

# INTRODUCTION

by Stephen Hinton

## I. Challenges

Principal among the challenges facing the editors of *Die Dreigroschenoper* has been a task that the composer himself identified but that neither he nor his publishers ever completed. In a letter he sent them a week after the work's premiere, Weill explained that he was "still busy completing the score following the experiences of the current production." Part of that job involved, as he pointed out, "matching the vocal score exactly with the stage script."<sup>1</sup> Trying to satisfy the conflicting demands of precision and haste, he was occupied with three sources. The first of these, the full score (**Fh**), was ostensibly a holograph in his own hand; now, seventy years later, it contains all kinds of addenda, mainly typesetting and performance markings, by other hands. After making the necessary revisions, in a few cases as insertions on additional sheets of paper, Weill eventually sent the entire manuscript to Universal Edition in Vienna with the understanding that it would soon be published. In fact it did not appear in print for another half century (**Fe**). The second source, the vocal score, differed from the full score in two important respects: it *was* published within weeks of its completion (**Ve1**), and its preparation for publication was done not by Weill but by Norbert Gingold. As a result, the manuscript vocal score (**Vh**) is in two quite distinct hands, Weill's and Gingold's. The third source, the stage script, would also soon appear in print (**Tp1**). As with the piano-vocal score, this material was urgently needed for distribution to the many theaters interested in presenting what was turning out to be the hit of the season.<sup>2</sup> As Weill pointed out, however, these three principal documents of the work did not match. Nor did his efforts, either before or after the premiere, wholly resolve the discrepancies between them.

Apart from identifying one of the principal challenges facing this edition, Weill's remarks touch on another issue with far-reaching philological implications. In saying that he was "following the experiences of the current production," Weill was responding to his publishers' anxious inquiry as to the whereabouts of "the score of *Groschenoper*," as they called it.<sup>3</sup> As Weill's reply suggests, the work was not finalized before it went into production but continued to evolve during rehearsal and even after opening night. This raises two basic questions. What is the relationship between the various textual sources Weill mentions? And what was actually going on in that first and legendary production? The answer to these questions is complicated in the extreme, bringing into play not just matters of philological method but also additional sources: the rehearsal scripts (**Tt1a**, **Tt1b**), which document aspects of the production process, and the surviving band parts used by the instrumentalists of the Lewis Ruth Band (**Im**). Further materials include recordings by those musicians and members of the original cast, as well as later revised versions of the piece (even those in which Weill had no hand; in particular Brecht's revision, **Tp3**), aspects of which can be traced back to the production at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.

Some of the revisions, Weill goes on to explain, had to do with his having written down "certain things for the published edition that I

could simply announce to the musicians present."<sup>4</sup> Both the stage script and the score represent necessarily imperfect attempts at capturing a work whose genesis was intimately bound up with a particular production, and which would continue to change during that production's run. They transmit a version of a work that may never have been presented exactly as indicated by these fixed written forms. As the band parts amply reveal, neither Weill's score nor the band parts themselves precisely reflect what the musicians were playing. And although, on several levels, the stage script published in 1928 indicates better than any other single document the version being presented in the theater in the initial weeks after opening night, we do know from several sources that the performances departed from this version in various ways and to varying degrees—sometimes quite substantially—mainly because of cast changes, but also because live theater permitted, even required, such flexibility.

The published stage script was certainly intended by the authors to form the basis for the transmission of the piece, as indeed it did in numerous productions over the next few years. So did the published band parts (**Ie1**), which were extracted from Weill's holograph score. Notwithstanding the errors that inevitably crept into all these sources, Weill's intention remained: to match the verbal with the musical sources. For this new edition, which presents music and text together for the first time, Weill's original intention became an imperative. Ostensibly, the new edition seeks to match the same sources that Weill did. Each of these has its strengths and weaknesses; none has absolute authority over the other. The nature and degree of their authority differ in each case, depending on their purpose. Because Weill worked on words and music separately, there is no one "principal"—still less "primary"—source.

The revised stage script, published in an initial print run of three hundred copies in October 1928, represented a collaborative attempt by Brecht and Weill to establish the sequence of musical numbers, the places at which those numbers interrupt the spoken dialogue, and which number should be sung by whom—all details the full score did not resolve. Yet not all the revisions indicated by Brecht and Weill found their way into the final published version, as can be seen from the prepublication materials that have survived, including the typescript (**Tt2**) and a set of proofs (**Tp1a**), which have copious handwritten annotations in the two authors' hands. And neither the production itself nor some of the other sources necessarily followed these designations. Numbers would change ownership depending on the cast, and some were temporarily cut altogether, either to save time or because of technical limitations on the part of the singer; in one case a number was cut because of moral objections.

As far as it may be reconstructed, the work's genesis reflects a balancing of creative intentions and practical concerns. "Barbarasong" and "Arie der Lucy" are two quite distinct cases in point. Even though Polly did not always sing the "Barbarasong" in the theater, she is unequivocally assigned it both in the score and in the libretto.<sup>5</sup> Earlier sources give it to Lucy, who sang the part early on in the run. "Arie der Lucy," on the

\* Sections I, II, and III of this Introduction are complemented and, in places, amplified by the Statement of Source Valuation and Usage in the Critical Report.

other hand, was never reinstated after it had been cut from the original production. A practical consideration—the fact that the actress Kate Köhl did not possess, as Weill put it in an explanatory article, the “good vocal abilities” of the actress for whom the part was originally conceived—would influence the ultimate shape the work was to assume in the published libretto.<sup>6</sup> Weill later remarked to his publishers that the aria “could not be included, because then the part of Lucy would always have to be played by a singer.”<sup>7</sup> By this he meant a trained opera singer capable of coloratura, as opposed to the all-around actor-singers who could tackle other parts of the work. This is not to say, however, that the later sources supersede the earlier ones in all regards. Many discrepancies between the sources arose not because of changes made by the authors but because of carelessness or oversight. The abiding challenge to the editors has been to judge where such lapses may have occurred.

While some of the sources establish the broader outlines of the piece, others more reliably furnish particular details. In general, this edition privileges Weill’s holograph over the hastily scribbled band parts or a single contemporaneous recording. Rather than documenting a particular realization of the same (or at least a similar) text, the edition, like Weill’s own score, transmits a text intended for multiple realizations. But because the band parts document multiple realizations, however sketchily, there are instances where both they and early versions of the song texts reveal shortcomings in Weill’s holograph. Of course the composer, under pressure from his publisher to dispatch performance materials to Vienna for publication, was not infallible. In some cases his departure from the work as documented in the other sources was intentional; in others not. Each time, the editors have had to decide which was the case. Moreover, Weill did not attend to the overall sequence of numbers in the full score as he did with the libretto. The story of the work’s genesis, much of which may be reconstructed from the correspondence between the composer and his publisher, shows that Weill submitted the individual numbers in batches. And it is in that correspondence (L), which constitutes another indispensable set of materials, that the anomalies in numberings were resolved.

## II. Principles

Given the numerous decisions that have had to be made, in the large and in the small, what are the principles informing the identity of the work as presented in the new edition?

The first principle—by no means trivial or obvious—is that the work can be transmitted as a score with (in the case of a work for the musical theater) a matching libretto or book, as Weill intended. This principle ultimately informs the entire Kurt Weill Edition, not just this volume. *Die Dreigroschenoper* may be Weill’s first stage work to be published without an opus number, even though the composer initially identified his “Musik zu *The Beggar’s Opera*” separately as “op. 25” on the cover of the autograph vocal score. The absence of the opus number in the published vocal score may owe to a shift in Weill’s philosophy of musical production, namely a partial retreat from the romantic reification of the musical work as a fixed and timeless “opus.” Describing the score as “Musik zu” may reflect two other things: uncertainty as to the genre of the piece and an overly modest estimation of the music’s contribution, which turned out to be both substantial and decisive. Nonetheless, Weill endeavored to fix the work in notation as clearly and efficiently as possible, notwithstanding the labile nature of theatrical practice. He did so for all his stage works throughout his career, even if the exigencies of musical life obviated their publication as full scores or, in some cases, even as complete vocal scores. In addition to his collaboration on memorable productions, Weill left a legacy of performance materials for works capable of transcending their original theatrical incarnation—a legacy that this edition is committed to preserving.

The second principle derives from the fact, in which Weill colluded, that performance practice necessarily affected and even undermined the singularity and authority of the score, as Weill’s comment about “the

experiences of the current production” suggests. This edition seeks to incorporate this flexibility as best it can. In the case of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the work, more or less fixed as text, gives rise to multiple individual performances, all of which constitute differing realizations. While this printed edition is bound (in a twofold sense) to present a single version of the piece, one shaped by the authors’ combined intentions from the period between the start of the production process and the end of the composer’s involvement, it also reflects in various ways the mutability of the work in production. The edition does not legislate any single version or every detail of performance practice so much as define the publishable parameters within which performance of the work, as conceived by the authors, can take place.

This edition is thus both historical and critical.

It is historical in that it presents the work as conceived and performed in a historically delimited period and in particular historical circumstances, while documenting through commentary and appendices some of the inevitable mutations the work went through as theatrical reality in performance. Obviously there are both practical and philosophical limitations to how far any publication can or should go in this endeavor. The abiding principle is nonetheless the first one mentioned: that the work be transmittable as text.

The edition is critical in that it utilizes critically all available sources and additional materials, not just textual ones, while also inviting and expecting critical judgment from the user. (A critical edition will lose much of its purpose if it is not used critically.) This edition is committed to conveying the history of the work as text, while being intended for use in critically informed performances. Its claims to being definitive do not extend to the expectation that henceforth all productions should be the same. It neither legislates a single version of the work, which anyway has never existed as such, nor records any single performance of the work (or in the unlikely event that it did, that would be merely fortuitous). Besides, there is enough flexibility built into the text—not only because of Weill’s “ad lib.” passages but also because of the possibility of reinstating cut numbers—that no two productions are likely to be exactly the same.

## III. Solutions

The actual version transmitted in the main body of this edition (the singular version, that is, to which the editors have necessarily had to commit themselves) is, in broad outline, the one intended jointly by Weill and Brecht in their 1928 published libretto (Tp1). The 1928 libretto represents a version of the work that both authors edited for transmission as a text that supersedes the first production in Berlin. What is more, the published libretto actually performed its intended function for five years, prior to the work’s suppression by National Socialism, serving as the basis for rehearsal scripts of the piece for countless German-language productions of the work from 1928 to 1933.

Insofar as the printed libretto bears not only authorial but also historical authority, the new edition corresponds—at least in terms of the texts—to the guidelines for the latest Brecht edition, the *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, an edition that “contains as a matter of principle the authorized and established first editions.”<sup>8</sup> It diverges, however, from the Brecht edition by using as its basis the first published text rather than Brecht’s substantially revised version published in the *Versuche* in 1931, in whose creation Weill played no part.

Sources other than the libretto are relevant for three reasons. The first is that all Weill’s musical theater works call for editions that are synthetic. This particular edition, like all others in the Stage series of the KWE, must synthesize the verbal and the musical sources. Secondly, the libretto is not infallible in matters of detail, as comparison of the sources—including the publisher’s proofs of the libretto—demonstrates. An especially valuable source in this regard is the rehearsal script, the closest surviving source to the one Weill used when composing most of the music (if it is not that very source itself). Thirdly, the libretto, although

representing the longer-term textual transmission of the work at the time, does not offer access to two aspects of the work that this edition does: the parts of the work that were suppressed for publication but either had been or would be part of the work in the theater; and those parts, such as “Arie der Lucy,” that Weill associated with the work by publishing them later, but that had never been included in performance during the period of his creative involvement with the production.

The period from which the relevant sources are drawn—the core of the “target period” (see Statement of Source Valuation and Usage in Critical Report)—lasted about six months, from mid-June to the end of 1928, when the libretto was reprinted. After this time, although there were various developments in the theater, none caused Weill to make any substantial changes to the piece as transmitted. A critical document here is his essay on the suppression of “Arie der Lucy,” written to accompany the number’s separate publication in *Die Musik* in 1932. Here Weill mentions one of the developments in the theater—a new scene, occasioned by a cast change—but he does not seem to endorse it:

In a scene from the last act of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Lucy, the daughter of the police chief, is sitting in her room expecting a visit from her rival, Polly. She is concocting a sinister plan of murder. It was for Lucy’s solo scene that the current aria was written—a counterpart, as it were, to the “Jealousy Duet” of act 2. It was possible to expand this jealousy monologue into a kind of vocal aria because we had in mind for the Berlin premiere a performer with good vocal abilities. Since the role was not cast as intended, however, the “aria” was cut. It would have been cut anyway because in the course of rehearsals the whole scene proved superfluous. Only in later revivals [*Neueinstudierungen*] was the scene reinserted, this time without the aria, which was vocally too demanding for the performer playing Lucy.<sup>9</sup>

Although Weill’s use of the expression *Neueinstudierung* in the sense of “revival” could be seen to remove him from any active involvement, the production to which he referred was still, in fact, the original one, except that it had moved from the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm to the Komödienhaus with some cast changes and with the cut scene reinstated. Playing Polly was Carola Neher, who had originally been cast in the role but had dropped out at the last minute. Lucy was still being played by Kate Kühl. According to a review by Herbert Jhering (published in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*), the cast change occurred in May 1929, after the first en suite run at Schiffbauerdamm had finished the previous month (Jhering’s review appeared on 13 May). Instead of the aria, as Jhering reports, there was the “Ballade der Lucy,” by which he must mean the “Barbarasong,” which Lucy had apparently been singing all along, but which Polly had now reclaimed. Although early sources indicate Lucy’s ownership of this “ballad,” all published materials, including the libretto, give the number to Polly, albeit in an earlier scene, as no. 9.

In his “Anmerkungen” to the 1931 published version of the work in *Versuche*, which includes the reinstated scene under the title “Kampf um das Eigentum,” Brecht described it as an “interpolation for interpreters of Polly who possess a talent for comedy,” just as Lucy’s aria required a particular talent for virtuoso operatic singing.<sup>10</sup> In all, then, there are three reasons why the scene may have been cut: because it was dramatically superfluous; because Lucy couldn’t be expected to sing the aria; and because Neher’s initial replacement as Polly did not possess a talent for comedy.

Weill seems to hold firm to the notion that the scene had become superfluous, despite what was being done in the revival at the Komödienhaus and despite Brecht’s having included it in the 1931 *Versuche* version. If Weill indeed knew of Brecht’s own revision, then his negative assessment of the newly interpolated scene’s dramatic worth could be read as implicit criticism of Brecht’s revisionist enterprise.

The Viennese production around the same time, which Weill attended and in which he seems to have had a hand, also departed from the published text. The production’s musical director was the editor of the published vocal score, Norbert Gingold. Here, however, none of the Viennese newspaper reviewers noted any departure from the published materials, and although Weill’s correspondence indicates that pieces were

added, it is not explicitly clear which ones.<sup>11</sup> A few days before the Viennese premiere, which took place on 9 March 1929, Weill wrote to his publisher: “I have discussed all details with Herr Martin [the director]. . . . A few numbers are being done that were omitted here, even one that was not included in the music.”<sup>12</sup> It is evident from this letter that the libretto and vocal score never functioned—nor were ever expected to function—as an exact document, a kind of published souvenir, of the premiere production. Among the most likely candidates for published numbers reinstated in Vienna is “Salomonsong,” printed separately in *Die Musik* in the same month as the Viennese premiere, presumably as publicity and to compensate for its absence in Berlin. Another candidate is the “Morgenchoral,” which is crossed out in Mackeben’s copy of the piano-conductor score. As for the number “not included” in the published materials, Weill is probably referring to “Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit,” which was soon to find its way into the 1929 *Song-Album* (VeH), where it would be described as “originally from *Die Dreigroschenoper*.”<sup>13</sup>

The suppression of “Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit,” as with “Arie der Lucy,” had to do with the performer in the Berlin production. It was not that the actress playing Mrs. Peachum (Rosa Valetti) was technically incapable of singing her ballad, however, as was the case with Lucy and her aria. She simply refused to, on moral grounds, because of the lyrics (the “filthy words,” as Lotte Lenya later reported). The work subsequently evolved without it, and following Weill’s explicit instructions, his publishers left it out of the first edition of the published vocal score (“the ‘Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit’ has been cut completely,” Weill wrote to Vienna, ten days after the premiere).<sup>14</sup> Nor was the number included in the published libretto. Should the number therefore be reinstated in this edition? In a sense it is, thanks to its inclusion in Appendix I. Productions are free to use it, should they so wish, just as Weill did in 1929, both in Vienna and in his *Song-Album*. However, to place it in the main body of the text would be to distort the predominant, “historical” form in which the work existed during its first run. Its position in the appendix nicely reflects its original status as text: existent but scarcely used, available (to those in the know) but not prescribed. The number was not reinstated in print until Brecht’s 1931 revised edition in the *Versuche*; it rejoined the printed music in the 1956 edition of the vocal score (Ve3), published six years after Weill’s death.

Although Weill’s holograph full score possesses substantial musical authority, it has proved fallible in numerous matters of detail. The question of numberings, mentioned already, is a case in point. That of underlay is another. Sometimes Weill omits underlay in this source altogether. While the published piano-vocal score is generally reliable, discrepancies between this source and the published libretto are numerous. Again, resolution of the discrepancies in many cases required critical intervention on the part of the editors. Occasionally, however, neither of these sources has prevailed; instead others, such as the rehearsal scripts, have presented more convincing readings.

One of this edition’s more substantial revisions arising from the need to fill in underlay missing from Weill’s holograph full score occurs in Mr. and Mrs. Peachum’s “Anstatt daß-Song.” Mr. Peachum has acquired a new last line—or rather, the one he was presumably intended to have all along. Deprived of words for this line in the full score, in subsequent musical sources he acquired the same line as Mrs. Peachum. However, given that his previous words diverge from those sung by his wife and that a divergence in the last line is documented in other textual sources, including the published lyrics from 1929, the new version provides a dramatically more satisfying solution to the blank left by the composer than the one normally transmitted. Mrs. Peachum proves susceptible to the same “pile of sensuality” that, according to her husband, their daughter Polly embodies, especially the kind expressed in romantic clichés (“Wenn die Liebe anhebt und der Mond noch wächst” [when love is on the rise and the moon still grows]). For his part, Mr. Peachum, the piece’s (a)moral spokesman, cynically sees through such sentiments (“Wenn die Liebe aus ist und allein du verreckst” [when love is gone and you drop

dead alone]). Occasionally, of course, Weill's underlay departs from other sources, but these departures are clearly intentional and have to be preserved for musical reasons. In all cases the critical apparatus provides documentation of editorial activity.

Unlike some other critical editions, this edition does not make it possible to reconstruct in every detail all the principal sources used. Even if these were documented, such a reconstruction would not always be practicable or desirable. Several of the sources do not transmit any single version of the piece, but rather a collection of materials that have accrued over a period of time. This is especially true of the band parts, but also of the full score, with its various layers in other hands.

The most famous number of all, "Die Moritat von Mackie Messer," offers the most vivid example of documented change in performance. Each of the band parts is, to varying degrees, either unclear, incomplete, or both. Itself a last-minute addition during the final stages of the production process, the "Moritat" was initially conceived for solo voice accompanied by barrel organ. In his full score Weill notes simply "Nr. 2. Moritat (Brown) für Leierkasten." Following this description, on the same page, is the score of no. 3. Only after no. 3 does Weill present the full score of no. 2, inserted on manuscript paper of a different type from that on which the surrounding music is notated. While the assorted hieroglyphs and annotations in the band parts document no. 2's genesis even more graphically than the composer's full score, none of the parts corresponds to the full-score version, which Weill committed to paper once the production was already in full swing. As with all the other numbers, the original piano-conductor score is missing from the band parts. The extant parts, such as they are, all contain fairly informal indications of what the players were expected to be playing; the scant information they transmit includes, in several cases, the number of stanzas (usually six) and mention of the solo instrument(s) featured in each. Although in his postpremiere version Weill scored the first two strophes for harmonium (to be played "in the manner of a barrel organ"), several of the parts indicate that the barrel organ was retained during the first three strophes, even after instrumental variations had been added to accompany the subsequent stanzas.

This number represents the most extensive example of Weill having written down "certain things for the published edition that I could simply announce to the musicians present." And even then, the final version may well have differed considerably from what the players were actually playing, just as they must have ad-libbed the instrumental interludes in various ways. (These instrumental pieces, likewise, are notated in the parts in only rudimentary outlines. Reconstructions, as far as they are possible, are included in Appendix II.) Interestingly, some of the band parts of no. 2 show traces of the composer's own hand (where "announcing" did not suffice), but these indications rarely amount to a full part. Insofar as they do offer what the players were playing, the parts must have served as scripts to multiple events, not just a single event, up to and perhaps including the recording of the music for the 1930 film directed by G.W. Pabst.

For all the splendid documentary evidence the parts supply of the genesis and performance practice of this number, none of the parts is either clear or complete enough to question, still less undermine, the authority of the full score, or even to supplement it in any meaningful way, as they do with the other numbers. Nowhere is the gap between work and event and between text and script as evident as in the "Moritat"—the number that, more than any other, was to make its way in the world in incarnations quite different from the one it is given in the full score.

#### IV. "Ad libitum"

One fixed aspect of the work is the flexibility it prescribes in performance: the places in the full score where Weill offers the instrumentalists options as to the type and the number of instruments to be employed.

There are several dozen such places in the score. They range from alternatives (usually indicated by the conjunction "oder"); apparent preferences with an alternative (in which case Weill writes "falls [preferred instrument] fehlt"); instrumental lines that should be played if the prescribed instrument and the requisite performing skills are available ("wenn möglich"); and parts marked "ad lib." This last marking can mean several things, partly depending on how it is interpreted. In one sense, Weill's presenting these options can be understood as an attempt to convey the spirit of spontaneous vitality and adaptability that attended the original production. Yet the markings also serve a quite pragmatic purpose. Weill is, within prescribed limits, accommodating the changing circumstances of future productions with regard to five parameters of performance: the numbers of players available; the instruments at their disposal; the performing skills of the instrumentalists; the ability of the singers to project their voices; and the acoustic properties of the theater. Especially in the case of "ad lib.," however, it is not always clear what he is asking the players to bear in mind: their own limitations, those of the singers, or those of the theater's acoustics. Based on the precedents set by the first production, it can be assumed that he is thinking in terms of a minimum number of seven players; these players utilize a basic lineup of instruments (alto saxophone/flute/clarinet, tenor saxophone/soprano saxophone, trumpet, trombone/double bass, banjo/guitar, percussion, and piano/harmonium), to be augmented as resources allow. There are several places, for example, where Weill indicates "Fagott oder Tenorsaxophon," suggesting that the former instrument should be used if available, which seems not to have been the case at Schiffbauerdamm. To take another example: productions could, if need be, also manage without a piccolo and a baritone saxophone in the "Kanonensong." Yet having gone to the trouble of inventing this sonority, Weill would presumably have preferred to hear the expanded orchestral palette. Other alternatives, such as the clarinet, are virtually indispensable, given how frequently they are called for (with saxophone as a backup). The case of the second trumpet part is especially vexing. The "Ouvertüre" and "Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit" are the only place where it is obligatory; everywhere else it is marked "ad lib." Weill's marking could be saying one or more of three things: "use a second trumpet if available"; or (for example, in the third finale) "use a second trumpet if available and the player can execute the part"; or "use a second trumpet if the acoustics permit." Given the inherent ambiguity of such markings in the score, the editors have made no attempt to interpret them unequivocally, much less to systematize them. They are reproduced here as they appear in Weill's holograph score, transmitted for the users of the edition to interpret as the situation demands.

#### V. Instrumental interludes and stage music

Part of the music played in the premiere production is indicated in the first published libretto but does not appear in the full score: the musical interludes and incidental stage music. Their presence in the first production betrays a double origin in theatrical models on which Weill was doubtless drawing: operetta and theatrical farce.<sup>15</sup> Although none of these purely instrumental pieces has survived in full score, nor indeed was ever likely notated as such, the band parts contain copious annotations that have permitted reconstructions, included here in Appendix II. The inclusion of these pieces in the libretto conveys, even more than do the "ad lib." passages in the full score, the spirit if not the letter of performance practice during the first production, giving the musicians an opportunity to respond as required to the theatrical situation. And it would go against that spirit to consider the reconstructions as having much more than documentary value. For sure, they do not have the same status as the numbers in Weill's score; rather, they suggest the bare bones of one among many possible realizations. The differing needs of individual productions dictate the extent of their use, as is usually the case with stage music.

## VI. Genesis

Mention has been made so far of just two authors: Weill and Brecht, with creative input from the band members. But when *Die Dreigroschenoper* opened on 31 August 1928, the audience was left in no doubt that others, both living and dead, had made contributions as part of the work's multiple authorship. The playbill clearly indicated the handful of sources on which this, one of the great confluences of theatrical history, had liberally drawn: "*Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Beggar's Opera). A play with music in one prelude and eight scenes after the English of John Gay. (Interpolated ballads by François Villon and Rudyard Kipling.) Translation: Elisabeth Hauptmann. Adaptation: Brecht. Music: Kurt Weill."<sup>16</sup>

A similar description was used in the 1929 edition of *Reclams Opernführer* (ed. G.R. Kruse), except that there Weill was named as the main author, with Brecht appearing last in the credits—after Gay, Villon, and Kipling—as author rather than adapter. The first printed libretto (Tp1) omitted to mention the interpolated ballads and their creators; it credits Weill with responsibility for the music, Brecht for the “German adaptation,” and Elisabeth Hauptmann for the translation. All subsequent editions of the text (except Tp4) have designated Brecht alone as author, omitting on their title pages any reference to the sources, and have allotted Hauptmann and Weill only fine-print credits as “collaborators” (*Mitarbeiter*).

It might seem uncharacteristically self-effacing of Brecht to cast himself in the role of mere adapter, and hence inappropriate, even churlish, for anyone to accuse him of an “offense” he had openly admitted, namely plagiarism. Many hands were at work—that much was clear from the outset. Even so, the list of co-authors did not end with those cited above, which is why the charge of plagiarism was in fact leveled. Having failed to acknowledge the translator of the interpolated Villon ballads, K.L. Ammer (pseudonym for Karl Klammer), Brecht was taken to task by one of the Weimar Republic's chief theater critics, Alfred Kerr. Kerr's chiding piece, entitled “Brecht's Copyright” and published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 3 May 1929, elicited from Brecht the notorious reply in which, having conceded that he “unfortunately forgot to mention Ammer's name,” he excused the oversight with reference to his “fundamental laxity in matters of intellectual property.”<sup>17</sup> The exchange enjoyed the status of a minor public scandal, becoming the first of the many *causes célèbres* *Die Dreigroschenoper* has produced. The Viennese aphorist and linguistic moralizer Karl Kraus, for example, a sworn enemy of Kerr, jumped to Brecht's defense, pronouncing that he had “more originality in the little finger of the hand with which he took the twenty-five verses of Ammer's Villon translation than that Kerr who had found him out.”<sup>18</sup> Money—a likely reason for the oversight in the first place—was at stake. Initially ignorant of the illicit use of his intellectual property, Klammer managed in the end to secure an arrangement whereby he received 2½ percent of all royalties from performances of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in the original German. Thanks to the work's phenomenal success, he eventually earned enough to purchase a small vineyard in the Viennese suburb of Grinzing, Austria's best-known wine-growing district, where he produced a wine he christened “*Threepenny drops*” (*Dreigroschentropfen*).<sup>19</sup>

This was not the only windfall Klammer enjoyed from the plagiarism scandal. Such was the demand for his volume of Villon translations that a reprint edition appeared in 1930. Brecht was invited to supply the foreword, which he did in the form of a sonnet, closing with an appropriately forthright tercet:

It's sour but cheap; you pay three marks for it  
And what a lucky dip the buyer gets!  
In my own case it yielded quite a bit . . .<sup>20</sup>

More precisely: Brecht took over wholesale large chunks of Ammer's Villon translation in “Ruf aus der Gruft” and “Grabschrift”; more or less freely adapted them in “Zuhälterballade,” “Die Ballade vom ange-

nehmen Leben,” and the “Salomonsong”; and conceivably left traces of Villon's influence in “Die Moritat von Mackie Messer.”<sup>21</sup> He also borrowed from himself: he had written the texts of the “Kanonensong,” the “Barbarasong,” and “Seeräuberjenny” and had, with Franz S. Bruinier, set the last two to music many months before the idea of adapting Gay's *Beggar's Opera* had even arisen.<sup>22</sup>

Legend has it that Kraus also made a creative contribution to the work—an extra stanza to the “Eifersuchtsduett.”<sup>23</sup> If he did, which seems unlikely, the new stanza was almost certainly not performed at the premiere, although it may have been subsequently; nor does Kraus seem to have claimed any remuneration for his rumored (and unacknowledged) efforts. This particular portion of the work may indeed be bona fide Brecht. But others plainly deserve to be included in the roll call: the director, Erich Engel, and his assistants; and Caspar Neher, the set designer for the first production, as well as for several subsequent ones. All were instrumental in molding a work that was not ready until literally a few hours before the curtain went up on that legendary opening night.

As already mentioned, Brecht and Weill continued to make alterations even after the premiere. Most substantial were those made by Brecht, including the added stanza to the “Eifersuchtsduett,” first published in the *Versuche* in 1931 (Tp3). Save for some minor modifications, the *Versuche's* substantially revised text of *Die Dreigroschenoper* is the one that has been most prominently in circulation, both in the original German and in countless translations. The question of sources and genesis is, in short, an involved and intricate one, and the Ammer and Kraus anecdotes are just two of the many legends—some true, some fictitious—that continue to surround the work.

### i. Adaptation

The notion of “adaptation” admits of a wide variation in meaning. In the case of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, ostensibly a reworking of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, several major changes were made to the original, both additions and omissions, which have given the piece a quite different complexion, purpose, and also message. What started out as a literal translation of *The Beggar's Opera*, prepared in the winter months of 1927–1928 by Brecht's diffident and devoted collaborator, Elisabeth Hauptmann, gradually took on a character of its own—so much so that one commentator has observed that “Brecht surreptitiously wrote a new piece.”<sup>24</sup> In terms of the music, Weill did the same; he retained just one of the original melodies (the “Morgenchoral”), while the rest were of his own invention.

The verbal matter of the piece—for which the American term “book” is more appropriate than “libretto”—underwent numerous reworkings before emerging as the version known today. But why was the adaptation made in the first place? In 1931, at a time of concentrated theoretical reflection, Brecht defined the piece retrospectively, for the *Versuche* edition, as “an experiment in epic theater.” And four years later, in 1935, he could look back on the 1928 production as “the most successful demonstration of epic theater.”<sup>25</sup> The initial impulse for the adaptation appears, however, to have been of a rather less experimental or theoretical nature. Nor were Brecht and Hauptmann the first to hit upon the idea, which was surely to repeat the extraordinary success enjoyed by a revival of *The Beggar's Opera* in London a few years earlier. Frederic Austin's arrangement of the John Gay original, produced by Sir Nigel Playfair at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, had opened on 5 June 1920 and run for a record-breaking 1,463 performances over a three-year period, vastly outstripping the previous record for a long-running show, which was held by the first production of that work.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Brecht had already shown an interest in adapting other people's work at a time when radical reinterpretations of classic plays were becoming fashionable, such as productions of Shakespeare done in contemporary dress (“Hamlet im Frack,” as one of them was dubbed).<sup>27</sup>

“The art of vandalism,” as W.E. Yuill has described it, was an integral part of Brecht's creative bent.<sup>28</sup> In 1923–1924, assisted by Lion

Feuchtwanger, he had already drawn heavily on another English play, Marlowe's *Edward II*, as the basis for his *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England*, the premiere of which he directed himself in Munich in March 1924. Later, in the early 1950s, his interest in Elizabethan drama led him to translate and adapt Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, a project first mooted in the 1920s. Numerous other works by Brecht also owe their existence to this principle of "creative vandalism"—such as *Die Mutter* (after Gorky) and *Der Jasager* (after Arthur Waley's English translation of the Japanese Noh play *Taniko*).

The success of Playfair's revival had not escaped the music publishers Schott either. On 28 January 1925, they wrote to the young composer Paul Hindemith (born in 1895, five years before Weill), proposing the idea of a new stage work based on *The Beggar's Opera*. Well acquainted with their rising star's previous flirtations with the idioms of modern dance music (or "jazz," as it was then known), and in uncanny anticipation of some of Weill's music for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, they suggested to him that "the way you drew the fox-trot of your Kammermusik [no. 1, 1922] into the sphere of serious music would be the right thing in this case: refined popular music or a caricature thereof, at the same time a satire of the sort of modern opera music composed by d'Albert."<sup>29</sup> Hindemith appears not to have responded to the suggestion, thereby leaving the field open for Weill-Brecht et al. (Hindemith's correspondence with Schott also shows that he twice approached Brecht, in 1924 and 1925, with the idea of collaborating on an opera, though without success.) Rumor has it that the director F.W. Murnau had contemplated a film version of *The Beggar's Opera*.<sup>30</sup> In any event, "Threepenny fever" (*Dreigroschenfieber*)—an expression coined to describe the clamor and mania attending the early performances of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Berlin—was already in the air.

Several of the people involved in the first production have recounted in print the work's genesis and initial reception, each contributing in their own way to the many legends that continue to circulate. The most substantial version is recorded in the autobiography of Ernst Josef Aufricht, the theater manager behind the first production. Aufricht, however, relied heavily on Lotte Lenya, Weill's widow, who in turn gleaned much information, including the wrong date for the premiere, from an unpublished interview that her second husband, George Davis, had conducted with Elisabeth Hauptmann on 25 May 1955.<sup>31</sup> Heinrich Fischer, Aufricht's deputy, also published his own account, in 1957.<sup>32</sup>

During the early stages of adapting *The Beggar's Opera*, Brecht had a chance meeting with Aufricht, then an aspiring impresario with a sizable inheritance behind him as financial backing. Aufricht had recently rented the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm and was in search of a play with which to launch his new venture. (The early nineteenth-century theater, a medium-sized house with a gaudy mock-rococo interior in what was then an unfashionable area near the center of Berlin, would belong to the Eastern Sector after World War II; since 1954, it has been the home of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble.) The proposed date for the opening was 31 August 1928, Aufricht's twenty-ninth birthday.

In his autobiography, Aufricht related the encounter with Brecht, including a few fond inaccuracies of hindsight, as follows:

I now had a theater in Berlin which I had to open in nine months' time. I offered Erich Engel, whom I consider the most important director of the 1920s, the first production. . . . We [Aufricht; his deputy director Heinrich Fischer, who was later to edit the complete works of Karl Kraus; and assistant Robert Vambéry, who would write the libretto for Weill's *Kuhhandel*] paid calls on authors living in Berlin. We went to Toller, Feuchtwanger, and others, but none had a finished piece. "If I don't find anything, I'll die. All we can try now is the artists' bars, the Schwannecke or Schlichter's."

We went to Schlichter's in the Lutherstrasse. On the walls hung pictures for sale by the owner, the painter Rudolf Schlichter. There was someone sitting in a second room. It was Brecht. I didn't know him personally, though I did know his literary experiments for the stage and thought highly of his poetry. His long face often had the ascetic expression of a monk, occasionally the slyness of a gallows bird. He had dark,

piercing eyes that greedily and hungrily absorbed everything presented to them. He was scrawny, with drooping shoulders. I have always considered his unkempt, proletarian turnout, with cap, jacket, and bare neck, to be a Brechtian "alienation." Although his exterior tended to be repellent, he himself was pleasant.

We sat down at his table and posed the vital question. He began to relate to us a plot he was working on at the time. He noticed, however, that we were not interested, since we asked for the check.

"There is always a minor work of mine. You can have six of the seven scenes tomorrow. It's an adaptation of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. I've given it the title *Gesindel* [Scum]. *The Beggar's Opera* was given its premiere in 1728, not in London but in a barn in the suburbs; it deals with a corruption scandal: the notorious gangster is a friend of the chief of police and is in business with him. The gangster robs a very powerful man of his only daughter and marries her. The man is the boss of the beggars; he fits them out, trains them, and stations them according to their qualities. The end is in the seventh scene, which as yet I've only sketched."

The story smelled of theater. We arranged to collect the manuscript the next day in the Spichernstrasse, where Brecht had a furnished room.

Fischer went to the Spichernstrasse and, since it is not far from the Meinekestrasse, I waited for him there at my parents-in-law's. He came in the rain with the manuscript, wet through and beginning to disintegrate. We read; I was immediately taken by the impudence and dry humor—today both have become blunted—as well as by the whiff of a new style, and was determined to open my theater with *Gesindel*. Fischer was of the same opinion. We telephoned Brecht, who informed us that a musician was also involved, Kurt Weill, whose two one-act operas *Der Zar lässt sich fotografieren* and *Der Protagonist*, with texts by Georg Kaiser, could be heard at the Charlottenburg Opera. Shortly afterward I went there, but I found Weill's music too atonal for a theater piece and asked Theo Mackeben, whom I had engaged as musical director, to get hold of the original music of *The Beggar's Opera* by Pepusch, so as to have a replacement ready.

Together with Engel, who also liked the Brecht text and who, as arranged, had taken on the direction of the opening production, we considered the question of casting. We saw the piece, as written, in terms of a comical literary operetta with a few flashes of social criticism. We took the only aggressive song, "Erst kommt das Fressen," quite seriously. Political reality hadn't yet demonstrated in any drastic way that when morality disappears, food is also lost. Brecht and Weill were no classics. The profound explications of *Die Dreigroschenoper's* sociophilosophical message, in which Brecht also later participated, have in retrospect given the piece a false significance.<sup>33</sup>

If Aufricht's memory had served him correctly on matters of chronology, then the above episode would have taken place at the beginning of 1928, nine months before the premiere. However, the information is probably no more accurate than the dialogue is authentic. For all the atmosphere that the use of direct speech evokes, Aufricht's words are, so to speak, too original to be true. According to John Willett and Ralph Manheim, the encounter must have been as late as March or April. They suggest, too, that the process of adaptation had probably not yet started.<sup>34</sup> If so, then Aufricht's account of what Brecht offered him is guilty of yet further anachronisms, since his version of Brecht's synopsis already includes two of the major alterations made to the original: Gay's prison keeper (Lockit) was replaced by the chief of police (Brown); and the eponymous beggars are no longer merely a part of the dramatic framework but feature prominently in Peachum's manipulations. Moreover, Aufricht remembers Brecht peddling the work at this stage under his own new title *Gesindel*, a title not documented elsewhere. Elisabeth Hauptmann's working translation has unfortunately not survived; nor does any surviving manuscript of the work bear this title.

In a letter dated 10 March 1928, Weill's publishers, Universal Edition in Vienna, report having learned "from a newspaper notice that you are preparing with Brecht an adaptation of *The Beggar's Opera*." The rival firm Schott must have read the same notice, since they too wrote to Weill with knowledge of his intentions. While Universal was merely keeping tabs on its young composer, Schott had more immediate business interests at heart. Their letter to Weill, dated 9 March, draws attention to the fact that they already have a version of *The Beggar's Opera* in their catalogue and that, understandably enough, they wish to

“eliminate mutual competition.” As Weill’s reply of 14 March shows, the composer had already established some firm ideas about the nature and aim of his “adaptation”:

During work on *The Beggar’s Opera* I have rapidly developed the impression that the piece is out of the question as “opera,” and that one can best choose the form of a farce with music, which cannot be considered for opera houses because of the preponderance of dialogue. Our adaptation will probably be intended for a very famous Berlin actor; and Herr Brecht, who is heavily involved in the project, would therefore prefer if the work were not given to a straight music publisher but rather to a theater agency that is connected with the theaters and operetta houses for which our work is intended.<sup>35</sup>

The collaboration with Brecht was clearly underway, and Weill’s description of the nature of the adaptation would appear consistent with Aufricht’s assessment of the piece as a “comical literary operetta.” Furthermore, the mention of a “very famous Berlin actor” suggests that the meeting with Aufricht may indeed already have taken place and the question of casting been discussed. Aufricht speaks of six completed scenes, with a seventh merely sketched. There were subsequently eight for the 1928 production and nine for the *Versuche* edition, which reinstated the discarded eighth scene, now revised and entitled “Kampf um das Eigentum.” Where Aufricht most certainly errs is on the matter of the original music. Pepusch wrote only the overture, otherwise arranging preexisting melodies as *contrafacta*.

The inception of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which may or may not have initially been called *Gesindel*, can be located, then, in the first three months of 1928. And although it is still impossible to ascertain how much the adaptation of *The Beggar’s Opera* had progressed by the time Aufricht approached Brecht, and whether this meeting was before or after discussions with Weill had taken place, work on the piece did not begin in earnest until a few months later, as Lenya recalled in 1955:

[I]t was decided that the only way Brecht and Kurt could whip the work still ahead of them was to escape from Berlin. But to where? Somebody suggested a certain quiet little French Riviera resort. Wires went off for reservations, and on the first of June, Kurt and I left by train, while Brecht drove down with Helene Weigel and their son Stefan. . . . The two men wrote and rewrote furiously, night and day, with only hurried swims in between. I recall Brecht wading out, pants rolled up, cap on head, stogy in mouth. I had been given the part of Spelunken-Jenny (Aufricht now says it was after my audition in the tango-ballad that he decided to forget about Pepusch).<sup>36</sup>

Again, the partially distorted products of memory lane raise as many questions as they answer. Had Lenya really been given the part of Jenny before the trip to France? And if so, was the tango-ballad (“Zuhälterballade”) already composed before the auditions took place? The date of departure for the south of France cited by Lenya is certainly wrong, as Weill’s correspondence with his publisher reveals. While a letter from Universal dated 10 May was dispatched to Berlin, the next letter, dated 18 May, was sent to Hostellerie de la Plage, Plage des Lecques, St-Cyr-sur-Mer (Var). Weill replied from this address on 26 May, stating that he intended to stay there until 4 June and return via Frankfurt by the 8th. It is likely, then, that his next letter from Berlin, although dated 4 June, was really written on 14 June, especially in view of the “received” stamp of 16 June (two days for delivery to Vienna being quite normal at the time). In any event he writes in that letter: “Meanwhile I’m working at full steam on the composition of *The Beggar’s Opera*, which I’m enjoying,” adding that “it is being written in a very easily singable style, since it is supposed to be performed by actors.” He hopes “to be finished by the end of June.”<sup>37</sup>

Weill underestimated the time needed for the work ahead of him. His next letter is dated 22 July. “You have not heard anything from me for rather a long time,” he writes, “as I’m working a great deal.” But he goes on to reassure his publisher: “You’ll be receiving by post in the next few days, via the publisher Felix Bloch Erben, the piano-vocal score of my

*Beggar’s Opera* (German title: *Des Bettlers Oper*). I would like to ask you, for the time being, not to reproduce this vocal score as a whole, since the sequence of numbers is not yet fixed and two numbers are also still missing.” He adds that the study material for the Berlin production must be “assembled with the greatest possible speed, since rehearsals begin on 10 August.”<sup>38</sup>

By the beginning of June at the latest, with substantial portions of the work still to be written, or at least finalized, Brecht and Weill had signed a contract with the theater agents Felix Bloch Erben, who were to supply multiple copies of the stage script. Forthcoming royalties were to be divided among the authors as follows: Brecht 62½ percent, Weill 25 percent, and Elisabeth Hauptmann 12½ percent. (The 2½ percent later allotted to Klammer was docked from Brecht’s share for performances in German.) Bloch Erben wrote to Universal Edition on 5 June confirming the contract and including details of the royalty percentages due to Universal Edition.<sup>39</sup> At this stage the piece was still referred to in English, as *The Beggar’s Opera*, with a subtitle in German, *Ein altenglisches Balladenstück*. On 1 May, Bloch Erben’s house journal, *Charivari*, had already announced the forthcoming production, using the same wording but beginning with the additional German title *Die Ludenoper* (The Pimps’ Opera). This title also appeared as a subtitle on the stage script subsequently prepared for the rehearsals in August (though without “ein altenglisches Balladenstück”). The author is billed as “John Gray” (*sic*). A later issue of *Charivari*, dated 23 May, contains a brief column on “the German version of Brecht’s adaptation of the English play *The Beggar’s Opera*, written in 1728”; readers are informed that it is “not an opera, but a prose work with music by Kurt Weill, using old English ballads.” By 18 July *Charivari* gives the main title in German as *Des Bettlers Oper*, as Weill did in his letter of 22 July; the original English title is now supplied in brackets, as it was for the premiere.

Lenya, following Hauptmann’s recollections, stated that the writer Lion Feuchtwanger—one of “the distinguished kibitzers who wandered in and out of the stalls”—invented the final title, *Die Dreigroschenoper*.<sup>40</sup> Feuchtwanger has consequently been cited on numerous occasions for his creative contribution to the work. There is, however, reason to doubt such an unequivocal attribution, as the recollections of another member of the literati present at rehearsals, Elias Canetti, make clear:

Karl Kraus was in Berlin at the time and he was friends with Brecht, whom he saw frequently, and it was through Brecht, a few weeks before the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, that I got to know him. I never saw him alone but always in the company of Brecht and other people who were interested in this production. . . . The conversation was about *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which didn’t yet bear this title; the name was being considered in this circle. Many suggestions were made and Brecht calmly listened to them, not at all as though it was his own piece; indeed, from the way he conducted himself during the conversation one would hardly have realized it was he who had the final say. So many suggestions were made that I no longer remember who made which. Without appearing domineering, Karl Kraus made a suggestion that he threw into the debate questioningly, as if he had doubts about it. It was immediately suppressed by another, a better one, which didn’t win the day either. I don’t know from whom the title finally did come; it was Brecht himself who proposed it, but perhaps he had gotten it from someone else who wasn’t present and wanted to see what those who were there thought of it. The freedom in his work with respect to demarcations and property labels was astonishing.<sup>41</sup>

Before *Die Ludenoper* became retitled *Die Dreigroschenoper*, there ensued the frantic weeks of rehearsal, during which endless changes and cuts were made to the text. Nonetheless, the prerehearsal text cyclostyled by Bloch Erben already represents a considerable transformation of the original. In an appendix to their translation of the 1931 text, Manheim and Willett have outlined the principal departures from Gay as follows:

Several subsequently discarded characters from Gay’s original still remain (notably Mrs Coaxer and her girls), but Lockit has already been purged, together with all that part of the plot involving him, and replaced by the rather more up-to-date figure of Brown. Peachum’s manipulations of the

beggars is also new, as are the first stable and second gaol scenes. The main items retained from Gay in this script are, in our present numbering, scenes 1, 3, 4, 5 (which is not yet a brothel but a room in the hotel), 6, 8 and the principle of the artificial happy ending. There are no scene titles. However, Macheath's final speech before his execution is already there, much as in our version, as are several of the songs: Peachum's Morning Hymn (whose melody is in fact a survivor from the original, being that of Gay's opening song), Pirate Jenny, the Cannon Song, the Barbara Song, the Tango-Ballade, the Jealousy Duet, Lucy's subsequently cut aria (in scene 8), the Call from the Grave and the Ballad in which Macheath Begs All Men for Forgiveness; also the final chorus. Most of these are not given in full, but only their titles, and some may not yet have been completed. There are also two of Gay's original songs as well as two translations from Kipling: "The Ladies" and "Mary, Pity Women."<sup>42</sup>

The Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv in Berlin holds two especially valuable copies of the *Ludenoper* prompt book: one used by the director, Erich Engel (Tt1a), and the other by his assistant, Dr. Halewicz (Tt1b). Both record in detail the innumerable cuts, amendments, and interpolations to which the piece was subjected right up to and including the night of the premiere, offering a striking document of how closely *Die Dreigroschenoper's* evolution was bound up with the purely practical operation of putting the piece on the boards. The role of Mrs. Coaxer, for example, which was to be played by Helene Weigel, Brecht's wife, was removed altogether when the actress got appendicitis. The "Moritat," on the other hand, one of the enduring hit tunes of the twentieth century, was a last-minute addition. Lenya relates the story of its genesis thus:

[Harald] Paulsen, vain even for an actor, insisted that his entrance as Mackie Messer needed building up: why not a song right there, all about Mackie, getting in mention if possible of the sky-blue bow tie that he wanted to wear? Brecht made no comment but next morning came in with the verses for the "Moritat" of Mack the Knife and gave them to Kurt to set to music. This currently popular number, often called the most famous tune written in Europe during the past half century, was modeled after the *Moritäten* ("mord" meaning murder, "tat" meaning deed) sung by singers at street fairs, detailing the hideous crimes of notorious arch-fiends. Kurt not only produced the tune overnight, he knew the name of the hand-organ manufacturer—Zucco Maggio—who could supply the organ on which to grind out the tune for the prologue. And the "Moritat" went not to Paulsen but to Kurt Geron, who doubled as Street Singer and Tiger Brown.<sup>43</sup>

Aufricht's account of the song's genesis is slightly different:

Harald Paulsen, who had mostly appeared in operetta, turned up in a black suit made by Hermann Hoffmann, at that time a first-class haberdashery. He bounced across the stage in a double-breasted jacket that hugged his waist in turn-of-the-century style, tight-fitting trousers with straps, patent-leather shoes with white spats, a slender sword stick in his hand and a bowler hat on his head. The buttons on his jacket came up high and a wing-collar lent him an air of respectability. He completed the outfit, according to his own taste, with a large fluttering bow made of light-blue silk. The blue bow to match the color of his eyes was indispensable—it was his tried-and-true security blanket with which he countered the incomprehensible madness around him. He clung to it with both hands, preferring to part with his role rather than with his blue bow. A frightful uproar began that soon assumed catastrophic proportions, since Paulsen was already becoming hoarse and thus putting the show at risk. Then Brecht had an idea. "Let's leave him as he is, over-sweet and charming," he said in the office. "Weill and I will introduce him with a 'Moritat' that tells of his gruesome and disgraceful deeds. The effect made by his light-blue bow will be all the more curious." That's how the most popular song of *Die Dreigroschenoper* was born.<sup>44</sup>

The "Moritat" is inserted into Halewicz's prompt book (but not into Engel's). A version of the wedding scene is deleted and a new one interpolated. Scene 3, a straight translation of the encounter between Mrs. Peachum and Filch from Gay's original (act 1, scene 6), appears in three different versions but is also cut three times. A translation of Kipling's poem "The Ladies" ("Die Ballade von den Ladies") is still in. "Die Zuhälterballade" is merely referred to as the "Bordell-Ballade [Brothel Ballad] von François Villon." The prison is still Gay's Newgate, not the

Old Bailey, as it later would become. The other Kipling poem, a translation of "Mary, Pity Women!" ("Maria, Fürsprecherin der Frauen"), intended for Lucy, is already crossed out. The first refrain of the poem was subsequently used as the text of "Polly's Lied" ("Nice while it lasted, an' now it is over"); it was cut for the premiere but added to the version of the text printed in 1955. (The rest of the poem was not permanently discarded, however; Brecht ingeniously recycled it a year later in his next collaboration with Weill, the "play with music" *Happy End*, where it forms the basis of the song "Surabaya-Johnny.") The "Streben" (endeavor) in the title of Peachum's "Lied von der Unzulänglichkeit menschlichen Strebens" was originally "Planen" (planning), as photographs of the captions used in the first production corroborate. "Arie der Lucy" is still in; here it is indicated at the beginning of act 3 (later becoming, in revised form, the reinstated scene 8 for the *Versuche* edition, albeit without the aria).

One of the most substantial cuts occurs near the end of the final scene, just before Macheath's proposed hanging. The original intention was that the players briefly step out of their roles and enter into a discussion with "the voice of the author"—an obvious, rather primitive alienation effect if ever there was one. The topic of the discussion is the opera's ending.

*Der Darsteller des Macheath zögert, dreht sich plötzlich um und sagt mißmutig in die Kulisse rechts.*

DARSTELLER DES MACHEATH: Ja, was ist jetzt? Geh ich jetzt ab oder nicht? Schließlich muß ich das wissen bei der Premiere.

DARSTELLER DES PEACHUM: Also, ich habe dem Dichter gestern schon gesagt, daß das ein Quatsch ist, eine pfundschwere Tragödie ist das und kein anständiges Melodrama.

DARSTELLERIN DER FRAU PEACHUM: Ich finde diese Hängerei zum Schluß auch zum Kotzen.

STIMME DES VERFASSERS: So ist das Stück geschrieben und so bleibt es.

DARSTELLER DES MACHEATH: So? So bleibt es? Dann spielen Sie Ihre Hauptrolle gefälligst selber! Unverschämtheit!

STIMME DES VERFASSERS: Das ist einfach die Wahrheit, daß der Mann gehängt wird, selbstverständlich muß er gehängt werden. Ich mache da gar keine Kompromisse. Wie es im Leben ist, so ist es auf der Bühne. Basta!

DARSTELLERIN DER FRAU PEACHUM: Basta?!

DARSTELLER DES PEACHUM: Versteht ja nichts vom Theater. Die Wahrheit!

DARSTELLER DES MACHEATH: Die Wahrheit! Das ist auch so ein Blödsinn auf dem Theater! Wahrheit ist immer dann, wenn einem nichts mehr einfällt. Meinen Sie, daß die Leute hier acht Mark zahlen, damit sie die Wahrheit sehen? Sie zahlen ihr Geld dafür, daß sie die Wahrheit nicht sehen.

DARSTELLER DES PEACHUM: Ja, also der Schluß muß geändert werden. So kann man das Stück nicht schließen lassen. So, und jetzt spreche ich im Namen aller Darsteller: so wird das Stück nicht gespielt.

VERFASSER: Ja, dann müssen sich die Herrschaften ihren Dreck eben allein machen.

DARSTELLER DES MACHEATH: Machen wir schon.

DARSTELLER DES PEACHUM: Wäre ja gelacht, wenn wir da nicht einen erstklassigen allgemein befriedigenden Theaterschluß fänden.

DARSTELLERIN DER FRAU PEACHUM: Also, gehen wir zehn Sätze zurück.

PEACHUM (*sanft*): Keine Feindschaft deswegen, Herr, keine Feindschaft.

MACHEATH: . . . hat mich zu Fall gebracht. Nun, ich falle.

*The actor playing Macheath hesitates, turns round suddenly and discontentedly addresses the wings, right.*

ACTOR PLAYING MACHEATH: Well, what happens now? Do I go off or not? That's something I'll need to know on the night.

ACTOR PLAYING PEACHUM: I was telling the author only yesterday that it's a lot of nonsense, it's a heavy tragedy, not a decent musical.

ACTRESS PLAYING MRS PEACHUM: I can't stand this hanging at the end.

THE AUTHOR'S VOICE: That's how the play was written, and that's how it stays.

ACTOR PLAYING MACHEATH: It stays that way, does it? Then act the lead yourself. Impertinence!

AUTHOR: It's the plain truth: the man's hanged, of course he has to be hanged. I'm not making any compromises. If that's how it is in real life, then that's how it is on the stage. Right!

ACTRESS PLAYING MRS PEACHUM: Right?!

ACTOR PLAYING PEACHUM: Doesn't understand the first thing about the theater. Plain truth, indeed.

ACTOR PLAYING MACHEATH: Plain truth. That's a load of rubbish in the theater. Plain truth is what happens when people run out of ideas. Do you suppose the audience here have paid eight marks to see plain truth? They paid their money *not* to see plain truth.

ACTOR PLAYING PEACHUM: Well, then, the ending had better be changed. You can't have the play end like that. I'm speaking in the name of the whole company when I say the play can't be performed as it is.

AUTHOR: All right ladies and gentlemen, you can clean up your own mess.

ACTOR PLAYING MACHEATH: So we shall.

ACTOR PLAYING PEACHUM: It'd be absurd if we couldn't find a first-rate dramatic ending to please all tastes.

ACTRESS PLAYING MRS PEACHUM: Right, then let's go back ten speeches.

ACTOR PLAYING PEACHUM (*gently*): No hard feelings, sir, no hard feelings.

MACHEATH: . . . has brought about my fall. So be it, I fall.<sup>45</sup>

Engel's copy of the stage script, which is less tampered with than Halewicz's, still contains—uncut—translations of two of Gay's airs (nos. 6 and 11): "Virgins are like fair Flower" ("Sehet die Jungfrau und sehet die Blüte!") and, in a rather freer rendering, "A Fox may steal your hens, Sir" ("Wenn's einer Hur gefällt, Herr"). Although Engel's script did not acquire the text of the last-minute "Moritat," it does indicate that Macheath's initial entrance be accompanied by "soft music." Brecht himself added a direction to this effect in a typescript that has hitherto received little attention from commentators, apart from a cursory mention in David Drew's *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (London, 1987). Now in the possession of Sibley Music Library in Rochester, that typescript (Tt2) was used as the basis for the 1928 published libretto (Tp1) with an intermediate proof stage (Tp1a). The typescript version probably reproduces more accurately than any other the actual material used during those early performances of the work. Moreover, additional handwritten instructions, most of which found their way into Tp1, communicate aspects of performance practice not contained in later versions.

The instruction in the typescript in Brecht's hand pertaining to Macheath's initial entrance reads: "Moritatenmusik Nr. 2 ganz leise, wie als Motiv" (music of "Moritat," no. 2, very soft, as if a motif). It is not the only of its kind. Others, in a different hand, similarly prescribe such purely instrumental passages. These instructions were not reproduced in the printed text of Tp1a, but are rewritten by Weill himself on the pages of that proof. At the beginning of the final scene the orchestra is required to play the "Moritat" "leise . . . als Trauermarsch" (softly, like a funeral march). After the "Liebeslied" in scene 2, Weill indicates "Zwischenaktsmusik: Wiederholung Nr. 7 für Orchester" (interlude music: repetition of no. 7 ["Kanonensong"] for orchestra). At the end of scene 4 there is a similar instruction: "Zwischenaktsmusik: Nr. 8 für Orchester" (interlude music: no. 8 ["Liebeslied"] for orchestra). Weill also insists, incidentally, that the coronation bells at the beginning of the fifth scene be tuned to F# and G. At the end of this scene he calls for "Zwischenaktsmusik: Nr. 11 für Orchester" (interlude music: no. 11 for orchestra); this refers to "Zuhälterballade," which eventually became no. 12. Only one such instruction failed to appear in the 1928 libretto: In the sixth scene Weill writes, "Hier kann das Orchester leise die Moritat Nr. 2 als Walzer spielen" (here the orchestra can play the "Moritat," no. 2, softly as a waltz), but for some reason this was overlooked by the printers. (See also section V.)

There are two small but interesting differences between the typescript and the libretto proof. In the former Brecht requires that the "Salomonsong" be sung by Polly, whereas in the latter Weill indicates that it be sung by Jenny: "Vor dem Vorhang erscheint Jenny mit einem Leierkasten" (Jenny appears before the curtain with a barrel organ). According to Lotte Lenya, the "Salomonsong" was cut from the first production (see section III). The "Barbarasong" is given in the typescript to "Lucie"; the handwritten amendment assigning it to Polly is upheld in both the proof and the final printed version. This switch offers support for the hypothesis advanced by Kim Kowalke that the "Barbarasong" was sung in the early performances not by Roma Bahn but by Kate Kühl (possibly to compensate Kühl for the suppression of "Arie der Lucy"; see sections I and III). Although it was eventually inserted to occupy its customary place in the typescript (that is, as the ninth number) it is identified as no. 12, which indicates that it was previously placed after the "Zuhälterballade." That is the placement suggested by the cue written anonymously into Theo Mackeben's piano-conductor score (SeM): "Ich liebe ihn," followed by Brown's reply: "Du auch—ja da kann man," an anticipation of the song's refrain ("Ja, da kann man sich doch nicht nur hinlegen").<sup>46</sup> In a letter to Universal Edition dated 10 September 1928, Weill himself still refers to the "Barbarasong" as no. 12, and only after several further inquiries from Universal is the song's position finally verified, both in the libretto and piano-vocal score, as no. 9.

The musical directions included in the first published version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* document important aspects of the work's early performance history. The most obvious significance of having the "Moritat" played "as a motif" would appear to be a rather crude parody of Wagnerian practices—something that certainly fits in with Weill's own proclamations on the work: "This type of music is the most consistent reaction to Wagner. It signifies the complete destruction of the concept of music drama."<sup>47</sup> The reminiscences played at the ends of scenes also shed light on the role of music in the first production: they show that music was an even more substantial component than the score alone indicates, and that it offered ironic comment on the action, such as in the repetition of the "Kanonensong" after the "Liebeslied."

Part of the reason for cuts and changes was purely practical: the piece would otherwise have overrun. Even allowing for encores, the premiere still ran about an hour longer than the duration specified on later copies of the program, so some of the cuts were probably not made until later performances. To cite an obvious example: Halewicz's prompt book contains nine stanzas of the "Moritat," as does the *Versuche* edition. Yet the postpremiere manuscript and first edition print just six stanzas; stanzas 2, 3, and 7 are omitted.

## ii. Brecht's postpremiere revisions

On the whole, the changes made during the process of putting *Die Dreigroschenoper* on the stage and preparing for publication the version that ultimately emerged are of an entirely different nature from the changes Brecht later made for his 1931 literary text. The business of making the piece stageworthy was as much a matter of trial and error as of expediency. For the preparation of the first printed text, the main concerns were the stage directions and specific details of musical performance that often had been transmitted only orally. In the *Versuche* edition, many of Brecht's revisions reverse this process. The projected captions, stage directions, and musical cues are substantially reduced. Instead, Brecht inserts new chunks of text that alter the original complexion of the piece and ultimately impose on it a new ideological slant. This change is also reflected in the theoretical commentary on the work, the "Anmerkungen" that Brecht produced around the same time, which has not only informed subsequent readings of the work itself but also misinformed assumptions about its reception. As Aufrecht wrote: "The profound explications of *Die Dreigroschenoper's* sociophilosophical message, in which Brecht also later participated, have in retrospect given the piece a false significance."<sup>48</sup>

*Die Dreigroschenoper* is by no means an isolated example of Brecht's radically altering his works for later editions. He was a habitual reviser, a master of the work-in-progress. With works written before 1930 the purpose of revisions was at once aesthetic and political: to correct earlier "aberrations" in the light of his current thinking, as regards both the theory of epic theater and Marxist-oriented cultural strategies. *Lehrstück* (or *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*, as it later became) and *Der Lindberghflug* (later renamed *Der Ozeanflug*) are two cases in point. Both written in 1929, they were later reworked in accordance with Brecht's new ideas on didactic theater in general and on the genre of "Lehrstück" as its principal form. The earlier versions, and hence traces of Brecht's evolution, were effectively suppressed. (With his revised versions the author could also meet contractual obligations for "new" works.) When in 1930 Brecht's musical collaborator on both projects, Hindemith, supervised publication of the score of *Lehrstück* in which he included a preface outlining the creators' original intentions, Brecht took exception, vindictively censuring Hindemith's views in what was in fact a veiled display of self-criticism.

The connection between theory and practice in *Die Dreigroschenoper* is similar. As the Brecht scholar Ronald Speirs observed in his pioneering study comparing the first published version of the work and the 1931 "standard" edition, "Brecht's 'Notes on *The Threepenny Opera*' . . . present a Marxist interpretation of the opera, based largely on [the] newly intercalated passages."<sup>49</sup> The most far-reaching of these passages, and the one most frequently cited in commentaries, is Macheath's valedictory speech delivered before his reprieve. In order to distinguish the revised version from the original, the later interpolations are printed here in italics:

MAC: Wir wollen die Leute nicht warten lassen. Meine Damen und Herren. *Sie sehen den untergehenden Vertreter eines untergehenden Standes. Wir kleinen bürgerlichen Handwerker, die wir mit dem biedereren Brecheisen an den Nickelkassen der Ladenbesitzer arbeiten, werden von den Großunternehmern verschlungen, hinter denen die Banken stehen. Was ist ein Dietrich gegen eine Aktie? Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank? Was ist die Ermordung eines Mannes gegen die Anstellung eines Mannes? Mitbürger, hiermit verabschiede ich mich von euch. Ich danke Ihnen, daß Sie gekommen sind. Einige von Ihnen sind mir sehr nahegestanden. Daß Jenny mich angegeben haben soll, erstaunt mich sehr. Es ist ein deutlicher Beweis dafür, daß die Welt sich gleich bleibt. Das Zusammentreffen einiger unglücklicher Umstände hat mich zu Fall gebracht. Gut—ich falle.*<sup>50</sup>

MAC: We mustn't keep anybody waiting. Ladies and gentlemen. *You see before you a declining representative of a declining social group. We lower middle-class artisans who toil with our humble jimmies on small shopkeepers' cash registers are being swallowed up by big corporations backed by the banks. What's a jimmy compared with a share certificate? What's breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank? What's murdering a man compared with employing a man? Fellow citizens, I hereby take my leave of you. I thank you for coming. Some of you were very close to me. That Jenny should have turned me in amazes me greatly. It is proof positive that the world never changes. A concatenation of several unfortunate circumstances has brought about my fall. So be it—I fall.*

The text of the interpolation first appeared in *Happy End*, written in 1929. It may not have been written by Brecht, though, whose chief contribution to that work was the initial outline of the plot and the lyrics to the songs. A likely candidate for authorship is the writer to whom Brecht entrusted his outline, Elisabeth Hauptmann. Be that as it may, the association of the practices of small-time criminals with those of big business becomes an important theme in Brecht's (re)interpretation of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. It not only provides an afterthought to Macheath's farewell speech, but it would also inform Brecht's screenplay for the film version of the work (discussed in section VII.ii) and become a central idea in his *Dreigroschenroman* ("Threepenny Novel"). The way in which Brecht shifts the target of his critique of social relations is consistent with his development in the early 1930s. In his various reinterpretations of earlier works, two overall tendencies can be detected. On a political level

the critique of capitalism becomes sharper, while on an aesthetic level the immediate functionality of his art receives greater emphasis, as in the *Lehrstücke*. The various adaptations of the *Dreigroschen* material bear witness to the first tendency: *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s message becomes progressively more radical. If the new dimension of big business, something quite foreign to the work's original spirit, could so alter Brecht's reading of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, then there is a good chance that it will alter how others interpret the work as well (see section IX). In refashioning the book of *Die Dreigroschenoper* Brecht laid traps for philologists and exegetes alike. Anyone who has been involved in performing the work will probably have been struck by the discrepancies between the words in the printed versions of the music and those in the later versions of the book. By the same token, interpretations that discuss the work's original impact while basing their reading on Brecht's revised versions of the text expose themselves to the pitfalls of exegetical anachronism.<sup>51</sup>

As Speirs has noted, many of the changes Brecht made in 1931 concern the role of Macheath. As Macheath's status as robber/bourgeois is altered, so are his relationships with both his men and his women. The changes are at once small and substantial: the 1931 text cuts, for instance, the earlier description of Macheath as "leader of a band of highwaymen," while drawing attention elsewhere to his new career as a banker. "Between ourselves," he confides to Polly in the 1931 version of scene 4, "it's only a matter of weeks before I go over to banking altogether. It's safer and it's more profitable." At the same time he is set further apart from his fellow robbers, who are made to seem more servile and submissive. In the new version he orders them to avoid bloodshed: "It makes me sick to think of it. You'll never make businessmen! Cannibals, perhaps, but not businessmen!" (act 1, scene 2). In 1928 Peachum talked of Macheath's "cheek" (*Frechheit*); in 1931 it has become "boldness" (*Kühnheit*). Revisions to the "Salomonsong" and the "Zuhälterballade" also cast a different light on Macheath's character. In 1928 the final stanza of the "Salomonsong" focused on the dangers of passion. In 1931 the reason for Macheath's downfall is given an economic slant: "passion" (*Leidenschaft*) is replaced by "wastefulness" (*Verschwendung*). The first stanza of the "Zuhälterballade," which is sung by Mac, is similarly modified. In 1928 the third and fourth lines are nostalgic, with Mac invoking his former "love" for Jenny.

In einer Zeit, die längst vergangen ist  
Lebten wir schon zusammen, sie und ich  
Die Zeit liegt fern wie hinter einem Rauch  
Ich liebte sie und sie ernährte mich.

At a time long since passed  
We lived together, she and I  
That time is now distant, as if behind smoke  
I loved her and she fed me.

In 1931 Mac's sentiments in the third and fourth lines are different from before (in fact, they have been reinstated from **Tt1b**): they are more prosaic and matter-of-fact, as is his manner of specifying them ("und zwar").

In einer Zeit, die längst vergangen ist  
Lebten wir schon zusammen, sie und ich  
Und zwar von meinem Kopf und ihrem Bauch.  
Ich schützte sie, und sie ernährte mich.

At a time long since passed  
We lived together, she and I  
That is to say, from my head and her tummy.  
I protected her, and she nourished me.

Macheath is not the only character affected by the revisions. Mrs. Peachum's loss of the second finale is Jenny's gain, with a corresponding shift in their respective importance. Reviewing the premiere, the critic for the newspaper *Der Tag* described Jenny as a "supporting role." Since then, she has moved ever more into the limelight, especially on those occasions where, following the precedent of the 1930 film, she usurps Polly's "Seeräuberjenny." Lenya, who played Jenny in the first production

and in the film, would later say, “If she ever becomes a major role, then there’s something goddamn wrong with the whole production.”<sup>52</sup> Polly and her father, Mr. Peachum, also undergo a transformation. In 1931 Polly appears more independent, less wimpish, a change that owes partly to cuts in Macheath’s role, partly to the elimination of stage directions indicating her emotional response in the wedding scene (such as “laughs along reluctantly”), and partly to her new espousal of the economic rationality propagated by husband and father alike. Having been instructed in matters of daily routine during Mac’s impending absence, Polly acquires a sequence of lines whose brazen materialism clearly unsettles her husband:

POLLY: Du hast ganz recht, ich muß die Zähne zusammenbeißen und auf das Geschäft aufpassen. Was dein ist, das ist jetzt auch mein, nicht wahr, Mackie? Wie ist das denn mit deinen Zimmern, Mac? Soll ich die nicht aufgeben? Um die Miete ist es mir direkt leid!

MAC: Nein, die brauche ich noch.

POLLY: Aber wozu, das kostet doch nur unser Geld!

MAC: Du scheinst zu meinen, ich komme überhaupt nicht mehr zurück.

POLLY: Wieso? Dann kannst du doch wieder mieten! Mac . . .

POLLY: You’re quite right. I must grit my teeth and look after the business. What’s yours is now mine, isn’t it, Mackie? What about your rooms? Shouldn’t I give them up? It’s such a shame about the rent!

MAC: No, I still need them.

POLLY: But what for? It only costs us money!

MAC: You seem to think I won’t be coming back at all.

POLLY: What do mean? When you do, you can rent them again! Mac . . .

In the same spirit, Polly is given an extra speech in scene 3, in which she discloses to her alarmed parents the fact of her marriage to Macheath:

POLLY: Bitte, schau ihn dir an, ist er etwa schön? Nein. Aber er hat sein Auskommen. Er bietet mir eine Existenz! Er ist ein ausgezeichnete Einbrecher, dabei ein weitschauender und erfahrener Straßenräuber. Ich weiß ganz genau, ich könnte dir die Zahl nennen, wieviel seine Ersparnisse heute schon betragen. Einige glückliche Unternehmungen und wir können uns auf ein kleines Landhaus zurückziehen, ebensogut wie Herr Shakespeare, den unser Vater so schätzt.

POLLY: Look at him. Is he, say, attractive? No. But he has his livelihood. He offers me an existence! He’s an excellent burglar and a far-sighted and experienced highwayman to boot. That I know. I could let you have the current figure of his savings. A few successful enterprises and we could retire to a little country house, just like Mr. Shakespeare, whom father so admires.

Macheath no longer cuts the debonair and dapper figure he did in 1928. To cite Brecht’s “Anmerkungen”: “He impresses women less as a handsome man than as a well-heeled one. There are English drawings of *The Beggar’s Opera* which show a short, stocky man of about forty with a head like a radish, a bit bald but not lacking dignity.”<sup>53</sup> This description stands in flat contradiction to Harald Paulsen’s original incarnation of Macheath. “The erotic attraction of dashing Mackie Messer,” wrote Theodor W. Adorno in 1929, “[should not] be underrated.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Polly no longer shares so readily her mother’s “cheerful disposition,” described by Walter Benjamin, which “shields [the women] from the ethical problems with which their men have to concern themselves.”<sup>55</sup> In the 1931 version, Polly is more aware, and hence less shielded, than she was three years earlier.

Thanks to Brecht’s revisions Mr. Peachum similarly becomes more aware, more articulate—and more cynical. He is also allowed to appear a little more dignified: in scene 3 Polly no longer repeats, to ironic effect, her father’s words as he contemplates the prospect of life—or rather, business—without his daughter. When Peachum elaborates the basic types of misery in scene 1, he does so at greater length. He acquires a new last line to the “Anstatt daß–Song.” Instead of “Wenn die Liebe aus

ist und allein du verreckst” (when love is gone and you drop dead alone) he now has “Wenn die Liebe aus ist und im Dreck du verreckst” (when love is gone and you drop dead in the filth). Likewise the effect of a subtle change of diction in the seventh line of Peachum’s opening stanza in the first “Dreigroschenfinale”: the idea that someone actually gets what is theirs by right is now immediately countered by the resigned remark “ach wo!”—you must be joking. This cynical political awareness acquires an almost tub-thumping directness in scene 7, with Peachum’s newly inserted analysis of the legal system. Brecht has sharpened his sociopolitical critique; Wall Street has crashed; and Weimar Germany is in the grips of a reactionary backlash:

Wir halten uns doch alle an das Gesetz! Das Gesetz ist einzig und allein gemacht zur Ausbeutung derer, die es nicht verstehen oder die es aus nackter Not nicht befolgen können. Und wer von dieser Ausbeutung seinen Brocken abbekommen will, muß sich streng an das Gesetz halten.

After all, we all abide by the law! The law was made solely for the exploitation of those who can’t understand it, or who are prevented by sheer necessity from obeying it. And whoever wants a chunk of this exploitation must strictly abide by the law.

Peachum’s summary dismissal of a beggar in scene 3 now incorporates an excursus on aesthetic response:

Zwischen “erschüttern” und “auf die Nerven fallen” ist natürlich ein Unterschied, mein Lieber. Ja, ich brauche Künstler. Nur Künstler erschüttern heute noch das Herz. Wenn ihr richtig arbeiten würdet, müßte euer Publikum in die Hände klatschen! Dir fällt ja nichts ein! So kann ich dein Engagement natürlich nicht verlängern.

My dear man, there’s obviously a difference between “tugging at people’s heartstrings” and merely “getting on their nerves.” Yes, I need artists. Only artists can still tug at people’s heartstrings. If you would do your job properly, your audience would have to applaud! You’re completely without ideas! Obviously I can’t renew your engagement.

This last example can be taken to illustrate both tendencies, the political and the aesthetic, in Brecht’s development. While Peachum seems to be providing ironic justification for the artist’s vocation, he may also be smuggling in a cryptic allusion to the idea of dramatic alienation (*Verfremdung*). “Tugging at people’s heartstrings” is precisely what Brecht’s theory of epic theater is at pains to proscribe.

### iii. The music

Although the music of *Die Dreigroschenoper* has invariably been tampered with in performance to a much greater extent than the text, Weill himself did not change the work after 1928. His revisions were restricted to the period immediately following the premiere when he completed his autograph score. By 7 July he had finished all but two numbers of the vocal score (three, if one includes the last-minute “Moritat”). The orchestration came last of all. On 21 August, Weill wrote to his publisher giving the impression, at least to begin with, that he had finished this too. “The orchestral rehearsals start on the 25th, the premiere is on the 31st.” Yet he admits with his closing words that he is not finished after all: “I will tell you more when the score of *The Beggar’s Opera* is completely finished.”<sup>56</sup>

Since the last page of Weill’s autograph full score (Fh) bears the date 23 August 1928, one might readily infer that this was the day on which he completed the final draft of the entire work, in time for the first orchestral rehearsal two days later. The correspondence with his publisher informs us otherwise. After Weill had stated on 7 September that he was “still busy at the moment completing the score following the experiences of the current production and also matching the vocal score exactly with the stage script,” he wrote two days later:

I am sending under separate cover a large batch of music. You now have the complete vocal score. No. 6 (“Seeräuberjenny”), no. 2 (“Moritat”) and no. 13 (“Ballade vom angenehmen Leben”) will follow soon in full score. I enclose an exact list of numbers [unfortunately now missing].

The “Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit” has been cut completely. I am sending you no. 12 (“Barbarasong”) [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”) is set for harmonium 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. In the case of no. 5 [“Hochzeitslied”] please add to the vocal score the direction contained in the full score [“first sung a cappella, embarrassed and bored. Later possibly in this version”—i.e., with instrumental accompaniment]. 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 beginning of the eighth scene it is played in a slow tempo, like a funeral march.”<sup>57</sup>

This last instruction was never carried out, and the absence of additional documentation leaves one wondering whether it was an oversight on the part of the publishers, which is quite likely, or whether the composer changed his mind. Nos. 6 and 13 followed the next day; no. 2 the day after that, on 12 September.

Exactly to what extent Weill adjusted the full score “following the experiences of the current production” we may never know, since not all of the materials have survived. Even where they have, it is difficult to tell the precise point at which the changes were made, or by whom. A good example is the opening of the “Ballade vom angenehmen Leben.” By virtue of its being photographically reproduced as part of the preface to a popular vocal selection, a full-score version of the opening has survived that consists merely of a dotted rhythm on the side drum.<sup>58</sup> This must be the version from which the Mackeben parts were copied, since they also contain the one-bar side drum introduction, with the dotted sixteenth melody being given to the tenor saxophone and piccolo. At some point the familiar introduction was added. Whether the addition was made during rehearsals or once the show was already underway, and whether it was made at Weill’s suggestion or not, remains unclear. Macheath’s text “Ihr Herren, urteilt jetzt selbst” is shown in the 1928 book as belonging to the song, though this is not in itself proof of the existence of the expanded instrumental introduction. In any event, this may well be a case where the musicians were first instructed orally to improvise the introduction before it was committed to paper, particularly since it does little more than quote, as accompanists traditionally do ad libitum, the last four bars of the strophe.<sup>59</sup>

It was stated earlier that although the book of *Die Dreigroschenoper* is a conflation of several sources, Weill’s score is largely a new composition. Writing to Universal on 21 August 1928, ten days before the premiere, Weill conveyed his own impression of the score’s quality and substance as follows:

I would like to ask you a favor. Now that work on *The Beggar’s Opera* is concluded, I think that I’ve succeeded in producing a good piece and also that several numbers from it have the best prospects, at least musically, of becoming popular in a very short time. To this end, it is absolutely necessary that in all the publicity for the premiere the music is accorded its rightful place. In the theater (as ever in literature) people seem to be a little afraid of the music’s effectiveness, and I fear that the music will tend to be passed off in announcements, press notices, etc. as incidental music [*Bühnenmusik*], although with its twenty numbers it far exceeds such limits.

Weill therefore suggested that he be named co-author, so as to give the music the best chance of success. “You know that I personally don’t set great store by such things,” he continued, “but we must seriously fear that the commercial possibilities of this music will be wasted if it is not given adequate promotion at the premiere.”<sup>60</sup>

The only music retained from *The Beggar’s Opera* is Peachum’s opening air, which Weill used for the “Morgenchoral.” Otherwise there are no obvious borrowings, at least none for which the composer could be charged, as Brecht was, with plagiarism. Although Weill’s conscious use of preexisting material cannot be ruled out, the identification of any further sources necessarily entails an element of speculation. For if parody is a seminal device in *Die Dreigroschenoper* (despite Weill’s claim

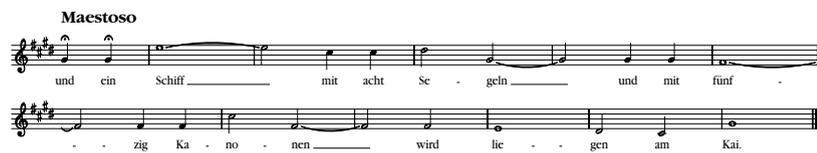
to the contrary), then it is above all particular types of musical expression rather than actual compositions that are parodied. The Overture, for example, is “baroque-like,” without actually quoting from a particular baroque composer. The rising minor sixth employed—or rather quoted—throughout the work as the musical signification of yearning is not specifically Wagner’s, let alone Tristan’s; it is common, clichéd musical property. Nonetheless, there are a number of occasions where Weill may well be making more specific allusions. A likely candidate here is the “Barbarasong,” whose opening bars possibly put the premiere audience in mind of a popular melody from one of the 1920s’ most successful operettas. The melody is “Ich bin nur ein armer Wandergesell,” from Eduard Künneke’s *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* (1921).<sup>61</sup>

Moderato [FREMDE] etc.  
Ich bin nur ein ar - mer Wan - der - ge - sell, gu - te Nacht, lie - bes Mä - del, gut Nacht.

Not only the rhythm and the melodic contour of the respective vocal lines are similar but so is the texture of their accompanying chords. Moreover, there is a textual connection that could scarcely have escaped Weill’s notice. As regular correspondent for the weekly journal *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, he had himself written about *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* prior to the operetta’s radio transmission in July 1926. The poor wayfarer (*ein armer Wandergesell*) deceitfully wins the heart of the unsuspecting heroine, Julia. He is not who she thinks him to be, namely the eponymous cousin from Dingsda (literally, “what’s-its-name”), but an imposter—in Weill’s own words, “a rather degenerate descendant of the family Kuhbrot.”<sup>62</sup> Rather than merely invite a direct analogy to Künneke’s original, the text of the “Barbarasong” presents its own piquant variation. Polly’s submission to a degenerate suitor is quite conscious and deliberate—a provocative snub to her parents’ hypocritical sense of decorum.

But Polly, like the false cousin, is fibbing. The degenerate, impecunious suitor with the unclean collar in the third stanza is no more the well-to-do Mac, famed for his sartorial elegance, than the Jenny of “Seeräuberjenny” is his former concubine. As mentioned above, the texts of both these songs are Brechtian self-borrowings, which may partly explain the anomaly of the collar. A different, more constructive explanation is that the “Barbarasong” affords Polly a further opportunity to indulge her talent for playacting (*Verstellerei*), for which the irritated Mac has already reprehended her in the wedding scene after her performance of “Seeräuberjenny.” Having unsettled her husband with her “art,” she now provokes her parents by the same means. According to the theory of epic theater, such willful disruptions of the Aristotelian unities, in this case that of character, are less an anomaly than an obligatory ingredient. Polly steps out of character to “adopt an attitude,” to use Brecht’s later theoretical formulation, intoning in both “Seeräuberjenny” and the “Barbarasong” a kind of anarchic *cri de coeur* on behalf of womankind—with a view to political emancipation in the former and for the cause of amatory autonomy in the latter.<sup>63</sup>

While Brecht’s setting of the “Barbarasong” seemingly left no mark on Weill’s music for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, his “Seeräuberjenny” possibly did. Both of these original settings were transcribed and arranged by Brecht’s collaborator Franz S. Bruinier.<sup>64</sup> The arrangements bear the date 8 March 1927, although the “Jenny-Lied” in the Brecht-Bruinier version must have been finished some months before, since Carola Neher (the future Polly of stage and film) performed it on Berlin radio on 31 December 1926 as part of the New Year festivities. Weill reviewed the event for *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, describing the song as “splendid” (*vorzüglich*).<sup>65</sup> When he eventually composed his own immortal version of “Seeräuberjenny” well over a year later, it is quite possible that Brecht’s own refrain was still lurking in his mind.



The similarity of the refrain, together with Brecht's later assertion that he "dictated to Weill, bar by bar, by whistling and above all performing," has prompted Albrecht Dümling to accuse Weill of being "inexact" in asserting co-authorship.<sup>66</sup> David Drew has eloquently countered the charge, identifying harmonic and melodic progressions similar to those in the "Seeräuberjenny" refrain in several of Weill's early songs. And even if Weill was responding in this particular case to Brecht's "dictation," the latter's idea—indeed, entire setting—is unremarkable. As Drew writes: "Bruinier may have been the first musician to board Brecht's 'Schiff mit acht Segeln,' but it was Weill who took it to sea and steered it to its destination with all its cannon blazing."<sup>67</sup>

But the identification of such apparent borrowings is purely speculative. Wolfgang Ruf claims to hear in Seeräuberjenny's refrain not Brecht's original Jenny but a variation of Madame Butterfly's "Eccolo: ABRAMO LINCOLN!"; he also suspects a textual parallel in that both women are singing about ships.<sup>68</sup> And so one might go on. Which opera is the most likely source for the King's Messenger's recitative in the third finale? And did Weill consciously invoke the witches' curse "Hokus pokus" (from his former teacher Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*) when he set to music "the rabble, whores, pimps, thieves, outlaws, murderers, and female toilet attendants" in the third strophe of Macheath's "Epitaph"? (See critical notes to no. 20 for another possible Humperdinck connection.)



## VII. Spin-offs

If *Die Dreigroschenoper* had gone the way of most modern operas, one could conclude here the discussion of the work's genesis and proceed to its stage history, which in most cases would comprise at most a dozen or so productions. But popularity dictated otherwise, engendering not just myths but also spin-offs.

i. The first spin-off was an instrumental suite of numbers from the opera, much in the tradition of *Harmoniemusik*, arranged by the composer and entitled *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (FhKD, FeKD). The "wind ensemble" consists of sixteen instruments, including banjo, guitar, bandoneon, and piano, with the only instrument not used in the opera being the tuba. The suite's eight movements present seven of *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s popular numbers that most readily shed their words ("Anstatt daß-Song," "Die Moritat von Mackie Messer," "Das Lied von der Unzulänglichkeit menschlichen Strebens," "Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben," "Polly's Lied," "Zuhälterballade," and "Kanonensong"), beginning with the overture and concluding with a finale that artfully combines "Ruf aus der Gruft," "Grabschrift," and the closing chorale of "Drittes Dreigroschenfinale." The solo instruments do not simply duplicate the missing vocal parts; they do their own kind of singing. The "Kanonensong," in particular, is thoroughly reworked "in the manner of an old operatic fantasy with much improvisation."<sup>69</sup> By framing the "Moritat" with the "Lied von der Unzulänglichkeit menschlichen Strebens," the second movement reveals a motivic connection between these two numbers, to which Peter Epstein first drew attention in a review written to coincide with the suite's publication in March 1929: "The beginning of the one is marked by the motion E-G-A, whereas the other (leaving out the upbeat) commences with the notes A-G-E." Epstein began his perceptive piece by remarking that

Weill was not merely exploiting the work's popularity but also reacting against it:

The rapid dissemination of the modern *Beggar's Opera* has given rise, here and there, to an unauthorized popularization, whereby numbers have been extracted from the stage music and played in the concert hall. The composer has rightly put an end to this: for it scarcely seems in keeping with the nature of these "songs" when they are removed from their context and, robbed of their texts, presented as mere pieces of music.<sup>70</sup>

The official premiere of the *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* took place at the Berliner Staatsoper on 7 February 1929, though it appears to have been preceded by an unofficial premiere a few weeks earlier at the Berlin Opera Ball, in the same building.<sup>71</sup> The conductor on both occasions was Otto Klemperer.

ii. This is not the place to investigate in any detail the most celebrated spin-off of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the film version made in 1930. Its genesis does, however, have relevance to the present discussion insofar as the Lewis Ruth Band and two members of the original cast took part. Moreover, both Weill and Brecht became embroiled in legal wranglings over "matters of intellectual property."<sup>72</sup> In fact, two versions of the film were made simultaneously, one in German and one in French. The German version starred Rudolf Forster (Mackie Messer), Carola Neher (Polly), Reinhold Schünzel (Tiger Brown), Fritz Rasp and Valeska Gert (Mr. and Mrs. Peachum), and Lotte Lenya (Jenny). Their counterparts in the French cast were Albert Préjean, Odette Florelle, Jacques Henley, Gaston Modot and Lucy de Matha, and Margo Lion. The director, G. W. Pabst, used the same sets and production team for both versions, with Theo Mackeben directing the band. The filming took place in Berlin from 19 September until 15 November 1930.

On 21 May 1930, Nero-Film, under the auspices of Tobis and Warner Brothers, had acquired from the agents Felix Bloch Erben the exclusive film rights for *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The contract was to last for ten years, and it included a clause (§3) whereby:

The production company accords the authors the right of participation in adapting the material for the screen. Neither the publisher nor the copyright holders nor subsequent copyright holders may raise any legal objection to the form and content of the film as produced by the production company on the basis of the screenplay adapted in consultation with the authors. The composition of additional music and the arrangement of existing music may only be carried out by the composer Kurt Weill, who is to receive separate remuneration for this from the production company. By the same token, new lyrics to existing music or to any new compositions may only be written by the librettist Bert Brecht, who is to be engaged by the production company to collaborate on the screenplay. The production company is to remunerate the author Bert Brecht separately for this activity.<sup>73</sup>

In other words, the contract stipulated explicitly that both authors had a say in the film's production: Weill in the creation of the score, Brecht in the screenplay. Once they had given their blessing to these aspects of the film, however, their influence on the project ceased. As it turned out, §3 proved to be a stumbling block. Cooperation between Nero-Film and the authors went far from smoothly. Brecht and Nero-Film crossed swords over the production of the screenplay; and although Brecht had committed himself, in a supplementary clause that he himself had demanded, to providing an outline for the screenplay, he failed to deliver on time. Nero, which disapproved of the political turn that Brecht's initial sketch of the screenplay had taken, requested that he resign from any further collaboration on payment of the arranged fee. Brecht refused, whereupon Nero withdrew from its contractual obligations on the grounds that Brecht had failed to meet his. Filming commenced without Brecht's approval of the screenplay. Weill, in turn, was unhappy about the production of the soundtrack, certain aspects of which he was not consulted about. Both authors therefore decided to sue Nero for breach of contract and, if possible, to place an injunction on the film's produc-

tion and distribution. Berlin's first district court decided to treat each author's case separately. The ruling, announced on 4 November, was also split: Weill won, Brecht lost. Brecht eventually arranged to have Nero-Film pay his legal costs as well as a fee for the initial collaboration; he was also to have his film rights returned earlier than previously agreed (at the latest within three years, or five years for a version in English).

In an article which he later reprinted as part of his theoretical tract *Der Dreigroschenprozeß: ein soziologisches Experiment*, Brecht stated that "the aim of the trial was publicly to demonstrate the impossibility of a collaboration with the film industry, even given contractual protection. This aim was achieved; it was achieved when I lost the trial."<sup>74</sup> Brecht's biographer Werner Mittenzwei has taken this to mean that "the aim was to show that the trial necessarily had to be lost," which is clearly an exaggeration.<sup>75</sup> Weill won, thereby obtaining the right to block the film's distribution. He eventually let the injunction drop, but only after reaching a settlement with Nero-Film that secured him payment of fifty thousand marks and the option of musical collaboration on three films.

Like the plagiarism scandal, the *Dreigroschenprozeß* was widely reported and commented upon in the press. In order to prevent misunderstandings and also to correct some, Weill published the following declaration:

Permit me to make a few remarks about the various commentaries concerning my settlement with Tobis. I did not reach the settlement because of the amount of compensation paid. I went to court in order to exclude from the production of the film any methods detrimental to the work of art or to the names involved, and I reached a settlement because Tobis guaranteed for future films the "exclusion of methods detrimental to the work of art or to the names involved." I went to court over the author's right of participation in the production, and I reached a settlement because Tobis made a commitment to include me in future productions. Until now all film authors have fought in vain for these concessions, morally and legally. I am the first to have attained them; for this reason my court case became superfluous. It is true that after two favorable decisions I on my own could not find the means, namely huge court and solicitor costs etc., to have the action withdrawn. And I also could not simply give away contractual rights that Tobis has acquired from me, for I have to live from my work and from the material value of my name as a composer. Yet anyone who knows me will know that I did not agree to the settlement for material reasons but because I achieved the principal aim of the court case.<sup>76</sup>

Despite Brecht's condemnation of the film as a "shameless botch" (*schamlose Versandlung*),<sup>77</sup> there is no denying that it sticks more closely to his own outline for the screenplay, which he entitled *Die Beule* (The Bruise), than it does to his original stage version of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The critique of big business retrospectively imposed on the stage version in 1931 informed the conception of the film from the start. During Mac's absence Polly and the gang leave large-scale petty crime behind them and found a bank. Rather than receiving the royal pardon, Mac escapes from prison during the beggars' demonstration, to be joined in his respectable family enterprise not only by Brown, whose enrollment is celebrated with a rendition of the repositioned "Kanonensong," but also by Peachum. The beggars, for their part, are menacingly out of Peachum's control.

The changes to the score, which is reduced in the film to 28½ minutes of music, are also substantial. All three finales are cut. Several songs are performed as purely instrumental numbers: "Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben" becomes a dance number played on the piano in the tavern scene; "Polly's Lied" is played before Mac's disappearance; and the "Zuhälterballade" is performed on the piano during Mac's habitual visit to the brothel. (In this last case, it is quite possible that Pabst hoped to elude censorship, which had been urged by the chairman of the German film distributors' association, Ludwig Scheer. Apparently Scheer was not acquainted with the work as a whole, but having chanced upon a copy of the "Zuhälterballade" on his daughter's piano, he had been morally impelled to publish a defamatory article about it.)<sup>78</sup> All of Lucy's music is missing, as is Lucy herself. Instead, a repentant Jenny aids and abets Mac's escape. And it is here that Jenny inaugurates the tradition of her,

rather than Polly, laying claim to "Seeräuberjenny," sung as a reflection on her initial betrayal of Mac. In the wedding scene Polly therefore has to make do with the "Barbarasong" as a party piece. The gala premiere of the German version of the film, described as "freely adapted from Brecht" (*frei nach Brecht*), took place in Berlin on 19 February 1931. Universal Edition also produced a song album (UE 1151) containing just four numbers ("Moritat," "Seeräuberjenny," "Liebeslied," and "Kanonensong"). The premiere of the French version followed, also in Berlin, on 8 June; the film would not open in France until October.

iii. It was not long after its Berlin premiere that the film of *Die Dreigroschenoper* became the object of Nazi protests. It was a foretaste of the events that would force Weill and Brecht into exile and prevent Weill from realizing his plan of collaborating with Tobis on further films. The form of Brecht's next reworking of the *Dreigroschen* theme was also conditioned by exile. While in Denmark, he turned what had started out as an opera into a novel—an unusual undertaking, whereas examples of the reverse process are, of course, legion. *Der Dreigroschenroman*, which afforded Brecht the opportunity to expand on his aborted film project, was published in Amsterdam toward the end of 1934.<sup>79</sup> The English translation by Desmond Vesey was published in 1937 as *A Penny for the Poor*, with the interpolated lyrics from the original *Dreigroschenoper* awkwardly translated by Christopher Isherwood, with little regard for the music.

iv. When Aufricht masterminded the second French production of *L'Opéra de quat'sous* in the summer of 1937, he commissioned Weill to set to music two additional chansons for Mrs. Peachum. The texts of the chansons ("Tu me démolis" and "Pauv' Madam' Peachum!", the first of which is now lost) were written by Yvette Guilbert, the disease who played the part. However, "there is no evidence (and little likelihood)," as David Drew has noted, "that she sang Weill's settings"; she may well have used her own.<sup>80</sup> Weill, who authorized Aufricht "to use both chansons only for the Parisian production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and only for use by Madame Yvette Guilbert," appears to have entertained no interest in their becoming permanent additions to the piece. Describing the second chanson to Aufricht, Weill remarked that "it is very much in the style of *Die Dreigroschenoper* to sing this rather obscene text to music that is very graceful and charming."<sup>81</sup> Weill's general approach to text-setting may not have altered too much in the intervening decade, but his musical idiom had—another reason, along with the foreign language, to keep the French chansons separate from the work as a whole.

v. By the time he made arrangements of the "Barbarasong" and the "Kanonensong" in 1942, Weill's preferred idiom had changed even more, as comparison of the new versions with their originals reveals. What prompted Weill to revamp the songs remains unclear. The most likely explanation is that he prepared them for Lenya as concert items. Yet this does not explain why he felt the idiomatic adjustments were necessary. Perhaps the *Verfremdung* of the cultural mix appealed to him. Conversely, it could have been that he was merely erasing the bolder, more surrealist aspects of his earlier European harmonies, which he no longer endorsed. If that were true, one might be tempted to cast doubt over Weill's conviction that, unlike any of his other European works, the score of *Die Dreigroschenoper* could readily be transplanted to a new culture. Be that as it may, even though Weill and Brecht made repeated attempts in the 1940s to adapt the entire work for the American stage, the plans never materialized.<sup>82</sup>

vi. The chief reason for the authors' failure to mount an American production of *The Threepenny Opera* was, put simply and euphemistically, their increasing lack of mutual understanding. When, in 1948, Weill learned of a production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* for which Brecht had written additional material, he conveyed to his publisher serious reservations.

A few weeks ago I received a report from Munich that in the new production [of *Die Dreigroschenoper*] there the music had been considerably altered and that new music had even been added. I would be most grateful if you could find out whether this is true, since I would naturally forbid even the slightest alteration to this score and, if repeated, would take legal action against it.

I have heard from another source that Brecht has revised the text of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. If the revised lyrics have been made to fit the music, then we probably can't do anything about it. If, however, the music has been altered, then you as publisher should lodge a severe protest and forbid any further performances of this version.<sup>83</sup>

Weill's fears were borne out. Brecht had revised some small portions of the dialogue and also completely rewritten some of the songs.<sup>84</sup> In scene 1, for example, he reduced Peachum's exposition of the basic types of human misery, realizing that many physically disabled, namely "victims of the art of war," would be sitting in the audience. Among the "updated" songs are "Der neue Kanonensong" and "Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben der Hitlersatrapen," both written in the United States in 1946, which likewise take account of the immediate past with their references to National Socialist rule and the atrocities of World War II.<sup>85</sup> Weill complained to Brecht that adding extra stanzas to songs would make for monotony, for example in "Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben," in which the composer had taken trouble to vary the accompaniment from strophe to strophe. The songs were not infinitely expandable, in other words, but self-contained musical entities. Brecht agreed.<sup>86</sup> But he then proceeded to alter not just the lyrics but also the music in the Munich Kammerspiele production, whereupon the composer took legal action. For the collected edition of his plays in 1955 (Tp5) Brecht reverted to the 1931 version, save for some minor alterations. Brecht's involvement in the prolonged and eventful genesis of *Die Dreigroschenoper* thereby ended, after thirty years of intermittent dissension over "matters of intellectual property."

### VIII. Early reception

According to the ledger kept by Universal Edition in Vienna, the number of new productions of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in its first season exceeded 50. By 1933, and despite several glaring omissions, the ledger had recorded a total of 130, many of them abroad. The cities infected by *Threepenny* fever, with varying degrees of susceptibility, included Brussels, Brno, Budapest, Copenhagen, Göteborg, Ljubljana, Milan, Moscow, New York, Oslo, Paris, Prague, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Turku, Warsaw, and Zurich. In due course the work was to be translated into most of the world's major languages—in many cases at least twice; into English no fewer than nine times. In his short article on the work, written around the time of the second French production in 1937, Walter Benjamin noted that as early as 1930 the work had played in Tokyo in three separate productions simultaneously. He quoted the current estimate of total performances in the world as 40,000.<sup>87</sup> When *Threepenny* fever hit America in the mid-1950s, the acclaimed production at the Theater de Lys in New York alone chalked up 2,611 consecutive performances, becoming for a while the longest-running musical show in history.

The fever still rages. The 1986–1987 statistics for new theatrical productions in West Germany may have placed *Die Dreigroschenoper* alongside *Hamlet* in only seventh position, with both plays receiving ten new stagings in one season. In terms of audience figures, however, it was top of the list, attracting approximately 174,000 people—that is, twice as many as the Shakespeare play.<sup>88</sup> Five years later, in a united Germany, *Die Dreigroschenoper* stood alone, with twenty stagings attended by 184,100 people. Such record-breaking statistics indicate an area of unceasing and diverse activity so vast as to render the work's stage history effectively unchartable. The following account concentrates on the premiere production and the "target period," during which the piece acquired the shape in which it is presented here.

#### i. The premiere

One of the more recent accounts of *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s opening night is that by Peter Härtling, published in 1985:

Thanks to her connections with the *Weltbühne*, Katja had got hold of tickets for the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. . . . After the "Kanonensong" they sprang out of their seats, clapped their hands until they were raw, shouted "encore," and succeeded, in unison with the frenzied audience, in getting the song repeated. They slipped into roles, and when on stage Jenny invoked the ship that was to liberate her, a ship with eight sails, Laura decided to be Jenny for that evening. And indeed she was, when at the Mampestube she recalled scenes and characters, hummed the songs, and when later, in the middle of the Kurfürstendamm, she stood with arms akimbo, the night wind tugging at her skirt, and she bellowed: "Und ich mache das Bett für jeden."<sup>89</sup>

Härtling has introduced an obvious but common infelicity, in that it was Polly, rather than Laura's new idol Jenny, who originally performed the song. Yet in this case authenticity hardly matters. The above account comes from a piece of fiction, Härtling's pseudo-biographical novel *Felix Guttmann*. The mythologizing process has come full circle: in using the premiere as an invocation of 1920s zeitgeist, Härtling obviously relied for his information on one or more of the various published recollections of the event.<sup>90</sup> All report how the audience remained unmoved until the "Kanonensong," which suddenly brought the house down. Some of the reminiscences contained in Härtling's sources may, however, be no more authentic than his own version's frankly fictional aspects. Lotte Lenya's comment suggests as much:

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! . . . And although I remember that the Schiffbauerdamm had less than eight hundred seats, I nod. . . . Sometimes, remembering all that madness, even to that blank space in the programme, I'm not even sure that I was there myself.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike those who may only pretend to have attended opening night, Lenya most certainly was there, playing Jenny. But her name had inadvertently been left off the program, which apparently so incensed her husband, Kurt Weill, that he threatened to stop the show. "For the first and last time in his whole theatre career Kurt completely lost control. . . . Perhaps it was a blessing that I was the one who had to quiet him and assure him that, billing or no billing, nothing could keep me from going on."<sup>92</sup>

By all accounts the final days of rehearsal were chaotic. Carola Neher, who was to play Polly, dropped out and had to be replaced by Roma Bahn. There were last-minute alterations, including the insertion of the "Moritat." Helene Weigel, who was to play Gay's Mrs. Coaxer in a wheelchair, had appendicitis, so her part was removed altogether. Even at the dress rehearsal, which lasted well into the small hours, further cuts had to be made to bring the work to a performable length. When Lenya and the rest of the cast finally went onstage, the house was anything but packed. A copy of the program booklet has survived on which the former owner has added Lenya's name, rated the individual cast members' performances with exclamation marks (on a scale from one to three) and appended the remark that "on premiere evening the house was empty; whoever expected the huge success?"<sup>93</sup> The question is of course rhetorical. The general feeling in the theater, according to impresario Aufrecht, was that the show would close after the first night, if not actually during it. The actress playing Mrs. Peachum, Rosa Valetti, was already making alternative arrangements.<sup>94</sup> Those who did attend were prepared less for a "sure-fire sensation" than for a sure-fire flop. Small wonder, then, given the audience's size and apprehension, that it took a while to warm to the piece. Had Härtling's Laura really existed, and had she really wanted to go to the premiere, she would probably have had little trouble in acquiring tickets, even without her connections at the *Weltbühne*.

Although the production was put together in a hurry, its discrete elements—music, words, and stage design—emerged from a collective

effort. Just as Weill and Brecht wrote their portions of the work in close consultation, making alterations as rehearsals progressed, so director Erich Engel drew his production ideas from Caspar Neher's drawings, and vice versa. The set for the premiere, and also the philosophy behind it, were succinctly described in Brecht's "Stage Design for *Die Dreigroschenoper*," written in the late 1930s:

When it comes to designing a set for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the greater the difference between its appearance for the dialogue and its appearance for the songs, the better the set. For the Berlin production (1928) a large fairground organ was placed at the back of the stage, with built-in steps on which the jazz band was positioned and with colored lamps that lit up whenever the orchestra played. Right and left of the organ were two huge screens, framed in red satin, onto which Neher's drawings were projected. During the songs the appropriate song titles appeared on the screens in large letters and lights were lowered from the flies. So as to blend patina and novelty, opulence and shabbiness, the curtain was a small, none-too-clean piece of calico pulled open and shut on brass wires.<sup>95</sup>

As can be seen from surviving photographs, other early productions of *Die Dreigroschenoper* similarly employed the props described above (notably the organ pipes and the white half-curtain), as though they were as intrinsic to the work as the other elements.<sup>96</sup>

A close friend of Brecht's since their school days, Neher was a seminal influence on the evolution of Brecht's epic theater, whose antidramatic tenets can most readily be defined in terms of a style of production.<sup>97</sup> Just as epic theater, at least in theory, deliberately subverts the so-called Aristotelian unities of character, place, and time—hence Brecht's concept "non-Aristotelian theater"—so Neher's stage designs are, in terms of theatrical tradition, starkly unrealistic. In *Die Dreigroschenoper*, to quote the critic Paul Wiegler, the sets "remove any memory of operatic scenery by means of a fantastic naturalism. The innards of the stage are laid bare."<sup>98</sup> In this way the central fairground organ housing the musicians was both essential and incidental to the action. While all music-making was clearly distinguished from the dialogue with the help of special lighting, the members of the band were permanently visible as part of the stage machinery. Any pretense to theatrical illusion was deliberately undermined, most blatantly by the captions projected onto the silk screens. Appraising Engel and Neher's achievement in his article on the psychology of stage design, Ernst Heilborn stated that "the backdrop . . . replaced the image by its symbol, thereby demanding from the audience that they use their imagination to form the image from the symbol, in such a way that either the image emerged from the symbol or, rather, the image and symbol together led to inner perception."<sup>99</sup>

Whatever inner perceptions the stark images and symbols produced, they were soon in great demand. In his diary entry for 27 September 1928, Count Harry Kessler recorded what by then had become for the members of Berlin's smart society an obligatory visit to the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm:

Very gripping performance, done in a primitive and proletarian way (*apache* style) à la Piscator. Weill's music enticing and expressive, the actors (Harald Paulsen and Rosa Valetti, etc.) excellent. It's all the rage, permanently sold out. We bumped into the Prittwitzens (the ambassador and wife), the Herbert Guttmanns [a Dresdner Bank board member and his wife], etc. One simply has to have been there."<sup>100</sup>

Notwithstanding the unequivocal social success, the initial reviews on 1 September 1928 were predictably mixed, covering the gamut from unreserved adulation to outright dismissal.<sup>101</sup> One of the republic's most noted theater critics and a confessed Brechtian, Herbert Jhering, felt that "the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* cannot be rated too highly":

It represents the breakthrough into the public sphere of a type of theater that is not oriented toward chic society. Not because beggars and burglars appear in it without it developing into a thriller, and not simply because a threatening underworld is in evidence that disregards all social ties. It is because the tone has been found that neither opposes nor negates morality, that does not attack norms but rather transcends them, and that, apart from the travesty of the operatic model at the end, is

neither parodic nor serious, instead proclaiming a different world in which the barriers between tragedy and humor have been erased. It is the triumph of open form. (*Berliner Börsen-Courier*)

Jhering's rival, Alfred Kerr, was similarly complimentary, especially about the director and the composer. He described Erich Engel as the "Einrichter des Abends" (arranger/adaptor of the evening), praising his ability to inject nervous energy into the piece. Weill, for his part,

has set it to music in a pleasant way, very fine in his coarseness, with jazz and kitsch and harmonium and barrel organ. . . . All in all, Brecht, jazz, folk texts craftily set by Weill, contents of 1728, costumes from perhaps 1880—not like a lost culture from a Chinese dynasty, but modern Manchuria. (*Berliner Tageblatt*)

Like Jhering, the critic of *Der Tag* was attracted by the work's calculated ambiguity:

Most important is what the thing as a whole attempts: to create from the dissolution of traditional theatrical categories something new that is all things at once: irony and symbol, grotesque and protest, opera and popular melody; an attempt in which subversion has the last word and which, leaving its theatrical claims aside, could represent an important phase in the otherwise directionless discussion about the form of the revue. (*Der Tag*)

Reviewing the work for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, the opera critic Oskar Bie called the music "completely new. . . a model of modern operetta as it should be." The communist *Rote Fahne*, on the other hand, was far from impressed:

If one is weak, then one leans on someone stronger; if one's attitude to the present is more or less one of incomprehension, then one seeks refuge in the past; if one does not know how to organize the revolutionary movement of the working class, then one experiments with the aimless and dull rebellious moods of the lumpen proletariat. (*Die Rote Fahne*)

The same critic went on to describe Brecht as a "bohemian." The work itself, he thought, compared unfavorably with Gay's *Beggar's Opera*: "Not a trace of modern social or political satire. All in all, a varied, entertaining mishmash." At the other end of the political spectrum, the right-wing *Neue preussische Kreuz-Zeitung* merely indulged in a cheap critical joke:

Since I quietly fell asleep after the first five minutes I am unfortunately unable to say anything more about the content of the piece [beyond quoting what was in the program]. . . . To anyone who suffers from chronic sleeplessness I can urgently recommend a visit to the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. And if they are not overcome by fits of yawning during the course of the evening, they can rest assured that they are beyond help! (*Neue preussische Kreuz-Zeitung*)

Within a few years the reactionary dismissals of *Die Dreigroschenoper* were to become no laughing matter. But in the meantime Berlin was under the *Dreigroschen* spell, and other German towns were quick to succumb. The first run at the Schiffbauerdamm finished on 11 April 1929 after 250 consecutive performances, whereupon the production transferred to the Komödienhaus, although Sunday matinees at Schiffbauerdamm continued for the entire run of more than two years. By the time the play was in its second en suite run at Schiffbauerdamm in October 1929, the scene between Lucy and Polly, which had been cut for the premiere, was reinstated, as was Carola Neher, who had been originally meant to play Polly (see section III). Ever since the premiere, in fact, there had been regular cast changes. Charlotte Ander was soon sharing Polly with Roma Bahn. Carola Neher, in turn, was later replaced by Hilde Körber. Hans Hermann-Schaufuß and Frigga Braut regularly played Mr. and Mrs. Peachum. Theo Lingen, who took over as Macheath when Harald Paulsen joined the Viennese production that premiered in March 1929, ended up relinquishing his part to Albert Hoerrmann.<sup>102</sup> Not that he left the cast altogether: he appeared as Tiger Brown instead. Lotte Lenya also changed roles. Having been replaced as Jenny by Cécilie Lvovsky, she rejoined the cast for a third run at the

Schiffbauerdamm as Lucy. According to the various newspapers that reported this brief revival in November 1930, the production by then had reached a total of 350 performances.<sup>103</sup>

## ii. *Dreigroschenfieber*

The commotion was not confined to the theater. “Berlin was shaken by *Dreigroschenfieber*,” writes the composer Werner Egk in his memoirs: “Even my digs echoed with Brecht-Weill songs. These were reproduced most perfectly of all by my friend Peter Pfitzner, a son of the monomaniacal genius Hans Pfitzner. It gave me great satisfaction that Peter now breathed Brecht-Weill like others do oxygen.”<sup>104</sup> Several dance-band arrangements of the music were made, so-called “Tanzpotpourris,” some of them with Weill’s explicit encouragement and approval. They were played by bands such as Marek Weber and his Orchestra, who in the late 1920s performed every afternoon in the “Tanztee” room of Berlin’s Hotel Adlon. In addition to the vocal excerpts featuring members of the Schiffbauerdamm cast, many of these popular arrangements were also committed to shellac and sold in considerable numbers. Besides publishing various jazz orchestra arrangements, Universal Edition published all the hit numbers individually as song sheets. They also carried in their catalogue “Seven Pieces after *Die Dreigroschenoper* for Violin and Piano,” arranged by Stefan Frenkel (UE 9969), as well as a simplified version (UE 9969b).

*Dreigroschen* wallpaper was manufactured depicting and naming the work’s main characters. And a “Dreigroschen-Keller” opened in Berlin’s Kant Straße. “For a while,” wrote one of its founders, the author Franz Jung,

this pub was all the rage in Berlin. It was the fashionable thing, after the theater, to end up in a group in the Dreigroschen-Keller—not just the theater crowd, who frequented the place in the first few weeks; soon the society snobs also turned up—whoever considered themselves part of culture, the diplomats and crooks of the strongman and pimp type, journalists and police informers.<sup>105</sup>

The German town of Hildesheim is on record as having given a premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper* on 9 February 1933, just over a week after the seizure of power by the National Socialists. This, however, must have been the last production of the work in Germany until that by Karlheinz Martin at Berlin’s Hebbel Theater on 15 August 1945.<sup>106</sup> During the Nazi period *Die Dreigroschenoper* was decried as the epitome of “degenerate art.” This meant an effective ban, except when the work and its composer received official exposure at the exhibition of “Degenerate Music” (*Entartete Musik*), which opened in Düsseldorf on 25 May 1938. Shellac recordings of the songs were played and a poster of Weill put on display. The latter contained the caption “The creator of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, in person,” followed by the closing lines (in Weill’s own manuscript vocal score) from the refrain of “Die Ballade vom angenehmen Leben” (“Nur wer im Wohlstand lebt, lebt angenehm” [Only he who is well-to-do lives well])—as if that, devoid of all irony, were the composer’s own doctrine. Apparently the room devoted exclusively to *Die Dreigroschenoper* had to close because it attracted such large and appreciative crowds.<sup>107</sup> Unofficially, the work’s popularity remained undiminished. Phonograph recordings of the songs were treasured possessions, played clandestinely as expressions of subversion as well as nostalgia. To quote a letter from Universal Edition to Weill of 5 July 1948: “In certain private circles during the Nazi period, the songs of *Die Dreigroschenoper* were a kind of anthem and served as spiritual rejuvenation for many an oppressed soul.”<sup>108</sup>

## IX. Interpretation

Subversion and nostalgia, taken together, can serve as keywords in the work’s reception history, which includes an extensive interpretive literature, though not as extensive as one might expect, given the work’s popularity.<sup>109</sup> The pairing of putative opposites nicely captures the perva-

sive ambiguity that remains a constant challenge to exegetes. Few stage works of the twentieth century have been as susceptible as this one to being performed, and therefore “read,” in such numerous ways. Few works so capaciously accommodate and thrive on aesthetic contradiction.

Brecht himself set the hermeneutic ball rolling with his own rereadings and creative rewritings of the piece, in the refashioning of the *Dreigroschen* material in the media of film and novel (see section VII.ii-iii) as well as in the *Versuche* revision and the accompanying notes (see section VI.ii). The distance he adopted from the work’s original incarnation in the Schiffbauerdamm production is nowhere more succinctly or blatantly expressed than in this self-interview from 1933, first published in 1994:

What, in your opinion, created the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper*?

I’m afraid it was everything that didn’t matter to me: the romantic plot, the love story, the musical elements. When *Die Dreigroschenoper* was a success, it was turned into a film. They put into the film everything I had satirized in the play: the romanticism, the sentimentality, etc., and omitted the satire. The success was even greater.

And what did matter to you?

The critique of society. I had tried to show that the mindset and emotional life of street robbers is immensely similar to the mindset and emotional life of respectable citizens.

Hm.

Hm.

Can’t *Die Dreigroschenoper* be performed in Germany anymore?

I can’t imagine it.<sup>110</sup>

Brecht presents a dichotomized view of the work: the sentimental, “romanticized” one he claims was the reason for its success, and the subversive, “critical” one he claims to have intended and wanted. In this he echoes a persistent theme in reception history, first articulated in Adorno’s 1929 review, according to which the work’s success owed to the public’s misunderstanding.<sup>111</sup>

Elias Canetti, who attended rehearsals for the premiere, offers a different view. The message was grasped, all right; but people did not feel threatened by it. On the contrary:

It was a stylish production, coolly calculated. It was the most precise expression of Berlin. The people cheered themselves, they saw themselves and were pleased. First came *their* food, then came their morality—no one could have put it better; they took it literally. Now it had been said; no bug in a rug could have felt snigger. The abolition of the death penalty had been taken care of: the mounted messenger with a real horse. Only those who experienced it can believe the grating and bare self-satisfaction that emanated from this production.

If it is the job of satire to castigate people for the injustice they represent and commit, for the misdeeds that turn into predators and multiply, then here, on the contrary, everything was glorified that one would otherwise shamefully conceal. Most fittingly and effectively derided was sympathy. To be sure, everything had merely been taken from elsewhere and spiced with a few new indelicacies. Yet these indelicacies were precisely what was genuine. An opera it was not, nor a send-up of opera, as it had originally been; it was—and this was the one unadulterated thing about it—an operetta. What one had done was to take the saccharine form of Viennese operetta, in which people found their wishes undisturbed, and oppose it with a Berlin form, with its hardness, meanness, and banal justifications, which people wanted no less, probably even more, than all that sweetness.<sup>112</sup>

Ultimately, the validity of the notion that the reception resided in a misunderstanding may have less to do with an interpretation of the piece than with an interpretation of Weimar society, something inevitably colored by the society that displaced the republic.

Another critical factor, then, and one that Brecht’s self-interview thematizes already in 1933, has been the role the piece was forced to play as clandestinely popular “degenerate art” during Nazi Germany. Interpretations that inform contemporary productions of the work may—à la *Cabaret*—care to introduce the cultural consequences of the

epoch, which so affected the piece's subsequent reception history, as effectively part of the piece itself. Or they may, as has frequently been the case, create new contexts into which the *Dreigroschen* material can be transplanted. The challenge remains: to do justice to the work's constitutive ambiguity, its sentimentality (however ironic) and its satire (however benign). Brecht's stark oppositions of "sentimentality" and "critique" are not so much mutually exclusive alternatives as they are two sides of the same *Threepenny* coin.

## X. Performance practice

Performance is interpretation insofar as each new production proceeds from its own understanding of the text. Yet the matter is complicated in that *Die Dreigroschenoper* acquired its ultimate form, as described above, as the result of an elaborate production process. In terms of the music, it is further complicated in that performances by members of the original cast have survived in a handful of recordings, including the musical portions of the Pabst film.

As with so many of Weill's pieces for the musical theater, the vocal parts were tailor-made for particular performers—or if they weren't, adjustments and even cuts had to be made to accommodate limitations or idiosyncrasies. The part of Jenny is a tailor-made case, written expressly for Lenya; so is Macheath, conceived for the operetta star Harald Paulsen. Because the intended Polly, Carola Neher, dropped out at the last minute, her role changed (or rather, shrank), with some of her material being either cut or reassigned. It was not until Neher rejoined the cast in 1929 that the scene "Kampf um das Eigentum" was reinstated, albeit without the opera parody "Arie der Lucy" (see sections I and III).

The significance of the recordings as models has to be qualified. Since the work and its sonic realization were intimately linked, the recordings are, in a sense, inseparable from the work itself. Lotte Lenya's Jenny is, in a sense, Jenny. In fact, she created two Jennys: the one documented in the original recordings, with a voice "sweet, high, light, dangerous, cool, with the radiance of the crescent moon," as Ernst Bloch memorably described it; and the later one, with its significantly lower, more "experienced" tessitura. Yet it must be borne in mind that none of the recordings reproduces what is written in the score, which anyway can only imperfectly convey the composer's intentions (something true of all notation). While the music emerged with the performance, what Weill eventually wrote down for posterity did not match exactly what the Lewis Ruth Band, all of them studio musicians, were actually playing.<sup>113</sup>

The singers as well as the musicians played within the bounds of a performance practice whose limits have been blurred or erased by time. The performances as documented on recordings, particularly those of the instrumentalists, were also adjusted to make allowances for the technology of the time. The limited space on the discs may account for some of the faster tempi, while the limited dynamic range and tone constitute a patina, such as we associate with old news broadcasts.

As with broadcasts from the period, there are qualities of vocal timbre and pronunciation that are epoch-specific. It would be very difficult today to sing like Lenya or Carola Neher, even if one wanted to. Some of these qualities derive from tradition: operetta singers, such as Paulsen, and singing actresses, such as Lenya and Carola Neher, are nowadays rare. If performers with such versatility exist anywhere, it tends to be on Broadway, which cultivates a very different style. The satire and cynicism of the Weimar cabaret kind are not a Broadway specialty. Furthermore, since each part was conceived for a different type of voice, there can be no uniform approach for all parts.

Nor do the phonograph recordings represent the work in its entirety, even though they did quickly become part of the show's considerable propaganda machine. In some cases these recordings are the "Tanzpotpourris" (see section VIII.ii) made with the composer's explicit approval. These, along with the cast recordings of individual numbers, would have been played in the "Dreigroschen-Keller" described earlier.

Weill himself, asked by a Danish journalist in 1934, claimed to be only "moderately satisfied" with the recordings from the time, citing two notable exceptions. One was the purely instrumental recording of the "Kanonensong" and the "Zuhälterballade" by the Lewis Ruth Band (issued on the Odeon label—R28b). The other was the selection of highlights recorded in conjunction with the 1931 Kurfürstendamm production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (issued on Electrola).<sup>114</sup>

The recordings, then, offer important insights into the spirit of the piece without necessarily providing models for imitation. Carola Neher, who also plays Polly in the Pabst film, beautifully illustrates the rapid shifts between speaking and singing that characterize the sardonic cabaret style. She sings with the small penetrating vibrato that was also Lenya's trademark—an oscillation more of dynamic intensity than of pitch. She speaks, not because she can't sing, but because speaking injects a kind of epic dimension to her delivery. The fluctuation between singing and speaking creates a counterpoint: the speaking puts the singing in quotation marks, as it were, just as the sweetness of the sung music often contrasts with the directness, even vulgarity of the words. Recall Weill's remark apropos the "Zuhälterballade": "The charm of the piece rests precisely in the fact that a rather risqué text . . . is set to music in a gentle, pleasant way."

Brecht's post-factum theorizing about epic theater and other matters tends, as a rule, to oversimplify and thereby distort actual practice. In his "Anmerkungen," published to accompany his revised text in the *Versuche*, he proclaimed: "There's a way of speaking against the music that can be very effective by virtue of its obstinate matter-of-factness, independent of and incorruptible by the music and rhythm."<sup>115</sup> The key word is "incorruptible." Brecht's theory of music takes to its logical extreme Nietzsche's injunctions against Wagner for drugging his audiences with the sonic equivalent of narcotics. Brecht, for both personal and political reasons, had little tolerance for the lyrical effusions of beautiful voices. Weill, on the other hand, was not only tolerant of beautiful, classically trained voices; he greatly admired them. He also required them as a default for a number of his works, though not for *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

Where does this leave opera singers and their use in Weill-Brecht recordings? A comment by the critic Nicholas Deutsch offers food for thought on this issue. "We perceive," he writes,

the vibrational richness of classically trained singing as an expression of the human soul; it, in turn, connects the listener to a direct sense of transcendental reality, which is calmer, more serene, more compassionate, more impersonal (in the positive sense) than the emotional, mental, and physical struggles of our daily existence. . . . Warm and compassionate tone is filled with an unspoken certainty that unconditional love stands ready to suffuse our hearts and minds in a potentially transformational way. What could possibly be more inappropriate to Mr. Peachum and *Die Dreigroschenoper*? . . . The world of the piece is haunted by the absence of transcendental connectedness, whether to a higher power or between human beings. . . . So the strengths of an opera singer are not only irrelevant, but a hindrance to a convincing portrayal."<sup>116</sup>

Deutsch's comments call to mind W.H. Auden's "Notes on Music and Opera" from the 1950s, in which Auden (writing chiefly about bel canto) made similar generalizations about the impact of operatic singing. Opera singers create the impression, he argued, of "doing exactly what they wish," even if they are "playing the role of a deserted bride who is about to kill herself." Opera, a cultural product of the age of liberal humanism, underwrites an "unquestioning belief in freedom and progress." This, of course, is a technical trick. As Auden concludes: "Every high C accurately struck demolishes the theory that we are the irresponsible puppets of fate or chance."<sup>117</sup>

Nothing could seem further from Brecht's theories of epic theater, promulgating as they do the need to demonstrate that we are, after all, "puppets," in this case of social forces. Deutsch's comments are apt, then, as far as they go—which is too far in one direction, namely away from the operatic. The creation of epic theater did not mean that the lyric and the dramatic had no role to play. Operatic lyricism and dramatic power

both play a part in Weill's music, but they do not dominate exclusively. Weill is one of the great melody writers; sometimes these melodies have great lyrical beauty and are to be sung with appropriate beauty of tone. Both the *Songspiel* and opera versions of *Mahagonny* are full of such moments. *Die Dreigroschenoper* has such moments, too, especially in the main characters' parts. But they are fleeting moments; the poetic modes change, sometimes within a single number or even phrase. The structure might be epic, but the delivery is by turns epic, lyrical, and dramatic. To the extent that such "epic" interjections, in contrast to the lyrical effusions, are suggested by the plot and characters of the piece, the voice types required for performance are inherent in the work itself. But they are extraneous to it to the extent that the text contains a wide range of interpretative possibilities, not just those suggested by the recordings. To take one example: Polly can be innocently sweet one moment and

naively ruthless the next, but the balance between the two is something the interpreter and the director have to renegotiate with each new realization.

The mixture of the poetic modes is something that comes across vividly in the early recordings. If they provide almost paradigmatic examples of how to perform Weill-Brecht, that does not mean that their spirit is easy to revive, except with the help of a machine: the phonograph. And even then, it all seems so distant. Today we might talk of crossover, but for it to be successful, the artist has to be coming from several directions at once—and the right directions, at that. It is not just a matter of mechanical imitation but of enormous, multifaceted capacity. To complement the generic mix, there has to be a corresponding mix of vocal intonations. That is the abiding challenge to performers.

## Notes

1. "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." Weill to Universal Edition, 7 September 1928. The correspondence (L) is quoted by permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and Universal Edition. All translations are by the author. Idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies of Weill's orthography have been edited without comment to conform to the norms of this volume.
2. The genesis and reception of *Die Dreigroschenoper* are described in detail later in this Introduction and in Stephen Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
3. Telegram from Universal Edition to Weill, 6 September 1928.
4. "Außerdem mußte ich manches, was ich bei den hiesigen Musikern nur anzusagen brauchte, für die gedruckte Ausgabe erst fixieren." Weill to Universal Edition, 12 September 1928.
5. See Kim H. Kowalke, "In Trivial[?] Pursuit: Who Sings the 'Barbarasong'?" *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 6, no. 2 (1988): 8–11.
6. Kurt Weill, *Musik und Theater: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1990), 108; the essay was originally published as "Anmerkungen zu unseren Bildern," *Die Musik* 25 (1932): 128.
7. "nicht aufgenommen werden konnte, da sonst überall die Rolle der Lucie [*sic*] mit einer Sängerin hätte besetzt werden müssen." Weill to Universal Edition, 26 August 1932.
8. "Die Ausgabe enthält grundsätzlich die autorisierten und wirksam gewordenen Erstdrucke." Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. Werner Hecht et al. (Berlin: Aufbau; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 2:[475]. The editorial policy for the entire edition is printed similarly at the back of each volume.
9. "In einer Szene des letzten Aktes der *Dreigroschenoper* sitzt Lucy, die Tochter des Polizeipräsidenten, in ihrem Zimmer und erwartet den Besuch ihrer Nebenbuhlerin Polly. Sie brütet finstere Mordpläne. Für diese Soloszene der Lucy wurde die vorliegende 'Arie' geschrieben, gewissermaßen ein Gegenstück zu dem Eifersuchtsduett im 2. Akt. Dieser Eifersuchts-Monolog der Lucy konnte zu einer Art von Gesangsarie ausgebaut werden, weil für die Rolle der Lucy bei der Berliner Uraufführung eine Darstellerin mit guten stimmlichen Fähigkeiten vorgesehen war. Da diese Besetzung nicht zustande kam, wurde die 'Arie' gestrichen. Sie wäre ohnehin gestrichen worden, weil sich im Laufe der Proben herausgestellt hatte, daß die ganze Szene überflüssig war. Erst bei späteren Neueinstudierungen wurde die Szene wieder eingefügt – jetzt allerdings ohne die Arie, die für die Darstellerin der Lucy gesanglich zu schwer war." See note 6.
10. "Diese Szene ist eine Einlage für solche Darstellerinnen der Polly, welche die Begabung der Komik besitzen." Bertolt Brecht, *Versuche*: 8–10, vol. 3: *Die Dreigroschenoper, Der Dreigroschenfilm, Der Dreigroschenprozeß* (Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1931), 240.
11. The reviews consulted are those by Felix Salten (*Neue Freie Presse*, 10 March 1929); Friedrich Lorenz and Elsa Bienenfeld (*Neues Wiener Journal*, 10 March 1929); Ludwig Ullmann (*Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 March 1929); Lothar Ring (*Volks-Zeitung*, 10 March 1929); Walther Schneider (*Wiener Mittags-Zeitung*, 11 March 1929); Ernst Decsey (*Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 10 March 1929); and Ferdinand Scherder (*Wiener Zeitung*, 12 March 1929). See also Peter Stalder, "Kurt Weills *Dreigroschenoper*: opernästhetische Betrachtungen und Materialien zur Wiener Erstaufführung," in Ernst Hilmar, ed., *40.000 Musikerbriefe auf Knopfdruck: Methoden der Verschlagwortung anhand des UE-Briefwechsels – Untersuchungen – Detailergebnisse* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1989), 63–74.
12. "Ich habe mit Herrn Martin alle Einzelheiten . . . besprochen. Es werden einige Musiknummern gemacht, die hier weggeblieben sind und sogar eine die nicht in die Musik aufgenommen wurde." Weill to Universal Edition, 5 February 1929.
13. Kurt Weill, *Song-Album: Gesang und Klavier* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1929).
14. "Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit ist ganz gestrichen." Weill to Universal Edition, 10 September 1928.
15. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno talked about an "exalted operetta form": "The success [of the piece] entices one into believing that here, with simple means, with utter comprehensibility, operetta has quite simply been exalted and made palatable for the requirements of the cognoscenti." "Zur Dreigroschenoper," *Die Musik* 22 (1929): 424–28; translated by Stephen Hinton in *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, ed. Hinton, 129–33. Elias Canetti wrote: "An opera it was not, nor a send-up of opera, as it had originally been; it was—and this was the one unadulterated thing about it—an operetta. What one had done was to take the saccharine form of Viennese operetta, in which people found their wishes undisturbed, and oppose it with a Berlin form, with its hardness, meanness, and banal justifications, which people wanted no less, probably even more, than all that sweetness." (See fuller quotation in section IX; cited in n. 112.) Ernst Josef Aufricht recalled: "We saw the piece, as written, in terms of a comical literary operetta with a few flashes of social criticism." (See fuller quotation in section VII; cited in n. 33.) Weill himself talked initially in terms of a "farce" (*Posse*; see n. 35 below). And the critic Heinrich Strobel confirmed this impression by drawing attention in his review of the premiere to "an unbuttoned performance with Nestroyesque traits." "Melosberichte," *Melos* 7 (1928): 498.
16. "Die Dreigroschenoper | (The Beggar's Opera) | Ein Stück mit Musik in einem Vorspiel und 8 Bildern nach dem | Englischen des John Gay. | (Eingelegte Balladen von François Villon and Rudyard Kipling) | [next page] Übersetzung: Elisabeth Hauptmann | Bearbeitung: Brecht | Musik: Kurt Weill".
17. ". . . grundsätzlichen Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums." *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 6 May 1929.
18. "Im kleinen Finger der Hand, mit der er fünfundzwanzig Verse der Ammerschen Übersetzung von Villon genommen hat, ist dieser Brecht originaler als der Kerr, der ihm dahintergekommen ist . . ." Karl Kraus, "Kerrs Enthüllung," *Die Fackel* 31 (1929): 129–32; reprinted in Kraus, *Widerschein der Fackel: Glossen*, vol. 4 of *Werke*, ed. Heinrich Fischer (Munich: Kösel, 1956), 404.
19. See Otto F. Beer, "In Grinzing wächst der Dreigroschentropfen," *Der Monat*, no. 115 (April 1958): 75–77; Reinhold Grimm, "Werk und Wirkung des Übersetzers Karl Klammer," *Neophilologus* 44 (1960): 20–36; and "Ein Buch aus Erlangen und Brechts *Dreigroschenoper*," *Erlanger Tagblatt*, 9 January 1986, signed.
20. "Wo habt ihr Saures für drei Mark bekommen? / Nehm jeder sich heraus, was er grad braucht! / Ich selber hab mir was herausgenommen . . ." Translation from John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, 3d ed. (London: Methuen, 1967), 93.
21. See Joel Hunt, "Bert Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* and Villon's *Testament*," *Monatshefte* 44, no. 5 (1957): 273–78; Reinhold Grimm, "Werk und Wirkung"; Daniel Frey, "Les ballades de François Villon et le *Dreigroschenoper*," *Etudes des lettres* 4 (1961): 114–36; Anthony J. Harper, "Brecht and Villon: Further Thoughts on Some *Dreigroschen* Songs," *Forum of Modern Language Studies* 1 (1965): 191–94; and Sara Zimmermann, "The Influence of John Gay, François Villon, and Rudyard Kipling on the Songs in Bertolt Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1968).
22. See Fritz Hennenberg, ed., *Brecht-Liederbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 375f. The "Kanonensong," written about 1924, was first published as "Lied der drei Soldaten" in Brecht's *Hauspostille* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1927).
23. Ernst Josef Aufricht, *Erzähle, damit du dein Recht erweist* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1966), 73.
24. "Brecht [hat] unter der Hand ein anderes Stück geschrieben." Werner Hecht, "Die *Dreigroschenoper* und ihr Urbild," in Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 222; also published in Hecht's *Sieben Studien über Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972).

25. “. . . die erfolgreichste Demonstration des epischen Theaters.” Bertolt Brecht, “Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater,” in Suhrkamp Verlag and Elisabeth Hauptmann, eds., *Gesammelte Werke* 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 473.
26. Having opened at Lincoln Inn Fields on 29 January 1728, *The Beggar's Opera* received a total of sixty-two performances in one season. See John Gay, *Dramatic Works*, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 46.
27. The fashion for classics in modern dress started in 1921 with Erich Ziegel's Hamburg production of Schiller's *Die Räuber*, followed in 1922 by Ivan Schmith's modernization of Molière's *Tartuffe* at Berlin's Deutsches Theater. Hermann Röbbeling staged Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with the protagonist wearing a tailcoat (“im Frack”), at Hamburg's Thalia-Theater in 1926. In 1928, apart from the jazzed-up *Beggar's Opera* by Weill and Brecht, Berlin also saw a contemporary-costume staging of *Macbeth*. See Helmut Grosse, “Modische Anpassung: Klassik im Zeitkostüm” in *Weimarer Republik*, ed. Kunstamt Kreuzberg et al. (Berlin and Hamburg: Elefanten, 1977), 750f.
28. William Edward Yuill, *The Art of Vandalism: Bertolt Brecht and the English Drama*, Inaugural Lecture (Bedford College: London, 1977). Yuill formulates his general thesis as follows: “The point of adapting plays from earlier times . . . is to illustrate the historical dialectic by creating an instructive contrast between the original in its historical context and the contemporary version” (7).
29. “Die Art, wie Sie den Foxtrott in Ihrer Kammermusik in das Gebiet der ernstesten Musik gezogen haben, würde auch in diesem Fall das Richtige sein: eine veredelte Gassenhauermusik bzw. deren Karikatur, zugleich eine Persiflage auf die moderne Opernmusik eines d'Albert.” Quoted in Giselher Schubert, *Paul Hindemith in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981), 47.
30. “Willy Haas berichtet über die *Dreigroschenoper*,” *Lingener Tagespost*, 14 July 1963.
31. Aufricht, *Erzähle*. The section on *Die Dreigroschenoper* is excerpted as “Die Moritat vom Mackie Messer,” *Melos* 33 (1966); “Die Uraufführung von Brechts *Dreigroschenoper*,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 July 1966; and “*Gesindel* zur Uraufführung,” *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 13 August 1966. See also Lotte Lenya, “That Was a Time!” *Theatre Arts* (May 1956); reprinted as “August 28, 1928,” in Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. Eric Bentley and Desmond Vesey (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1964), v–xiv. Davis's protocol of the interview is held in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.
32. Heinrich Fischer, “Die Geburt der *Dreigroschenoper* über Premiere,” *Südwest-Merkur* (Stuttgart), 9 May 1958; reprinted in Kurt Fassmann, *Brecht: eine Bildbiographie* (Munich: Kindler, 1958), 48–52.
33. “Ich hatte jetzt ein Theater in Berlin, das ich in neun Monaten eröffnen mußte. Ich bot Erich Engel, den ich für den bedeutendsten Regisseur der zwanziger Jahre halte, die erste Inszenierung an. . . . Wir suchten jetzt die in Berlin lebenden Autoren auf. Wir gingen zu Toller, Feuchtwanger und anderen, aber keiner hatte ein fertiges Stück. ‘Ich muß mich umbringen, wenn ich nichts finde! Jetzt können wir nur noch in die Künstlerlokale zu Schwannecke oder zu Schlichter gehen.’  
Wir gingen also zu Schlichter in der Lutherstraße. An den Wänden hingen die Bilder des Inhabers, des Malers Rudolf Schlichter, zum Verkauf. Im zweiten Zimmer saß einer. Es war Brecht. Ich kannte ihn nicht persönlich, kannte aber seine literarischen Experimente auf der Bühne und schätzte seine Gedichte. Sein langes Gesicht hatte oft den asketischen Ausdruck eines Mönches, manchmal die Durchtriebenheit eines Galgenvogels. Er hatte dunkle stechende Augen, die gierig und hungrig alles, was ich ihnen anbot, aufsaugten. Er war dürr, mit abfallenden Schultern. Seine ungepflegte proletarische Aufmachung mit Mütze, Joppe und nacktem Hals habe ich immer für eine Brechtsche ‘Verfremdung’ gehalten. Trotzdem sein Äußeres eher abstieß, was er anziehend.  
Wir setzten uns zu ihm an den Tisch und stellten unsere Gretchenfrage. Er fing an, uns eine Fabel zu erzählen, an der er gerade arbeitete. Er merkte wohl, daß wir nicht interessiert waren, denn wir verlangten die Rechnung.  
‘Dann habe ich noch ein Nebenwerk. Davon können Sie morgen sechs von sieben Bildern lesen. Es ist eine Bearbeitung von John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. Ich habe ihr den Titel *Gesindel* gegeben. Die *Beggar's Opera* wurde 1728 uraufgeführt, nicht in London, sondern in einer Scheune in einem Vorort, sie behandelte verschlüsselt einen Korruptionsskandal: der berühmte Gangster ist mit dem Polizeipräsidenten befreundet und macht mit ihm Geschäfte. Der Gangster stiehlt einem sehr mächtigen Mann die einzige Tochter und heiratet sie. Der Mann ist der Chef der Bettler, er kleidet sie ein, bildet sie aus und stationiert sie nach ihren Qualitäten. Das Ende steht im siebenten Bild, das ich nur skizziert habe.’  
Diese Geschichte roch nach Theater. Wir verabredeten, am nächsten Morgen das Manuskript aus der Spichernstraße, wo Brecht ein möbliertes Zimmer bewohnte, abzuholen.  
Fischer ging in die Spichernstraße, und da sie nicht weit von der Meinekestraße liegt, wartete ich dort bei meinen Schwiegereltern auf ihn. Er kam im Regen mit den aufgeweichten und leicht zerlaufenen Schreibmaschinenseiten. Wir lasen, und ich war von der Frechheit und dem trockenen Witz, heute ist beides stumpf geworden, sowie durch die Andeutung eines neuen Stils sofort angetan und entschlossen, mein Theater mit *Gesindel* zu eröffnen. Fischer war derselben Ansicht. Wir telefonierten mit Brecht, der uns mitteilte, daß noch ein Musiker dabei wäre, Kurt Weill, dessen zwei Operneinakter *Der Zar läßt sich photographieren* und der *Protagonist* mit Texten von Georg Kaiser in der Charlottenburger Oper zu hören waren. Ich ging bald hin, fand Weills Musik für ein Theaterstück zu atonal und bat Theo Mackeben, den ich mit der musikalischen Einstudierung beauftragt hatte, sich die Originalmusik der *Beggar's Opera* von Pepusch zu beschaffen, um einen Ersatz bereit zu haben.  
Mit Engel, dem der Brechtsche Text auch gefiel und der wie verabredet die Regie der Eröffnungsvorstellung übernommen hatte, überlegten wir die Besetzung. Wir sahen das Stück so wie es geschrieben ist, als lustige literarische Operette mit einigen sozialkritischen Blinklichtern. Den einzigen aggressiven Song ‘Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral’ nahmen wir ernst. Die politische Realität hatte noch nicht drastisch bewiesen, daß, wenn die Moral verschwindet, das Fressen auch verschwunden ist. Brecht und Weill waren keine Klassiker. Die tief sinnigen Auslegungen über die sozialpolitische Aussage der *Dreigroschenoper*, an denen sich später auch Brecht beteiligte, haben dem Stück rückwirkend eine falsche Bedeutung gegeben.” Aufricht, *Erzähle*, 60–65.
34. Ralph Manheim and John Willett, “Berlin 1925–1929: Implications of Success” in Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Plays*, vol. 2, ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willett (New York: Vintage, 1977), xx.
35. “Ich habe nämlich während meiner Beschäftigung mit der *Bettleroper* sehr bald den festen Eindruck gewonnen, daß das Stück als ‘Oper’ nicht in Frage kommt, und daß man höchstens die Form einer Posse mit Musik wählen kann, die durch das starke Überwiegen des Dialogs für Opernhäuser nicht in Betracht kommt. Voraussichtlich wird unsere Bearbeitung für einen sehr bekannten Berliner Schauspieler bestimmt sein, und Herrn Brecht, der an der Arbeit starken Anteil hat, wäre es daher lieber, das Werk nicht einem reinen Musikverlag zu übergeben, sondern einem Bühnenvertrieb, der mit den Schauspiel- und Operettenbühnen in Verbindung steht, für die unsere Arbeit bestimmt ist.” Weill to Schott, 14 March 1928.
36. Lenya, “That Was a Time!” x–xi.
37. “Unterdessen arbeite ich mit Hochdruck an der Komposition der *Beggars-Opera*, die mir viel Spaß macht. Sie wird in einem sehr leicht sangbaren Stil geschrieben, da sie ja von Schauspielern ausgeführt werden soll. Ich hoffe bis Ende Juni damit fertig zu sein.” Weill to Universal Edition, [14] June 1928.
38. “Sie haben längere Zeit nichts von mir gehört, da ich sehr viel arbeite. . . . Sie bekommen in diesen Tagen durch den Verlag Felix Bloch Erben den Klavierauszug meiner *Beggar's Opera* (deutscher Titel: *Des Bettlers Oper*) zugeschickt. Ich möchte Sie bitten, diesen Klavierauszug als Ganzes vorläufig noch nicht zu vervielfältigen, da die Nummerneinteilung noch nicht feststeht und auch noch zwei Nummern fehlen. . . . Das wichtigste ist, daß diese Arbeiten mit möglicher Beschleunigung ausgeführt werden, da die Proben schon am 10. August beginnen.” Weill to Universal Edition, 22 July 1928.
39. See John Fuegi, “Most Unpleasant Things with *The Threepenny Opera*: Weill, Brecht, and Money,” in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 157–182.
40. Lenya, “That Was a Time!” xii.
41. “Karl Kraus also war zu dieser Zeit in Berlin und er war mit Brecht befreundet, den er häufig sah, und durch Brecht lernte ich ihn einige Wochen vor der Premiere der *Dreigroschenoper* kennen. Ich sah ihn nicht allein, immer in Gesellschaft von Brecht und anderen, die an dieser Aufführung interessiert waren. . . . Das Gespräch ging um die *Dreigroschenoper*, die noch nicht so hieß, ihr Name wurde in diesem Kreis beraten. Viele Vorschläge wurden gemacht, Brecht hörte sich's ruhig an, gar nicht so, als wäre es sein Stück, und daß er sich die letzte Entscheidung vorbehielt, war ihm während dieses Gesprächs kaum anzumerken. Es wurden so viele Vorschläge gemacht, daß ich mich nicht mehr darauf besinnen kann, wer welche machte. Karl Kraus hatte einen Vorschlag, den er ohne Herrschsucht vertrat, er warf ihn fragend in die Debatte ein, als zweifle er daran. Er wurde sofort von einem anderen, besseren verdrängt, der sich aber auch nicht behauptete. Ich weiß nicht, von wem der schließliche Titel kam, es war Brecht selbst, der ihn vorbrachte, aber vielleicht hatte er ihn auch von einem anderen, der nicht zugegen war, und wollte hören, wie die Anwesenden darüber dachten. In seiner Freiheit von Abgrenzungen und Besitzmarkierungen war er bei der Arbeit erstaunlich.” Elias Canetti, *Die Fackel im Ohr: Lebensgeschichte, 1921–1931* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982), 258–59.
42. *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. and ed. by Ralph Manheim and John Willett, vol. 2 of Brecht, *Collected Plays*, 106f.
43. Lenya, “That was a Time!” xif. Lenya's recollection of the organ builder's name is faulty; it was Bacigalupo. See “Das Orchestron war nur mit einem Kahn erreichbar,” *Die neue Ärztliche*, 26 March 1986. According to his own testament, Bacigalupo also made a creative contribution to *Die Dreigroschenoper*: he had to simplify Weill's music in order to fit it onto the organ's barrel.
44. “Harald Paulsen, der meist in Operetten aufgetreten war, zeigte sich in seinem schwarzen Maßanzug von Hermann Hoffmann, damals ein erstklassiger Herrenschneider. Den Sakko doppelreihig auf Taille im Stil der Jahrhundertwende, die Hosen eng anliegend mit Stegen, Lackschuhe mit weißen Gamaschen, den dünnen Degenstock in der Hand, die Melone auf dem Kopf, federte er über die Bühne. Sein Jackett war hochgeschlossen, ein weißer Stehkragen mit eingebogenen Ecken gab ihm etwas Gediegenes. Dieses Kostüm ergänzte er nach seinem Geschmack mit einer großen, seidenen, hellblauen, flatternden Schleife. Die blaue Schleife in der Farbe seiner Augen, das war die erprobte Sicherheit, auf die er nicht verzichten wollte und die er dem ihm unverständlichen Wahnsinn um ihn herum entgegengesetzte. An die blaue Schleife klammerte er sich mit beiden Händen, von ihr wollte er sich nicht trennen, eher von der Rolle. Ein ungeheuerliches Gebrüll ging los, das ganze verdichtete sich zu einer Katastrophe, da Paulsen bereits heiser wurde und die Aufführung gefährdet war. Jetzt hatte Brecht einen Einfall. ‘Lassen wir ihn so süßlich und charmant’, sagte er im Büro, ‘Weill und ich führen ihn durch eine Moritat ein,

- die seine grausigen Schandtaten besingt, um so unheimlicher wirkt er mit seiner hellblauen Schleife.' So entstand der populärste Song der *Dreigroschenoper*." Aufricht, *Erzähle*, 72.
45. Quoted from *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. and ed. Manheim and Willett, 121f. Original German published in Hecht, *Brechts "Dreigroschenoper"*, 26–28.
  46. See Fritz Hennenberg, "Weill, Brecht und die 'Dreigroschenoper': Neue Materialien zur Entstehung und Uraufführung," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 40 (1985): 285. Hennenberg also draws attention to an autograph copy of the "Barbarasong" in Kate Kühl's *Nachlass* in the Berlin Akademie der Künste (source VmK).
  47. "Diese Art Musik ist die konsequenteste Reaktion auf Wagner. Sie bedeutet die vollständige Zerstörung des Begriffes Musikdrama." Interview, "Kurt Weill, der Komponist der *Dreigroschenoper*, will den Begriff des Musikdramas zerstören," *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 March 1929; reprinted in Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 302–03.
  48. Aufricht, *Erzähle*, 65. See n. 30.
  49. Ronald Speirs, "A Note on the First Published Version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and Its Relation to the Standard Text," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 13 (1977): 25. The differences are readily observable in source Tp3a, a heavily marked copy of the 1928 edition, held in the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (BBA 1783/01–80), which Brecht used as the basis for his *Versuche*. The new material consists of typed insertions on separate sheets of paper.
  50. This and the following excerpts are taken from Tp3.
  51. A complete list of the differences between Tp1, Tp3, and Tp5, compiled in collaboration with the present author, has been published as an appendix to Steve Giles, "Rewriting Brecht: *Die Dreigroschenoper* 1928–31," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 1989 (Berlin: Duncker Humboldt, 1989), 249–79.
  52. Lotte Lenya, interview by David Beams, tape recording and transcript, New York, February 1962. The tape and transcript are kept in the Weill-Lenya Research Center. Portions of this interview were published as David Beams, "Lotte Lenya," in *Theatre Arts* 46, no. 6 (1962).
  53. "Frauen gegenüber wirkt er weniger als der schöne Mann, weit mehr als der gutsituierte Mann. Englische Originalzeichnungen zur 'Beggars Opera' zeigen einen etwa vierzigjährigen unteretzten, aber stämmigen Mann mit einem Kopf wie ein Rettich, schon etwas kahl, nicht ohne Würde." Translation adapted from Bertolt Brecht, "Notes to *The Threepenny Opera*," in *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. and ed. Manheim and Willett, 92.
  54. "Auch darf die erotische Affektionswert des feschen Mackie Messer nicht unterschätzt werden." Adorno, "Zur *Dreigroschenoper*," 424–28; translated in Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 129–33.
  55. "Was die Frauen angeht – Peachums Frau und die Tochter, Polly – so bewahrt ein glückliches Naturell sie vor den ethischen Problemen, mit denen sich ihre Männer befassen müssen." Walter Benjamin, "L'Opéra de quat'sous," published as "Nachtrag zu den Brecht-Kommentaren," in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 7, bk. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 347–49; translated by Stephen Hinton in Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 144–45.
  56. "Die Orchesterproben beginnen am 25. ds., die Premiere ist am 31. . . . Über alles weitere schreibe ich noch, wenn ich die Partitur zur Beggars Opera ganz fertig habe." Weill to Universal Edition, 21 August 1928.
  57. "Sie erhalten mit gleicher Post eine große Notensendung. Sie haben jetzt den Klavierauszug vollständig. Nr. 6 (Seeräuber Jenny), Nr. 2 (Moritat) und Nr. 13 (Ballade v. angen. Leben) folgen in Partitur in kürzester Zeit. Ein genaues Nummernverzeichnis liegt noch einmal bei. Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit ist ganz gestrichen. Nr. 12 (Barbarasong) ist in der Partiturfassung, die ich Ihnen schicke, hauptsächlich für Klavier gesetzt, sodass Sie den Klavierpart wörtlich in den Klavierauszug übernehmen können. Nr. 17 (Salomonsong) ist in der Partiturfassung, die ich Ihnen schicke, für Harmonium gesetzt. Ich bitte Sie, diese Fassung (nicht die in dem Klavierauszug enthaltene) in den gedruckten Klavierauszug zu übernehmen. Bei Nr. 5 bitte ich im Klavierauszug die Anmerkung hinzuzufügen, die Sie in der Partitur an der gleichen Stelle finden. Bei Nr. 2 bitte ich im Klavierauszug und Partitur folgendes hinzuzufügen: 'Dieses Stück kann bei den Auftritten des Macheath mehrfach leise im Orchester angestimmt werden. Zu Beginn der 8. Scene wird es in langsamem Tempo als Trauermarsch gespielt.'" Weill to Universal Edition, 10 September 1928.
  58. Source Ve2: Kurt Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Musik für alle 274 (Berlin: Ullstein, 1929). A facsimile of this page is presented in Weill, *Die Dreigroschenoper: A Facsimile*, Series IV, vol. 1 of the Kurt Weill Edition, 143.
  59. Fritz Hennenberg's assertion that one can reconstruct the genesis of the music from the way the various types of manuscript paper are collated is flawed on two counts ("Weill, Brecht und die *Dreigroschenoper*: neue Materialien zur Entstehung und Uraufführung," *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 40 (1985): 287f.). First he infers a particular stage in the work's composition from the composer's choice of paper, without offering proof of a necessary connection. Second, the songs submitted after the premiere, although all written on the same type of paper—K.U.V. Beethoven Papier Nr. 39 (30 Linien)—are revisions, not new compositions.
  60. "Ich möchte Sie heute um einen Gefallen bitten. Ich glaube nach Abschluß der Arbeit an der *Bettleroper*, daß mir hier ein gutes Stück gelungen ist, und daß einige Stücke daraus jedenfalls musikalisch die größten Aussichten haben, in kürzester Zeit populär zu werden. Dazu ist aber unbedingt nötig, daß in der ganzen äußeren Aufmachung der Premiere der Musik der ihr gebührende Platz eingeräumt wird. Man scheint im Theater (wie immer bei der Literatur) ein bißchen Angst vor der Durchschlagskraft der Musik zu haben, und ich befürchte, daß man die Musik in Ankündigungen, Pressenotizen usw. mehr als Bühnenmusik ausgeben wird, obwohl sie mit ihren 20 Nummern weit über den Rahmen einer Schauspielmusik hinausgeht. . . . Sie wissen, daß ich persönlich auf diese Dinge keinen großen Wert lege, aber wir müssen ernstlich befürchten, daß uns alle Auswertungsmöglichkeiten dieser Musik verloren gehen, wenn sie jetzt bei der Uraufführung nicht genügend propagiert wird." Weill to Universal Edition, 21 August 1928.
  61. I am indebted to Wolfgang Ruf for drawing attention to this connection in his "Modernes Musiktheater: Studien zu seiner Geschichte und Typologie" (Habilitationsschrift, University of Freiburg, 1983), 192.
  62. Wll. [Kurt Weill], "Berliner Übertragungen und Sendespiele," *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, 4, no. 31 (1926): 2138f.
  63. The origin and significance of the title are teasingly uncertain. A Brecht short story from 1926 is also called "Barbara," and the author confesses at the outset that although Barbara appears only at the beginning of the narrative, the story has to bear her name. With the "Barbarasong" the situation is yet more perplexing: there is no Barbara whatsoever. But there is another "Barbara Song"—one similarly not sung by a character in the play—namely Desdemona's Willow Song in *Othello*. Desdemona sings: "My mother had a maid call'd Barbara: / She was in love, and he she loved proved mad / And did forsake her: she had a song of 'willow'; / An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune, / And she died singing it: that song to-night / Will not go from my mind; I have much to do, / But to go hang my head all at one side, / And sing it like poor Barbara. Prithee, dispatch." At another point in the song, she sings: "I call'd my love false love; but what said he then? / Sing willow, willow, willow: / If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men! / So, get thee gone; good night / Mine eyes do itch; Doth that bode weeping?" And afterwards, Desdemona says to her own maid: "I have heard it said so. O, these men, these men! / Dost thou in conscience think,—tell me, Emilia,— / That there be women do abuse their husbands / In such gross kind?" There is a parallel, then, coincidental or not, not just between the name of the absent owner of the song and Weill's "Barbarasong," but also between the content of the two songs. Both Rossini and Verdi include the Willow Song in their versions of *Othello*: Verdi mentions Barbara by name; in Rossini she becomes Isaura. But Weill may not have not known the latter work, whereas he most certainly knew the former.
  64. Both songs are included in both versions in Hennenberg, *Brecht-Liederbuch*. For a transcription of the Brecht-Bruinier "Barbara-Song" and a comparison with Weill's setting of the same song, see Michael Morley, "'Suiting the Action to the Word': Some Observations on Gestus and *gestische Musik*," in *A New Orpheus*, ed. Kowalke, 183–201.
  65. Wll. [Kurt Weill], "Vom Berliner Sender," *Der deutsche Rundfunk*, 5, no. 2 (1927): 86.
  66. Albrecht Dümling, *Laßt euch nicht verführen: Brecht und die Musik* (Munich: Kindler, 1985), 134.
  67. David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (London: Faber, 1987), 203.
  68. Ruf, "Modernes Musiktheater," 191.
  69. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, "Kompositionskritik. Kurt Weill: *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* für Blasorchester," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 11 (1929): 316–17; reprinted in *Über Kurt Weill*, ed. D. Drew (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 49–51.
  70. "Bei der raschen Verbreitung der modernen 'Bettleroper' begann mancherorts bereits eine unbefugte Popularisierung, indem Stücke aus der Bühnenmusik herausgenommen und im Konzertsaal gespielt wurden. Hier aber gebietet der Komponist mit Recht Einhalt: denn es scheint dem Wesen dieser 'Songs' am wenigsten zu entsprechen, wenn sie aus ihrem Zusammenhang herausgerissen und, ihres Textes beraubt, als bloße Musikstücke dargeboten werden." Peter Epstein, "Die Kleine Dreigroschen-Musik," *Pult und Taktstock* 6 (March–April 1929): 36. See David Drew's "Motifs, Tags, and Related Matters," in Hinton, *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 151.
  71. See letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 April 1988, from Berthold Goldschmidt, who was present on the occasion. According to Goldschmidt, the performance of Weill's *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* was preceded by Berlioz's *Rákóczy March* (conducted by Erich Kleiber) and Strauss's *Emperor Waltz* (conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler).
  72. See Steve Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory: Marxism, Modernity, and the Threepenny Lawsuit* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998).
  73. "Die Produktion räumt den Autoren ein Mitbestimmungsrecht bei der kurbelfertigen Bearbeitung des Stoffes ein. Dem Verlage oder den Urhebern stehen gegen Form und Inhalt des durch die Produktion, bzw. ihren Rechtsnachfolgern auf Grund der im Benehmen mit den Autoren angefertigten kurbelfertigen Bearbeitung hergestellten Films, des Propagandamaterials u. dgl. ein Einspruch nicht zu. Die Neukomposition von Musik und Bearbeitung der schon vorhandenen Musik darf nur durch den Komponisten Kurt Weill vorgenommen werden, der hierfür von der Produktion gesondert zu honorieren ist. Ebenso dürfen neue Gesangstexte zu der bereits bestehenden Musik sowie zu etwaigen Neukompositionen nur von dem Textdichter Bert Brecht verfaßt werden, der auch zur Mitarbeit am kurbelfertigen Manuskript von der Produktion zu verpflichten ist. Die Produktion hat für diese Tätigkeit den Autor Bert

- Brecht gesondert zu honorieren." Quoted in Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, ed., *Photo, Casparius: Filmgeschichte in Bildern* (Berlin: Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, 1978), 211f.
74. "Der Prozeß hatte das Ziel, die Unmöglichkeit einer Zusammenarbeit mit dem Industriefilm selbst bei vertraglichen Sicherungen öffentlich darzutun." Bertolt Brecht, "Der Dreigroschenprozeß: ein soziologisches Experiment," in *Gesammelte Werke* 18, 149.
75. "Zu beweisen war, daß der Prozeß verloren werden mußte." Werner Mittenzwei, *Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht, oder Der Umgang mit den Welträtselfeln*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 420.
76. "Gestatten Sie mir zu verschiedenen Kommentaren über meinen Vergleich mit der Tobis ein paar Bemerkungen. Ich habe mich nicht wegen einer Abfindungssumme verglichen. Ich hatte prozessiert, um aus der Filmherstellung kunstschädliche und persönlichkeitschädliche Methoden fernzuhalten, und ich habe mich verglichen, weil die Tobis mir für künftige Filme die 'Fernhaltung kunstschädlicher und persönlichkeitschädlicher Methoden' gewährleistete. Ich prozessierte um das Mitbestimmungsrecht des Autors bei der Produktionsleitung, und ich habe mich verglichen, weil die Tobis sich verpflichtete, mich künftig für die Produktionsleitung heranzuziehen. Um diese beiden Zugeständnisse hatten bis jetzt alle Filmautoren, ich eingeschlossen, vergeblich gekämpft, gerichtlich und moralisch. Ich habe sie zum erstenmal errungen, und darum wurde mein Prozeß überflüssig. Es ist richtig: ich konnte, nach zwei obsiegenden Entscheidungen, die Mittel für die Zurücknahme der Klage, nämlich enorme Gerichtskosten, Anwaltshonorare usw., nicht von mir allein aus aufbringen. Und ich habe auch vertragsmäßige Rechte, die die Tobis von mir erworben hat, nicht verschenken können; denn ich muß ja von meiner Arbeit und vom materiellen Wert meines Komponistennamens leben. Aber wer mich kennt, weiß, daß ich den Vergleich nicht aus materiellen Gründen abschloß, sondern weil ich das prinzipielle Prozeßziel erreicht habe." "Die andere Seite: Kurt Weill zum Dreigroschenoper-Vergleich," *LichtBildBühne*, 13 February 1931; reprinted in: Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 94–95.
77. Brecht, "Der Dreigroschenprozeß," 149.
78. Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, ed., *Photo, Casparius*, 180.
79. For a comprehensive study of the *Dreigroschenroman*, see Klaus-Detlef Müller, *Brecht-Kommentar zur erzählenden Prosa* (Munich: Winkler, 1980).
80. Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 293.
81. "Es ist sehr im Stile der *Dreigroschenoper*, diesen etwas obszönen Text zu einer sehr graziösen und anmutigen Musik zu singen. . . . Ich autorisiere Sie, die beiden Chansons nur für die Pariser Aufführung der *Dreigroschenoper* und nur für den Gebrauch von Madame Yvette Guilbert zu verwenden." Weill to Aufricht, 18 August 1937.
82. See Kim H. Kowalk's detailed account, "The Threepenny Opera in America," in Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 78–119.
83. "Vor einigen Wochen habe ich einen Bericht von München erhalten, daß in der dortigen Neuaufführung des Werkes die Musik beträchtlich geändert war, und daß sogar neue Musik hinzugefügt war. Ich wäre Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn Sie herausfinden könnten, ob das wahr ist, da ich natürlich jede, auch die kleinste Änderung, in dieser Partitur strengstens verbieten und im Falle der Wiederholung gerichtlich verfolgen würde.
- Von anderer Seite habe ich gehört, daß Brecht den Text der *Dreigroschenoper* neu bearbeitet hatte. Falls die Bearbeitung der Gesangstexte der Musik angepaßt ist, können wir wahrscheinlich nichts dagegen machen. Falls aber die Musik geändert ist, sollten Sie als Verleger strengste Verwahrung einlegen und weitere Aufführungen dieser Fassung verbieten." Weill to Alfred Schlee of Universal Edition, 11 December 1948.
84. *Die Dreigroschen-Oper* (revised stage script prepared by Brecht and printed for distribution to theaters by Suhrkamp Verlag, 1950); *Songs aus der "Dreigroschenoper"* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Gebrüder Weiss, 1949).
85. The new material is reprinted in Hecht, ed., *Brechts "Dreigroschenoper"*, 38–48; and in volume 2 of the *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. Jürgen Schebera, 309–22. English translations of the new stanzas are appended to the Manheim and Willett version (London, 1979), 85–89. Brecht included the new stanzas in his edition of *Songs aus der "Dreigroschenoper"* and also in the unpublished concert version, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv BBA 1013/1–52 [ca. 1949], which he prepared for an unrealized recording project.
86. See Brecht to Weill, 28 January 1949, in Bertolt Brecht, *Briefe 1931–56* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 551f.
87. Benjamin, "L'Opéra de quat'sous," 348; translated by Stephen Hinton in Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 144–45.
88. "Werkstatistik 1986/87: Brecht auf dem Vormarsch," *Die Deutsche Bühne* 12 (1987): 47–50. If it had been included in the musical-theater charts, *Die Dreigroschenoper* would have had to concede first position to Lloyd Webber's *Cats*, which sold 450,000 tickets for the single production it received.
89. "Katja hatte, dank ihrer Beziehungen über die *Weltbühne*, Karten für die Premiere der *Dreigroschenoper* ergattert. . . . Sie saßen nebeneinander . . . sprangen nach dem Kanonen-Song von den Sitzen, klatschten sich die Hände wund, brüllten da capo, schafften es, im Verein mit einem tobenden Publikum, daß das Lied wiederholt wurde. Sie schlüpfen im Rollen, und als Jenny auf der Bühne das Schiff erlebte, das sie befreien sollte, ein Schiff mit acht Segeln, entschloß sich Laura, an diesem Abend Jenny zu sein, und sie war es, als sie beim Mampe sich Szenen und Figuren in Erinnerung riefen, die Lieder nachsummten, und als sie später, mitten auf dem Kurfürstendamm, die Hände in die Hüften stemmte und der Nachtwind an ihrem Kleid zerrte, und sie schmetterte: Und ich mache das Bett für jeden." Peter Härtling, *Felix Guttman* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985), 192–95.
90. Aufricht, *Erzähle*, 60–74; Lenya, "That Was a Time!"; H. W. Heinsheimer, *Menagerie in F Sharp* (New Jersey: Doubleday, 1947), 152–62, and *Best Regards to Aida* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 119–23; Heinrich Fischer, "Die Geburt der *Dreigroschenoper* über Premiere," *Südwest-Merkur* (Stuttgart), 9 May 1958, reprinted in Kurt Fassmann, *Brecht: eine Bildbiographie* (Munich: Kindler, 1958); Willy Haas, *Die literarische Welt: Erinnerungen* (Munich: P. List, 1957), 143–51; Felix Jackson, "Portrait of a Quiet Man: Kurt Weill, his Life and Times" (unpublished MS), 54–80.
91. Lenya, "That was a Time!" xiv.
92. *Ibid.*, xiii.
93. The program is kept in the Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.
94. Aufricht, *Erzähle*, 73.
95. "Eine Bühne für die *Dreigroschenoper* ist umso besser aufgebaut, je größer der Unterschied zwischen ihrem Aussehen beim Spiel und ihrem Aussehen beim Song ist. Die Berliner Aufführung (1928) stellte in den Hintergrund eine große Jahrmarktsorgel, in die auf Stufen die Jazzband eingebaut war und deren bunte Lampen aufglühten, wenn das Orchester arbeitete. Rechts und links von der Orgel waren zwei riesige Leinwandtafeln in roten Samtrahmen aufgestellt, auf welche die *Neher'schen* Bilder projiziert wurden. Während der Songs standen auf ihnen groß die Song-Titel und aus dem Schnürboden gingen Lampen nieder. Um Patina mit Neuheit, Prunk mit Schabigkeit zu mischen, war dementsprechend der Vorhang ein kleiner, nicht zu sauberer Nesselfetzen, an Blechschnüren auf- und zugezogen." Bertolt Brecht, "Aufbau der *Dreigroschenoper*-Bühne," in *Gesammelte Werke* 18, 1000f.
96. For the Brecht-Weill-Neher collaboration on *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, plans were discussed for Neher's projections as well as a production booklet to be loaned to theaters along with other performance materials. Although the production booklet, begun by Neher and Weill, never appeared, its preface was published as Kurt Weill, "Vorwort zum Regiebuch der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*," *Anbruch* 12 (1930): 5–7; reprinted in Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 77–79.
97. See John Willett, *Caspar Neher: Brecht's Designer* (London: Methuen, 1986); Walter Bohaumilitzky, "Caspar Neher's Bühnenbild in den 20er Jahren: sein Frühwerk" (diss., University of Vienna, 1968).
98. ". . . beseitigen jede Erinnerung an die Opernkulissen durch einen phantastischen Naturalismus. Die Eingeweide der Bühne sind bloßgelegt." Paul Wiegler, "Die *Dreigroschenoper*: einst und jetzt," *Musik für alle* 274. Revised reprint of the same critic's review first published in *B.Z. am Mittag*, 1 September 1928.
99. "Der Bühnenprospekt . . . ersetzte das Anschauungsbild durch dessen Symbol. Forderte von der Phantasietätigkeit des Zuschauers damit die Anstrengung, eine Art von Anstrengung, aus dem Symbol das Bild zu gestalten, derart, daß entweder das Bild aus dem Symbol entstand, oder besser, Bild und Symbol zugleich zu innerer Anschauung gelangten." Ernst Heilborn, "Zur Psychologie des Bühnenbildes," *Die Literatur* 31 (1928/29): 184. The article is accompanied, on the facing page, by B. F. Dolbin's drawing of the set.
100. "Sehr fesselnde Vorstellung, Piscator-haft primitiv und proletarisch aufgemacht (Apachenstil), Weills Musik einschmeichelnd und ausdrucksvoll, die Schauspieler (Harald Paulsen, Rosa Valetti usw.) ausgezeichnet. Es ist das Modestück, immer ausverkauft. Wir trafen Pritwitzens (den Botschafter mit Frau), Herbert Guttmans usw. 'Man muß dagewesen sein.'" Harry Kessler, *Tagebücher 1918–1937*, ed. Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1961), 569.
101. A selection of notices can be found in Hugo Fetting, ed., *Von der Freien Bühne zum Politischen Theater: Drama und Theater im Spiegel der Kritik*, vol. 2, 1919–1933 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1987), 383–95; see also Monika Wyss, *Brecht in der Kritik: Rezensionen aller Brecht-Uraufführungen* (Munich: Kindler, 1977), 79–87.
- "Es ist der Durchbruch eines nicht mondän, nicht gesellschaftlich orientierten Theaters in die Pubikumszone. Nicht weil Bettler und Einbrecher darin vorkommen, ohne daß ein Kriminalreißer entsteht, nicht nur weil hier eine bedrohliche Unterwelt auftaucht, die alle sozialen Bindungen mißachtet, sondern weil hier der Ton gefunden ist, der Moral weder bekämpft noch negiert, der Normen nicht angreift, sondern aufhebt, der, mit Ausnahme des eindeutig travestierenden, das Operschema travestierenden Schlusses, weder parodistisch noch ernst ist, sondern eine andere Welt verkündigt, in der die Grenzen zwischen Tragik und Humor gefallen sind. Es ist der Triumph der offenen Form." (*Berliner Börsen-Courier*)
- "Weill hat es lieblich vertont, ja, sehr fein in der Grobheit, mit Jazz und Kitsch und Orgelharmonium und Leierkasten. . . . Und alles zusammen, Brecht, Jazz, Volkstexte von Weill durchtrieben gesetzt, Inhalte von 1728, Kleidung von vielleicht 1880 – das alles ist kein verschollenes Chinesentum. Sondern heutige Manschurei." (*Berliner Tageblatt*)
- "Das wichtigste aber bleibt doch der Versuch des Ganzen: aus der Auflösung aller überlieferten theatralischen Kategorien etwas Neues zu machen, das alles zugleich ist: Ironie und Sinnbild, Grotteske und Anklage, Oper und Gassenhauer. Ein Versuch, in dem die Zersetzung noch das letzte Wort behält, der aber außerhalb des theatralischen Anspruchs für die zur Zeit so zielloos gewordene Diskussion über die Form der Revue eine Etappe bedeuten könnte." (*Der Tag*)

- “. . . gänzlich neu . . . eine Art Mustervorbild der modernen Operette liefert, wie sie sein sollte.” (*Berliner Börsen-Courier*)
- “Fühlt man sich schwach, so stützt man sich auf einen Stärkeren; steht man der Gegenwart mehr oder minder verständnislos gegenüber, so flüchtet man in die Vergangenheit; weiß man die revolutionäre Bewegung der Arbeiterklasse nicht zu gestalten, so versucht man es mit dem ziellosen und dumpfen rebellischen Stimmungen des Lumpenproletariats. . . . Bohemien . . . Von moderner sozialer oder politischer Satire keine Spur. Alles in allem aber ein abwechslungsreicher unterhalt-samer Mischmasch.” (*Die Rote Fahne*)
- “Da ich nach den ersten fünf Minuten sanft entschlief, ist es mir leider unmöglich, über den Inhalt des Stückes näheres auszusagen. . . . Leuten, die an chronischer Schlaflosigkeit leiden, empfehle ich zurzeit dringend einen Besuch des Theaters am Schiffbauerdamm. Und wenn sie im Verlaufe solchen Theaterabends nicht von Gähnkrämpfen überwältigt werden, können sie versichert sein, daß ihnen überhaupt nicht mehr zu helfen ist!” (*Neue preussische Kreuz-Zeitung*)
102. See Theo Lingen, *Ich über mich: Interviews eines Schauspielers mit sich selbst*, Reihe Theater heute 9 (Velber bei Hannover: Friedrich, 1963), 37f. Lingen first played Macheath in the production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* that opened at the Neues Theater Frankfurt on 20 October 1928.
103. Partly unidentified newspaper cuttings from the “Theaterwissenschaftliches Archiv Dr. Steinfeld,” held at the Theatrumuseum der Universität zu Köln.
104. “Berlin war vom Dreigroschenfieber geschüttelt. Auch meine Bude widerhallte von Brecht-Weill-Songs. Am perfektsten reproduzierte sie mein Freund Peter Pfitzner, ein Sohn des autonomen Genies Hans Pfitzner. Es war mir eine Genugtuung, daß Peter jetzt Brecht-Weill ein- und ausatmete.” Werner Egk, *Die Zeit wartet nicht* (Percha am Starnbergersee: R. S. Schulz, 1973), 168. Egk goes on to relate how Peter Pfitzner was expelled from the parental home for playing Puccini on his father’s piano.
105. “Dieser Keller ist eine Zeitlang große Mode gewesen in Berlin. Es gehörte zum guten Ton, nach dem Theater mit einer Gesellschaft im Dreigroschen-Keller zu landen, nicht nur die Theaterleute, die in den ersten Wochen das Lokal allein frequentiert haben, bald auch die Gesellschafts-Snobs – wer immer sich zur Kultur rechnete, die Diplomaten und die Ganoven vom Typ der starken Männer und Zuhälter, Journalisten und Polizeispitzel.” Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach unten: Aufzeichnungen aus einer großen Zeit* (Hamburg: Schulenburg, 1988), 351. The pattern of the Dreigroschen wallpaper has been reprinted in *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 6, no. 2 (1988): 4–5.
106. The cast included Kate Kühn (the original Lucy) as Mrs. Peachum. See Walther Karsch, *Was war – was blieb: Berliner Theater 1945–46* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1947), 11.
107. Kim H. Kowalke, “Accounting for Success: Misunderstanding *Die Dreigroschenoper*,” *Opera Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1989): 18–38.
108. “Die Songs der *Dreigroschenoper* waren in der Nazizeit in gewissen Privatkreisen eine Art Hymne und diente zur seelischen Auffrischung mancher bedrückter Gemüter!”
109. In one of the most recent book publications that focus on *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Dieter Wöhrle remarks on the paucity of detailed analyses relative to the number of performances the piece has received. “It can certainly count as Brecht’s best-known work,” he writes, “and nonetheless plays a marginal role in scholarship.” (“Die *Dreigroschenoper* kann sicher als bekanntestes Werk Brechts gelten und spielt dennoch in der Forschung nur eine marginale Rolle.”) Wöhrle, *Bertolt Brecht: “Die Dreigroschenoper,” Grundlagen und Gedanken zum Verständnis des Dramas*, ed. Hans-Gert Roloff (Frankfurt am Main: Moritz Diesterweg, 1996), 55.
110. “Was, meinen Sie, macht den Erfolg der *Dreigroschenoper* aus?  
Ich fürchte, all das, worauf es mir nicht ankam: die romantische Handlung, die Liebesgeschichte, das Musikalische. Man nahm für den Film all das, was ich in dem Stück verspottet hatte, die Romantik, die Sentimentalität usw., und ließ den Spott weg. Da war der Erfolg noch größer.  
Und worauf wäre es Ihnen angekommen?  
Auf die Gesellschaftskritik. Ich hatte zu zeigen versucht, daß die Ideenwelt und das Gefühlsleben der Straßenbanditen ungemein viel Ähnlichkeit mit der Ideenwelt und dem Gefühlsleben des soliden Bürgers haben.  
Hm.  
Hm.  
Die *Dreigroschenoper* darf wohl jetzt in Deutschland kaum mehr aufgeführt werden?  
Ich kann es mir nicht denken.”
- Bertolt Brecht, *Journale 1*, vol. 26 of *Werke: Große Kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 299.
111. See my “Misunderstanding *The Threepenny Opera*,” in Hinton, ed., *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, 181–92.
112. “Es war eine raffinierte Aufführung, kalt berechnet. Es war der genaueste Ausdruck dieses Berlin. Die Leute jubelten *sich* zu, das waren sie selbst und sie gefielen sich. Erst kam *ihr* Fressen, dann kam ihre Moral, besser hätte es keiner von ihnen sagen können, das nahmen sie wörtlich. Jetzt war es gesagt, keine Sau hätte sich wohler fühlen können. Für Abschaffung von Strafe war gesorgt: der reitende Bote mit echtem Pferd. Die schrille und nackte Selbstzufriedenheit, die sich von dieser Aufführung ausbreitete, mag nur glauben, wer sie erlebt hat.
- Wenn es die Aufgabe der Satire ist, die Menschen zu peitschen, für das Unrecht, das sie vorstellen und begehen, für ihre Schlechtigkeiten, die zu Raubtieren heranwachsen und sich fortpflanzen, so fand sich im Gegenteil hier alles verherrlicht, was man sonst schamvoll versteckt: am treffendsten und wirksamsten verhöhnt war das Mitleid. Gewiß war alles bloß übernommen und mit einigen neuen Rohheiten nur gewürzt worden, aber eben diese Rohheiten waren daran das Echte. Eine Oper war es nicht, auch nicht, was es im Ursprung gewesen war, eine Verspottung der Oper, es war, das einzig Ungefälschte daran, eine Operette. Gegen die süßliche Form der Wiener Operette, in der die Leute ungestört alles fanden, was sie sich wünschten, war hier eine andere, Berliner Form gesetzt, mit Härten, Schuftigkeiten und banalen Rechtfertigungen dafür, die sie sich nicht weniger, die sie sich wahrscheinlich noch mehr als jene Süßigkeiten wünschten.” Canetti, *Die Fackel im Ohr*, 285f.
113. Having worked with these musicians twice, Weill compared them to orchestral musicians, on whom he had relied for the realization of his previous works for the musical theater: “Orchestral musicians are inhibited by the concept of time; for them music-making is work. . . . With a jazz band you can try out the same passage twenty times or more and achieve different results; for the jazz musician making music is a joyful experience.” (“Orchestermusiker werden durch den Begriff Zeit gehemmt, für sie ist Musikmachen Arbeit. . . . Mit einer Jazzband kann man zwanzig und mehrere Male dieselbe Stelle durchprobieren und dabei zu neuen Ergebnissen kommen, denn der Jazzmusiker empfindet doch Freude beim Musikmachen.” From “Neue Musik,” *Berlin am Morgen*, 6 September 1929.) Weill then went on to explain how during rehearsals for *Happy End* a particular instrumental combination occurred to him in the song “Surabaya-Johnny,” forcing him to rewrite the score. (The newspaper reports the wrong combination, but the point remains.) Weill says: “This would be impossible with a large orchestra. The conductor would soon say: ‘Can’t you orchestrate properly, since you make adjustments to the score during rehearsal?’” (“Dies wäre unmöglich mit einem großen Orchester. Der Dirigent würde augenblicklich sagen: ‘Können Sie denn überhaupt nicht instrumentieren, da Sie während der Proben Änderungen an der Partitur vornehmen?’”)
114. See “Kurt Weill im Exil” in Weill, *Musik und Theater*, 316. Weill’s comments, in which he rejects most of the phonograph recordings of his music as arrangements, also convey the importance he attached to his own instrumentation. The “correct, the *original* piece of music,” he said, “depends exclusively on . . . respecting the composer’s own instrumentation.” Referring to the practice of making phonograph recordings in general, he added that, “like most musicians, I’m not much in favor of ‘preserved music’ [*Konservenmusik*].” (“Det er i det Hele taget besynderligt at se, saa man synes at regne det for ganske overflødig, hvorvidt Komponistens egen Instrumentation respekteres eller ikke – og det er dog udelukkende af den, det rigtige, det *originale* Musikstykke afhænger. Forøvrigt er jeg som vistnok de fleste Musikere ikke meget for ‘Musik i Konserves.’”) The article originally appeared in Danish as Ole Winding, “Kurt Weill i Exil,” *Berlingske politiske og Avertissements-Tidende: Aften-Avisen* (Kopenhagen), 21 June 1934.
115. “Es gibt ein Gegen-die-Musik-sprechen, welches große Wirkungen haben kann, die von einer hartnäckigen, von Musik und Rhythmus unabhängigen und unbestechlichen Nüchternheit ausgehen.” Brecht, *Versuche*, 225.
116. “*Die Dreigroschenoper*,” *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (1991): 25. See also Kim H. Kowalke, “Singing Brecht versus Brecht Singing: Performance in Theory and Practice,” in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
117. W.H. Auden, “Notes on Music and Opera,” in *The Dyer’s Hand* (London: Faber, 1963), 465–74.