"Where's the score of Groschenoper?" Eager to capitalize on their composer's unexpected triumph, Weill's publishers cabled him this terse question from Vienna on 6 September 1928, a week after Die Dreigroschenoper had received its legendary premiere at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin. Weill had no simple answer. He eventually sent them the full score that is reproduced here as a facsimile. First, however, he had to finish it. Hence his initial response to the inquiry about the score's whereabouts: "I'm still busy at the moment completing the score in light of experiences with the current production and also matching the vocal score exactly with the stage script."1

First came the production, then the complete score—performance, then publishable record. This creative sequence, hardly novel in the world of opera, nonetheless belies the notion that a work's entire compositional process, culminating in the full score, precedes any performance. As later, when Weill was composing for the American musical theater, his involvement in the work's realization was such that the distinction between creation and production became blurred. Each flowed into the other.

Though staged in the wake of a British theatrical triumph, the production also reflected native fashions. No doubt the original idea was to repeat the huge success of Sir Nigel Playfair's revival of The Beggar's Opera, which had opened at London's Lyric Theatre in 1920 and run for a record-breaking 1,463 performances. Yet Berlin was already enjoying its own trend of modernized theatrical classics, such as productions of Shakespeare done in contemporary dress ("Hamlet im Smoking" as one of them was dubbed).2 Die Dreigroschenoper, conceived and presented as a modernized adaptation, followed this trend. Weill's score borrowed only a single air from the original Beggar's Opera No. 3, "Morgenchoral des Peachum," uses the same melody as the first air of John Gay's and J.C. Pepusch's ballad opera, and in the same key. Initially this number was to follow the "Ouvertüre," as it does in Gay's work (both works feature classicizing overtures with fugues), but the last-minute insertion of "Moritat vom Mackie Messer" disturbed the neat parallel. In the program booklet and the performance materials, Brecht was billed as the "adapter" of the German translation, which his self-effacing assistant, Elisabeth Hauptmann, had prepared for him in the winter of 1927–28.3 The title Die Dreigroschenoper, it should be noted, was invented only shortly before the premiere; prior to that the piece was principally referred to by Gay's English title or its German equivalent, Des Bettlers Oper. Weill's music—a high-low stylistic mix drawing on baroque counterpoint, traditional and popular song, opera and operetta, and even Lutheran chorale, colored throughout by the sonorities and idioms of the modern dance band—contributed as much as anything to the work's multilayered ambiguity. A classic it was, but one defamiliarized in a provocative way.

The story of the production's five-month genesis and legendary first night has been told many times, often inaccurately. So unexpected was the triumph that even the head of Universal Edition's opera department at the time, Hans Heinrich, appears not to have been present on opening night, 31 August, despite his later claims. On 1 September, the Musikeditio sent Weill a telegram: "Warmest congratulations on the great success. Urgently request piano-vocal score indicating most successful individual numbers." And on 3 September, Heinrich followed up with a polite letter saying, "We are sincerely happy about the great success of the 'Drei-Groschen-Oper,'" adding that he had received a piano-vocal score from a "Herr Löwy."4 Heinrich's own colorful accounts of the premiere, published in two sets of memoirs, would thus appear to belong to the pervasive and enduring Dreigroschen mythology.5 Weill's wife, Lotte Lenya—who played the role of Jenny and most certainly was there, although her name was omitted from the program—left her own account, itself not entirely accurate. In it, however, she offered a valid word of caution for all historians of the piece: "Perhaps the strangest note of all is that people who scornfully had passed up that opening night began to lie about it, to claim to have been there, primed for a sure-fire sensation... Sometimes, remembering all that madness, even to the blank space in the program, I'm not even sure that I was there myself."6

Based as far as possible on primary sources rather than unreliable hearsay, the story runs as follows. The twenty-nine-year-old impresario Ernst Josef Aufricht was looking, in the early months of 1928, for a play with which to launch his new company at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, a medium-sized mock-rococo theater in a then unfashionable area near the center of Berlin. Brecht offered Aufricht The Beggar's Opera, even though work on the adaptation had scarcely begun. The sporadically creative months between then and the premiere included a collaborators' retreat in late May and early June to Le Lavandou in the south of France. Back in Berlin, Weill continued work

**Die Dreigroschenoper: The 1928 Full Score**

by Stephen Hinton
on the musical numbers until late July, by which time he had produced an incomplete (and now largely lost) vocal score. Meanwhile he, Brecht, and Hauptmann had signed a contract with the theater agents Felix Bloch Erben. Rehearsals began on 10 August. During the frantic final weeks, as the surviving rehearsal scripts show, the book underwent substantial and frequent revision—a creative process that lasted virtually until opening night (which was planned to coincide with Aufricht's thirtieth birthday). The cast changed along with the work and vice versa. Carola Neher, who was to play Polly, dropped out after the death of her husband, the poet Kluband. She was replaced by Roma Bahn. (Neher returned for the second run and played Polly in the 1931 Pabst film.) Brecht's future second wife, Helene Weigel, was to play Mrs. Coxer, but was incapacitated with appendicitis. Rather than recast her role, the authors simply removed it. Musical numbers, such as the "Moritat," were added, while others were swapped around and even assigned to different roles (Lucy, for example, temporarily inherited the "Barbarasong" from Polly). Still others were cut, especially when the piece became too long. The "Salomonsong" disappeared, as did "Atie der Lucy" and the "Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit," the latter reportedly because of the squeamishness of the actress playing Mrs. Peachum, Rosa Valetti. The seven instrumental parts were hastily copied, just hours before the first band rehearsal, in the Held-Werkstätte in Charlottenburg. And Weill continued to work on the full score for a number of days after opening night.

The holograph presented here offers last rather than first thoughts: Die Dreigroschenoper as it emerged from the theater, not its state prior to performance. It resulted from the composer's attempt to fix once and for all what had, up to that point, depended on the actors' and musicians' collaborative cooperation. They, too, had been part of his conception. As he completed his written record of the work, the production had just begun a run that was to last more than three years, with more than 350 performances. Other theaters were already signaling their interest. It resulted from the composer's attempt to fix once and for all what had, up to that point, depended on the actors' and musicians' collaborative cooperation. They, too, had been part of his conception. As he completed his written record of the work, the production had just begun a run that was to last more than three years, with more than 350 performances. Other theaters were already signaling their interest.

The correspondence between Weill and his publisher provides other important clues to the genesis of the music, as do the various paper types of the holograph itself. The letter dated 10 September identifies those numbers not submitted before in their final versions:

You now have the complete vocal score. No. 6 (Seetausderjenny), No. 2 (Moritat), and No. 13 (Ballade v. angen. Leben) will follow soon in full score. I enclose an exact list of numbers [now missing]. The "Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit" has been cut completely. I am sending you No. 12 (Barbarasong) [originally No. 13 but soon to become No. 9], which is mainly set for piano in the full-score version, so that you can literally transfer the piano part to the vocal score. No. 17 (Salomonsong) [later 18] is set for harp in the full-score version. I'm sending you. Please transfer this version (not the one in the vocal score) to the printed vocal score.14

As can be seen in the holograph, all the songs Weill mentions are written on the same paper type (K.U.V. Beethoven Papier Nr. 39). It would be mistaken, however, to assume that the work's genesis can be completely reconstructed from the type of paper used and the way it is collated in the full score, as Fritz Hennenberg has done.15 Weill's pre-premiere correspondence with his publishers makes mention of an incomplete piano-vocal score, of which, as stated above, little seems to have survived.16 The order in which Weill submitted the numbers of the full score does not necessarily reflect the order in which they were composed, whether in draft or in full score. The numbers submitted later may or may not have been revised. He may simply have written them out again because the first copies were "still required in the theater." He may have revised them "in light of experiences with the current production," as with "Ballade vom angehemen Leben." Or he may have "had to write [them] down for the published edition" for the first time because he "could simply communicate [them] to the musicians here by word of mouth." The "Moritat" is an obvious instance of the confusion that may arise from these multiple possibilities. The title appears in the holograph score immediately following the "Ouvertüre," with the indication "für Lieerkasten" ("for barrel organ"). The full score of the number is inserted after No. 3, with the instrumental variations written out, more or less reflecting the parts used by the musicians. Unfortunately, the score used by Theo Mackeben at the premiere is no longer extant; it was presumably among the materials still required in the theater. Of Mackeben's own materials, only his copy of the piano-conductor score, published after the premiere, has survived. Although this contains interesting performance markings, it is essentially a post-premiere version of the piece.

In the absence of Mackeben's original materials or any other musical source that transmits a complete version of the score before the premiere, the surviving parts used by the other six members of the band are especially valuable, although these do not accurately transmit any one version either. Their myriad layers of changes and修订 changes of instrumentation: the doubling of the vocal line becomes the responsibility of the piano rather than the tenor saxophone, and the piccolo is cut altogether.10

Of Weill's draft piano-vocal score only a few numbers have survived.11 Perhaps the most bizarre, and certainly most ominous, transmission of primary materials concerns an item from that source. On display at the Nazis' 1938 exhibition of "degenerate music" in Düsseldorf was a poster showing a photograph of Weill together with a facsimile of the closing three measures of the song "Ballade vom angehemen Leben" in the composer's own hand. (See the facsimile on page 143.) The caption of the poster reads, "The 'Creator' of the Dreigroschenoper, Kurt Weill, in person." It is followed by the last line of the verse—in this context devoid of all irony—"Nur wer im Wohlstand lebt, lebt angenehm" (Only he who is well-to-do lives well) announced as "his handwriting, giving the personal philosophy of the Dreigroschenoper." The question of who willfully contributed to Weill's defamation by providing the exhibitors with this item will no doubt remain a mystery. On a purely musical level, the exhibit offers a rare, tantalizing glimpse of Die Dreigroschenoper before it went into rehearsal.

...
tory after the composer's holograph was submitted. For the instrumenta-
lists, that performance history included various gramophone record-
ings, with and without voice, and Pabst's 1931 film.

The Lewis Ruth Band was made up of skilled studio musicians adept
at improvising as the occasion demanded, and the band parts bear traces
of such occasions. In several instances the musicians are instructed to play
cal on numbers as instrumental music. The instructions are included in
the first published libretto, and Weill wished to have them inserted into
his full score, as can be seen from the note written to accompany the
installment of 10 September 1928: "With No. 2 ["Moritat"] please add to
the vocal score and full score the following: At Macheath's various
entrances the orchestra can start playing this piece softly. At the begin-
ing of the eighth scene it is played in a slow tempo as a funeral march."
Such was the performance practice during the initial run of the piece, as
the band parts testify. Also added to the band parts are instructions to
play certain numbers as purely instrumental en' actes. The en' actes are
not written out, however, and the repetitions of the "Moritat" are noted
only in the barest outlines. The instrumentalists knew from rehearsals
what the vocal score wanted them to play.

The band parts thus reveal the process that constituted the work's
musical and theatrical presence during the first few years of its reception
history in Berlin. They also vividly reflect the confused state of the per-
formance materials that Weill was keen to rectify by assembling the full
score. Only some of the changes contained in the parts found their way
back into the score after the composer had initially communicated them
orally to the musicians. Some were added to the parts after the premiere,
no doubt. Moreover, the composer evidently departed in his revisions
from what the band was playing. His full score does not faithfully docu-
ment the Schiffbauerdamm production, as comparison of the sources
shows, but was conceived to transcend it. The work is not synonymous
with the event.

Weill was equally concerned about two other components of the
materials: the stage script and the vocal score. These, as he remarked, had
to match exactly. But as anyone who has ever staged the piece knows, that
match remains an elusive goal to this day. In fact, the situation has only
worsened. The first published stage script, like Weill's holograph score,
emerged directly out of the Berlin production. It was published in
October 1928 and sent to theatres along with other performance mate-
rials: the vocal score (prepared by Norbert Gingold and published in
November), the piano-conductor score (also published in November), and
the instrumental parts. At this stage, the match between the various
sources, though far from exact, was reasonably good, even if the
Schiffbauerdamm production had not been adhering to any of them reli-
giously.

The most significant discrepancies, however, surfaced with a new ver-
sion of the script that was published in Brecht's Versuche in 1931, three
years after the premiere. The relationship of this version to the original
production is complicated indeed. A "literary" version of the work, it
excludes much of the stage business in the original script and many of
the musical cues, including the en' actes. It also excluded any collaboration
by the composer. For the most part the new material, which effectively
alters the complexion and purpose of the piece, can be seen as Brecht's
revised response to a review of the premiere that appeared on 4
September 1928 in the Communist daily newspaper Die rote Fahne. "Not
a trace of modern social or political satire," the reviewer concluded, hav-
ing characterized Brecht himself as a "bohemian." Whether or not Brecht
sought to rectify this alleged shortcoming, he certainly influenced how
the piece was subsequently interpreted, as the work's reception history
reveals. This later version is the one usually performed nowadays, both
in the original German and in many translations. Weill's score, however,
belongs to the version of the work that created the initial impact.

Despite the apparent urgency of Universal Edition's inquiry, Weill's
score had to wait forty-four years before it was finally printed. The day
after cabling his request for the full score, Hans Heinricher followed up
with a letter describing the publishing plans for the work. The piano-
vocal score was already being engraved, even though Weill still had to
submit four more numbers in that format (the "Ouverture," "Seeräuberjenny," "Polly's Lied," and the "Barbarasong"). The Kanonensong was also being engraved, as a separate number. The band
parts eventually had to be made, of course. Heinricher said he required
the score because we want to have arrangements of the 'Kanonensong'
and the 'Zuhalterballade' made immediately for dance band [Salonorchester] and naturally need your instrumentation as a guide for
the arrangement. Such popular arrangements were indeed made, as were
further piano arrangements of individual numbers. But plans to publish
the full score soon evaporated. On 8 September Heinricher was still
counting the printed full score for theaters among the various publishing
projects connected with the work; a week later, on 13 September, he was
in the process of changing his mind. The day before, Weill had sent him a
list of the distribution of instruments, indicating that the player of the
piano and harmonium part also acts as conductor, as was the case with
Mackeben at Schiffbauerdamm. This list prompted Heinricher to make
a practical suggestion: "If one can conduct from the piano and harmo-
nium in this way, then the production of a proper score becomes super-
fluous. Conductors can direct a small orchestra from the piano or
harmonium if the parts are arranged accordingly." He also cited a generic
precedent to justify this cost-cutting measure: "You know, of course, that
scores are never printed for operettas; the conductor directs from the
piano-vocal score." Then he suggested two possible courses of action. The
first would be to print the piano-vocal score "with the necessary addi-
tions." The alternative would be to arrange "the orchestral piano parts,
without taking the piano-vocal score into account, as a conductor's
part." Weill rejected the first suggestion but acceded to the idea of a
"condensed score" [zusammengezogene Partitur], as he put it in his reply
of 17 September. A further letter from Vienna, on 19 September, sought
to confirm that Weill was "in agreement that a piano-conductor score
[Klavier-Direktionsstimme] be produced rather than a full score."

Although Weill accepted the lack of a published full score in princi-
pole, he came to regret it in practice. On 28 November, shortly after the
Klavier-Direktionsstimme was published, he wrote to Vienna with a com-
plaint: "Unfortunately there are endless mistakes . . . which can possibly
cause my music to sound heavily altered." By 14 March 1933, with the
first American production (directed by Francesco von Mendelssohn) in
sight, he expressed this view even more forcefully.

I have written again to Mendelssohn and implored him to provide
for a respectable performance of the music. Perhaps it would be
helpful if you could send him (Hotel Ambassador) my original score of
Die Dreigroschenoper. The printed score is really full of errors and
gives rise to many false impressions on account of its being a reduced
piano-conductor version. We must do everything we can to assure a
first-class performance of the music . . . It is not jazz music in the
American sense but rather a quite special, new sound, which can be
achieved only by a meticulous realization of the original full score."

It would appear that Weill's request was not carried out; the holograph
score probably crossed the Atlantic for the first time in 1952, when New
York City Opera was planning a production (see Kim Kowalske's essay
in this volume). And it was another twenty years before it finally found its way
into print. Karl Heinz Füsl's edition of the full score, prepared for
Universal Edition's Philharmonia series, appeared in 1972,20 by which time
the libretto that Weill's holograph was originally supposed to match had
been out of circulation for several decades. In the process of editing, Füsl
"cleaned up" Weill's holograph, comparing it with a few of the other
sources, wisely ignoring later versions of the book but unwisely and, in
places, uncritically ignoring the fact that the manuscript bore traces far
removed in time and space from the composer's own notations.21 Moreover,
in making his printed version conform to standard practices of notation,
Füsl had to remove some of the features that reflect the work's original con-
ception—features that can be savored in this facsimile.
The work, throughout, is scored for many more instruments than players. In standardizing the notation, Füssl's edition gives each instrument required in any number its own separate staff, suggesting many more players than there actually were or, indeed, need to be. Weill's extremely economical holograph more accurately reflects the scale of the original production. The "Ouvertüre" is an example. It begins with two saxophones, two trumpets, trombone, timpani, and harmonium—seven instruments indicated in the holograph (eight in the printed edition). When the banjo enters on the second page, the second trumpet drops out, remaining "tacet" for the rest of the number. The holograph thus poses a riddle: how did the seven players negotiate such changes of instruments? It could be assumed, in this case, that the banjo and second trumpet parts were played by the same person. But the band parts indicate that the second trumpet part was given to the percussionist. Moreover, that player's part has some passages, not in the holograph, that complement the first trumpet throughout the "Ouvertüre." In this case, then, consultation of the band parts does not solve the riddle so much as compound it. There are two likely solutions: either the banjo player briefly took over the percussionist's role, or the second trumpet player's versatility was such that he could play two instruments at once (a group photograph of the band includes a trumpet player with a drum on his knees—see page 144). The banjo player was quite versatile himself. Besides banjo, his part instructs him to play bandoneon, guitar, and Hawaiian guitar. It even includes several passages for cello (for example, in "I. Dreigroschenfinale"). By marking these passages for cello "ad lib.,” however, Weill was presumably making allowances for less versatile players. The total number of instruments required by the score is twenty-three.

The holograph records several renumberings occasioned by cuts, additions, and reorderings. The "Barbarasong"—changed from 13 to 12 to 9—is perhaps the most glaring example. Originally performed by Lucy, it was eventually appropriated by Polly. Lucy lost another number, too: her parodistic aria. (Weill later commented that the actress who eventually played Lucy in the premiere [Kate Küh] did not have the "good vocal abilities" of the actress for whom the part was conceived.) Her aria was cut, and along with it the whole scene "Kampf um das Eigentum." The scene had been restored by the time the production was in its second en suite season at Schiffbauerdamm in October 1929, but the musical number (left unorchestrated by the composer) was not revived. It is therefore missing from the full score. Yet another remarkable feature of the holograph is the indication of Polly as the singer of the "Salomonsong," whereas it is Jenny who sings it in all the published materials. Lotte Lenya must have taken over the number during the rehearsal period, that is, before Weill dispatched the full score. That the change escaped his attention as he completed his revisions may be due to the fact that by that point the number itself had been cut altogether.

In view of the holograph's genesis, the date at the end of the score—23.8.1928—is nothing if not misleading. The composer may have finished a version of the work a week before the premiere, in time for the parts to be copied in Charlottenburg and for the band to be rehearsed. But a week in the theater is a long time, as Weill well knew. Only when the process of realization had run its hectic course, and the work had undergone all manner of revisions, could he truly say that his collaborative efforts were complete.

Here, then, is the score of "Groschenoper"—the score Weill eventually submitted, two weeks after the premiere, in response to his publishers' eager inquiry. It is hardly in the state now that it was when Universal Edition received it. Over the last sixty years, the holograph has passed through other hands, some leaving indelible marks—traces, in various colors, of the work's involved performance history. For the most part, those traces were left in the United States, the country where Weill was to become a naturalized citizen. But that is another story.
Notes

1. Weill to Universal Edition (UE), 7 September 1928. “Ich bin augenblicklich noch damit beschäftigt, die Partitur nach den Erfahrungen der hiesigen Aufführung fertig einzurichten, und den Klavierauszug mit dem Textbuch genau in Einklang zu bringen.” Original items from the correspondence between Weill and Universal Edition are held in the Werner Songbook Collection. Photocopies of the complete correspondence are in the Weill-Lenya Research Center (WLRC), New York [series 41]. The correspondence is quoted by permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and Universal Edition. All translations are by the author.


3. The extent of Hauptmann’s creative contribution to Brecht’s plays is a topic of considerable debate. In The Threepenny Opera, Karl Heinz Fliss!, Philharmonia Academy, London, 1990, p. 239. See also Hinton, Kurt Weill, 26, no. 2 (fall 1988): 8-11.


7. “Wenn mein Musik einigermaßen korrekt ausgearbeitet ist, kann der Dirigent die Partitur in seiner Hand halten, und die Instruktorenspur kann er nur in Notenform in die Partitur einarbeiten.”

8. The ent’actes suggest the influence of operetta. The “Moritat” inserted as a recurring leitmotiv, on the other hand, may have a double meaning; it both parodies the leitmotivic practices of Wagnerian music-drama and points to the emerging medium of film, where such “underscoreing” was a common practice. As the full score was eventually published, none of these instructions was included.

9. Apart from appeasing his Marxist critics, Brecht’s revisions and theories can be seen as a reaction to constant questions of the form and function of music in his works, especially in his most well-known production, Die Dreigroschenoper. In the Threepenny Opera,” Karl Heinz Fliss!, Philharmonia Academy, London, 1990, p. 239. See also Hinton, Kurt Weill, 26, no. 2 (fall 1988): 8-11.

10. “Wenn man auf diese Weise dem Klarinettenkonzert einen besonderen Klang gibt, so können wir die Musik der Klasse als eine Art ‘Klarinettenkonzert’ ansehen.”

11. “Wir danken Ihnen sehr, dass Sie die Kompositionen unserer Ausscheidung angenommen haben.”


14. “Verzogerung kam daher, dass ich selbstverständlich nicht die Finanzierung, sondern die Herausgabe der Partitur zu fordern mich, die die meine Musik eventuell stark verändert klingen kann. Ich bitte Sie, an Stelle einer Partitur eine Klavier-Directionsstimme anzunehmen, wobei darauf hinzuweisen ist, dass sie die Kompositionen unserer Ausscheidung angenommen haben.”

15. “Wir haben uns freudig über die großen Erfolg der ‘Drei-Groschen-Oper.’”


17. “Die Ballade von der sexuellen Horigkeit ist in meinem Klavierauszug enthalten, die mir die breite Durchsetzung sehr schade, aber ich freue mich, dass Sie sich für eine im Frack’’ (as ‘in modern dress’) have been staged in Berlin, with Brecht well known for his theatrical innovations, including the use of jazz in his productions. This letter from Weill to Brecht is part of a larger correspondence between the two, which includes requests for changes to the score and instructions for the director. Weill was known for his innovative use of music in his productions, and this letter reflects his concern with the preservation of his work during the production process.

18. The ent’actes suggest the influence of operetta. The “Moritat” inserted as a recurring leitmotiv, on the other hand, may have a double meaning; it both parodies the leitmotivic practices of Wagnerian music-drama and points to the emerging medium of film, where such “underscoreing” was a common practice. As the full score was eventually published, none of these instructions was included.

19. Apart from appeasing his Marxist critics, Brecht’s revisions and theories can be seen as a reaction to constant questions of the form and function of music in his works, especially in his most well-known production, Die Dreigroschenoper. In the Threepenny Opera,” Karl Heinz Fliss!, Philharmonia Academy, London, 1990, p. 239. See also Hinton, Kurt Weill, 26, no. 2 (fall 1988): 8-11.

27. “Ihr Instrumentation als Anhangspunkt für ein Arrangement.”


29. “Wir haben gerne davon Kenntnis genommen, dass ...”