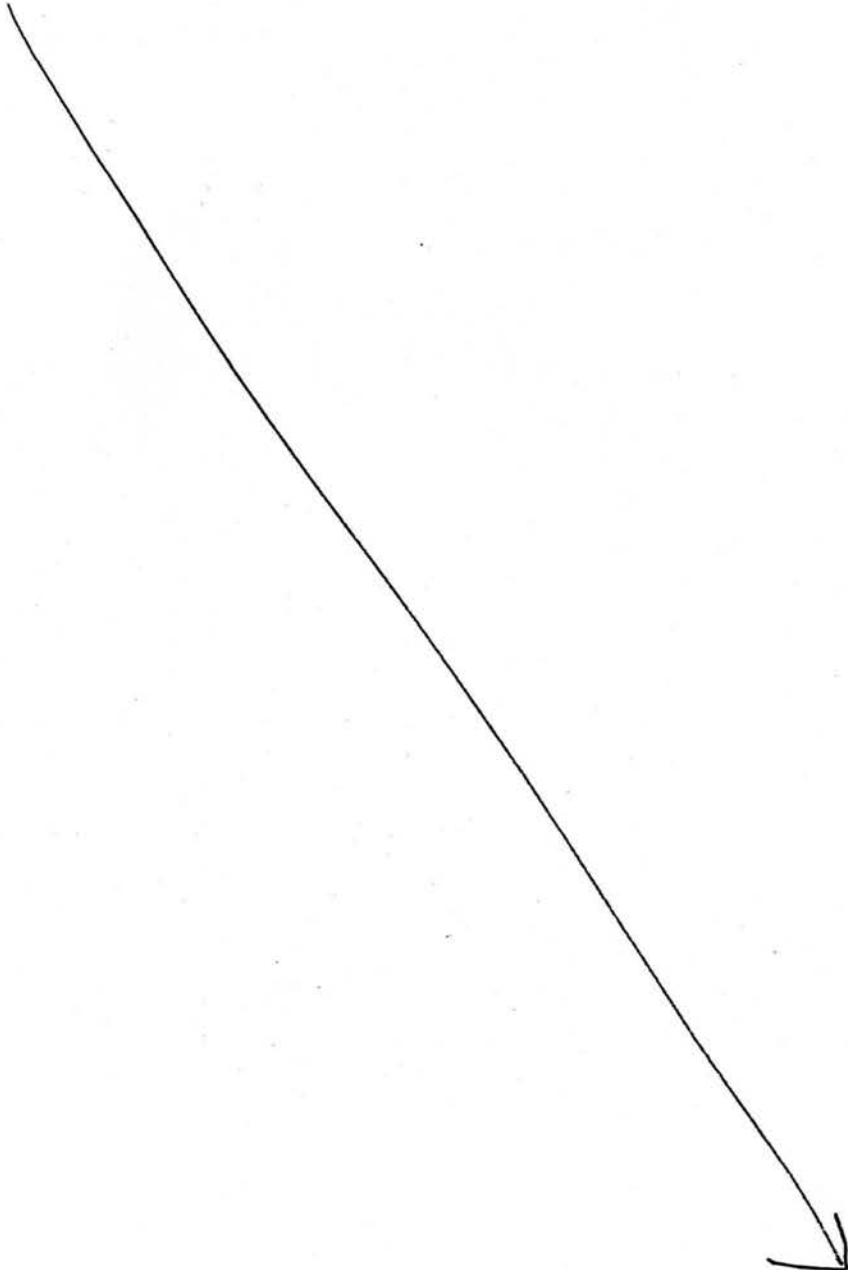
20. Q. Which leading role in one of Weill's Broadway shows was played and sung by Lotte Lenya?
- A. The Duchess, in The Firebrand of Florence, an operetta about Benvenuto Cellini with book by Edwin Justus Mayer and music and lyrics by Ira Gershwin. (DD,344-47, RS,338-339, M). This was the only role for Lenya in any of the stage works Weill composed in America. The show which opened in March 1945, was unsuccessful and has not been seen again. There is no other correct answer to this question: The Eternal Road, in which Lenya appeared but did not have a leading role, was not a "Broadway show".

21. Q. Which leading Black poet wrote lyrics for the Broadway opera Street Scene, based on Elmer Rice's play?
- A. Langston Hughes (DD,350, RS,349 E)

22. Q. Which traditional Jewish melody did Weill arrange and orchestrate for an important occasion at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel ?
- A. The Hatikvah (DD,363 D). The occasion - at which the Boston Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Serge Koussevitsky - was a testimonial dinner for Chaim Weizmann. In 1948 Weizmann was to become the first President of the newly formed state of Israel, and the Hatikvah was to be officially adopted as the Israeli national anthem.

23. Q. What links are there between Weill and My Fair Lady?

- A. The close friendship with Alan Jay Lerner which began with the collaboration on Love Life in 1947, and led to several plans for further shows (DD,421, D). A musical version of Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion had been one of Weill's favoured projects for some years prior to his first meeting with Lerner(DD419-420 D), but none of their plans for continuing the collaboration came to fruition before Weill's sudden and early death.



24. Q. What celebrated novel about apartheid formed the basis of Weill's last completed work for the Broadway stage?

A. Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country (DD,365 E), which inspired Maxwell Anderson's book and lyrics for Weill's "musical tragedy" Lost in the Stars.

25. Q. Eleven weeks before his death in "April 1950, when he was already working on a musical version of "Huckleberry Finn", Weill made a list of nine possible opera projects. Can you name one (two, three, or whatever) of them?

A. Spoon River
Dulcinea
The Grapes of Wrath
Green Mansions
Good Maiden of Sezuan
Gone with the Wind
John Brown's Body
Winterset
Moby Dick

(DD 422) (one would be moderately easy, two would already verge on the difficult).

26. Q In what technical respect did Weill's work for Broadway differ from that of his contemporaries and of every predecessor since Victor Herbert?

A. He made his own orchestrations (DD,84 D). For various reasons, the Broadway system has traditionally relied on a small team of highly specialised arrangers for the orchestration of musicals.

27.Q. With which celebrated poet, dramatist, and film maker did Weill plan a "Faust" opera in 1933?

A. Jean Cocteau (DD,396-7 D). The project never materialised.

28. Q. With the proceeds from his first great Broadway success, Lady in the Dark, Weill bought the house where he and Lenya lived for the rest of his life and in which Lenya remained until her death three decades later. What sort of a house was it?.
- A. A converted farmhouse (DD 7) built in the 18th century (RS 312) and situated on South Mountain Road, New City (RS 312, photograph in RS facing 252), some 35 miles from Manhattan. The home was called Brook House, after the small trout stream which ran through the grounds. (nb: any of this detail constitutes an adequate answer to a moderately difficult question; the mere name of Brook House, which appears innumerable times in RS and DD, won't do except as the answer to the easy question directed at that specific answer.)
29. Q. What is the English title of the song by Weill and Brecht originally titled : "Moritat vom Mackie Messer" .
- A. 'The Ballad of Mack the Knife' (DD 201 :E) in Marc Blitzstein's version, "Mack the Knife" for short.
30. Q. Weill and Lenya were married in 1926 and divorced seven years later. When did they remarry?
- A. 1937 (DD, 62 D) in the USA .

Corrigendum

Q.11, line 1: 'In Paris in 1933'

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London 7 Dec 87

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