

INTRODUCTION

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- I. EDITING A BROADWAY OPERETTA
- II. WEILL, BROADWAY, AND OPERETTA IN THE 1940S
- III. GENESIS AND PRODUCTION
 - i. The Weill-Gershwin-Mayer Collaboration
 - ii. Casting and Production
- IV. CRITICAL RECEPTION
- V. MUSIC AND LYRICS
- VI. EDITORIAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS
 - i. Privileging Sources
 - ii. Case Studies
- VII. A FUTURE FOR *FIREBRAND*

I. EDITING A BROADWAY OPERETTA

The philological problems attendant upon a critical edition of *The Firebrand of Florence* (hereafter *Firebrand*) are inextricably bound with the failure of its Broadway production—its only performance during Weill's lifetime. The genesis, production, and critical reception of *Firebrand* all took place in less than a year, after which it effectively disappeared until some fifty years after Weill's death. *Firebrand* was written in Hollywood and New York, largely between July and December 1944. Rehearsals started on 22 January 1945, followed by a three-week tryout at Boston's Colonial Theater beginning on 23 February. After some hasty revisions, *Firebrand* opened in New York at the Alvin Theater on 22 March. Had it not been such a lavish show, it might have survived longer than it did, but the producer, Max Gordon, not wishing to throw good money after bad, withdrew it on 28 April, after forty-three performances. Four shellac sides were recorded by 9 April, but the only member of the stage production involved in the project was conductor Maurice Abravanel, and the recordings were never released. Of the four numbers published as sheet music by Chappell, only "Sing Me Not a Ballad" had an after-life. The original Duchess, Lotte Lenya, recorded it in 1958 without Weill's orchestrations. In the mid-1990s, recorded highlights from *Firebrand* based on original source material were included in two compilations of Weill's Broadway music.¹ Finally, the Weill centenary season offered three productions, all based on a preliminary version of this edition. Until then, *Firebrand* had remained one of Weill's most obscure works, available only to those able and willing to study the archival materials.

Firebrand's quick demise poses something of a critical conundrum, at least at first glance. After all, this production boasted a score by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and a book adapted by the esteemed playwright Edwin Justus Mayer from one of his most successful works, *The Firebrand* (1924), a tragi-comedy about Benvenuto Cellini's amorous entanglements with the Medici. The reasons for the flop were complex, stemming partly from weaknesses specific to Max Gordon's production, such as casting and direction, partly from structural flaws in

the work itself, and partly from critical consternation over what appeared to be nothing more than an old-fashioned costume operetta. One might have expected something more up-to-date from a composer and lyricist whose previous collaboration had been the groundbreaking *Lady in the Dark* and from a playwright who scripted for Ernst Lubitsch. Aiming for an operetta "with great possibilities for an international market after the war,"² they largely eschewed topical allusions, normally one of Gershwin's stocks-in-trade. With the exception of isolated passages—the cynical "You Have to Do What You Do Do" (No. 21b) being a case in point—they also avoided the Offenbachian satire at which each had previously tried his hand: Weill with *Der Kuhhandel* and *Knickerbocker Holiday*, and Gershwin with the trio of political operettas on which he had collaborated with his brother and the writers Morrie Ryskind and George Kaufman (*Strike Up the Band* in 1927, *Of Thee I Sing* in 1931, and *Let 'Em Eat Cake* in 1933). What humor *Firebrand* does possess derives largely from the deliberate anachronisms that Gershwin's lyrics and Mayer's book introduce into their tale of the Medici.

The Firebrand of Florence was not Weill's least successful theater work. *Happy End* (1929), *Marie Galante* (1934), and *A Kingdom for a Cow* (1935) all fared worse in their original productions. But several songs from the first two works survived and even became popular, thanks not only to sheet music but also to recordings, some of them featuring singers from the original casts. And *A Kingdom for a Cow*—or, more precisely, the torso of its unproduced earlier incarnation, *Der Kuhhandel*—has enjoyed a certain amount of critical attention.³ *Firebrand* was the only one of Weill's Broadway musicals to suffer both critically and financially. By way of contrast, *Johnny Johnson* (1936) did not run significantly longer than *Firebrand* (sixty-eight performances). It lost money, but it enjoyed a *succès d'estime*, and Weill in particular received favorable reviews, among them a lengthy encomium by Marc Blitzstein.

Firebrand's short production history poses formidable problems for a critical edition. Consider, for example, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, which enjoyed some fifty new productions in its first year. Its success encouraged the printing of a piano-vocal score, orchestral parts, and libretto; Weill even revised his holograph full score with the expectation that it would be published. All of this evinces an authorial intention to transmit the work in a form capable, as Stephen Hinton puts it, "of transcending [its] original theatrical incarnation."⁴ In contrast, there was not enough time for *Firebrand* to settle into anything more than a provisional form; the distinction between "text" and "script," "work" and "event" risks obliteration here. The same could be said, of course, for most Broadway musicals of the time. The composer's involvement usually ended after the first production, sometimes even once he had submitted the music to the orchestrator/arranger. If a show survived beyond its first production—for instance, in a version licensed for stock and amateur productions—it did so in a form dictated more by practical exigencies than by any philological principles of *Werktreue*. More often, a show's individual numbers lived on as standards in the popular repertoire, in arrangements, harmonizations, and presentational contexts quite divorced from the original.

One solution to the dilemma is to do away with the concept of work altogether, replacing it with the notion of "script" or "social text." This

has certainly been the tactic of scholars who, influenced by the anthropological approaches of the New Historicism, have proposed replacing scores with performances—even those diverging considerably from their textual sources—as the point of departure for critical approaches to Broadway musical theater. Scores, according to this view, are merely “raw material for a vibrant vernacular performance culture with its origins in popular musical theater, refocused and intensified by the requirements of the mass media.”⁵ Of course, similar considerations ultimately hold for many sorts of texts, particularly theatrical ones. Thus, the Shakespeare scholar David Scott Kastan, no doubt influenced by Jerome McGann’s critique of the “Romantic ideology” supposedly lurking behind editorial appeals to final authorial intentions, has argued that the tradition of Shakespeare editions, going back to the First Folio of 1623, distort the historical context of plays that “were not autonomous and self-contained literary objects, but provisional scripts for performance.”⁶ Flawed quartos were as much a part of the social context of theatrical productions as their more privileged counterparts, and traditional source valuation proves problematic for authors who had little control over or concern about what became of the provisional scripts they turned in.

These ideas are stimulating and provocative, but it is not easy to grasp how they apply in practice to the creation of a musical edition that is both critical and performable. Such an edition, after all, cannot merely commemorate all documentable performed variants and let it go at that. Moreover, it is one thing to assert that Broadway musicals, like most theater pieces, are socially conditioned through and through. It is another to claim that composers merely provided provisional scripts and then washed their hands of the whole affair. Even songwriters who depended on professional arrangers for the realization of their ideas had opinions about how their products were to be disseminated. On one occasion, Jerome Kern even went so far as to refuse to grant radio performance rights to the songs from one of his musical comedies (*Sitting Pretty* in 1924) because he objected to what he felt were distortions by popular entertainers.⁷ Weill, for his part, never objected to the commercial exploitation of individual songs outside their theatrical setting. On the contrary, he often had occasion to chastise his publishers on both sides of the Atlantic for insufficiently promoting performances of his music in popularized form for mass media.⁸ By orchestrating his own scores, however, he continued to exert much the same control over the *Klangbild* of his music on Broadway as he had in Europe.

Weill did not notate a full score for *Firebrand* in quite the same sense as he did for his European works. All of his European scores, even the hybrid *Der Kuhhandel/A Kingdom for a Cow*, contain vocal parts and text together with the instrumental parts. These scores were circulated to the various theaters producing his works, and in some cases they were to have served as the principal source for publication. Weill’s Broadway scores served a different function. In the Broadway tradition, full scores—rarely written by the composer himself—were never prepared for possible publication, and they were used primarily by the copyists who prepared the individual instrumental parts. Weill was exceptional in wanting as much control over the sound of his works as he did. In America, however, he adopted the Broadway practice of including only instrumental parts in the full score.⁹

One factor that may have contributed to the problems *Firebrand* encountered was the compressed time frame of its genesis compared to most of Weill’s other Broadway shows.¹⁰ Even though Weill, Gershwin, and Mayer had reached an agreement with producer Max Gordon early in May 1944, Weill and Gershwin did not begin working in earnest on the music and lyrics until August, a little over five months before rehearsals began for what was then called *Much Ado about Love*.¹¹ As late as December, Weill and Gershwin had yet to complete several large-scale numbers, the title role had not been cast, and the collaborators had not even decided whether there would be a concluding production number set in the palace of Fontainebleau.¹² The composer scarcely had time to produce the orchestral score, the longest of his American career up to that time—only *Love Life* (1948) has a more extensive page count. This

may explain why nearly one fourth of this 650-page score is in the hand of a professional arranger, Ted Royal. To be sure, in some of his other Broadway works, Weill also assigned the orchestration of certain numbers to assistants. Usually one can argue that these are exceptional passages for which Weill desired a more specific Broadway sound than the one he had already so successfully appropriated. Cases in point would be Royal’s orchestration of the charm song “Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow” from *Street Scene* and Irving Schlein’s of the boogie-woogie that closes the “Women’s Club Blues” from *Love Life*. In the case of *Firebrand*, informed as it is by traditional operetta, one can only conclude that pressures of time rather than considerations of style prompted Weill to relinquish, at least in part, control over this dimension of his work.

For such scores as *Die Dreigroschenoper* or *Lady in the Dark*, which were prepared for publication or enjoyed an extensive performance history during which the composer remained actively involved, it is possible to glean evidence about the form in which Weill wished his text to be transmitted for future use. We possess no such evidence for any number in *Firebrand*. Given these difficulties, this edition endeavors to transmit within the main text a version of the work that could actually have been performed—in this case during the Boston run—rather than an arbitrary collation of all extant material. Within those constraints, however, a certain amount of flexibility is possible. During the rehearsals and performances of *Firebrand*, almost every number underwent significant alteration in the form of cuts, reorchestrations, transpositions, or the wholesale reordering of musical sections. The editor has had to determine which revisions merit inclusion in the main text and which should be relegated to appendices and notes. For example, because No. 3 (“Our Master Is Free Again”) was never performed in Boston or in New York, it is included in Appendix I. It is always possible to reinstate it, of course; in fact, all three productions in which this edition was used in pre-publication form elected to do so, while abridging the final scene.

The two ariettas, No. 4 (“I Had Just Been Pardoned”) and No. 21c (“How Wonderfully Fortunate”), present a different problem: both are listed in the Boston program, and the physical state of the full score and parts suggests that, for a time, the numbers were performed, or at least rehearsed, before they were dropped. The show was certainly too long, but if the authors had been able to revise the work independently of the constraints imposed by the Max Gordon production, they might have chosen to omit something else—perhaps the last scene, about which Weill expressed reservations.¹³ And there are good reasons for leaving these numbers in the main text. Without No. 4, in which Cellini recounts his most recent adventure in ever more hyperbolic language, the humor of Act I, Scene iii becomes merely pedestrian. The intonation problems of Beverly Tyler (Angela), noted in the Boston reviews, could have been a factor in dropping No. 21c. Indeed, Weill had already jettisoned much of this difficult number while orchestrating it; the original piano-vocal version is preserved in Appendix III.

Not every cut made in Boston should be reinstated, however. For example, the decision, on advice by book doctor George Kaufman, to bring down the curtain on Act I just at the moment when the Duke and Duchess discover one another instead of their lovers, is clearly an improvement, because it eliminated the anticlimactic da capo of mm. 111–152. This revised ending is preserved in the main text of the edition, and the original ending appears in Appendix II.

In sum, any critical edition is caught between a Scylla and Charybdis: an edition that merely juxtaposes all possible variants is not critical; but an edition that imposes a unitary vision of the work forestalls the user’s critical judgment. It is possible, within limits, to determine more or less what was being played when *Firebrand* closed in April 1945, for instance, by matching as closely as possible the annotated vocal scores to the final state of the orchestral parts. Alternatively, one could try to match the vocal parts to the original, unmarked state of the Weill/Royal orchestration. Following the first procedure amounts to asserting that the final state of the score is the *Fassung letzter Hand*, reflecting the sum total

of all compositional decisions taken by the composer. The second procedure would imply that Weill's score had once existed in a virginal state before being sullied by the practical exigencies of the theatrical production. Both strategies would be thoroughly ahistorical approaches not only to editing Weill's Broadway musicals, but his works in general. One has to hope that somewhere in the process of negotiating that slippery terrain between a composer's notation and the various "scripts" that historical circumstances have bequeathed to us, it is possible for a text to emerge that is both critical and viable. In keeping with the tenets of the *Kurt Weill Edition*, this edition strives to distinguish between "event" and "work," "text" and "script," even if the distinction is more regulative than constitutive.

II. WEILL, BROADWAY, AND OPERETTA IN THE 1940S

Although the playbill for *Firebrand* described it merely as "a new musical," nearly all the opening night reviews noted that the new offering was an operetta. In their taxonomic zeal, critics seem not to have noticed any of the work's innovations in the context of American operetta. The verdicts on *Firebrand* were also verdicts on a genre widely perceived as epigonic. By 1945, New York critics used the term *operetta* to designate a distinct, increasingly outmoded subgenre of musical theater. This perception was based on the romantic Broadway operettas of the previous generation, particularly those of Friml and Romberg, as well as on older European operettas in revival.

In the 1920s and '30s, New York audiences and critics would have made a distinction between two principal types of book shows, operetta and musical comedy, even when instances of the former were slipped into the repertory under such euphemisms as "musical play" (Friml's *Rose-Marie*), "musical romance" (Romberg's *The New Moon*), or "musical adventure" (Kern's *Music in the Air*). In operettas the score, lyrics, and book were more or less "integrated," to use what became a fashionable term after the 1943 triumph of *Oklahoma!* As Oscar Hammerstein put it in 1925, following the success of *Rose-Marie* (which he shared with composers Herbert Stothart and Rudolf Friml):

The type [of musical comedy] that persists, that shows the signs of ultimate victory, is the operetta—the musical play with music and plot welded together in skillful cohesion. These are the only kind that are revived years after their first presentation.¹⁴

Operetta lyrics and dialogue were usually the work of a single librettist. In musical comedy, book and lyrics were often created by different people, with the book serving as a loose framework for songs that might already have been composed or taken wholesale from other shows. Cole Porter, for instance, usually wrote twice as many numbers as a show needed; it was up to the rest of the team to worry about which ones to use and where. The loosely-knit books of musical comedy also left room for the interpolation of specialty material that had nothing to do with the rest of the show. In *Lady, Be Good!*, the vaudeville star Ukulele Ike performed his scat routines to music that was not composed by Gershwin. In short, the line between musical comedy and revue was hazy.

Operetta and musical-comedy texts differed not only in structure but also in content. Operettas were set in *Mitteleuropa*, exotic locales, or bygone eras, and they busied themselves with the exploits of aristocrats or historical figures. Musical comedies featured contemporary, urban American settings with recognizably modern characters: playboys, college athletes, gangsters, politicians, and the women who loved them. Operetta lyrics tended to be effaced by the music; the likes of Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein (at least in his earlier days) typically wrote overwrought, sentimental, and decidedly minor poetry. The best musical comedy lyrics could stand on their own, and they assimilated (and in some cases influenced) the language of the smart set; you could learn to speak "flapperese" from *Funny Face*.

Regarding the music, operetta composers and arrangers exploited

techniques for creating long, continuous sections of music. These techniques, staples in comic opera, included the use of recitative, melodrama, flexible *arioso*, and chain construction, especially in finales. Musical comedies were made up of shorter, more discrete numbers. Length was achieved by way of repetition; often a song form, typically in the thirty-two-bar AABA pattern, would be heard several times over the course of an evening: it might be sung strophically by one or more characters, repeated several times during a dance evolution, reprised by the full ensemble in a finale, exploited in the potpourri overture and entr'acte, and used to cover scene changes and exits.

Among operetta dances, waltzes predominated; musical comedy, by contrast, reflected changing fashions, starting with rags, then featuring fox trots and Charlestons, and later, as the Latin craze of the late 1930s exploded, rhumbas and beguines. Operettas made liberal use of part-writing in ensemble passages; musical comedies preferred unison and octave doublings. Operettas demanded legitimately trained voices; musical comedies demanded actors who could sing or dance. In operettas, characters sang to one another; in musical comedies a more presentational style of performance dominated. Operettas employed relatively large orchestras with full string sections. Musical-comedy pit bands were smaller and were more likely to include saxophones, duo pianists, banjos, or Hawaiian guitars; they used reed books, with one player switching back and forth between two or more instruments.

Of course, this typology is better understood as two networks of family resemblances rather than as two fixed concepts. For instance, in American operettas it became a virtual rule that a secondary couple be introduced to perform numbers written in a musical-comedy style employing up-to-date dance idioms and slang. The resulting stylistic contrast corresponded to a social difference, since these secondary couples were often of a lower social stratum than the principal lovers. A case in point is the incongruous appearance in *The Desert Song* of an American couple, whose fox trot, "It," a paean to sex appeal, contrasts with the demure waltzes and ballads entrusted to Margot and Pierre. Scenes featuring secondary couples often seemed like interpolations, divorced from the main action, but this quality was technically useful, since such scenes could sometimes be performed "in one" to cover a set change.

If operetta came to seem old-fashioned in comparison to musical comedy, it was partly because its American incarnation (with the notable exception of Gershwin's political operettas) had been drawn mainly from one, largely central-European strain. Operetta's satirical, socially relevant aspects in Offenbach's *opéra-bouffes*—and, to a lesser extent, Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy Operas—were largely eschewed. Only one of Gershwin's three assays in the satirical operetta tradition (*Of Thee I Sing*) met with success. American operetta tended to sentimentalize, not satirize. The exotic and historical settings typical of 1920s and '30s operetta may also have contributed to operetta's moldy reputation. Earlier works, too, featured such locations (for example, Offenbach's *Ba-ta-clan* and *La Périchole*, or Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*), but in order to parody the court of Napoleon III or the bureaucracy of Victorian England. (The Chinese in *Ba-ta-clan* turn out to be French!) Later works avoided such subtexts. The same considerations apply to language itself: classic operettas did not eschew fashionable *argot*, any more than did the musical comedies of Cole Porter. As one of Offenbach's contemporaries put it, in Meilhac's texts "will be found, more accurately and agreeably than elsewhere, the manners and ways, the tics, catchwords and turns of speech of the frivolous and elegant society of the Second Empire and early Third Republic."¹⁵ The same could scarcely be said about the French aristocrats in *The New Moon* (1928). Indeed, musical comedy became for American audiences what Offenbach or Gilbert and Sullivan had been for Europeans. When older operettas were revived on Broadway, their once topical features were no longer deemed relevant. Consider the two major revivals of Gilbert and Sullivan and Offenbach operettas that took place during Weill's American career. Michael Todd's production of *The Hot Mikado* (1939) stressed the exoticism of the original instead of its sociopolitical bite. The lavish *Helen Goes to Troy* (1944)

jettisoned much of Offenbach's score in favor of popular numbers from his other works, including the Barcarolle from *Les Contes d'Hoffman*. In this new guise, *La belle Hélène* came to resemble a mid-1930s MGM operetta rather than an intimate, satirical *opéra-bouffé*.

By the time Weill was emerging as a significant force on the Broadway scene, New York critics had long been expressing reservations about old-fashioned operetta and were soon to welcome its revitalization and refashioning in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical plays. Broadway musical theater in general was in the doldrums; some of its greatest collaborators had died (Gershwin, Youmans) or moved to Hollywood (Kern, Berlin). Even before his death in 1943, alcohol and illness had already put an end to Lorenz Hart's partnership with Richard Rodgers. Cole Porter still wrote annual shows, but they depended increasingly on stars such as Bobby Clark and Ethel Merman to put them over. The greatest hits of the day were revues; *Hellzapoppin'* (1938) held the record with 1,404 performances. Prior to *Lady in the Dark*, which opened in January 1941, the most successful book musical in nearly a decade had been Cole Porter's *Dubarry Was a Lady* (1939), the nightclub setting of which ensured a revue-like succession of star turns for Ethel Merman and Bert Lahr.

It was, therefore, in the context of what might be considered a creative vacuum on Broadway that *Lady in the Dark* achieved its resounding critical and popular success. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* immediately heralded it as the culmination of what he interpreted as a recent trend toward a new kind of musical show:

All things considered, the American stage might as well take a bow this morning. For Moss Hart's musical play, *Lady in the Dark*, which was put on at the Alvin last evening, uses the resources of the theatre magnificently and tells a compassionate story triumphantly. Note the distinction between "musical play" and "musical comedy." What that means to Mr. Hart's mind is a drama in which the music and the splendors of the production rise spontaneously out of the heart of the drama, evoking rather than embellishing the main theme.

Although the idea is not new, since *Cabin in the Sky* and *Pal Joey* have been moving in that direction this year, Mr. Hart and his talented associates have carried it as close to perfection as any one except an academician can require. . . . Mr. Weill's score is a homogenous piece of work, breaking out into song numbers over a mood of dark evocation—nostalgic at times, bursting also into humor and swing.¹⁶

Atkinson's distinction between "musical comedy" and "musical play"—as *Lady in the Dark* was billed—brings to mind the older distinction between "musical comedy" and "operetta"; in the 1920s and '30s, "musical play" had served as a commercially viable euphemism for "operetta." Compositionally, *Lady in the Dark* bore comparison to the genre; each of its musically continuous dream sequences was organized like an extended operetta scene such as a finale or an introduction. Indeed, these sequences were the most extended musical structures Weill had conceived since the failure of *A Kingdom for a Cow*, his only genuine operetta to date. When *Lady in the Dark* opened for its second season, Atkinson took the opportunity to comment further on this novel aspect (for Broadway) of Weill's score:

In the case of *Lady in the Dark* the catalytic agent is Kurt Weill's music. It not only tightens the transitions from the analyst's office to the dream sequences but also expresses the modern, unearthly mood of the play. Mr. Weill is the best writer of theatre music in the country. . . . [H]e is not a song writer, but a composer of organic music that can bind the separate elements of a production and turn the underlying motive into song. . . . At one time music was written for particular occasions rather than for promiscuous use by bands and over the radio, which had not been invented. Mr. Weill is a composer of theatre music in the original sense of that term. He is wholly interested in the occasion.¹⁷

Atkinson's remarks suggest one reason for Weill's relatively limited commercial success on Broadway. After all, only *Lady in the Dark* and *One Touch of Venus* were financially lucrative. All the other shows, critical successes though most of them were, either lost money or barely earned

back their capitalization. Even his two outright hits did not significantly outperform some of Cole Porter's most formulaic shows.¹⁸ Though Weill often complained that Chappell, his American publisher, failed to promote his music properly, in truth he wrote very few songs capable of becoming "standards," so enmeshed were they in plot and character. Atkinson's review reminds us that Weill's formal innovations did not readily accommodate the practice of enhancing ticket and sheet-music sales through "song plugging" on the radio and in nightclubs.

Lady in the Dark was one resting point in Weill's continuous search—even at the partial expense of commercial viability—for new ways of opening up the Broadway musical, of transcending its formal limitations, of exploring "the enormous territory between the two genres" of opera and musical comedy.¹⁹ This search goes some way toward explaining why Weill, after the "chic" success of *Lady in the Dark*, turned to a genre that had fallen into desuetude, eventually making matters even worse by choosing so quixotic a subject as the exploits of a Renaissance sculptor. After *Lady*, Weill was keen to write another work with Gershwin and Moss Hart, but Hart demurred. In any case, the score of *Lady in the Dark* was so dependent on the structure and subject matter of Hart's play that this particular formal experiment was all but unrepeatable. How, then, could Weill continue to "discover new grounds" and satisfy his ambition to compose an American opera within the context of the Broadway musical theater?²⁰ By late 1941, he seems to have decided that operetta, "a very entertaining and yet original kind of *opéra-comique* on the Offenbach line," was the way to achieve this goal.²¹

When Weill, casting about for new ideas after the cul de sac of *Lady in the Dark*, looked to the *opéra-bouffé* as a means of reinvigorating the Broadway musical stage, he was, in a sense, repeating himself. At least twice before, in the early 1930s, he had sought in the Offenbachian model a means of formally transcending the song style he had so successfully exploited in *Die Dreigroschenoper* while at the same time achieving something more widely accessible than the austerities of an opera like *Die Bürgschaft* would permit.²² In his critical writings, moreover, Weill expressed on several occasions his admiration for this other cantor's son who found fame and acceptance in an adoptive country: for the continued sociopolitical relevance of Offenbach's persiflage, for his ability to express stage action rhythmically through musical *gestus*, and for his combination of craftsmanship and popular appeal.²³

Over the course of 1942, Weill became involved in at least four tentative operetta projects. The first was inspired by an English novella he had read the previous fall, F. Anstey's *The Tinted Venus*. He inquired whether Gershwin would write the lyrics, but it was in collaboration with producer Cheryl Crawford, script writer Bella Spewack, and lyricist Ogden Nash, that Weill started work in the summer of 1942 on *One Man's Venus*.²⁴ It was to have starred Marlene Dietrich, but she ultimately demurred.

During the very period when Weill was searching for projects that would permit him to compose "an *opéra-comique* on the Offenbach line," the producer Russell Lewis asked him to make a new arrangement of *La belle Hélène* for Grace Moore. Weill refused the commission and recommended Darius Milhaud, who gladly accepted.²⁵ This particular production never materialized. When *La belle Hélène*, retitled *Helen Goes to Troy*, finally opened at the Alvin Theater in April 1944, the producer was Yolanda Mero-Irion, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold was both conductor (in place of Efrem Kurtz) and arranger (in place of Milhaud).

A third project, an adaptation by S. N. Behrman of Ludwig Fulda's play *Der Seeräuber*, was to have been produced by the Playwrights' Company. A memo to Behrman suggests what Weill may have had in mind for this project:

All these ideas [for *The Pirate*, as Behrman's adaptation was titled] are part of a musical form which I have been interested in for a long time, a kind of improvised commedia dell'arte music. . . . [This] musical treatment [would be] . . . a valuable contribution to the success of the show, especially for an American audience which is not used to a stylized romantic period comedy.²⁶

In the end the Playwrights opted for a straight play to star Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Once his potential involvement was limited to incidental music, Weill withdrew from the venture. A musical version of *The Pirate* eventually appeared in 1948 as an MGM film featuring Cole Porter songs.²⁷ Weill's references to the commedia dell'arte and to "stylized romantic comedy" suggest that *Firebrand* ultimately fulfilled some of the aspirations he had had for the Behrman vehicle.

The fourth project, an operetta based on the life of the Restoration-era courtesan Nell Gwynn, initiated the Weill-Gershwin-Mayer collaboration. Because all three men were in Hollywood at various times from 1943 to 1945, their surviving correspondence is sporadic, and it is not clear exactly how the team came together, although Gershwin and Mayer had long been friends and the latter's involvement might have led to their collaboration on a costume operetta.

Mayer, a former journalist, had gained fame as a playwright with his historical comedies, of which *The Firebrand* (1924) and *The Children of Darkness* (1930) were the most successful. As a screenwriter, he specialized in romantic comedy-dramas with historical, exotic, or aristocratic settings, such as Billy Wilder's *Midnight* (1939) and Ernst Lubitsch's *A Royal Scandal* (1945), although his most famous script for Lubitsch, *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) was set in occupied Poland. Mayer did not author any of Lubitsch's many operetta adaptations (for example, *The Merry Widow* with Chevalier and MacDonald), but he did write several film musicals, most notably two European-style screen operettas: *I Am Suzanne* (1933) starring Lillian Harvey (of *Der Kongress tanzt* fame), with music by Friedrich Holländer; and *Give This Night* (1936), in which the opera singers Jan Kiepura and Gladys Swarthout performed Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score.

The Firebrand, written during a trip to Florence and inspired by Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography, was the twenty-seven-year-old Mayer's first play. The original Broadway cast included Joseph Schildkraut as Cellini, Frank Morgan as the Duke, Nana Bryant as the Duchess, Edward G. Robinson as Ottaviano, and Eden Gray as Angela. The production also featured one song, "The Voice of Love," with music by Robert Russell Bennett and lyrics by none other than Ira Gershwin. *The Firebrand* was an immediate success, hailed by Burns Mantle as one of the season's ten best, along with O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Laurence Stallings and Maxwell Anderson's *What Price Glory*. As a playwright, Mayer has continued to garner praise from literary critics.²⁸

Given Mayer's special talents, it is not entirely surprising that the newly-formed team envisioned some sort of historical operetta well before specific work on *Firebrand* began. On 10 October 1942, the trio signed a contract with Russell Lewis to provide the book, lyrics, and music for a stage production based on the life of Nell Gwynn and starring Grace Moore.²⁹ Weill gushed to Lenya:

Last night I had a long session with Edw. Justus Mayer (a first class writer) and Ira about Nell Gwynn. I got a wonderful idea for that show and they are very excited about it and want to do it. It would be a perfect set-up. If I don't have to go into the army I think I will do a show with Brecht for you [underscore in original].³⁰

Nell Gwynn might well have joined a venerable tradition of operettas based on the life of royal courtesans.³¹ A surviving page of notes by Weill suggests that *Nell Gwynn* might have eventually resembled Offenbach's court satires *Barbe bleue* and *La Périhole*, for he intended the work as a commentary on imperialist delusions:

The theme should be somewhat around: How empires are being made—namely in the bedrooms of the kings. This would have great significance in a time where the whole idea of empires—and the empires themselves are breaking down. You know that Charles II, through his marriage, acquired Bombay and India for the empire. We could show how silly it is that 300 million Indians are being ruled by foreigners, just because a young princess who had nothing else to offer wanted to be married to a king. We could also show the competition among the *maitresses* who, each of them, are trying to make a present to the English empire.³²

Although Gershwin recalled a few work sessions with Eddie Mayer on *Nell Gwynn* toward the end of 1942, Mayer's prior screenplay commitments eventually precluded a collaboration on this project, as well as on a "Cinderella idea" that Gershwin floated that December.³³ Mayer, busy on a screenplay for Lubitsch (*A Royal Scandal*) and suffering from diabetes, may have preferred not to begin a new project from scratch. Weill spent much of 1943 on a revised version of *One Man's Venus*. In the hands of his new collaborators, librettist S. J. Perelman and lyricist Ogden Nash, the project evolved into *One Touch of Venus*, which bore little resemblance to *opéra-comique*. In fact, it has been called Weill's only "regulation musical comedy," or nearly so.³⁴ All of Weill's tentative operetta projects had come to naught, and his ambitions in that direction remained unfulfilled.

By the time Weill returned to operetta in 1944, it was no longer possible to compose anything along the lines of *Der Kuhhandel* or even *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938), which could almost be considered a political operetta (were it not for the modest scope of most of its individual numbers). As David Drew puts it, "the only implications of *Der Kuhhandel* that could still be worked out were formal and generic. . . . Apart from their indebtedness to *A Kingdom for a Cow*, the one thing *Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *The Firebrand of Florence* had in common was the avoidance of any topic that threatened to be 'too overwhelming' for parody."³⁵

In other respects, however, it seemed like a propitious time for operetta. Max Reinhardt's production of *Die Fledermaus*, as revised and conducted by Erich Wolfgang Korngold under the title *Rosalinda*, had been one of the successes of the 1942–43 season, racking up 521 performances, almost as many as *One Touch of Venus* and more than the initial Broadway run of *Lady in the Dark*. Then, during the 1943–44 season, there was an almost equally successful revival of *The Merry Widow* at the Majestic Theater. The music director was Robert Stolz, who had conducted the Viennese premiere in 1905, and the stars were Jan Kiepura and Martha Eggerth. That season and the next witnessed revivals of several other operettas (for example, the Korngold-Offenbach extravaganza).

Even the success of *Oklahoma!*, for all its reputation as a groundbreaking work, could be interpreted as evidence of renewed interest in operetta, as Gerald Bordman has suggested:

[Hammerstein's] solemnity and sentimentality, coupled with Rodgers's broader new style, suggest that what the new American musical play really had suddenly become was the mid-20th-century native answer to the Continental operetta, the same answer Hammerstein and Kern had hit upon with *Show Boat*, but never properly pursued. If this is true, it might also partially explain the appeal of operettas and operettas disguised as musical plays running so successfully at the time on Broadway.³⁶

Indeed, *New York Times* drama critic Lewis Nichols coined the term "folk operetta" to designate Rodgers and Hammerstein's new type of musical play.³⁷ Could Nichols have had in mind a comparison to the distinctly *volkstümlich* subgenre of central European operetta, epitomized in the works of Carl Zeller (*Der Vogelhändler*, *Der Obersteiger*) and Carl Michael Ziehrer (*Die Landstreicher*) in Vienna, and Leon Jeßel (*Schwarzwaldmädel*) in Berlin? He certainly understood that, choice of locale aside, many of Rodgers and Hammerstein's formal innovations showed a marked continuity with earlier American operettas, some of the most celebrated of which had been scripted by Hammerstein himself (*Rose-Marie*, *The Desert Song*, *Show Boat*, *Music in the Air*). And even if the much-touted innovation of using dance toward dramatic ends had not been especially characteristic of 1920s and '30s operetta, had not the climactic *galop* and waltz finales of Offenbach and Strauß (not to mention Weill's own *Der Kuhhandel*) served a similar purpose?

Oklahoma! could have provided a further incentive for Weill to pursue his path toward an "Opera for Broadway,"³⁸ as he hoped *Firebrand* would turn out to be, for his rivalry with Richard Rodgers was already pronounced. If, back in 1941, Brooks Atkinson had interpreted Rodgers

and Hart's *Pal Joey* as a step in the direction of *Lady in the Dark*, by 1943 it was beginning to seem as if Weill was following in Rodgers's footsteps. Like *Oklahoma!*, *One Touch of Venus* featured a dream ballet choreographed by Agnes de Mille. Some critics compared the two works, which had both opened in 1943, and found Weill's wanting:

I had heard so many enthusiastic reports about the show that I went prepared to be incited to write a rave review. In fact I had already had my lead in mind. Only one qualitative phrase out of two possible ones remained (so I thought) to be chosen: it was either to be "as good as" or "better than" *Oklahoma!* That's out, definitely.³⁹

While most critics approved of Agnes de Mille's ballets, they were no longer novel, as they had been half a year before. First-night reviewers singled out for praise the first-act comic ballet, "Forty Minutes to Lunch," a pleasant medley of tunes heard earlier in the evening. They deemed over-long the second-act dream ballet, "Venus in Ozone Heights," which, musically, aims considerably beyond the potpourri technique of *Oklahoma!* Wilella Waldorf expressed the critical consensus:

Agnes de Mille, since her success with the ballets in "*Oklahoma!*" is now the most sought-after choreographer on Broadway. If she goes on staging dances hereabout, people may grow a little tired of her style. . . . [H]er shorter first-act ballets in "*One Touch of Venus*" . . . are top-grade de Mille, reflecting her highly developed and individual comedy sense. . . . ["*Venus in Ozone Heights*"] struck us as the sort of "pagan rout" occasionally indulged in by the Ballet Russe in one of its more routine moods.⁴⁰

Weill and "musical play" were no longer being mentioned in the same breath. Significantly, critics did not compare Cole Porter's musicals of the same period (for example, *Something for the Boys* and *Mexican Hayride*) to Rodgers and Hammerstein's. Weill had been cast in the role of that team's main rival; Porter's shows were accepted as the star vehicles that they were.

Weill, in turn, seems to have been envious of *Oklahoma!*'s record-setting triumph and was convinced that he could do better. He expressed his opinion to Ira Gershwin:

Eddie [Mayer] probably told you that we saw "*Oklahoma!*" together. I was surprised to find that they haven't much improved the show since I saw it in New Haven. They still haven't got a second act—but they don't seem to need one. . . . On the whole, the show is definitely designed for a very low audience I. Q. and that, in my opinion, explains the terrific success. But it is a very professional job, very neat and clean and lovely to look at and to listen to.⁴¹

It is tempting to compare Weill's verdicts on *Oklahoma!* with his pronouncements some ten years earlier about another rival work, the revue-operetta *Im weißen Rössl*:

Naturally it is easiest—as today numerous theaters in the country do—to attract an audience with *Im weißen Rössl*. I am enough of an optimist to assume that we in Germany today have not yet come to a cultural situation so barbaric as to replace opera—always a significant component of German culture—with the most superficial type of theater.⁴²

Both shows were the most successful of their day, the former eclipsing *Lady in the Dark*, the latter *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Both appealed to a sentimentalized, *volkstümlich* past. Weill's remarks on the Benatzky confection places his seemingly antipopulist reference to low audience intelligence in context. To Weill's way of thinking, a Benatzky or a Rodgers could, by writing down to their purported level, be just as disdainful of audiences as a Schoenberg, who ignored them altogether.

The context in which Weill predicted to Lenya that "*Firebrand* might become what you and I have been waiting for: my first Broadway Opera" is significant.⁴³ He expressed this hope during the first few days of his collaboration with Gershwin and Mayer, in response to a letter in which Lenya had written:

I was so mad, when they gave *Carmen Jones* the Billboard award for the best score. Those snobs. . . . It makes me furious to think, how little they know about you. But maybe after the war you will have a chance to write operas again and then see what will be left of that Hillbilly show "*Oklahoma!*" That music sounds dummer and dummer every time I hear it.⁴⁴

A month later, Lenya reported another stinging incident:

I was quite mad when I read in the Sunday Times about fall productions (Barnes) and he talks about the "eminent" Mr. Rodgers and puts "*Firebrand*" down the drain with some minor announcements.⁴⁵

Even more galling, the Theater Guild had considered asking Weill to compose the score for Oscar Hammerstein's adaptation of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which became *Oklahoma!*⁴⁶ The next Rodgers and Hammerstein success was also associated with one of Weill's abortive ventures. In 1937, plans he had made with the Theater Guild for an adaptation of Ferenc Molnár's *Liliom* came to naught when the playwright refused to grant them the rights. Seven years later, Molnár, having emigrated to the United States, proved more conciliatory, and Rodgers and Hammerstein once again scooped Weill.⁴⁷

In short, the successful revivals of classic operettas; Weill's long-standing, albeit intermittent, interest in the genre as a kind of *Zwischengattung* that could mediate between high and low; his rivalry with Rodgers; Edwin Justus Mayer's specialization in historical tragi-comedy: all of these factors surely played a part in convincing Weill that an operetta like *Firebrand* would be one way to achieve his goal of injecting more "content" into American musical theater, thereby slipping a "Broadway Opera" in through the back door.

III. GENESIS AND PRODUCTION

i. The Weill-Gershwin-Mayer Collaboration

In the spring of 1944, with *One Touch of Venus* well into its run of 567 performances, the Weill-Gershwin-Mayer triumvirate was revived. The idea of adapting Mayer's play *The Firebrand* does not, however, seem to have come from any of the collaborators. In 1928, Mayer's publisher, Horace Liverwright, had produced a musical version, *The Dagger and the Rose*, under the distinguished direction of George Cukor. Sigmund Romberg and Oscar Hammerstein II were to have provided the music and lyrics, but when they withdrew, the assignment went to the little-known team of Eugene Berton and Edward Eliscu. It disappeared after a one-week tryout in Atlantic City.⁴⁸ The scriptwriter for that failed venture, Isabel Leighton, contacted Weill early in 1944 about composing the music for a new adaptation. Weill reported to Gershwin, "I was very unenthusiastic, but they finally asked if I would be interested in case that you would do the lyrics—and I said yes."⁴⁹ Gershwin worried that he had no experience writing lyrics for costume pieces: where would he find room for humorous topical allusions?⁵⁰ He said he was "in no rush to rush into anything," citing correspondence, taxes, dentist appointments, and poker as prior commitments. Moreover, he remembered Leighton's involvement with the 1928 fiasco, of which Weill was apparently unaware:

I like your being "very unenthusiastic" about the "*Firebrand*." When you write it's being done by Elizabeth Layton I'm wondering if you don't mean Isabel Leighton who, I believe, has something to do with the musical version that never got to New York, some fifteen years ago.⁵¹

By early March, Weill was leaning toward the possibility of collaborating with Gershwin and Mayer on a show for Billy Rose that was to open that Christmas. This show was to have been based on *My Lady's Dress*, the 1914 play by Edward Knoblock, whose *Kismet* would be adapted for the eponymous Wright-Forrest "Musical Arabian Night." Rose had also asked if Weill and Gershwin could write the songs for his forthcoming *The Seven Lively Arts*, but Weill was not interested in com-

posing for a revue; that assignment eventually fell to Cole Porter. The Knoblock project, though, offered Weill the opportunity to compose “almost . . . an opera and . . . definitely not a musical comedy.”⁵²

It is not entirely clear what caused Weill to change his mind about Mayer’s play by early April. The possibility of casting Lenya as the Duchess was certainly a factor. Weill’s two goals in the wake of *Venus*—the operetta with Gershwin and Mayer and the show for Lenya—could now come together. Another factor could have been that Weill saw in Mayer’s historical play, with its Italian setting, the possibility of composing an entire score along the lines of the Columbus sequence from the film *Where Do We Go from Here?*, on which he and Gershwin had worked during the winter of 1943–44. This sequence differed from the other songs in the film insofar as it was a continuous musical scene, some ten minutes in length, in a flexible musical idiom that moved freely from Italianate recitative and arioso composed for “legitimate” voices to passages of musical comedy better suited for the vocal talents of the star, Fred MacMurray. It is stylistically of a piece with *Firebrand*. This was not the first American film musical to use continuous music over long stretches. Here once again, Rodgers had anticipated Weill: in two early sound films, *Love Me Tonight* and, especially, *Hallelujah! I’m a Bum*, he and Lorenz Hart had experimented with extended musical scenes in which rhymed dialogue, either spoken or sung in a *parlando* style to the accompaniment of rhythmic ostinatos, occasionally gave way to flexible arioso or to a standard thirty-two-bar popular song. What is different about *Where Do We Go from Here?* is that the musical *scena* is conceived operatically, both in style (the roles of Columbus and the mutinous sailor call for legitimately trained voices) and in formal organization; Weill himself referred to it as “a little Italian opera.”⁵³ Harking back to the individual dreams in *Lady in the Dark*, and looking forward to the Prologue and the Trial Scene from *Firebrand*, the Columbus episode very nearly constitutes a self-contained miniature comic opera (“nearly” because when the scene was filmed, the music for the ending was cut and replaced with spoken dialogue).

By early spring 1944, in any case, it was beginning to look as if the Billy Rose project would not work out. Evidently, Mayer was not going to be involved in adapting *My Lady’s Dress*, and nothing came of the idea to invite the playwright S. N. Behrman instead. Perhaps for lack of any better options, Weill decided that, after all, Mayer’s play was one of the “best-constructed” comedies he had ever read:

I was amazed to what degree it is a ready made libretto for the kind of smart, intelligent, intimate romantic-satirical operetta for the international market which we always talked about, and I think, from our point-of-view we would make a great mistake if we would not seriously consider it. I see it as a small show (with great touring possibilities), more a comic opera than a musical comedy, which means it would have a great deal of music of all types: songs, duets, quartets and sextets, recitative, underscored dialogue, and some dancing. . . . [Y]ou’ll probably have heard from Eddie how Jed [Harris] tried desperately to get in on this project. I just wait for the whole excitement to die down. Then I will probably have a talk with Max Gordon and see how he would feel about it.⁵⁴

By mid-May Weill was able to tell Gershwin, “Well, it looks as if we’ve really got a show this time.” He reiterated his vision for the work:

I see the whole thing more as a light opera than a musical comedy, with a good deal of story told in terms of lyrics and music, musically very light, elegant, and melodious. . . . [W]e have a chance to turn out what people have been talking about for a long time: an intelligent intimate operetta based on charm, humor and warmth, with great possibilities for an international market after the war. We should try to cast it with good singing actors, without big names so that we can send out a second company in case of a success.⁵⁵

With his reference to good but little-known singing actors, Weill may have already have been trying to enlist Gershwin in his campaign to cast Lenya as the Duchess.

Weill, Gershwin, and Mayer had taken their time deciding on a project, but once Gordon was involved it suddenly seemed as if there was very little time to waste. Gordon was already pressing for an out-of-town tryout around Thanksgiving, to be followed by a New York opening during Christmas week. Hassard Short, who had co-directed *Lady in the Dark*, agreed to join the team, but not until the fall, after he had honored his commitment to Billy Rose for *The Seven Lively Arts*.⁵⁶ Because of Mayer’s film obligations and Gershwin’s aversion to spending a hot summer in New York, far away from his regular poker game, Weill agreed to work in Beverly Hills, at least until the weather cooled down on the east coast. In return, Gershwin promised to “try to have the liquor rings taken off the piano.” Weill arrived at Union Station in Los Angeles at 2 a.m. on 26 June 1944. Over dinner that night, the three authors began their collaboration in earnest.

The ten-month history of *Firebrand*, from Weill’s first meeting with Gershwin and Mayer to the last performance on 28 April 1945, was generally calamitous, except for a brief honeymoon, during which Weill wrote to his brother Hans:

I have done a lot of work these first ten days. We have almost a complete story outline and Ira and I can start on the score in a few days. That’s more than I expected. I am quite excited about the musical possibilities with this show. And thank God, I have collaborators on my own level this time.⁵⁷

Was it around this time that Gershwin jotted down several dozen ideas for a show title? Apart from the definitive title, one other idea, *Much Ado about Love*, was to serve for the rehearsal period and the Boston tryout. We can only regret the rejection of “Malice in the Palace” or “He, She, and the Duke,” not to mention “Laid in Florence.”⁵⁸

Weill’s letter to his brother hints at the reason why the composer soon found work on *Firebrand* so frustrating. Unlike, say, Cole Porter, who could compose an entire slate of songs for a book about which he had only the slightest knowledge, Weill had to have a libretto, or at least an extended outline, before he could begin. It had been a while, however, since Mayer had written an original stage work; he had become used to the piecemeal approach to scriptwriting that was characteristic of the Hollywood studio system. Weill also needed lyrics in order to compose. Gershwin, who did not read music, habitually set an already-composed song with a dummy lyric as mnemonic device, subsequently inventing real verses at his leisure. After the death of his brother George in the summer of 1937, Ira had gone into semi-retirement. Leaving aside a brief collaboration with Vernon Duke on the score of *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938), a film commission left unfinished at the time of George’s death, Weill had become Gershwin’s first creative partner in nearly three years. For Gershwin, working with Weill meant altering some well-established routines. In order to collaborate on *Lady in the Dark*, Gershwin had to travel to New York, where it was necessary for composer and lyricist to work feverishly for four months at close quarters in a hotel suite.⁵⁹ Gershwin was not eager to resume so punishing a schedule, especially when surrounded by the amenities of his “Plantation” at 1021 North Roxbury Drive, purchased after the resounding financial success of *Lady in the Dark*. It was more agreeable to work on *Cover Girl* (1944), a film for which Gershwin and Jerome Kern provided the songs. This project, the only one during the period from 1940 to 1945 on which Gershwin did not collaborate with Weill, was completed between *Lady in the Dark* and *Where Do We Go from Here?* In contrast to Weill, who demanded a close working relationship, Kern preferred to work alone. Gershwin would visit Kern, listen to a new song, fix it in his memory with a dummy lyric, and then return to his routine.⁶⁰

It did not help matters that both of Weill’s partners were not in the best of health at the time. Maurice Abravanel recalled that Mayer, seriously diabetic, was “constantly hazy” because of a dependency he had developed on the scotch whisky he drank to counteract the insulin. Meanwhile, Gershwin was trapped in a vicious cycle of anti-depressants and Benzedrine.⁶¹ In short, both Gershwin and Mayer, who were keen

on the *Firebrand* project in principle, seemed to become reluctant partners when it came to realizing it. It was not long before an irritated Weill was threatening to go home: "I told Eddie and Ira in so many words that I didn't come to California to swim in the pool."⁶² He was even unsporting enough to snitch on them to Max Gordon. With Hassard Short's release from *The Seven Lively Arts* delayed (it did not open until 7 December), a Christmas premiere of *Firebrand* was no longer feasible, but Gordon still insisted on out-of-town tryouts by the end of the year. He agreed with Weill that work might progress better if Gershwin could be persuaded to get out of his house and away from his routine: "Why don't you be a good guy and take the train East with Kurt and work on the show here? I am very anxious to open the show Christmas week out of town . . ."⁶³ His entreaties fell on deaf ears.

The thirty-one letters Weill wrote to Lenya between his arrival in Beverly Hills in June and her own arrival that September chronicle the genesis of *Firebrand* in several reports per week. For no other work of Weill's is there so much detail concerning the daily working relationship between the composer and his collaborators. There is scarcely a letter among them in which Weill did not complain about the stalling tactics of one or both of his partners. For example, toward the end of July, Weill suspected that Gershwin's cold was just an excuse to take medicine that made him "dopey" and prevented him from working.⁶⁴ Lenya took to defending the hapless lyricist, while stroking her husband's ego:

And Darling, dont get nervous if Ira hangs around sometimes. Dont forget, that you are an exeptional case on vitality. You have to understand, that Ira is just so much slower. I dont even think it's laziness, maybe he really needs a day or two between lines.⁶⁵

Lenya would often beg Weill to take his time and overlook Max Gordon's impatience: "No matter how long it takes, there is no time limit on that show. . . . It's too an important show to rush."⁶⁶ Yet Weill's concern was not entirely misplaced: the contract that he, Gershwin, and Mayer signed with Gordon that summer stipulated that libretto, lyrics, and music be delivered by 1 November, with two-month's leeway for last-minute changes, ballet music, and other contingencies. In return, Gordon guaranteed production within two months of delivery.⁶⁷ Weill's habitual drive seems to have been intensified by his conviction that the success of the show rode on his shoulders. This sense of responsibility, coupled with his habit of contributing to all aspects of the collaboration, led him to claim the dominant role in the creative team:

I am rather proud of getting out of Ira the sort of lyrics which I want and on a level which he has never reached before. I am doing the same with Eddie, and both Ira and Eddie are following me blindly— . . . I have become so sure now of my craftsmanship, of my theater knowledge and of my taste that I would take a dominating position in almost any combination. You can see clearly from the little samples of lyrics which I sent you that this will be more "my" show than anything I have done so far—even though I don't get credit for anything but the music. But I am sure that Verdi or Offenbach or Mozart contributed as much to their libretti as I do without getting credit for it. This is a part of a theatre composer's job to create for himself the vehicle which he needs for his music.⁶⁸

Weill also had to attend to other business: exploring casting possibilities for the roles of Angela, Cellini, and the Duke; supervising recording sessions for the film *Where Do We Go from Here?*; and negotiating with Mary Pickford over the movie sale of *One Touch of Venus* to United Artists. There was also the matter of negotiating the film rights for *Firebrand*. Although the production was still some six months away, this had to be attended to immediately because Twentieth-Century Fox already owned the film rights to Mayer's play. The studio had produced a screen version in 1934, starring Fredric March as Cellini and Fay Wray as Angela, with Frank Morgan reprising his stage role as the Duke. Weill had been under the impression that Mayer would have already cleared the rights: "This is again Eddie's fault. He should have [had] them ironed

out before he asked me to come out here."⁶⁹ Max Gordon arranged to acquire temporary film rights from Fox for \$50,000; Weill, Gershwin, and Mayer agreed to repay their share from the proceeds from any eventual film sale. Fox wanted to retain an option to buy film rights to the musical version for a period of eight weeks after the production opened, for which they would pay \$3,000 a week (up to a cap of \$150,000) during the Broadway run. The three authors rejected this deal in favor of one in which rights to their property would be immediately open to the market. They also insisted on retaining the film rights until 1 January 1946, which would give them time to find another producer in case Gordon failed to put on the show. In return, the authors agreed to give Fox twenty-five percent of proceeds in excess of \$250,000 from the film sale. Perhaps in anticipation of a huge hit on the order of *Lady in the Dark*, Fox also helped to capitalize the production.⁷⁰

The film agreements with Twentieth-Century Fox were hammered out over the course of July and August, as was the authors' contract with Max Gordon. Weill, Gershwin, and Mayer had largely approved the contract by 7 August 1945, but they insisted on a change in the billing, which was to have read as follows:

THE FIREBRAND
An operetta by
MAYER, GERSHWIN and WEILL
Libretto by Edwin Justus Mayer
Lyrics by Ira Gershwin
Music by Kurt Weill

The authors requested that the clause be changed to incorporate the following:

Immediately under the title of the play
An operetta
by
Edwin Justus Mayer and Ira Gershwin
Music by Kurt Weill

This billing was unusual for a Broadway musical, for which it was customary to credit the authors of the book and lyrics separately. It is certainly possible that this billing reflected the structure of the operetta libretto, in which extended lyricized passages, the opening scene among them, have a narrative function equal to that of the prose dialogue. The same could be said, however, about Gershwin's contribution to *Lady in the Dark* or Langston Hughes' contribution to *Street Scene*. In both of these billings, however, lyrics and book received separate credit. Perhaps the *Firebrand* billing was related to another contractual clause that called for an equal three-way split of the nine percent author's share of the box office gross. The clause further specified that Mayer's three percent covered his 1924 play. One might have expected Mayer to garner more as author of both the original property and the libretto. Elmer Rice, for instance, received four percent of the *Street Scene* gross in his dual role as author and adapter, while the lyricist, Langston Hughes, got two percent. For *Lost in the Stars*, the novelist Alan Paton received 1.5 percent; Maxwell Anderson, who authored the entire libretto, received five percent; Weill's share was three percent. The contractual arrangements for *Firebrand*, completed several weeks after the collaboration was underway, may have reflected the relatively small amount of rewriting that Mayer undertook in adapting his play.

Despite all of these travails, Weill retained his enthusiasm about the project throughout his California sojourn, and he harbored considerable hopes for it. Officially, *Firebrand* was to be an operetta, according to the billing clause in the Dramatists Guild contract. Indeed, Weill sometimes compared the style of his score to Offenbach and to "Gilbert Sullivan [*sic*]." On several occasions, however, he went so far as to call *Firebrand* a "Broadway Opera," a "comic opera," "a real opera," and (in a letter to Alma Mahler) his "Cellini-Oper."⁷¹ This work, not *Street Scene*, was to

have been his debut as an opera composer on Broadway. Even before Weill had started composing, when he was still developing the basic outline of the libretto with Mayer, he described his vision to Lenya in a letter that reads as if he were addressing a potential backer, except for the caveat about Ira Gershwin:

Well, I am just on the verge of getting Ira to start actual working on the score. . . . It looks more and more as if "Firebrand" might become what you and I have been waiting for: my first Broadway Opera. Ira who keeps comparing it with *Rosenkavalier* [!], is getting really exciting every time I tell him that this show could be an entirely new combination of first class writing, music, singing and acting. You know how ambitious he is, and the aspect of writing the first real Broadway Opera excites him to no end. Of course, the step from this excitement to settling down to real work is not easy with him, but I think today or the next day I'll get him to the piano. The main problem with him is to get him out of that chair in his living room and to come to New York. His argument is, of course, that he spent 5 months in N. Y. for "Lady in the Dark," so it is alright if I spend some time with him here on this show. Several times in the last days I got very impatient about this attitude and said to myself: why don't I go home and forget about the whole thing. But then I had to admit that I would have a very hard time to find another subject like "Firebrand" and another combination of collaborators on my level like Eddie and Ira. So I suppose I'll stick it out.⁷²

During the first part of the summer, Weill's main concern was over the amount of work Mayer was going to have to do. Weill had been worried all along that Eddie's commitments to Lubitsch might impede the collaboration, and he had wanted to avoid being stuck in Beverly Hills while Mayer wrapped things up at the studio:

I am quite worried about Eddie's movie commitment. In his last wire he said: "I believe I will be finished with studio around middle of June," but I am afraid that Lubitsch doesn't quite believe what Eddie believes, and if this is one of those interminable Hollywood jobs it could jeopardize our whole project. I don't think we can accomplish anything in evening conferences while Eddie is still on his picture. Everybody here agrees that there is quite a lot of work to be done on the book. . . . I am definitely planning to come out as soon as Eddie gives me a definite date for the termination of his job.⁷³

These concerns proved well-founded; although Mayer had originally promised to be done with the Lubitsch picture by mid-June, he was still working on it well after Weill had arrived. Weill found it galling that the writer was rarely available at the time when he was most needed:

On Wednesday night we decided that the Ascanio story is too pedestrian and that it might be better to try another way to make the love story between Cellini and Angela the main story because we are afraid of too much plot for an operetta. So I wanted to work on this idea yesterday, but Eddie is busy with his picture and doesn't make any attempt to finish it, and Ira doesn't want to work as long as Eddie doesn't. . . . I am seeing Eddie for lunch today and I am going to tell him that I will give up the whole idea and go back to New York unless he finishes his picture next week.⁷⁴

Two weeks later, Weill had yet another "showdown with Eddie," again threatening to quit the show "if he does not get out of the picture."⁷⁵ And although on 1 August Weill could triumphantly report, "Hurray! Eddie is through with Lubitsch and entirely free for the show," a week later he discovered that "that louse is secretly still working on the picture."⁷⁶

Mayer would not be done with the film until 14 August, almost two months later than promised. Nevertheless, by 25 July, one month after his arrival, Weill had enough of a script to begin composing. That day, he and Gershwin started work on the lyrics and score for what would become the twenty-minute Prologue. They finished it about two and a half weeks later, "which isn't bad," Weill wrote with pride, "if you think that it is as long [actually twice as long] as the 'Columbus' sequence in

the picture which took us about 10 weeks."⁷⁷ Weill was especially pleased with Gershwin's lyrics, finding that the Hangman's Song read just like *Dreigroschenoper*.⁷⁸ Lenya concurred that the line "one man's death is another man's living" sounded "like: *Erst kommt das Fressen* but less aggressive and much wiser."⁷⁹ The whole number seemed to her "like François Villon," the fifteenth-century poet upon whose poetry Brecht had based some of the *Dreigroschenoper* lyrics.⁸⁰ It probably did not escape her that several of Villon's poems concern hangings.

That summer, Weill would dine at the Gershwins several times a week—so often that, at one point, flush with excitement about just having finished the Prologue and having gotten "more work out of [Ira] than in 6 weeks last winter when we were working on the picture [*Where Do We Go from Here?*]," he considered making the Gershwins a present of some whisky ("because I am eating there so much"). Following Weill's instructions, Lenya had half a case packed for shipment. But then, after some further tension resulting from Gershwin's refusal to go to New York until well into the fall, Weill changed his mind:

Darling, don't bother with the whisky for the Gershwins. They will get along without. I am doing enough by staying out here to work with him and I don't have to make presents on top of it. And we can use those few bottles of whisky ourselves, can't we, darling?

Lenya sent four bottles anyway.⁸¹

On one occasion, Weill, who was renting a house in Bel-Air for the summer and had at his disposal a Viennese butler who was usually "slightly drunk all day long," arranged a dinner party of his own. His guests on the evening of 10 August included Ira and Lee Gershwin and Richard and Jo Révy.⁸² Richard's association with the Weills went back to Lenya's early days in Zurich, when he had served as Lenya's acting coach, mentor, and lover. Although the Gershwins invited the Révys to dinner a few days later, their social encounter was evidently not a happy one. Richard's diary entry for 13 August gives a withering picture of the Gershwin ménage, betraying the typical emigré attitude towards Weill's American career:

At the Ira Gershwins. Lee Gershwin the wife, a poor specimen. The face is made up of artificial, rather successfully mended, skin. Empty. Basically *eine Schnattergans*. Silly, impudent assurance of being "arrivée." The house: "old" Spanish. Nailed to the walls the culture medals, the decorations of civilized society: works of "real art."

Kurt Weill, this Asiatic-European specimen. So far away from the Americans, that he would be terrified if ever he would become fully aware of it. They like him, and to some degree he likes them. But they really don't know who he is. "Freedom from want, freedom from need." Is that it? . . . Kurt Weill singing and playing "Silbersee" (Georg Kaiser). That is great music, compared to this powerful, ringing sound, "Lady in the Dark" etc. are not much more than pretty "Schnadahüpferln." The tragic dependence of the opera composer on the author. Compare the "Firebrand"-Meyer or the Gershwin Ira to Georg Kaiser.⁸³

Once Weill and Gershwin had completed the Prologue, around 12 August, work progressed steadily. The first portion of the Act I finale, the Tarantella ("The Night Time Is No Time for Thinking") was completed by mid-September.⁸⁴ By 18 October, two days before Weill boarded the Super Chief for New York, he and Gershwin were able to record much of the piano-vocal score through Act II, Scene ii, with the following important lacunae: No. 3 ("Our Master Is Free Again"), No. 4 (Arietta), No. 7 (Finaletto), the canonic passage from No. 10 (Madrigal), No. 13 after m. 154, No. 15 ("You're Far Too Near Me Reprise"), No. 16 ("The Letter"), and No. 17 ("The Little Naked Boy"). These demo recordings were probably made in order to interest potential financial backers in the show.

The recordings confirm that much of Weill's holograph piano-vocal score was now more or less in its final shape, ready to be orchestrated. The material missing from the recorded versions of Nos. 13, 15, and 16 consists largely of instrumental passages and reprises. Although it went

unrecorded, No. 4 had been completed during the summer as well. In mid-August, when Weill wrote Lenya thanking her for a new Dunhill pipe with his preferred small bowl and long stem, he also mentioned that Gershwin and he had just written “a little Arietta for Cellini where he tells his exaggerated version of Maffio’s murder. Very good.”⁸⁵ The contrapuntal complexity of the ensemble writing in No. 7 meant that Gershwin and Weill probably could not have performed it by themselves, although this number, too, was substantially complete, as is suggested by the following mid-September report to Lenya:

What is so good for me with Ira, is that he loves to do things that nobody else does, and that he (the only one) has the technique to do them. So for instance, when I had the idea yesterday of writing a Trio between Angela, Cellini and the Duke, where everyone of them sings something different, he got all excited and we wrote the whole thing between 2 P.M. and 1 A.M. last night, and it is a peach. Now I have to write it out.⁸⁶

Weill could not have been talking about the “Nosy Cook Trio” (No. 12) here, since Cellini scarcely sings at all in that number. Moreover, he had described No. 12 several weeks earlier, when he announced work on a duet for the Duke and Angela “where he always mixes up the words.”⁸⁷ Weill’s description of a trio in which “everyone sings something different” could apply only to mm. 1–55 from the Finaletto. (In its final form, this passage is not a trio but a quartet with chorus, for Emilia joins the three other principals. But because Emilia and the chorus merely repeat Angela’s text, Weill could have emended the number after he and Gershwin had worked out the basic structure.)

Evidence suggests that one other number was at least partially completed during the summer of 1944: No. 17 (“The Little Naked Boy”), originally planned for the garden scene in Act I. Weill described it as “a madrigal for Angela and the girls with the title ‘The Little Naked Boy’ (Cupid, you stupid).” Lenya replied enthusiastically: “Cupid ‘you stupid’ shows, that you treat Angela not just as a little sweetiepie.”⁸⁸ On 18 October, however, Weill and Gershwin recorded a different madrigal for the garden scene, “When the Duchess Is Away,” which remained in this spot for the duration of the production.

It is possible that the authors had decided to jettison “The Little Naked Boy,” easily the weakest number in the show. Certainly none of the mocking tone hinted at in the Weill-Lenya correspondence subsists in the extant lyric, nor, at least not in any obvious way, in Weill’s setting, which seems perfectly “with the grain.” Weill was a master at composing satirical waltzes—witness the Boston from *Die Dreigroschenoper* (“Siehst du den Mond über Soho?”), the first-act finale from *Der Kuhhandel* (“Mit einem Mal erfüllt den Saal ein vornehmes, zartes Aroma,” reused in the Circus Dream from *Lady in the Dark*), and the Trial Waltz from *Firebrand* itself. “The Little Naked Boy” does not appear to be one of them.

At some later point, however, probably after Weill had returned to New York, a decision was made to recycle “The Little Naked Boy” and use it near the opening of Act II as a production number for Angela, Emilia, and the six models. Physical evidence suggests such a chronology, even if it cannot conclusively prove it. Sketches and drafts for No. 17 survive on three of the four paper types that contain preliminary material for *Firebrand*. It is the only number drafted on more than two types, which hints at an extended genesis. First, a final draft of the chorus and a sketch for the verse (“The Little God of Love”) survive on a paper type that otherwise includes Act I material almost exclusively. Other sketches for No. 17 are intermingled with preliminary versions of Nos. 8 and 13. Second, a draft of the modulatory transition between the two choruses of No. 17 (mm. 73–76) may be found on a paper type used mostly for Act II; directly below this material is a sketch for No. 21c (“How Wonderfully Fortunate”). Third, a final draft of the verse appears on a paper otherwise reserved for the Trial Scene. For much of November and December, Weill and Gershwin were working on separate coasts. If an additional production number for Act II was required, it would have

made sense to expand material that the collaborators had already developed during their summer together.⁸⁹

By the time Weill and Gershwin made their recordings, the composer’s stay had stretched well beyond the summer sojourn he had planned. A holiday season preview was now out of the question. Two months of leeway had been built into the contract; accordingly, Gordon pushed the tryouts back to February. Weill returned to New York on 30 October, Mayer arrived somewhat later, and Gershwin finally joined them on 12 December. Evidently Mayer was still proving recalcitrant, for Weill reported to Gershwin that “Eddie is really no help whatsoever. He is confused and absent-minded and very impractical. But he is such a nice guy and, at least, he got a good rest and looks better than I’ve ever seen him.”⁹⁰

With Weill and Gershwin apart for six weeks, progress was slow, but at least Gershwin could pen some second strophes.⁹¹ On 25 November, Weill informed Gershwin that he had completed the piano-vocal score up to the Trial Scene, roughly eighty percent of the whole score. The basic outline of the Trial Scene, however, was still under discussion. Weill’s letter to Gershwin that day is worth quoting at length:

As far as our second act troubles are concerned, we will have some hard work to do, but I am sure it will work out. One thing I found out: we are making a mistake by musicalizing just the first part of the trial. The whole trial scene right up to Cellini’s departure for Paris should be another complete musical-lyrical conception, a complete aequivalent (in form) to our opening scene. This doesn’t mean that it all has to be sung, but the only real comedy scene we have in the trial (the scene when the proceedings turn against Ottaviano) should be surrounded by musical material. In order to do that we need about two real “numbers,” just as we have “Florence” and “Life and Love and Laughter” in our opening. That’s why I think we should build the whole “blues” part (“No matter under what sign you’re born”) into a real song on the “It ain’t necessarily so” line, maybe with a complete elimination of the astrology idea. I am still sure that a song with the theme “Nobody is to blame for anything” is a brilliant idea for this spot in the show—if we really work it out. Here are some pre-1535 characters we could use . . . Plato (not to blame for being platonic) . . . Helen . . . This song should be built to a real climax and finish. Then we could go into that crazy waltz “You have to do what you do do” (and that line might be saved for this spot) and leave the rest, as is. Now let’s say we do that, then we would follow it with a few lines of dialogue, leading to Angela’s entrance with her Aria and, maybe a little chorus response. Ascanio’s entrance as a soldier could have music. . . . Then we play the comedy scene, ending with Ottaviano’s being taken away (“The world is full of villains”). Everyone remains on stage. Angela, singing, tells Cellini that now they will at last live together. The Marquis, singing, tells him about the job that’s waiting for him. Cellini is torn apart and it all leads up to a number which would be the big ensemble you always had in mind for this spot. Eddie, I think, has a good idea for that number. It is a quotation from Byron’s “Don Juan”:

Man’s love is of man’s life a thing apart,
’Tis woman’s whole existence.

. . . At the end Cellini is off for Paris, everybody going out with him, leaving Angela alone, heartbroken.—That sounds pretty solid to me. Well, think about it until we meet again.⁹²

Some of Weill’s textual allusions (“The astrology idea,” “no matter under what star you’re born,” “nobody is to blame for anything”) originate in the Circus Dream from *Lady in the Dark*. In a dream sequence, Liza Elliott, torn between her career and her marriage plans, finds herself on trial for being unable to make up her mind. Initially, Gershwin and Weill composed a “Zodiac Song,” in which Liza fatalistically blames the stars for her disposition. The number was eventually replaced by “The Saga of Jenny.” Faced with the prospect of yet another nearly musically continuous trial scene, it was natural to contemplate recycling the unused song for what became No. 21b (“You Have to Do What You Do”). What surely clinched the matter, given Weill’s and Gershwin’s working habits, was that it solved the problem of collaborating on separate coasts. Whereas Weill’s music is entirely new, Gershwin incorporated several verses almost unchanged:

LADY IN THE DARK

[See end of this lyric below]

LIZA:

No matter under what star you're born,
Your days are dark and your life forlorn
And till Mr. Gabriel blows his horn
You go from bad to worse.

No matter under what star you're starred,
The going's rough and the road is hard.
You're always hoist on your own petard
And wind up in a hearse.

With trouble always beckoning,
Who cares about the reckoning?

And who's to judge or blame anyone
For what anyone has done?

CHORUS:

No matter under what star you're born—
It work's out just the same!
We're all in a stew,
So, whatever we do—
We are not to blame.

BARKER:

This is the New Freedom—and they love it!
This is the existence that they covet!
Where, whatever happens, you are above it,

And whatever you do—"What of it?"

JURY:

(repeat)

JURY:

I am not to blame,
Thou are not to blame,

THE FIREBRAND OF FLORENCE

CELLINI:

In Naples one night a wandering gypsy,
After three or four bottles too many, grew tipsy;
On the secret of Secrets she let down the bars
And told me what really is written in the stars.

DUKE:

I don't know where this is going to go
But a tipsy gypsy told him so.

CROWD:

A gypsy let down the bars
And told him what's really in the stars.

CELLINI:

You will offer your apology
When you hear the New Astrology.

CROWD (whispering):

The New Astrology!

CELLINI:

No matter under what sign you're born—
If Leo, Virgo or Capricorn,
Whatever you do from morn to morn—
You have to do what you do do!

No matter under what star you're starred,
It doesn't help you to be on guard.
You're always hoist on your own petard
And have to do what you do do!

CROWD:

What does he mean
With this routine
That comes like bolts from the blue do?

CELLINI:

You have to do what you do do.
'Tisn't up to you at all.
We all live under a hoodoo
Till you hear the trumpet call.
In this life what else can you do?
In this life we're pawns in a game!
If you have to do what you do do—
Whatever you do—you're not to blame.

ALL:

If you have to do what you do do—
Whatever you do—you're not to blame.

CELLINI:

Was Plato to blame for being platonic? . . .
[nine more verses absent from *Lady*]

ALL:

You have to do what you do do
'Tisn't up to you at all.
We all live under a hoodoo
Till you hear the trumpet call.
In this life what else can you do?
In this life we're pawns in a game!
If you have to do what you do do—
Whatever you do—you're not to blame.

DUKE:

I like it! No one's to blame for anything!

I am not to blame,

Thou art not to blame,

He is not to blame,
We are not to blame,
You are not to blame,
Nobody is to blame!
This lady's testimony
Is not so very phony!
With joy we all exclaim
That nobody is to blame.

LIZA:

In Budapest one night a gypsy,
Who drank too much Tokay, grew tipsy
And showed me her secret almanac
And I learned the truth about the Zodiac.

BARKER:

I don't know where this is going to go—
But a tipsy gypsy told her so.

He is not to blame,
You are not to blame,
They are not to blame,
Nobody, nobody, nobody, nobody,

Nobody is to blame!

Gershwin incorporated Weill's idea of listing blameless historical and legendary figures, although he used only Plato and Helen. By refashioning bits of the "Zodiac Song" and expanding it along the lines Weill proposed, he was able to complete most of the Trial Scene. No. 20 ("Procession") and No. 23 ("The Little Naked Boy") repeat earlier material, and the lyric of No. 24 ("Come to Paris") scans exactly like "Come to Florence" from No. 2. Most of No. 21a ("Oh the World Is Full of Villains") consists of unrhymed recitative, and Nos. 25–26 (Gigue-Sarabande) are instrumental. No. 27 (Finale ultimo—"Life, Love, and Laughter") is another reprise. The first six poetic verses of No. 21a and the first six of No. 21c have the same scansion—indeed, Weill set them to the same music. Any remaining collaboration on Act II—most likely on No. 21c ("How Wonderfully Fortunate") and No. 22 ("Love Is My Enemy")—could have waited until after Gershwin's arrival in New York on 12 December, with Weill working on the Act I orchestrations and the vocal score of the Trial Scene in the interim.

On the whole, the 201 pages of Weill's extant sketches and drafts confirm the impression that he and Gershwin worked rather methodically through the score. There are four paper types, and it is possible to order them more or less chronologically. One type, Chappell Professional, contains several unused, untitled sketches: an "Aria alla Italianna," a motif that would eventually appear in "You Have to Do What You Do Do," and a "Serenade" that transforms the *Marie Galante* tango ("Youkali") into a waltz (Weill had previously tried to find a home for this tune within the score for the abortive 1937 film project *The River Is Blue*). The remaining Chappell Professional bifolia contain Cellini's recitative and aria ("Life, Love, and Laughter") from No. 2 and his arietta "I Had Just Been Pardoned" (No. 4). The arietta is closely modeled on the unused "Telephone Number" from *Where Do We Go from Here?* On this first paper type, then, discarded sketches and material from earlier sources predominate.

A second paper type, King Brand No. 1, presents additional unused sketch material, including more echoes of earlier work: "Der Mädchenraub" and "Weiß fällt aufs Feld der Schnee" from *Der Kuhhandel*; the Music Box Waltz from *The River Is Blue*; and "The Westpointer," an unused song from *Johnny Johnson* that was itself derived from the "Mandelay Song" in *Happy End*. Ultimately, Weill retained only two self-borrowings. The march to the gallows from No. 2 opens with a passage (mm. 334–339) derived from unused funeral music in *Johnny Johnson*.⁹³ Even the key is the same. The hymn of praise to "Alessandro the Wise" that appears in Nos. 6 and 7 reworks the national anthem "Wehe über Land und Meere" from *Der Kuhhandel*. In the remaining King Brand foldings, Weill proceeded through sketches and drafts for Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, and the Tarantella from No. 13. The only Act II material, aside from some preliminary sketches for the Trial Waltz, consists of a fair draft of the chorus and a sketch of the verse from No. 17 ("The Little Naked Boy"), which was, however, originally composed for Act I.

The next paper type, Schirmer Royal 54-12, includes sketches and

drafts for Nos. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 (except for the Tarantella), 16, 18, 19, 21a, 21b, 21c, 22, and 24. There is also a draft for the transitional passage between the two choruses of No. 17. The only incongruous element in the third paper type is a fair draft of the pardon and its aftermath in No. 2. The final paper type, Schirmer Royal 61-24, contains material for Nos. 21b, 21c, and 22, as well as a fair draft of the verse from No. 17.

The sketches and drafts indicate that Weill tended to work on an individual number fairly steadily until it was in good enough shape to be incorporated into the holograph piano-vocal score, from which the copyists in turn would derive rehearsal materials such as piano scores and choral parts. The evolution of a number from preliminary sketch to final draft can usually be traced on a single paper type, often on just one or two bifolia or foldings thereof. The sketches and drafts fall roughly into three stages. First, there are Weill's preliminary sketches of a number. Sometimes Weill tried out different options and then circled his preference. These sketches feature rudimentary harmonization, and they may be partially texted, sometimes revealing early versions of Gershwin's lyrics. For example, in one sketch for No. 6 ("Alessandro the Wise"), the Duke begins, "I'm Alessandro the Wise," and then trails off. In the next two sketches, he opens with, "I'm poetic, aesthetic, and, if I may say so, magnetic."

Eventually, the ideas explored in the preliminary sketches coalesce into a continuity draft. At this second stage, the melody is already very nearly in its final shape, and the harmonization, although still sometimes confined to just the bass, has acquired in rudimentary form the rhythmic and motivic profile of its final incarnation in the orchestral score. Weill also introduced certain refinements, such as introductions and postludes, at this point. In "Alessandro the Wise," for example, the opening soldiers' chorus makes its appearance.

The third stage of development is a nearly complete, reasonably clear, final draft of the number, which becomes the basis for the holograph piano-vocal score, all of which is notated on a single paper type. In this latter score, Weill refined the accompaniment, completed the text underlay, and added the tempo, dynamic, articulation, and expressive markings needed for a practical rehearsal score. He also included written instructions for the copyist. For example, instead of writing out No. 23 ("The Little Naked Boy"—Reprise), he requested that at the end of No. 22 ("How Wonderfully Fortunate") the copyist transpose a portion of No. 17 ("The Little Naked Boy"). The holograph vocal score contains only material that is necessary for rehearsing the singers: it does not include dance numbers (for example, No. 25: Gigue), certain instrumental dances within vocal numbers (such as mm. 153–381 of the first-act finale), or other instrumental numbers (the Prelude, for example). Weill prepared his piano scores and short scores for this material separately, on a variety of paper types. He composed them later as they were needed, once the production was underway.

In contrast to the rich trove of information about chronology and working methods in Weill's correspondence, sketches, and drafts, only nine sheets of Gershwin's sketches and preliminary versions have survived, and many of these are too preliminary to give us much of a glimpse into the lyricist's workshop. On one sheet, Gershwin jotted down a few quotations (all unused) from Cellini's memoirs, made a note to himself to "look up jewels in Britannica and precious stones," and then tried out some rhymes suggestive of the historical period. Most of these never made it into the libretto, not even "bodice/arquebus." Although the Prologue was Gershwin's most extended contribution to the libretto, only a single sketch sheet survives, a primitive version of the Hangman's song entitled "The Happy Hangman":

Riff-raff and nobility
Under the gallows tree.
There's an end to haranguing
When you're hanging
Under the gallows tree.
Oh the gallows tree, the gallows tree
Is death for some, but a living for me.⁹⁴

In the final version, a grim observation of the human condition in the first stanza is lightened by a delightful anachronism in the third, creating a splendid bit of gallows humor, in keeping with such operetta precedents as the near-hanging in Offenbach's *Le Pont des soupirs* (not to mention the hanging scenes in two earlier Weill works, *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Knickerbocker Holiday*):

One man's death is another man's living
Under the gallows tree
With union pay
We sing all day
The while our hammers bang.
If the world doesn't like it
The world can go hang—
Under the gallows tree!
Oh, riddle dee diddle dee dee!
Oh, under the gallows tree!

The sketches for No. 10 (Madrigal: "When the Duchess Is Away") are the most extensive, and they reveal Gershwin's characteristic attention to detail. Initially Gershwin wrote:

When the Duchess is away,
Just like the mouse, the Duke will play
Now the Duchess is away!
Under the moon, very soon I'll make hay!

In the final version, Gershwin turned the internal rhyme in the fourth verse into an end rhyme for the second couplet, thus avoiding a near-repetition of the first verse:

All the world is now in tune.
Duchess away, let's make hay 'neath the moon.

No. 12 ("The Cozy Nook Song") fulfilled Gershwin's long-standing desire to devote an entire lyric to spoonerisms. He recalled the number with particular fondness, adding that "[it] was, I think, not ungraciously accepted by the few who paid to see *The Firebrand of Florence*, and by the few more who came in on passes."⁹⁵ The lyrics become somewhat tiresome, since, like No. 19 ("A Rhyme for Angela"), the humor depends mostly on the repeated use of a single gimmick. Still, the following spoonerism provides one of the few truly off-color passages in the text:

DUKE: I love you for your sturgeon vile.
ANGELA: My lord, you mean my virgin style?

The lyrics for No. 5 ("I'm Afraid You're Far Too Near Me") are the only ones derived directly from the original play:

ANGELA: You must not come near me.
CELLINI: I must come very near.
ANGELA: That's near enough.

Apparently, it was Weill and Mayer who had the idea of developing this material into a duet.⁹⁶

Surviving documentation about the genesis of Mayer's book is even scarcer than that for Gershwin's lyrics. The earliest available script probably does not predate January 1945. It contains all the lyrics and dialogue for the Trial Scene, which was still not completed as of Weill's letter to Gershwin from 25 November. It also contains the Fontainebleau scene, which Weill had ruled out in that letter but which was under discussion as late as 18 December. That day, designer Jo Mielziner sent this memorandum to director John Murray Anderson:

[Mayer and Weill] asked if I thought there should be more of a production number at the Trial Scene or in Fontainebleau. My opinion was very definitely that Fontainebleau was the place for it.

Finally, this script is titled *Much Ado about Love*. During the summer and

fall of 1944, the operetta was consistently referred to in the press and in correspondence under the title of the original play, *The Firebrand*. But several clippings in the *Firebrand* scrapbook testify that as of 8 January the production was being called *Make Way for Love*, after having briefly been titled *It Happened in Florence*.⁹⁷ Apparently, there was some vacillation for a couple of weeks thereafter between *Make Way for Love* and *The Firebrand*, but on 22 January, the *New York Times* announced a change from *The Firebrand* to *Much Ado about Love*. It was under the latter title that the production opened in Boston, although just four days later the newspapers were reporting the final change to the definitive title of the Broadway run.⁹⁸ Two further scripts, both also titled *Much Ado about Love*, presumably also date from the rehearsal period. These scripts, as well as further miscellaneous revisions collectively described in the Critical Report under the siglum Tt3a, introduce several small changes, but by and large the available sources show Mayer's adaptation of his own play remaining fairly fixed during the course of the production.

Weill's correspondence provides some additional evidence about how work on the adaptation proceeded. At first, before the collaboration was truly underway, Weill seemed to have been impressed by Mayer's skills. In light of the problems that were to develop between them, it is poignant to read: "What a pleasure to work with a real writer! I am sure he will write my next opera; he has everything for it."⁹⁹ Later, Weill's eagerness to push the project forward may have blinded him to some potential flaws in the libretto. When Gershwin worried that some of the comedy scenes seemed dated—an apt verdict, as it turned out—Weill cheerfully speculated: "That probably comes more from Lee who doesn't like what she calls sex comedy (probably because she hasn't got anything where other people have sex)."¹⁰⁰ Weill's increasingly frequent complaints that Mayer was doing very little rewriting is borne out by a comparison between play and libretto. Apart from the first and last scenes, they follow a nearly identical sequence of events, and most of the dialogue is drawn verbatim from the 1924 play. The adaptation consists largely of cuts, and not always the most judicious ones. Indeed, many of the 1945 critics noted that the adaptation paled in contrast to the original.

In his impatience, Weill at one point considered writing some of the dialogue himself:

Yesterday he [Mayer] brought in a scene in which he just had copied the original play—so I tore it into pieces and gave him a detailed outline, almost word by word how to do it. As a matter of fact I had an idea last night of writing it myself (which I might do). Well, anyhow, Eddie was so overwhelmed by the accuracy and sharpness of my criticism that he accepted it without any hesitation. He really is an awfully nice guy—and so talented.¹⁰¹

It is unclear to which scene Weill refers here; he could have been exaggerating, or he could have been referring to a scene that no longer exists. As it stands, there are eight scenes in the operetta for which there is no precise equivalent in the play. The original play had begun with the workshop scene, which became Scene iii in the operetta. The text of the new first scene is entirely in verse and was largely Gershwin's work, although according to Weill, Mayer did contribute a scenario, which has not survived.¹⁰² In any case, it had already been composed by the time Weill made the remark just quoted. The dialogue in Scene ii of the operetta, performed "in one," serves merely to cover a scene change, and it first appears in the second extant version of the script, which dates from the following January. The Duchess's entrance in Act I, Scene iv, has no counterpart in the play. This is another "in one" scene that exists largely to provide the Duchess with her only number in the show. Weill had already claimed credit for this scene in an earlier letter:

I must say that so far I have done about 95% of the work on the show. Last night again I had a long session with two tired old men, but I was so full of ideas and energy that they just had to come along. I had a wonderful idea for the first entrance of the Duchess, carried through the street in a sedan-chair ("*Sänfte*"), preceded by a little band of negro boys; that's how she plays the first scene with Cellini. Good?¹⁰³

In the play, the scene between Cellini and the Duchess took place in his workshop, and she did not make a grand entrance. The rest of Act I, Scene iv, after the Duchess's departure, is taken almost verbatim from the end of the workshop scene in its 1924 version. A fourth new scene, Act II, Scene ii, again performed "in one," consists almost entirely of sung text (No. 18: "Just in Case"). New dialogue in Act II, Scene iii creates a comic context for No. 19 ("A Rhyme for Angela"). Act II, Scene iv, another "in one" scene, is entirely sung and borrows most of its material from the first-act opening, as does the "in one" Scene vi. The final scene of Act II does contain a fair amount of new dialogue, but it could not have been written in August; as late as December this ending was still being discussed. With these exceptions, the only dialogue that does not reproduce or paraphrase portions of the play consists of comic material for the Duke, intended to make him more amiably buffoonish than in the original. Typical of the new material is a hoary one-liner that the Duke gallantly addresses to a coy lady-in-waiting: "Well, you won't have to wait long!" (This line was cut in Boston, and it is likewise cut in this edition.) Weill's contributions to the libretto must have been mainly surgical: he probably advised Mayer what to cut from the original play and how to reorder or telescope the remaining material.

The 1924 play comprises three acts, each observing unity of place, and the whole play observing unity of time. Act I ends with what became Act I, Scene iv, of the libretto; it takes place entirely in Cellini's workshop. Act II of the play corresponds to Act I, Scene v of the operetta. Act III corresponds to Act II of the libretto, minus the Fontainebleau sequence. In the play, Pierre is not the French ambassador, but the Florentine notable Pier Landi, a well-placed friend of Cellini's who intercedes for him with the Duke. The idea of going to France is not his but Cellini's, although in the play the sculptor never actually departs. The libretto combines two villains from the play, the Duke's scheming cousin Ottaviano and the courtier Polverino. Angela's aunt Beatrice appears in the first three versions of the libretto, but she was removed by the time the show opened in Boston—the Boston playbill does not list the role, and she has disappeared in late revisions to Act I, Scene iii (in Tt3a). The part of Ascanio, Cellini's apprentice, was gradually stripped down. In the first extant version of the libretto, he appears in the first scene of Act II, following Cellini's departure, but his ensuing dialogue with Angela was removed in the second extant version. Unfortunately, that cut makes rather a hash of the subsequent Trial Scene, for we no longer learn how Angela comes to discover Ascanio's secret (he has overheard Ottaviano plotting against Alessandro's life). By the time the show reached New York, Ascanio's only musical number, "Our Master Is Free Again," had been removed as well.

Although it was necessary to simplify the play so it could serve as an operetta libretto, the show's weaknesses stem largely from what was changed in the adaptation: above all, the attitude towards the material. The 1924 version was a satire that punctured not only the sentimental conventions of period swashbucklers but also, and more importantly, the entire Romantic concept of genius. Cellini is a braggart given to uttering lines such as "There are many who would rather be hanged as Cellini than live as themselves," or "Through that statue, I enter the Holy Ghost before I die." Mayer's Cellini could not be more different from the almost contemporaneous portrayal in Lehár's operettas of Goethe and Paganini as brooding geniuses torn between love and art. Mayer enjoyed deflating sentimental notions of the artist: there are strong family resemblances between Cellini in *The Firebrand*, Jack Benny's character in *To Be or Not to Be*, and the poisoner, forger, and illustrator Wainwright in *The Children of Darkness*.

The 1945 Cellini almost hangs for a crime he did not commit, but he never succeeds in killing anyone, and he manages only one seduction. In the 1924 version, he kills four men. These deaths, some of which take place on stage, are the occasion for grim comedy involving the Duke, who on one occasion fails to realize that his interlocutor is dying. The 1945 libretto would have us believe that it is only the conflict between love and work that tears Cellini away from his innamorata. The earlier

Cellini is more callous; for him a woman is an aesthetic idea the night before and a nullity in the morning: "I stole her! And what have I found? That what was rich and mystical under the stars was gross and common in the light of day." When he is finally pardoned, he passes Angela off to the Duke, and the play ends with Cellini alone on stage contemplating the Duchess's key—and the prospect of a new conquest. The two couples have switched partners, but with all the warmth of rutting animals. Although some of these character traits remain, thinly sketched, in the libretto, efforts were made to make Cellini more of a romantic lead. Naturally, any hint of Cellini's "equal opportunity" sexual appetites ("I love you like an angel, and I love you like a man, and I love you like a boy") were extirpated. The most egregious modification is the tacked-on happy ending, and the overall effect is to make Cellini into a conventional 1920s operetta hero, like Lehár's Goethe, tragically yielding to the imperatives of genius.

As for Angela, the ingenue of 1945 had two decades earlier been not merely a model but, like many models of the day, a prostitute. Her favors are sold by her mother, Beatrice, who haggles with Cellini over their price, finally selling them for forty ducats. When the Duke offers more, Beatrice betrays Cellini. The mother has turned her daughter into a complete cynic, whose attitude can be summarized in the following line: "I've tried to fall in love with all the men I've known. With the master . . . with the Duke. And if they are good-looking, they are all the same to me." In the end, she expresses regrets about leaving Cellini, but she becomes the Duke's mistress anyway ("It isn't as if I didn't like him") on the condition that he exile her mother, whom she blames for having forever denied her any possibility of knowing true love. The Duke, far from being an old buffoon, is a reasonably good-looking thirty-five-year-old tyrant, somewhat comically dim-witted but nevertheless dangerously cruel.

Weill could very well have entered into the spirit of Mayer's original play; after all, he had set many a cynical love affair to music in his younger days. The composer of "Siehst du den Mond über Soho," that ironic refashioning of operetta waltz duets, could have had a field day with the affairs of Cellini. Beatrice, the mother as procuress, might well have become the latest personification of a recurring Weillian type—the rapacious, *petite bourgeoise* social-climber to whom a relative is merely a market asset (Frau Peachum in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Widow Begbick in *Mahagonny*, Frau von Luber in *Silbersee*, Anna I in *Die sieben Todsünden*, and even Mrs. Kramer in *One Touch of Venus*). Earlier versions of the script transform Beatrice into an aunt and reduce her role to a bit part. She disappears altogether in the revisions undertaken during the course of production. Was it a cautious attitude toward a Broadway public besotted by *Oklahoma!* that induced Weill to adopt the following stance towards *The Firebrand*?

[I]n its present form, the love story is too cynical and hasn't got enough warmth and simplicity. This would be the main job for Eddie to do. Angela and Cellini should be passionately in love. She would go to the Duke to save Cellini's life. Then in the end she would give him up when she sees that a genius like him should not be tied down by personal bonds. It should have a very moving ending.

The most important job is to make the love story more sincere and less cynical without losing the sharp, shavian humor of the original play. That will take a lot of careful planning and probably a good deal of actual rewriting on the part of Eddie.¹⁰⁴

The anti-hero eager to rid himself of a mistress who has served her purpose has been transmogrified into the *Salonromantik* genius torn between art and love, bequeathed to the ages by an angel's sacrifice.¹⁰⁵ And the young composer who had sarcastically predicted, after the success of *Friederike*, that the operetta stage would be inundated by a "series of historical . . . personalities utter[ing] their tragic outcry at the end of the second act," now proposed to add his own contribution to that used-up subgenre.

After reading Cellini's memoirs, Weill reconsidered:

It is quite a fascinating book, full of intrigues, jealousies, fighting, and f He was a real big-mouth, bragging, lying, cheating, but with a great feeling of independance and an utter disregard of any authority. The amazing discovery is how little life and manners have changed in those 400 years. It is obvious from this authentic book that Cellini was quite unsympathetic, that Eddie's characterisation is very good and that Cellini should possibly not become the romantic hero and should not get the girl at the end. (He never wanted to get the girl in the first place.)¹⁰⁶

But what to do with Angela? After considering the idea of allowing the apprentice Ascanio to be her true love, the one who would get her in the end, Weill hit upon an idea related to one that Meilhac and Halévy had already used in *La Périhole*:

Yesterday I got the idea to make Angela's original lover not an apprentice . . . but a wandering street singer who sings ballads at street corners as accompaniment to the puppet show. That will give us a lovely ending when Angela goes off with the puppet show and leaves Cellini and the Duke behind.¹⁰⁷

Weill soon realized, however, that introducing yet another lover for Angela, whether apprentice or street singer, was "too much plot for an operetta." About two weeks into the collaboration, Weill had worked out the ending that was definitively adopted some seven months later, after further hesitation:

I was in great form and so full of ideas that Eddie had a hard time digesting them as fast as they came. We had decided earlier in the week that we would cheat the audience if we would give the girl to another, minor character at the end (like Ascanio). The audience will rood for Cellini and Angela to get together, but the difficulty was how to do that without destroying the humour and satyr of Cellini's character. Well, I found it. . . . [W]e play a last scene, one year later, at the Court of Fontainebleau where he is working for the King of France. It is the day of a reception for the Duke and Duchess of Florence. Cellini was unable to work since he had given away Angela. Now he finds out that the Duke didn't get anywhere with Angela who has become a friend of the Duchess. So the lovers meet, he promises to be good and faithful, but just before the curtain comes down he starts again fighting and flirting. And Angela exchanges an understanding smile with the Duchess.¹⁰⁸

Weill changed his mind about the ending at least one more time that November, when he suggested to Gershwin that the Trial Scene (Act II, Scene v) be expanded into a full-fledged, through-composed finale that would end with Cellini going off to France, leaving Angela alone and broken-hearted.¹⁰⁹ But Gordon wanted a production number in the court of Fontainebleau, and that was that.

Between 25 November, the day Weill started orchestrating *Firebrand*, and 22 January, when rehearsals started, much of the composer's energies, apart from completing the piano-vocal score, were probably devoted to preparing the full score, which in the end occupied 656 pages. The holograph piano-vocal score served as the basis for much of the orchestral score; isolated orchestration sketches appear on it, the only such sketches that have been located. For passages not included in the piano-vocal score, Weill often prepared a preliminary piano score, as for the Tarantella dance in the first-act finale. For reprises, Weill worked out the orchestration directly from corresponding earlier passages of the full score. For example, his pencil annotations to the score of No. 2 (at mm. 420–461) are not reflected in the instrumental parts to that number; they were intended for the reprise in No. 27 (Finale ultimo). The introduction to No. 10 ("When the Duchess Is Away"), the reprise of "You're Far Too Near Me" in No. 15, the instrumental passages from No. 18 ("Just in Case"), the trial waltz from No. 21b, and the first portion of No. 26 (mm. 1–43) all modify—but do not merely duplicate—existing orchestrations.

Because Gershwin did not rejoin Weill in New York until 12 December, and because the details of the Fontainebleau scene were not negotiated until after 18 December, Weill had to compose, or at least to

arrange, additional music during that time as well. It is no wonder that Weill entrusted twenty-five percent (167 of 656 pages) of the full score to a professional arranger, more than for any of his other Broadway shows. The last few weeks before a show opened could be draining for a composer who also insisted on orchestrating his own music. In a newspaper interview conducted during the Boston tryout of his previous show, *One Touch of Venus*, Weill described the experience:

It's hard work. . . . You sleep about two hours a night for the four weeks that it takes, but it's fun. Not until the rehearsals get under way can you start your orchestrating . . . since until you know who the singers are going to be you can't tell what key to put each number in.¹¹⁰

By insisting upon his own orchestrations, Weill ensured that each of his Broadway shows would have a unique sound. For *Firebrand*, he used a classic operetta orchestra: no saxophones, no reed books, and a large string section. In most of his Broadway works, Weill did not use a full complement of strings. The orchestrations of *Johnny Johnson*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, and *Love Life* excluded violas; that of *Lost in the Stars* called for violas but no violins. In all, the *Firebrand* required thirty-two players (1 piccolo/flute, 1 oboe, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 French horns, 3 trumpets, 1 trombone, harp, guitar/mandolin, timpani/percussion, 8 first violins, 4 second violins, 2 violas, 2 violoncellos, 1 contrabass). Only the *Street Scene* orchestra was larger, with one additional flute and one more oboe.¹¹¹ Weill specified the number of string players in his holograph score. The 2:1 ratio of first to second violins was typical of his Broadway works. He required it as well in *Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Street Scene*.¹¹² The 4-2 violin division could then be further subdivided 2-2-2 for those numbers in which the first violin part was notated on two separate staves, both *divisi*. The *Firebrand* orchestra included some exotic touches not found in any other Weill scores. In "Sing Me Not a Ballad," the Duchess declares her disdain for the conventions of courtly love to the accompaniment of a mandolin. References to a "tipsy gypsy" in the Trial Scene are punctuated by a cymbalom.

During negotiations with Gordon the preceding July, Weill had the following approvals inserted into the Dramatists Guild contract for *Firebrand*:

Kurt Weill shall have the approval of conductor and the contractor, and the size of the orchestra and chorus, and there shall be a minimum of twenty-five musicians. Cuts in musicians, chorus or conductor in New York and on the road must be subject to the approval of the composer. Contract must include clause covering no interpolations. . . . Further provision which has been discussed by Kurt Weill with Max Gordon is that Kurt is to do the orchestrations and be paid same per page as any first class orchestrator. . . . If any other orchestrator is required, he shall be approved by Kurt Weill and paid by the producer.¹¹³

Thus, Weill drew an additional salary as orchestrator. When Weill received a copy of the Dramatists Guild contract for approval, he requested changes in the orchestration clause that are significant in light of the ambitions he harbored for the work:

Kurt Weill agrees to write the orchestrations for a flat sum of \$3,000 to be paid after the opening of the show, with a further understanding that if he needs any assistance, it is to be paid for by the manager. . . . The composer shall also be given credit for "musical arrangements and orchestrations" in the program as the last of the top credits before the cast. . . .

The reason for Kurt Weill's change from charging per page to a flat amount of \$3,000 is that Kurt feels that at the rate per page, the orchestrations would cost between \$6,000 and \$8,000 as the average arranger writes only four bars on a page and since "*THE FIREBRAND*" will be a real operetta with a very extended score, much larger than any musical comedy, the cost of the orchestrations per page would be much too high.¹¹⁴

In the end, Weill's income for the orchestrations worked out to \$6.10 per page, roughly equivalent to \$60 per page in 2002.

In requesting control over the choice of contractor, conductor, and

assistant, Weill was able to assemble a team that served him well throughout his Broadway career. As usual, his choice of orchestral contractor was Morris Stonzek, who managed the orchestra for every one of Weill's Broadway shows. Although Weill's preferred conductor, Maurice Abravanel, had already accepted an offer to conduct the Billy Rose revue *The Seven Lively Arts*, he negotiated in advance to be released in time for *Firebrand*.¹¹⁵ Abravanel had had a long association with Weill, going back to 1922, when he had been one of Weill's composition students. He had conducted Weill's works in Germany, France, Italy, and England. Weill had already entrusted him with the premieres of *Die sieben Todsünden*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *One Touch of Venus*, and would do so again with *Street Scene*. Composer and conductor had developed a close working relationship, of which the full score of *Firebrand* provides ample evidence. Weill's notation for the opening number, roughly a sixth of the total, is meticulous, with detailed instructions regarding such parameters as dynamics, articulation, and mutings. For later numbers, with time growing shorter, Weill's notation of performance directions became sparser, and it was Abravanel who fleshed out the details before the parts were copied. A comparison of the holograph score of *Firebrand* with the instrumental parts used in the 1945 production corroborates Abravanel's later recollections:

I used to go to New City where he would give me the pages of orchestration he had made. I would bring them to Chappell and see to it that they were copied properly, and so on. . . .

I put in all the dynamics, doing simply what Mozart did in *Figaro* or *Don Giovanni*, that when somebody is singing you put *p* and when he stops singing, a little bit half past the second beat, Mozart writes a *forte* right there. . . . And I did basically that thing for his orchestrations. . . . And he was in New City, and I would go there, and he would give me the scores, and I would do those things, marks, like mutes, like one octave lower. Then I mix [i.e., balance], then give it to the copyist . . . which I had done with Kurt's full understanding.¹¹⁶

As the principal orchestrator of his own shows, Weill normally attended dance rehearsals so as to be on hand when the need for additional music arose. He depended, therefore, on Abravanel to prepare the singers. In a letter beseeching Abravanel to be present at the first rehearsals of *Lady in the Dark*, Weill described the division of labor:

Well, the conductor situation for my show is getting more critical than you think. The Sam Harris [producer of *Lady*] office insists that the conductor has to be there from the first day of rehearsals. . . . [I]n the case of my show it is absolutely necessary because it is a difficult score, it is to a great part chorus work and we have only 3 weeks rehearsals before we go to Boston. They say it would be alright for them if I would do the complete rehearsal job for you, but that is physically impossible because I have to be at the dance rehearsals to work out the ballets, compose and orchestrate them. . . . All I can do is to work with the soloists.

But apart from rehearsals there is a great deal of organisation to be done which I am absolutely unable to do. The material has to be prepared, the rehearsal schedule has to be worked out and the orchestra problems have to be solved. It would be unfair to leave all this to me even if I had the time to do it, for these are just the things that I need a good conductor for.¹¹⁷

The New York playbill for *Firebrand* credited Abravanel twice: for the musical direction and for "selecting and training" the chorus.

Ted Royal, Weill's assistant orchestrator, was a professional arranger who had earlier contributed to *Lady in the Dark* and later worked on *Street Scene*. He was one of the top Broadway orchestrators in the 1940s and '50s, responsible for the scoring of such shows as *Brigadoon*, *Paint Your Wagon*, and *Where's Charley?* During the 1944-45 season, in addition to his work for Weill, he contributed orchestrations to Bernstein's *On the Town*. Royal's role in *Lady* had been limited to the dance break in "One Life to Live" and the unused "Bats about You."¹¹⁸ The only two Royal orchestrations in *Street Scene*, "Moon-faced, Starry-eyed" and "Wrapped in a Ribbon," were numbers for which Weill may have desired a specifically "Broadway sound." In the case of *Firebrand*, Weill assigned

to Royal much of the last-minute material needed once the production numbers had been worked out. This included two sets of second choruses and dance evolutions (No. 9: "Sing Me Not a Ballad" and No. 19: "A Rhyme for Angela"), two "in one" numbers (No. 18: "Just in Case" and No. 24: "Come to Paris"), one number consisting largely of reprise (No. 16: "The Letter"), one dance number (No. 25: Gigue), and the Prelude and Entr'acte (Nos. 1 and 14). For Nos. 9 and 19, Weill orchestrated the first choruses. For Nos. 16, 18, and 24, Royal worked from Weill's holograph vocal score. Weill provided a piano score for No. 25, and for the Prelude and Entr'acte he furnished three-stave short scores with notes on the instrumentation. Weill introduced minor changes in every one of Royal's *Firebrand* arrangements, and in some cases he considerably expanded Royal's material, scoring introductions, codas, and modulatory transitions himself. Thus for "Just in Case," Royal orchestrated only the vocal material in mm. 21–88 and 105–117. Weill would likely have added such orchestral passages relatively late, in response to specific staging requirements. Even for traditional European operettas, it would not have been unusual for the principal orchestrator to require assistance in preparing a full score for an imminent production. The autograph of *Die Fledermaus*, for example, reveals that Strauß relied heavily on Richard Genée, who was also the co-librettist, to orchestrate and even to expand certain passages compositionally.¹¹⁹

Generally, the state of the full score shows that Weill's involvement decreased as the operetta approached completion. The last twenty minutes of the show contain only reprises and potpourri ballet movements, mostly in Royal's arrangements. Time constraints certainly contributed to this situation, but one might further surmise that, Weill's ideas for a proper operetta finale having been jettisoned, he largely washed his hands of the Fontainebleau production number that had been imposed upon him.

ii. Casting and Production

The belabored collaborative process that plagued Weill during the summer and fall of 1944 was not his only problem. In casting the show, Weill soon found himself at odds with Max Gordon, about whom he had only recently gushed, "I never want another producer for a show,"¹²⁰ and "My relation to Max Gordon has developed into a real love story. We are crazy about each other, and it looks like a long marriage."¹²¹ Gordon was a famously mercurial showman, who had inspired Hammerstein's conceited summer-stock producer in Jerome Kern's last musical, *Very Warm for May* (1939). That role was the funniest thing about the show that introduced "All the Things You Are." Unfortunately Gordon was the producer, so the humor was eviscerated before the show opened. Gordon had gotten his start in musicals producing revues by Dietz and Schwartz, such as *The Band Wagon* (1931) and *Flying Colors* (1932). His book shows included Kern's *The Cat and the Fiddle* (1931) and *Roberta* (1935), Hammerstein's Johann Strauß pastiche *The Great Waltz* (1934), and Porter's *Jubilee* (1935, which was in fact George V's jubilee year). Still, when it came to musical theater, Gordon's stock in trade was the lavish spectacle. He did not seem a likely impresario for "intimate operetta," and in choosing how to spend money on the production, he made scenery and elaborate production numbers his priority.

Gordon proved unable to assemble a top-flight cast for *Firebrand*; all four principals were problematic. In the tactful words of a first-night critic, "one of Kurt Weill's finest scores . . . [was] not always projected as it should have been."¹²² Heroic, good-looking, yet roguish bari-tenors seem to have been in short supply that season. All of Weill's top choices for Cellini were either engaged elsewhere or unacceptable to Max Gordon. Weill had wanted famed Metropolitan Opera baritone Lawrence Tibbett for the title role, but Gordon, apparently misconstruing Cellini as a juvenile role, found Tibbett unconvincing: "Lawrence Tibbett is out because we want a young romantic lead for this show. . . . [He] is not, in my opinion, imaginative casting; I would say it is unimaginative casting!"¹²³ Another possibility was Wilbur Evans, the star of Cole

Porter's *Mexican Hayride*; Evans was willing to star in *Firebrand* at a salary of \$1,000 a week. But the producer of the Cole Porter show, Michael Todd, refused to release him. Weill was still hoping to get Evans at the end of November, but after the Porter show had closed, Evans went straight into another Todd production, *Up in Central Park*.¹²⁴ Another candidate for Cellini was John Raitt, but the Theater Guild had already signed him for *Liliom*, which opened as *Carousel* in the last days of *Firebrand*'s brief run. In the meantime, Raitt was singing *Oklahoma!* in Chicago. Alfred Drake, the lead in the original cast of *Oklahoma!* and still under contract to the Theater Guild, was slated for the calvacade *Sing Out, Sweet Land* (27 December 1944). His brother Arthur Kent was in the army.¹²⁵ The rising opera star Leonard Warren also came up as a possibility, but Abravanel thought he was "all voice, no acting."¹²⁶ Even Nelson Eddy was considered, although both Weill and Gordon had justifiable concerns about his acting abilities; "I have always heard it said that he can't walk across the stage."¹²⁷ It is unclear why some of the other names proposed, including Allan Jones, Don Ameche, and the operatic baritones John Brownlee, Conrad Thibault, Thomas L. Thomas, Hugh Thompson, and Robert Weede, proved unfeasible.¹²⁸ Two tenors from the Metropolitan Opera, James Melton and Nino Martini, were also briefly considered. The latter had "an Italian accent that you could cut with a knife. His diction is very bad so we will have to declare him out."¹²⁹ Perhaps the most tantalizing of the many names floated was Ezio Pinza. He certainly would have had the sexual charisma for the part, and for once Weill could have scooped Richard Rodgers—Pinza would make his Broadway debut in *South Pacific* (1949).¹³⁰

The eventual choice, Earl Wrightson, was not announced until 28 December (*New York Times*). Wrightson had a pleasant, light baritone and almost no stage experience; he had been hired on the basis of his performance opposite Dorothy Kirsten in the revival of Romberg's *The New Moon*, which had enjoyed a brief run at City Center the previous summer. Abravanel diplomatically recalled his characterization of Cellini as "careful."¹³¹ Less diplomatic, but perhaps more representative of what the women in the audience were to think, was the verdict of the show's rehearsal pianist and "swing girl," Lys Bert:

Very good voice. Typical American baritone, you know? Rather good-looking, but his legs weren't so good. They were a little crooked, and he was always in tights. And he couldn't speak his lines, and he had absolutely no sex appeal. None.¹³²

Firebrand would be his only Broadway appearance.

Among the names considered for the role of Angela were Susanna Foster, Kathryn Grayson, and Jeanne Madden, the female lead in *Knickerbocker Holiday*.¹³³ It is unclear why the part did not go to Madden. Foster had recently played the lead in the remake of *The Phantom of the Opera* opposite Nelson Eddy and Claude Rains; it may have been her singing in that role that attracted Gershwin's attention. But Universal refused to release her from her film contract.¹³⁴ Kathryn Grayson, too, was under contract; she was just beginning her film career at MGM and was to star in most of the musicals released by that studio in the 1940s and '50s (including the 1953 film version of *Kiss Me, Kate*). The part of Angela eventually went to Beverly Tyler, a redheaded, seventeen-year-old "starlet who did not know the ABC of acting," despite small screen roles in the MGM musicals *Best Foot Forward* (1943) and *The Harvey Girls* (1946).¹³⁵ Gershwin's "first reaction was to say no" although in his own list of casting possibilities he described her as "very good—very good-looking."¹³⁶ In any case, by the end of November, with time running out, Weill agreed to hire her and informed Gershwin:

I have heard a number of girls, but none of them compares with Beverly Tyler. So Arthur [Lyons] has definite instructions to sign Beverly. She gets 350.¹³⁷

Tyler had studied voice with Vera Schwarz, the Berlin operetta star who had created the role of Lisa in *Das Land des Lächelns*. Despite this tute-

lage, Tyler's vocal abilities seem to have been limited. Her difficulties with high notes, mentioned by several of the opening-night critics, surely motivated some of the last-minute changes in the score: No. 15 may have been assigned in part to Emilia; a large portion of No. 21c was cut prior to orchestration, and the entire number was removed after the try-out. Elsewhere, the orchestral texture of her material was thinned. Her lack of stage experience and her exaggerated mannerisms also became evident once rehearsals were underway. Lys Bert recalled that "she was gorgeous looking—when she didn't sing. But when she started to vocalize, her face became distorted and her otherwise lovely *derrière* seemed to be growing to the proportions of what Lenya used to call an *Opern-Arsch*."¹³⁸ After *Firebrand* she continued to play small roles in film and television, but her only other Broadway show would be the short-lived Fain-Harburg *Jollyanna* (1952).

Weill's choice for the Duke was Walter Slezak, and for good reason. The son of the famous Vienna Opera tenor Leo Slezak, Walter's accent would have complemented Lenya's:

I am using a new trick to make sure that you get the part. I am trying to get Walter Slezak to play the Duke—which means they would need a European actress for the Duchess.¹³⁹

Although he achieved prominence as a heavy in straight movie roles, Slezak had played the juvenile lead in Kern's *Music in the Air* a decade earlier. Gordon was "very strong" for him, at least until Slezak turned down an offer for \$1,500 a week, insisting on \$2,000 against 7.5 percent of the gross. "My dear Walter," Gordon wrote:

I received your very amusing letter but I still think you ought to take \$1,500 which is a very good salary. You must realize that in my case, I do everything to make for a perfect production and with a musical show, it takes quite a long time to get your money back. We would like to hook this play up so that we can run and make a little money when we sell out. Here I am fighting for a living and you are lounging around in that lazy California climate, with a large home and money in all pockets! For God's sake, take the \$1,500.¹⁴⁰

By early October, Gordon had settled on the British comedian Melville Cooper for the part. At the time, Cooper was appearing in another Gordon production, *While the Sun Shines*, and his fee was only \$1,000. Gordon informed Weill:

Now, between Walter Slezak for \$2,000 and Melville Cooper for \$1,000, my vote would certainly be for Melville Cooper. I think Cooper is funnier than Slezak and I think he can do your numbers as well as Slezak.¹⁴¹

Until this time, Cooper's participation in musical offerings had been confined to roles that demanded relatively little solo singing: Baron Zeta in the 1943 revival of *The Merry Widow* and the King in Cole Porter's *Jubilee*. Possibly out of sheer resignation, Weill reported: "I was very pleased with Cooper's singing and his whole appearance. Max, after reading the book, says he is surer than ever that Slezak would have been a great mistake."¹⁴²

The only major casting decision in which Weill had his way was the choice of Lenya as the Duchess, but this proved a pyrrhic victory. Gershwin and Gordon immediately foresaw the problem: Lotte Lenya was simply not the Latin hothead needed for the comic role of a man-eating Italian aristocrat. Weill, however, dismissed such objections as "American narrowmindedness in casting matters. When they hear the word Duchess they think of a big luscious woman with bosoms and they cannot imagine that a part can be played in ten different ways."¹⁴³ He vowed to "go ahead and bully" Gershwin into accepting her.¹⁴⁴ Throughout the summer and early fall of 1944, Gershwin and his wife Lee passively resisted the idea, either telling Weill that "it would be up to Max," or exhibiting exaggerated interest in other people's suggestions, as when their agent, Arthur Lyons, urged upon the team his "current flame," Kitty Carlisle.¹⁴⁵ At first, Lenya urged Weill not to push the issue too aggressively:

Now Darling, I am really upset about you, not sleeping a whole night just because Ira agreed with Lyons on Kitty Carlisle. What in the world did you expect of him? That he should take a stand right there in the office? Darling to push me through will need a lot of fighting and arguing but you have to do it without any emotion. If you have a sleepless night every time that question comes up, you won't get any sleep at all.

Darling, don't fight too much for me. I don't want you to get too much distracted. This all sounds so wonderful, that it will be exciting for me whether I am in or not.¹⁴⁶

When the Gershwins continued to prevaricate, however, she was hurt enough to adopt a more combative attitude:

Darling, forget about Ira. He is just silly. I will tell him, when I get out, that he shouldn't carry on that much about that part and me playing it. I have done more important parts and succeeded pretty well and if he doesn't trust your judgment, he always can ask people like the Lunts or Helen Hayes and so on. That'll fix him. After all my success in Berlin, Paris and London is quite a prove that I am very able to play a part like the Duchess. So, he should shut up and wait. It's too boring that attitude and so unoriginal. . . . If he has no imagination, it's not our fault. After all, who knows him in Europe? I will be quite conceited, when I get there and leave my usual modesty at home. I am good and angry now.¹⁴⁷

Finally, Weill wrote Max Gordon a threatening letter:

I read your letter to Ira and I was surprised to find that you are still talking about Peggy Wood or Vivian Segal for the part of the Duchess. Both Ira and Eddie agree with what I had told you 5 months ago: that our conception of the Duchess is an entirely different one. Besides, neither of them would play the part because it is too small, and it would be fatal if we would have to build it up.

As you know, I have made it very clear to you and everybody concerned that I want Lotte Lenya (who happens to be Mrs. Weill) to play the part of the Duchess. I am sure that this is perfect casting, just as I was sure when I insisted on Mary Martin for Venus, or when I say that Walter Slezak should play the Duke.

Walter Huston told me the other day how you had fought him tooth and nail against Nan's playing a part in "Dodsworth" until you discovered at the first rehearsal that she was excellent for the part. I hope you won't start the same business with me because that would affect my whole attitude towards the show and towards you. The worst thing you could do to the show at this moment would be to kill my enthusiasm which, up to now, has carried through the whole project.¹⁴⁸

Ten days later, Gordon announced in the *New York Times* that Lenya would play the part, and Weill backed down on Slezak. Weill reassured Gershwin, somewhat disingenuously, "that the personal question doesn't enter into this at all":

We all are convinced that it will add a very special and interesting and classy touch to the show if a highly accomplished actress of the continental type, with a completely original (and very successful) technique of song-delivery will play this part. As Moss keeps saying: she is just the actress whom—if she were not married to me—we would try very hard to get for the Duchess.¹⁴⁹

Aside from the four principals—Cooper, Wrightson, Tyler, and Lenya—listed in that order in the programs—four other cast members received featured billing. The Viennese actor Ferdi Hoffman, who specialized in villainous roles, played Ottaviano. He had appeared with Lenya in Maxwell Anderson's *Candle in the Wind*. The part of the French ambassador was taken by Paul Best, an opera singer who hailed from Berlin and had appeared in several recent operetta revivals on Broadway (*La Vie parisienne*, *Rosalinda*, *The Merry Widow*). Gloria Story, who played Emilia, was making only her second theatrical appearance. Her first had been in another short-lived operetta of the 1944–45 season, Fritz Kreisler's *Rhapsody*, with which the violinist had attempted to recapture the success he had once enjoyed with *Saffi* (1919). In the Boston program, she had merely been listed in the cast; that she received better notices than most of the principals may have prompted her promotion by the time the show opened in New York.

Hoffman, Best, and Story were billed fifth, seventh, and eighth, respectively. Billed sixth was a non-singer, Metropolitan Opera ballet dancer Jean Guélis, one of the last cast members to be signed—Gordon announced it to the press only on 12 February.¹⁵⁰ The former premier male dancer of the Paris Opera Ballet, he had managed to escape from France just as Paris fell and had signed with the Met in 1941. His first Broadway appearance had been in *Helen Goes to Troy* the previous season. In *Firebrand* Guélis was cast as Harlequin in a troupe of nine commedia dell'arte players. His was not a speaking or singing role; Gordon imported him into the production for the set dance pieces that were added late to the score. None of the other eight dancers received featured billing, but Norma Gentner, the Columбина, received a separate mention in the "Who's Who" section of the New York playbill. A student of *Firebrand*'s choreographer Catherine Littlefield, she had been a solo dancer at Radio City Music Hall. *Firebrand* was her first Broadway appearance. The original programs confirm that the nine-member dance ensemble participated in the Civic Song ("Come to Florence") from the Prologue, the orchestral Tarantella from the first-act finale, and the Gigue and Sarabande from the final scene. Indeed, the Fontainebleau scene seems to have been constructed largely around Guélis's talents. As fine as they surely were, interpolating a classical ballet shortly before the final curtain was a serious miscalculation.

Among those entrusted with smaller roles, three later became well known. The Hangman was the baritone Randolph Symonette, who later understudied and eventually took over the part of Frank Maurant in *Street Scene*, performing it on the original cast recording. The little Black-moor was seven-year-old Billy Dee Williams, the son of an elevator operator in Max Gordon's Lyceum Theater.¹⁵¹ (Apparently, the youngster could not quite manage to carry his tune, so Lys Bert had to sing it from the wings.)¹⁵² One of the apprentices was John ("Jack") Cassidy, who became a popular stage and recording artist in the 1950s.

In addition to seventeen individually-credited speaking and singing roles and nine dancing roles, the production called for a twenty-four-member chorus (a dozen men, a dozen women), from which smaller vocal ensembles were drawn, such as the male quartet that participates in Nos. 9 and 19.¹⁵³ A further ensemble of six apprentices and four models received separate program credit, as did two sedan bearers, bringing the cast up to sixty-two, the largest of Weill's Broadway shows.

On 8 January 1945, the *New York Times* announced that *Make Way for Love*, as the show was then being called, would be directed by John Murray Anderson and John Haggott, designed and lit by Jo Mielziner, and costumed by Raoul Pène DuBois. Weill and Gershwin had expected Hassard Short to direct their new work, as he had the musical sequences of *Lady in the Dark*, but his request for ten percent of the movie rights plus top billing induced Gordon to "give him that four-letter-word advise which, I am afraid, Hassard is unable to follow."¹⁵⁴ After Moss Hart also declined an offer, John Murray Anderson was hired to stage the show.¹⁵⁵ Anderson's role as director was principally to "supervise the physical end of the show and to organize the whole production."¹⁵⁶ To handle the dialogue, Gordon hired John Haggott.¹⁵⁷ The choice of Anderson indicates that Gordon had in mind a grand song-and-dance extravaganza, quite different from the intimate operetta that Weill initially envisioned. Anderson, a professional ballroom dancer, had first gained national attention in 1914 with a book entitled *The Social Art of Dancing*. His experience as a stage director was almost completely limited to revues, which became increasingly spectacular as his career progressed. After staging six editions of the intimate *Greenwich Village Follies*, he moved to Irving Berlin's theater to direct the *Music Box Revues*. That was followed by a stint with the *Ziegfeld Follies*, two editions of which he codirected in 1936 with Vincente Minelli. Anderson's association with Billy Rose had begun when the producer invited him to stage the shows in his nightclub, The Diamond Horseshoe. Subsequently Rose hired him to direct the extravagant 1935 circus musical *Jumbo*, with music by Rodgers and Hart, and the 1939 Aquacade at the New York World's Fair. Anderson's reputation for staging circus shows and

water ballets led Ringling Brothers entrusted him with seven of their editions, and MGM with Esther Williams's screen debut in *Bathing Beauty* (1944). Two decades earlier, he had directed Rodgers and Hart's *Dearest Enemy* (1925), but his only recent book show had been the Romberg-Hammerstein operetta *Sunny River* (1941), which closed after only thirty-six performances.

Nine years after his *Firebrand* experience, Anderson had occasion to recall the show:

Monsieur Robert, who furnished the shoes, uncannily appraised the show from the start. Before he agreed to provide the footwear, he insisted on auditioning the ballet dancers! He reluctantly agreed to shoe the show only when he learned that I was going to direct it.¹⁵⁸

Anderson's assistant for this show was his regular sidekick, Arnold Saint Subber, who would soon achieve success in his own right as a producer with Cole Porter's Shows *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) and *Out of This World* (1950).

The choreographer for *Firebrand* was Catherine Littlefield. Like Anderson, she had worked mainly in revues, though evidently she preferred ice to sawdust; her routines adorned many a skating spectacular, such as *Howdy, Mr. Ice!* and *Hats Off to Ice!* The latter, which starred Sonja Henje, opened on 22 June 1944 and was still playing long after *Firebrand* had folded. Aside from several dance evolutions of vocal numbers, she was responsible for choreographing the three ballet movements: the Tarantella, Gigue, and Sarabande. These ballets, unlike those in *One Touch of Venus*, contribute nothing to plot or characterization.

The sets and lighting were created by Jo Mielziner, who, over the course of a distinguished career, designed two hundred plays, fifty-one musicals, and four operas and ballets, by his own count. During the 1944–45 season, he was responsible not only for *Firebrand* but also for four other new Broadway productions, including *The Glass Menagerie* and *Carousel*. He designed two other Weill works: *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Street Scene*. His contract for *Firebrand*, signed on 20 November, called for two acts and twelve sets, for which he was to be paid \$5,000, plus \$100 a week (\$75 after the eleventh week). For his previous musical, Rodgers and Hart's *By Jupiter* (1942), Mielziner had charged only \$4,000. Five of the scenes in *Firebrand* were to be performed "in one" before tapestries; in all, the production would call for 5,882 square feet of tapestries and drops. The production also demanded a great deal of art work. The bronze nymph statue alone, on which so much of the plot hinges, cost \$2,000 (nearly one percent of the production's budget) to build.

The distinguished designer Raoul Pène DuBois was responsible for the costumes. Some of his previous credits included *Jumbo*, the Cole Porter shows *Leave It to Me* (1938) and *Dubarry Was a Lady* (1939), *Carmen Jones* (1943), and the film version of *Lady in the Dark* (1944). Unfortunately, his boldly striped costumes for *Firebrand*, with which he evidently meant to evoke the commedia dell'arte, turned out to be ungainly and unflattering. They obscured the physical attributes of the carefully selected chorus:

I wasn't very wise then to the potentials of a hit show, but I couldn't figure out for the life of me . . . why those gorgeous six show girls, the Models of Florence, which [Anderson] had chosen with such care . . . now were all dressed in tight bodices, squeezed into huge folding skirts which made all of them look about eight months pregnant. And in contrast, all of the fellows wore tights, which seemed to be padded generously.¹⁵⁹

Three stage managers, William McFadden, Richard Phelan, and Mildred Sherman, coordinated the entire production. In the end, Weill's "intimate" operetta had become a lavish spectacle capitalized at \$225,000; it would be his most expensive Broadway show. Only four years earlier, the production costs for *Lady in the Dark*, with all of its elaborate stage machinery, had reached \$127,715. *Street Scene*, with its large cast and orchestra, came to only \$99,463. *Love Life*, Weill's second-most-expensive Broadway show, was produced for about \$200,000.¹⁶⁰

There is very little surviving documentation regarding the period between the start of rehearsals on 22 January and the company's departure for Boston. Separate rehearsals were held for dialogue under the direction of John Haggott, singing under the direction of Abravanel, and dancing under the direction of Catherine Littlefield. The latter took place in the 66th Street Armory, a cavernous, underheated space that soon earned the nickname "Ice Palace." John Murray Anderson held a few initial "movement" rehearsals in the Armory, then reappeared only when all the elements of the production were finally being brought together. (Anderson had a habit, annoying to some, of coining nicknames for the cast members. Alan Noel, who played the part of the Clerk, was dubbed "White Christmas," while Lys Bert received two names, "Miss Spare Tire" in her function as general understudy and "Miss Piano" in her capacity as rehearsal pianist.) Singers were rehearsed at a midtown hotel.¹⁶¹

During rehearsals, the score underwent several changes. A duet for Ascanio and Emilia, entitled "Our Master Is Free Again," originally opened Act I, Scene iii. Weill orchestrated it, but the omission of the number from both the Boston and the New York playbills, along with the absence of any markings in the instrumental parts, suggests that the number had been cut before 23 February. The state of the instrumental parts also suggests that the Finaletto to Act I, Scene iii was restaged during this period. In the original version, Angela initiates the quodlibet "I Was Happy Here" only after Ottaviano's recitative interrupts the exit march ("Make way for the noblest of nobility . . . But my Lord, you forget about Cellini"). Angela's regrets are better motivated in the revised version, where they follow immediately upon the Duke's order that she accompany him to the summer palace. In order to accommodate the revisions, Weill did more than merely reorder the material. Evidently, he wanted to preserve the D-major, E \flat -major, E-major key scheme, with the rising half-step modulations mirroring Angela's heightened anguish.¹⁶² Ottaviano's recitative, originally in F-major, had to be incorporated into this modulatory plan. So, a new set of orchestra parts for the Finaletto was prepared. Since the first set remained entirely unmarked, the revisions to the Finaletto must predate the orchestral rehearsals.

Although Weill started orchestrating his score before the production had been completely cast, few transpositions were necessary. The only number so revised was "The Little Naked Boy": the verse and first chorus were transposed down a semitone. This was not done to accommodate Beverly Tyler—even without the transposition, her highest note in this section would have been a G5; the second chorus requires A \flat 5 and A5. Rather, the first chorus was probably transposed down a major second to F-major so as to lend a climactic touch to the G-major second chorus. One number, 21c ("How Wonderfully Fortunate"), was considerably shortened in its orchestral version. Because Beverly Tyler had been cast by the time he orchestrated this number, Weill may have abridged it in light of her shaky vocalism.

One of Weill's main chores in late January and February was to compose the additional music required as the production numbers jelled. Whereas most of Weill's full score is notated in dark ink and paginated with consecutive arabic numerals, several passages are hastily scrawled in pencil, paginated with letters or with numerals followed by "bis." That these were added relatively late is confirmed by the instrumental parts, which had been copied without Weill's pencil material and subsequently had to be doctored with inserts and paste-ins. Apart from local, minor retouches to the orchestration, the pencil passages include portions of the second choruses and dance evolutions in Nos. 9 ("Sing Me Not a Ballad") and 19 ("A Rhyme for Angela"), the orchestral introduction and interlude in No. 18 ("Just in Case"), the orchestral waltz that concludes No. 21b ("You Have to Do What You Do Do"), the coda to No. 24 ("Come to Paris"), the introduction to No. 25 (Gigue), and all of No. 26 (Finale . . . Sarabande). Ted Royal was responsible for the additional choruses in Nos. 9 and 19; Weill's pencil pages constitute emendations or expansions. For Nos. 18, 24, and 25, Weill added orchestral introduc-

tions, interludes, and codas, and otherwise revised Royal's arrangements. Nos. 21b and 26 are entirely Weill's own dance arrangements; a preliminary holograph piano score of No. 26 survives as well. There is only one dance number that seems neither to have been introduced nor altered during the rehearsal period. Weill sketched the orchestral Tarantella (No. 13, mm. 153–185) together with the preceding vocal portion, presumably in the late summer of 1944. He prepared a piano score, and then notated it fully in the original layer of the full score. It was thus incorporated into the first layer of the instrumental parts; subsequent markings affected only dynamics and articulation.¹⁶³

There may have been a reading in New York of the full score with orchestra alone, as would be the case for *Street Scene*, but the first full rehearsal with cast and orchestra took place in Boston, where there were only three days to rehearse on the set prior to the opening.¹⁶⁴ Once rehearsals with orchestra were underway, Abravanel and Weill must have realized that some of the principals could not stand up to the lush orchestrations. Numerous minor changes were introduced around this time, including such standard fixes as lowering by an octave an instrumental part doubling a solo voice at the unison or upper octave. All too often, however, the circumstances required prompt and radical surgery. Lys (Bert) Symonette recalls the enthusiasm generated by Weill's orchestrations when they were first heard, followed by disappointment when they had to be scaled back.¹⁶⁵

During the third weekend of February, the entire company traveled to Boston on three different trains. The crew left on Saturday the 17th, the orchestral musicians on the 18th, and the cast on the 19th.¹⁶⁶ The final dress rehearsal took place on Thursday the 22nd, and the show opened the following evening at the Colonial Theater.¹⁶⁷ The Boston papers had reported brisk ticket sales in the days before the opening, and most of the twenty-seven performances—the show closed on 17 March—must have very nearly sold out. After slightly more than three weeks in this 1590-seat venue, *Much Ado about Love* had grossed \$93,000, with a top ticket price of \$4.20.¹⁶⁸ The success of the Boston run was spurred in part by the lack of any competition, for it was the only musical in town.

Perhaps to help orient the audience during the long passages of continuous music, the Boston playbill provided fanciful titles not only for individual numbers but also for subsections of the more extended ones. These titles were reproduced in the New York playbill as well:

ACT I

SONG OF THE HANGMAN

CIVIC SONG—"Come to Florence"

ARIA—"My Lords and Ladies"

FAREWELL SONG—"There Was Life, There Was Love, There Was Laughter"

ARIETTA—"I Had Just Been Pardoned"

LOVE SONG—"You're Far Too Near Me"

THE DUKE'S SONG—"Alessandro the Wise"

FINALETTO—"I Am Happy Here"

THE DUCHESS'S SONG—"Sing Me Not a Ballad"

MADRIGAL—"When the Duchess Is Away"

LOVE SONG—"There'll Be Life, Love, and Laughter"

TRIO—"I Know Where There's a Cozy Nook"

NIGHT MUSIC—"The Nighttime Is No Time for Thinking"

TARANTELLA—"Dizzily, Busily"

FINALE

ACT II

REPRISE—"You're Far Too Near Me"

LETTER SONG—"My Dear Benvenuto"

CAVATINA—"The Little Naked Boy"

MARCH OF THE SOLDIERS OF THE DUCHY—"Just in Case"

ODE—"A Rhyme for Angela"

PROCESSION

CHANT OF LAW AND ORDER—"The World Is Full of Villains"

TRIAL BY MUSIC—"You Have to Do What You Do Do"

ARIETTA—"How Wonderfully Fortunate"

DUET—"Love Is My Enemy"

"COME TO PARIS"

- FINALE— a. Sarabande
b. Gigue
c. “There’ll Be Life, Love, and Laughter”

While some of these titles can be traced to the authors (“Madrigal,” “Arietta,” “Procession”) and others provide titles for sections already clearly demarcated in Weill’s score (the “Hangman’s Song” and the “Civic Song”), other generic labels cut against the musical grain. For example, the “aria” (“My Lords and Ladies”) is closer in style to a recitative; the ensuing “Farewell Song” (“Life, Love, and Laughter”) follows without a break. The three final selections in Act I collectively form the finale, according to all sources stemming from the authors. The “Night Music” is already a tarantella and in no way a separate number from the chorus, “Dizzily, Busily.”

The playbill departed from the billing agreed upon during the contractual negotiations the preceding summer in one significant way: *Much Ado about Love* was subtitled “a new musical” rather than “an operetta.” The typescripts of the libretto read “Much Ado about Love: A Musical Comedy in Two Acts.” Perhaps Max Gordon had persuaded the authors that a “musical” would prove more commercially viable than an “operetta.” The change in billing notwithstanding, most of the Boston critics, who were guarded but favorably inclined toward the new offering, readily recognized the genre for what it was. Elinor Hughes of the *Boston Herald* (6 March) announced that it “most resembled” an operetta, while Helen Eager of the *Boston Traveler* (24 February), in praising the score, pointed out that “the musical is largely operetta, and the dancing is pure ballet.” Edwin F. Melvin of the *Christian Science Monitor* (3 March) tried to explain his reasons for the classification:

Mr. Weill has provided enough songs and Mr. Gershwin’s impudent rhymes are sufficiently tied in with the plot so that the piece might almost be classified as an operetta. Just where the line of demarcation falls in these categories is difficult to say. Probably current fashion rather than strict definition determines the description. . . . [The music is] more romantic and less pungent than in *Lady in the Dark* or *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

A later, unsigned clipping from the *Monitor* (10 March) called the show “really an operetta,” but added the caveat “after (a long way after) Gilbert and Sullivan.”

Surely the warmest review came from the pen of distinguished Beethoven scholar Elliot Norton of Harvard University, who, like many musicologists in those days, doubled as music critic:

[It needs] a little fixing. . . . But it is beautiful to look at and it has the loveliest score since “Oklahoma,” sung by some gifted principals and by choruses who sound like choirs of angels. Kurt Weill wrote the music which comes very close to being operatic in quality, yet richly melodic and full of wonderful popular songs. . . . It’s a good story for a musical show, but it needs now to be stepped up to a faster tempo, freed from numbers that drag it down, and re-staged in places so that swift scenes will follow slower ones and comic sequences will occur between ballads.¹⁶⁹

Norton touched discreetly upon a problem that would plague the show during its entire run, despite many last-minute changes to the book and score during the three-week tryout: the production moved “like goo,” as Lenya would recall.¹⁷⁰ Quipped Helen Eager of the *Traveler* (24 February), “too often there is too much ado about nothing. . . . [It is] a tremendous production, but the action, if it can be called that, merely crept.” What the Boston critics seized upon, apart from the quality of the score and lyrics, was the operetta’s glacial pace and the unwieldiness of its overly opulent production, to which a slight, stilted book and an indifferent cast could scarcely stand up:

That the frame sometimes overshadowed the subject-matter was a suspicion that intruded itself recurrently through the evening. Such outrageously gorgeous sets and costumes require rarely dominating stage

personalities to arrest an audience’s attention. A book, too, must be strictly on the beam to withstand such terrific visual competition. It is this otherwise admiring aisle-sitter’s reluctant conclusion that Edwin Justus Mayer and Ira Gershwin’s book . . . has too Florentine an accent, might profit by a needling of 1945 Americanese.¹⁷¹

Caveats about a lack of “sparkle and lift” and “too leisurely a pace” were the only sour notes among the remarks of the *Monitor*’s Mr. Melvin. The *Daily Record* of 26 February recommended “a lot of going over before it is hammered into shape for Broadway.” This review bestowed individual praise on the sets, costumes, choreography, good-looking girls, lyrics “in the tradition of Gilbert and Sullivan,” and a score boasting “smooth and beautiful” orchestrations, “hit tunes,” and “a depth and richness in the choral ensembles seldom to be heard.” But the overall direction was another matter: “And yet, there is lacking a master hand to integrate all these wonderful talents into a smooth unit.”

One opening-night mishap not reported by the press involved the problematic ending, which requires Count Maffio, supposedly killed in the opening number, to reappear out of nowhere and resume his long-interrupted sword fight with Cellini. Boyd Heathen, who played Maffio, apparently failed to emerge in time, and Earl Wrightson had to fetch him while improvising a line about glimpsing his nemesis in the distance.¹⁷² One wonders whether playing the scene that way for the rest of the run might not have mitigated the show’s second-act problems by adding an ironic, self-referential, meta-dramatic touch to an otherwise arbitrary and unmotivated ending.

Despite the weaknesses described in the Boston notices, there seems to have been genuine hope during the tryout that *Firebrand* would eventually work on Broadway. A scout for the *New York Times* (26 February) predicted that the show could be in good shape once “trimmed, speeded up, and restaged in some places.” John Murray Anderson later recalled Max Gordon’s mood at this time:

When the production was playing in Boston, Gordon seemed very hopeful of its success, and told me: ‘When this show opens in New York, it will make me the Anthony Eden of the American theater’—an analogy which still eludes me.¹⁷³

Gordon did realize that the show needed tightening. Accordingly, he brought in George Kaufman as book doctor and informed the *New York Times* on 4 March that the distinguished playwright and director had “cast an appraising eye over the musical and made several worthwhile suggestions,” resulting in about twenty-five minutes worth of cuts.¹⁷⁴ Yet John Murray Anderson was not far wrong when he recalled that in this case “the medicine proved to be more in the nature of a paregoric.”¹⁷⁵ The major casualties in the score were the two ariettas, No. 4 (“I Had Just Been Pardoned”) and No. 21c (“How Wonderfully Fortunate”), both of which were cut before the show reached New York. At some point, Cellini lost his version of the waltz refrain in No. 5 (“You’re Far Too Near Me”). One important emendation to the dialogue affected the first-act finale, which had originally ended with a partial reprise by the full ensemble of the choral tarantella (“Dizzily, Busily”) heard earlier in the number. This reprise had followed the Duke’s stunned realization that his bedmate that night would be not the fair Angela but rather his dreaded consort. Kaufman suggested a musical-comedy finish that would not vitiate the humor of the situation with yet another dance. Kaufman’s revised conclusion, which shortens the finale by some fifty measures, has the disgusted aristocrat turn to the audience with the line, “It shouldn’t happen to a dog,” followed by an eight-bar play-out and curtain.¹⁷⁶ All in all, excisions in the score amounted to at most about ten minutes of music. The dialogue, too, was shortened by about ten minutes, and at the same time efforts were made to broaden the comic element provided by the Ducal couple.

The myriad revisions made during the tryout, most of them minor, could not in themselves significantly improve the pacing of the show, which would have needed a thorough overhaul of the book, direction,

and casting. While the Boston critics looked more kindly upon the performers than would their more discriminating New York colleagues a few weeks later, there were ample hints of things to come. Edwin Melvin complained about Cooper's "absence of operatic range and timbre" and about Lenya's nervousness. Especially damning was an anonymous reviewer for the *Boston Sunday Post* (4 March):

Much of "Much Ado about Love" is charming. The music is delightful. . . . It is a handsome show. It is being overhauled now and its mentors should work strenuously to achieve greater speed, vivacity, and variety. Unfortunately, one of the principals is not suited to her role. Lotte Lenya . . . is hardly up to the comedy and the songs which have been given her. Her ability is not in question, nor her personal charm. But someone else should be playing the Duchess, for the sake of all concerned.

Lenya did not work well with the English comedian who was her counterpart. She later recalled, "My style would never ever jell with Melville Cooper's."¹⁷⁷ Playing opposite an actor she did not like and in the face of hostile reviews was surely a draining experience, softened perhaps by a love affair with Paul Mario, the chorus member who took the bit part of Second Petitioner in Act II, Scene iii.¹⁷⁸ Weill, too, underwent enormous strain during the tryout. At some point, he must have realized that there was little hope of saving the show.¹⁷⁹

As if the show's troubles were not enough, another crisis in Boston loomed in the person of Paul Feigay, who was producing Bernstein's *On the Town* that season. Feigay initiated a lawsuit, insisting that he had some kind of claim on the property. Apparently, during a meeting with Weill, Gershwin, Wilbur Evans, and a Twentieth-Century Fox executive, it was Feigay who had first proposed Mayer's *The Firebrand* as a musical, and now he was asserting that the authors had promised him their collaboration. Feigay does appear to have been involved with some early discussions about the project; when Gershwin explained to Weill in the spring of 1944 why he was hesitating to write the lyrics, he prefaced his remarks with "as I told Feigay (or whatever his name was)." The authors denied having made Feigay any promises, and nothing seems to have come of the suit, perhaps because there soon was nothing to fight over.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, Feigay appears to have changed his story, for the *New York Times* had reported on 22 June 1944 that he claimed to have a deal with Mayer, composer Vernon Duke, and lyricist John Latouche going back to October 1943.¹⁸¹

While in Boston, Edwin Mayer gave an amusing interview, which accords with the picture of him that emerges from Weill's correspondence:

The secret of a successful collaboration is to choose collaborators who know a good deal more than you do about what you and they are doing, and then let them do most of it, making for a happy, happy division of labor.¹⁸²

Meanwhile, in New York the daily papers were reporting a brisk business in advance sales, which had begun on 1 March. Ten days later, the advance ticket purchases already exceeded \$75,000. The top ticket price for opening night was \$9.60—more than twice as much as the top price of \$4.40 for *Lady in the Dark* (and more than \$100 in 2002 currency). The remaining seats ranged from \$1.80 to \$6.00. For other nights, the top price was \$6.00, \$3.60 for matinees.¹⁸³ The March 22nd opening at the Alvin Theater, following a sold-out preview on the 21st, was announced with great fanfare; the previous Sunday, a large cartoon rendering of the principals had appeared in the *New York Times* on the front page of Section 2.¹⁸⁴ Opening night reviews were mixed but not devastating; other, financially more successful shows playing that same season had received opening night reviews that were similar or worse. Yet *Firebrand*, after the initial flurry of ticket sales, failed to attract much of an audience. The first five performances at the 1357-seat Alvin, including the preview, grossed a respectable \$21,000. But subsequent weeks, with seven or eight performances apiece, saw dwindling returns:

\$22,500, \$19,500; \$27,000; \$18,000. *Variety* (18 April) attributed the sudden surge of sales in the fourth week, despite the cancellation of the Saturday matinee on the 14th, to several organized theater parties. It also suggested (11 April) that the high ticket prices were dissuading audiences. Indeed, there were only three other shows, *Seven Lively Arts*, *Song of Norway*, and *Up in Central Park*, that had a top price of \$6.00; these shows had been successful for some time and had lower bottom prices.¹⁸⁵

By way of comparison, in the week that *Firebrand* grossed \$19,500, *Bloomer Girl*, with a top ticket price of \$5.40, gleaned \$33,500. As for the three shows with comparable prices, *Seven Lively Arts* grossed \$34,500; *Song of Norway*, \$41,000; *Up in Central Park*, \$49,000.¹⁸⁶ *Lady in the Dark*, which had also played at the Alvin, had taken more than a year to recoup its production costs, despite standing-room-only audiences on most nights and an average weekly gross of \$31,500 during its record-breaking run.¹⁸⁷ *Firebrand* had higher ticket prices, but also a much larger investment to pay back. In order, perhaps, to gain extra publicity for the show while doing their bit for the war effort, the company organized a stage unit to tour area base hospitals.¹⁸⁸ Shortly thereafter, however, Gordon bowed to the inevitable. Citing the show's expense, he announced to the press that he would close the show after Saturday 28 April.¹⁸⁹ Including the Boston tryout and the March 21st preview, *Firebrand* had received a total of seventy-one performances. (There would have been seventy-two, but theaters remained dark on the afternoon of Saturday 14 April as a tribute to President Roosevelt, who had died two days earlier.)

On 9 April 1945, not long before the show closed, Abravanel went to the RCA studios with chorus, orchestra, and soloists. The two soloists were Dorothy Kirsten and Thomas L. Thomas, who had been one of Weill's early suggestions for Cellini. Abravanel recorded five numbers: "Sing Me Not a Ballad," "You're Far Too Near Me," "Life, Love, and Laughter," "When the Duchess Is Away," and "You Have to Do What You Do Do." This was not unusual; despite the precedent set by *Oklahoma!*, it was not yet customary to record the bulk of a theatrical score with the original cast. For example, in 1944 only six numbers from the very successful *Mexican Hayride* were released. In 1945 *Up in Central Park* spawned an album of highlights, with Met soprano Eileen Farrell replacing original cast member Maureen Connor. What is unusual is that the *Firebrand* recordings were never released. The score did receive some publicity in the form of sheet music and commercial arrangements. Chappell brought out sheet music for "You're Far Too Near Me," "Sing Me Not a Ballad," "There'll Be Life, Love, and Laughter," and "A Rhyme for Angela," and big-band arrangements by Jackie Mason and Al Goodman were disseminated.¹⁹⁰

Gershwin was bitter about the closing. On 9 April he reported: "*The Firebrand of Florence* received a couple of good notices but mostly they were bad so it looks as if nine months of hard work has been shot to hell."¹⁹¹ Perhaps as part of a zero-hour publicity campaign to bolster sagging sales, on 15 April Gershwin gave the *Herald Tribune* an interview in which, astonishingly under the circumstances, he claimed much of the credit for instigating the project and giving it its operetta character:

I had a lot of fun working on it with Edwin Justus Mayer and Kurt Weill. This, it seemed to me, might be the "international operetta" my brother George used to speak about. By that he meant an operetta whose background would be understandable to audiences in any country. My intention was to write "*The Firebrand of Florence*" in opera bouffa [style], giving it an Offenbach flavor. I'm rather proud of our eighteen-minute opening, in which the plot is explained solely with words and music, and of a finaletto [No. 7] based on the French triolet, which is then developed into a trio and a septet. Also, in the Duke's number, "Cozy Nook," I finally got a chance to do a lyric on spoonerisms, an idea I've been saving for twenty years.

It had been Weill's oft-stated intention, not Gershwin's, to compose an international operetta in the Offenbach tradition, and he had thus described *Firebrand* in at least two letters to Gershwin a year before. The only reservation Gershwin expressed about the show in this interview

was that, too late, he had noticed a solecism in “You’re Far Too Near Me,” the split infinitive “to ever, ever let you go.”

After *Firebrand* had closed, Weill admitted ruefully that, with *Carousel*’s concurrent success, Richard Rodgers had trumped him once again:

So Rodgers “is defining a new directive for musical comedy.” I had always thought that I’ve been doing that—but I must have been mistaken. Rodgers certainly has won the first round in that race between him and me. But I suppose there will be a second and a third round.¹⁹²

But on the whole, Weill seemed to take it all in stride. Of course, when he summed up the entire experience for Lenya, he laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of his associates. Two weeks before the show closed, Weill complained to Lenya that “the show was killed by production.”¹⁹³ He could have been referring to Max Gordon’s role, but surely he also had in mind the staging, for in his very next letter Weill placed most of the blame on John Murray Anderson:

I am pretty much reconciled to the idea that the show will close on April 28. Looking back at what has happened from a little more distance it becomes quite clear what mistakes in taste and judgement have been made. Murray [Anderson] was the main desaster, Eddie the second—and that, coupled with the lack of a director, Ira’s laziness and Max’s foolishness is enough to destroy anything. The only thing I have to blame myself for is lack of toughness and taking for granted that Max is a great producer or Ira a good showman (which were both mistakes). My score and you are the innocent victims of these mistakes. But that’s the theatre. It wouldn’t be so much fun if it weren’t so dangerous, so unpredictable. Of course, it is safer to work in the movies. But how dull, how uninspiring!¹⁹⁴

To his parents, Weill showed greater equanimity still:

As always, when I’m bringing out a new work, the last few months were full of vexations and I was so completely wrapped up in my work that I didn’t have time for anything else. This time it had been particularly difficult, because the dramatist, who had written the libretto, was a total fiasco and I had felt a particular responsibility, because it was a very big and a very expensive show, and, of course, also because Lenya appeared in it. Musically it was the best I have written in years, a real opera, with big choral and ensemble numbers, full of melodic invention, and my taking advantage of all the craftsmanship I have acquired throughout the years. Ira Gershwin, who wrote the lyrics, also had surpassed himself. But the libretto was very weak and the performance itself left much to be desired. Outside of Lenya (who gave a magnificent portrait of the Duchess of Florence) the cast wasn’t very good, and this time we didn’t have any big star names. The long and short of it: this time it wasn’t as big a success as were the last two shows. I did have a personal success with my music, but otherwise the reviews were very bad. In addition, we happened to have opened at a time when the tension about the events in Europe is so huge that people don’t feel much like going to the theatre. —Apart from the momentary irritations and annoyances which always are connected with these things, the failure of the “Firebrand of Florence” hasn’t touched me very much, and you definitely shouldn’t give yourselves any headaches because of it. I’ve gotten long since used to the ups and downs of success, and for a long time now I’ve been very conscious of the fact that after the two gigantic successes I’ve been having in the last few years, a setback has been overdue. Somehow I’m even glad that I’m not falling into the routine of a career of successes. I have to take such reversals into the bargain, so long as I’m trying to do something new with each work, which in many instances is ahead of its time—something which of course is made easier by being financially able to hold out very well. Therefore—let’s forget it—and off to new deeds!¹⁹⁵

Weill had hoped that *Firebrand* would be “a real opera for Broadway,” but his gamble that a romantic costume operetta set in Renaissance Italy would lure audiences into accepting an ambitious score did not pay off. Now he would turn his back on operetta for good. Two years later, *Street Scene* having finally fulfilled his ambitions, he could even joke about the whole thing. In the context of rebuking *Life* magazine for referring to him as a German composer, he wrote:

I am an American citizen and during my dozen years in this country have composed exclusively for the American stage, writing the scores for *Johnny Johnson*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, *The Firebrand of Florence* (ouch!), and *Street Scene*.¹⁹⁶

IV. CRITICAL RECEPTION

There were three points of agreement among most New York critics: the cast was weak, the production was heavy, and the new offering was best understood as operetta rather than traditional musical comedy or the more integrated “musical play,” as the previous Weill-Gershwin collaboration, *Lady in the Dark*, had been dubbed. Beyond this, critics parted ways on *Firebrand*, for their verdicts on the general merits of operetta differed widely. The proponents of operetta were themselves divided over whether or not *Firebrand* was a successful realization of the genre. Howard Barnes of the *Herald Tribune* vigorously defended the new offering on two grounds: first, operetta had the aesthetic right to coexist with more modern types of musicals; second, as an operetta, *Firebrand* was first-rate. His review merits quoting in full:

One of the most pernicious aspects of this booming season is the tendency of showmen to go Hollywood and copy established entertainments. No one can outshout this reviewer in praise of “Oklahoma!” which set a new and exciting pattern for musical shows. It was still a miraculous blend of drama, ballet and music after two years of standing up spectators. It amply deserves its extraordinary reclame. Unfortunately, it has diverted attention from the fact that a “musical,” as it is so loosely called, should define a wide variety of theatrical make-believe.

“Firebrand” is Operetta

“The Firebrand of Florence,” for example, should no more be compared to a satirical musical comedy or a fast-paced revue than a dachshund should be judged on the same points as a St. Bernard. It is, quite frankly and unpretentiously, a farcical operetta, relying for its entertainment on a neat juxtaposition of lyrics and melody and pleasing decor. When it is a period piece, as this adaptation of Edwin Justus Mayer’s play about Benvenuto Cellini happens to be, it can stand considerable swashbuckling.

Those who have found the new Alvin Theater offering wanting are wrong, we suggest, in anticipating an “Oklahoma!,” a “Seven Lively Arts,” an “On the Town,” or even a “Catherine Was Great.” It seems reasonably certain that Mayer and his brilliant collaborator on the libretto, Ira Gershwin, had no notion of making a romantic tale of sixteenth century Florence anything other than just that. In this department’s humble opinion they have done an elegant job in its field. It is as different from modern or contemporary “musicals” as a Mozart opera is from “Show Boat,” but it is eminently satisfying.

Gershwin is the moving spirit in the enterprise, and he has never been more ingenious and eloquent. It is true enough that the script lags rather badly in a long first act, when the wily Cellini is making love to a model and a duchess simultaneously to save himself from hanging. The same mustiness that shrouds most opera plots is evident in several of the early passages of “The Firebrand of Florence.” Once it cuts loose in brilliant choral ensembles and a fast-paced second act, the show is enchanting to both the eye and the ear.

The Gershwin lyrics do far more for the structure of the work than the plot itself. He has outdone himself in this latest feat of fitting rhymes to music. “There Was Life, There Was Love, There Was Laughter,” “A Rhyme for Angela,” “Love Is My Enemy” or “You’re Far Too Near Me” have the exact verbal inflections which a farcical operetta demanded. Since the gifted ditty-smith has worked with composer Kurt Weill before, he was obviously in a delicately precise collaboration with the composer, as he always was with his great brother, George Gershwin.

Variety in the Music

The music is, of course, particularly important in a “musical.” Weill has scarcely fallen down on his assignment. His score is prodigal with tunes and represents a remarkable variety of moods and modes. There are melodies for the principals to sing. There are splendid choral numbers, which find a company which can sing and is not afraid to do so, going to town. And there are dance numbers to accompany some

stunning terpsichorean interludes. He may not be George Gershwin, but Weill has filled a theater with delightful musical sounds.

As for the players, the chief bulwark to a rather archaic musical comedy form is Melville Cooper. It is his ingratiating comedy which keeps the plot from thudding down into mere pageantry. He even tries his hand at singing, with comic, if not particularly vocal, success. His portrayal of the dumb duke who tries to hang Cellini but has a sneaking liking for the fellow makes a rich dramatic core for the . . . quality of farcical operetta which the work has. The others are all right, particularly the choral ensembles, and the dancing is well worth watching. Since Max Gordon has not stinted on the production and has commissioned Jo Mielziner to turn out striking settings and Raoul Pene DuBois to clothe the performers sumptuously, all is well at the Alvin.¹⁹⁷

While most of the other first-string critics, in contrast to Barnes, emphasized the excellence of the score over the lyrics, what is significant about Barnes's piece is his astute and sympathetic recognition of the genre that Weill had in mind when he took on the project—operetta and, more specifically, operetta of the farcical “bouffe” subgenre, rather than the romantic variety epitomized in Berlin by *Friederike* and on Broadway by *The Desert Song*. Also significant is that Barnes's review in the Sunday *Herald Tribune* of 1 April expands upon the one he wrote on opening night. In its expanded form, this review constitutes the bulk of a more general article on “The Ups and Downs of This Theater Season.” True, *Carousel* had not yet opened. As of 1 April, however, Barnes considered *Firebrand* a high point of the season.

Barnes's comparison to *Oklahoma!* seems to have been *de rigueur* for theater critics of the time. As one *Firebrand* critic complained, “this is not the *Oklahoma!* of Florence.”¹⁹⁸ A show that two years earlier had inspired some theater critics to declare a new era in musical theater, if not an entirely new genre of musical play, *Oklahoma!* remained a formidable competitor for any new musical. Although it had much in common with traditional operetta, specifically of the sentimental *volkstümlich* strain, it offered a wartime audience romanticized visions of the American prairie rather than of the Tyrol or Venice. Its success inspired a spate of successful costume musicals during the 1944–45 season, many of them offering up slices of Americana: Arlen's *Bloomer Girl*, Romberg's *Up in Central Park*, and *Carousel*.¹⁹⁹

Like Howard Barnes, the generally conservative drama critic George Jean Nathan admired traditional operettas and bemoaned the obsession with naturalism that he discerned in contemporary musical theater:

The answer that the younger critics make [to the decline of romantic operetta] is that we live in a realistic age and that there is small place in our theatre today for the old romantic escape. The answer, I fear, is largely bosh. Otherwise how else to account for the enormous success of an *Oklahoma!* which in its timid way makes at least a gesture towards capturing the old trovatore mood.²⁰⁰

Nonetheless, he admitted that *Firebrand* simply was not good enough to brave the critical climate of 1945:

With enough money invested in the exhibit to float a battleship, Max [Gordon] has floated only a tow-boat, desperately chugging away and pulling at nothing. . . . Edwin Justus Mayer's amusing comedy about the doings of Benvenuto Cellini has been turned into something that lacks only a little music by Wagner in Kurt Weill's stead to constitute a first-rate funeral. . . . The book, though Mayer himself worked on it . . . plods its heavy way like a “The Vagabond King” in water-soaked boots. . . . Costume musicals are frequently, even at their best, fertile in stage embarrassment. . . . It takes music of an uncommon sort to make any stage costume show capture the necessary fragrant mood. Even the best book has a time of it competing with the waywardly realistic mood of latter day audiences. And when the book is as sour as that of “The Firebrand of Florence” it would require the services of Lehar, Eysler, Kalmann [*sic*] and Victor Herbert operating in combination and at the top of their form to win over those audiences to it, or to get them, at the least, to suspend judgment regarding it.²⁰¹

Implicit in many reviews of *Firebrand* is a conception of operetta as

standardized, superannuated, marked by operatically styled music, old-fashioned ballet, irrelevant plots, and historical or exotic settings:

Edwin Justus Mayer's famous “Firebrand” came back to town last evening. It did so in the guise of Max Gordon's latest musical, and this time it is called “The Firebrand of Florence.” Second things usually are not as good as first things, and in this the new show is no exception. Despite a Kurt Weill score, the original author's collaboration with Ira Gershwin on the book, and a lavish production, Benvenuto Cellini's return to the stage is not a happy one. “The Firebrand of Florence” lacks sparkle, drive, or just plain nervous energy; it is a little like an old-fashioned operetta, slowly paced and ambling.²⁰²

There is little to distinguish *The Firebrand of Florence* from a score of other period musicals with vaguely swashbuckling heroes and specifically soporific plots. To be fair to it, *The Firebrand of Florence* is much more operetta than musical comedy, and should probably be treated so. As operetta, it has its musical assets: Kurt Weill, deserting the chic manner of *Lady in the Dark* and *One Touch of Venus*, has turned out a big romantic score, much of it full-bodied and tuneful; much of it pleasantly sung. What the music lacks is character and variety; the songs do not rise above a tradition. . . . Ira Gershwin's lyrics are often ingenious and clever, but they lack his usual gaiety and sparkle. As for the book, it can be let off more lightly in terms of operetta (where librettos as a rule are even sadder than they are in musical comedy), but it can hardly be more warmly cherished.²⁰³

Those seeking a modern show will be disappointed. . . . It is essentially an operetta, and as such will hold, I think, strong appeal to those who react to a pretentious work of stage art in which a lot of its pretensions are fulfilled.²⁰⁴

The effect . . . is one of operetta, with all of operetta's occupational infirmities. . . . As musical comedy it lacks both comedy and pace. As operetta, it is deficient in the swish and swashbuckle of the period.²⁰⁵

John Chapman of *The Daily News* went so far as to versify his criticism:

For “The Firebrand of Florence”
I have no great abhorrence.
The Ira Gershwin lyrics
Induced in me hysterics,
Being tricky
And seldom icky.
The music by Kurt Weill would beguile
The dullest ear; but I wish I could forget a-
bout the plot—for “The Firebrand” is old-style operetta.
Hot-cha!²⁰⁶

After the opening night of *Firebrand*, some critics reminded their readers of a trait that set Weill apart from other Broadway composers: “Mr. Weill has orchestrated his own music—something unheard-of in these days of one-fingered composers—and has given it exciting color and verve.”²⁰⁷ Two critics even pointed out the mandolin in “Sing Me Not a Ballad” as a particularly effective touch.²⁰⁸ Some of the *Firebrand* reviewers indicated that they preferred other Weill scores, but only two theater critics panned it. George Jean Nathan considered Weill, with the exception of the *Threepenny Opera*, merely a “lightly pleasant composer” whose melodies for *Firebrand* sounded too “yesterday.” Burton Rascoe inexplicably declared that “most of the melodies in Kurt Weill's score are definitely liturgical—watered down Massenet for musical farce!”²⁰⁹ But if most of the theater reviewers conceded that the score compensated for the book and the casting, that was emphatically not the case for the critic of *Modern Music*, an avant-garde bastion that had followed Weill's career as far back as his German days (Marc Blitzstein and Hans Heinsheimer had both been regular contributors). Blitzstein's review of *Johnny Johnson* had been the last positive assessment of Weill's work to appear in its pages. In 1945, Sam Barlow, continuing the assault on Weill's Broadway works launched by Virgil Thomson, deplored the latest example of the composer's decline, suggesting that he may have been a victim of circumstances beyond his control:

I do know what the Guild did with all the bad operatic bits they cut out of *Porgy and Bess*. They plugged them right into *Carousel*. . . . The next blow, but in this case not unexpected, was *The Firebrand*, a recovering of the old household sofa with imitation plush. (By now, as a matter of fact, the bottom has dropped out.) . . . Lotte Lenya and Melvin Cooper worked well and hard. But the real disaster is Kurt Weill's music. What was "the most arresting voice of a young musical Germany, a voice with the grinning, pavement pathos of Villon" has become increasingly dreary and now finally clap-trap. The fault is not all his. The poverty of the librettos handed him began with *Knickerbocker Holiday*; and the blindness of producers continues to hand him material utterly unsuited to his talent. Lately he has been asked to write in the vein of Gilbert and Sullivan, of Gershwin, and now of *seicento* madrigals. And this for a man who was notable for the curious individuality of his own style, for a man almost inflexibly remote from any other style but his own.²¹⁰

Unlike Sam Barlow, most American theater critics were scarcely aware of Weill's European works. George Jean Nathan aside, only one first-string critic remembered the 1933 New York production of the *Three-penny Opera*, which had folded after only a dozen performances. Robert Garland of the *New York Journal-American* compared that production to *Firebrand*, to the latter's detriment:

There're a couple of dozen songs in all—arias, madrigals, love songs, tarantellas, chants, ballads and the like—and, engaging and Kurt-Weill-ian as they are, Mr. Weill is yet to write a score as memorable as was his ill fated "Three Penny Opera."²¹¹

One other reviewer placed *Firebrand* in the context of Weill's career. The German-language newspaper *Aufbau* reported:

After "Lady in the Dark" and "One Touch of Venus," Kurt Weill has returned with his musical adaptation of Edwin Justus Mayer's old comedy "The Firebrand" to the tradition of his one-act opera, "Der Zar lässt sich photographieren"—after musicals in Broadway style, back to opera buffa. The play . . . is a charming comedy of Renaissance Florence. With its musical setting, to which Ira Gershwin has written witty lyrics, however, the evening belongs to the composer. It has been a while since Kurt Weill has luxuriated so much in his musical intuitions. The comedy is almost entirely through-composed: arias, love songs, ballads, madrigals, marches, duets, and trios end with stylish finalletos and finales. The comic satire of the scene with the preparations for Cellini's execution on the gallows, and later the "Trial by Music" recalls "Die Dreigroschenoper" thematically and musically.²¹²

This anonymous German critic understood better than his American counterparts the underlying continuities in Weill's creative life.

Several critics favorably compared the style of Gershwin's lyrics to W. S. Gilbert's, two major exceptions being Wilella Waldorf (*New York Post*), who thought them "second to third, fourth, and even fifth rate W. S. Gilbert," and George Jean Nathan:

While Ira Gershwin's lyrics here and there offer a momentary hint of his erstwhile skill, they more often descend to such stuff as "I know where there's a nosey cook—My lord, you mean a cozy nook." A lyric, furthermore, in which the singer strives vainly for a rhyme with Angela the while, after theoretically hilarious pauses and looks at the audience, he succeeds in negotiating such rhymes as needeth for Edith and so on, is hardly more to the credit of the excellent lyricist of "Of Thee I Sing" and half a dozen other shows than such souvenirs of the music show stage of the early Nineteen Hundreds as are sufficiently suggested by titles like "There Was Life, There Was Love, There Was Laughter," "When The Duchess Is Away," and "Come To Paris."²¹³

Almost no one had anything good to say about Mayer's script, save for some of the Duke's comedy bits. Those familiar with his 1924 play were especially disappointed that the satire of the original had yielded to conventional historical romance of just the kind it had originally lampooned:

Twenty years ago Edwin Justus Mayer wrote *The Firebrand*, a broad, slightly bawdy and vastly amusing comedy about the wolfish doings of

one, Benvenuto Cellini. It was sock. Currently, Mayer and Ira Gershwin have cooked over the ingredients into farce operetta form—and much of the fun has been boiled away. . . . As it is, *Firebrand* emerges lush, glittering and tuneful—but a period operetta all the same. It will likely get quite a play from the customers who go for the cloak and dagger routine—but it is not in the sock hit class.²¹⁴

The Firebrand of Florence is very unjust—as *The Firebrand* was not—to the gay impudence, the stylish gallantry, the dashing villainy, the inborn *désinvolture* of Benvenuto Cellini. It plays only a dull child's game of Cellini-meeny-miny-mo with him. It weighs him down, it flattens him out.²¹⁵

[1924] provided a grateful public with *The Firebrand* by Edwin Justus Mayer, a bedroom-cum-costume farce of negligible weight but notable comic content. Joseph Schildkraut as an irrepressible Cellini made gorgeous fun of cloak and sword romances. . . . Today, Mr. Mayer's *The Firebrand of Florence*, tricked out with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, reappears weighted down with a superabundance of costumes by Raoul Pène DuBois and set by Jo Mielziner on a scale compatible with Big Musicals but somewhat perfunctory in mood. Kurt Weill's music is the chief attraction of an evening more noticeable for gorgeousness than wit.²¹⁶

Newsweek called the show a "milquetoast version of Cellini's nightlife."²¹⁷ Only Hazel Bruce of the *San Francisco Chronicle* (30 March) realized that, despite its weaknesses, this was not a regulation romantic operetta: "Some effort is made to treat ironically the standard material." The one critic who seems to have liked the book was Sherborne of the *Christian Science Monitor*, but he may have been thinking principally of Gershwin's contributions, because he asserts that the "witty lyrics actually remind the listener of Gilbert" to qualify the sentence in which he praises the text.

The slow pace of *Firebrand*, which some attributed to the book, was also blamed on the direction. Wilella Waldorf summarized the prevailing opinion when she wrote: "[O]n the whole the production has a clumsy air about it that is hardly to be associated with a professional Broadway musical attraction these days, despite the beauty and opulence of its decor." The adjectives "out-dated" and "routine" cropped up frequently in connection with Anderson's name. *Theatre Arts Magazine* noted the atavistic ambiance of the staging: "The whole production, supervised by John Murray Anderson, is a reversion to an earlier type rather than a step forward in the progress of American Musical Comedy." Arthur Pollock of the *Brooklyn Eagle* (23 March) complained of "the same old John Murray Anderson manner." There were isolated words of praise for Catherine Littlefield and many comments about the high quality of the dancing itself. Critics were somewhat divided about the stylized ballet interpolations dressed up as commedia dell'arte routines. One critic thought the dance "too choreographed," and another mentioned "tedious interludes."²¹⁸ Surprisingly enough, given the number of dances in the score, Kronenberger bemoaned "a minimum of dancing. There are (perhaps from a desire to be historical) virtually no full-stage routines, only some brief Brueghel-like figurations, and some good special bits by Jean Guelis."²¹⁹

In contrast to the pacing of the production, its physical appearance met with universal approbation. For Lewis Nichols, it was just about the only saving grace:

There can be no doubt, however, that the production itself is a beautiful one to see. Jo Mielziner has designed the settings, and Raoul Pène du Bois the brilliant costumes. If the book, music, and acting were up to their physical dressings, the return of "The Firebrand" would be a special event of the first order. They are not, however, so neither is "The Firebrand of Florence."²²⁰

The general consensus about Earl Wrightson was that he did fine as a singer but that as an actor—especially for a role like Cellini—he was a nullity. As the ever-witty George Nathan wrote, "when [his voice] lapses into dialogue, [it] sounds considerably less like the hypnotic Benvenuto than like Benay Venuta."²²¹ Wrightson's speaking voice also proved

problematic for Burton Rascoe of the *New York World-Telegram*: “[T]he moment he begins to speak, he has a flat, nasal quality, and thus he was a little preposterous in the swashbuckling, romantic role.”²²² He “posse[d] about as much Florentine fire as any nice young American in a church choir,” according to Wilella Waldorf, and was “too much a boy scout” for Arthur Pollock of the *Brooklyn Eagle* (23 March). Rowland Field of the *Newark Evening News* (23 March) compared him to “a bearded bank clerk turned swordsman and adventurer for the moment.”

At least half a dozen critics complained of Beverly Tyler’s tendency to go flat, even if she was “rather an eyeful.”²²³ Her limited vocal technique seems to have been coupled with rudimentary acting:

To the role of Angela, Cellini’s beloved model, Beverly Tyler, imported for the event from Hollywood, brings a voice notable chiefly for flattening the higher notes and a stage demeanor still so awkward that she must needs heavily finger her skirts this way and that in order to conceal the woodenness of her gait.²²⁴

Beverly Tyler as the model Angela is a pretty ingenue whose stage deportment is deplorably amateur and whose vocalizing is nearly always painful.²²⁵

Miss Tyler [was] afflicted in this, her first theatrical appearance, with all the stale mannerisms of the operetta stage.²²⁶

Despite vocal abilities insufficient for the demands of the part, Cooper won the reviewers over with his stage antics. John Chapman (*Daily News*) even called it “Mr. Cooper’s show.” In the 1 April article previously cited, Howard Barnes of the *Herald Tribune* fairly summed up the prevailing consensus that Cooper was the best actor in the company and the one chiefly responsible for rendering Mayer’s script remotely acceptable.

Some diplomatic critics chose to write nothing at all about Lenya’s performance. Others were chillingly polite. Most panned her. Kronenberger (*PM Magazine*) cited her “mannered European fashion.” Lewis Nichols (*New York Times*) stated flatly, “Lotte Lenya, who in home life is Mrs. Weill, is miscast as the Duchess.” Chapman (*Daily News*) considered “Sing Me Not a Ballad” the best song in the show and complained that “she fails to sell it because she and the number are not the same type.” Some found her performance practically the only sour note of the evening:

Notes that I jotted down for critical complaint during the course of the evening seem silly as I type this. It’s like beefing about the dust on a bottle of hundred-year-old brandy, after you have smacked your lips over its contents. But just for the records, the book is rather dusty, first-night shakes shook some of the performers, I wanted to assassinate the duchess, and I found the pace too slow even though George S. Kaufman accelerated John Murray Anderson’s staging.²²⁷

Among the critics for the major New York dailies, she did have two defenders. One was Burton Rascoe, who praised only Lenya, Gloria Story (Emilia), Randolph Symonette (Hangman), and Cooper, deeming all the other cast members “undistinguished or inadequate.”²²⁸ Another was Robert Garland (*New York Journal-American*):

Writing of that “Three Penny Opera,” ill-fated only here in America, the Lotte Lenya who is so forthright and skillful as the Duchess, appeared in that work in Berlin and Vienna. Privately, she is Mrs. Weill.

Still, Weill’s lack of judgment became the butt of jokes in theatrical circles. Billy Rose, who was also married to a singing actress, wrote an amusing column describing the turn for the worse that his domestic life had taken ever since Weill had given his wife ideas:

Whenever Mrs. Billy Rose gets mad at her husband, she calls me “Kurt Weill.” If Mrs. Arnstein, the lady down the block, comes out of the house wearing a silver blue mink, Eleanor is apt to hit me with, “Do you think I’ll ever have one like it, Kurt?” . . . It was the first time [Weill] had been able to feature [Lenya] in one of his American shows. . . . It’s my

guess their up-and-down years together had something to do with this casting. When you’ve lived through Brownshirts marching Unter der [sic] Linden, a couple of skinny seasons in Paris, and the agonizing job of adapting your talent to the Broadway tempo, you don’t figure to be too analytical when a part comes up you think your wife can play. . . . I don’t dare produce a show featuring an unknown girl. I have a pretty good idea of what might happen if a critic reported my new find was “badly miscast.” I can see Eleanor at La Guardia Field. “It was nice knowing you, Kurt,” she says as she steps on the plane for Reno.²²⁹

Three cast members who received consistently good reviews were Gloria Story, Randolph Symonette, and Jean Guéllis. Rowland Field (*Newark Evening News*) went so far as to call Symonette’s the best voice in the show and Story’s “the most engaging feminine performance.” Story must have been far sexier than Tyler, for this “pert little Florentine honey” evidently stole the scenes.²³⁰ But the singing that garnered perhaps the most praise was that of the chorus, which had been extensively coached by Abravanel: “Uncommonly fine is the ensemble singing, both for the quality of the voices and the spirited leadership of the accompaniments of the large orchestra under Mr. Abravanel’s direction.”²³¹ Wilella Waldorf noted that, “Under the circumstances Mr. Weill’s music comes over much better in the ensemble numbers than it does as solos, duets, etc.”

What this account of the work’s critical reception suggests is that the reviews of *Firebrand* were by no means as uniformly poor as one might expect, given its rapid disappearance. The undeniable weaknesses of the book, cast, and direction were balanced by the generally appreciated excellence of music, orchestrations, lyrics, chorus and dancers, and set design. But success and failure on Broadway arise in the context of a free market, and the challenge of keeping theaters full was all the greater in wartime, when a significant amount of the population was stationed overseas. Moreover, *Firebrand* happened to receive its mixed reviews in a season that offered particularly stiff competition from other costume musicals, and it was one of the last to open.

Oklahoma!, of course, was still playing to capacity audiences in its third season. The first new costume operetta of 1944–45 opened on 21 August at the Imperial Theater. The unexpectedly successful *Song of Norway*, a production imported from Los Angeles, was a pastiche of Grieg’s life and music in the tradition of such bio-operettas as *Blossom Time* and *The Great Waltz*. It was the only book show with a non-American setting to play more than one hundred performances during that crucial wartime season. Neither critics nor audiences seemed to mind its “lamentable book,”²³² which somehow did not “impede the progress of a lavishly conventional operetta conceived and produced in the good old-fashioned way.”²³³ Weill had seen it in California, in the midst of his work on *Firebrand*:

On Wednesday I went with Eddie downtown to see that musical show “The Song of Norway” that made such a sensation here. It is a kind of *Dreimäderlhaus* [the German version of *Blossom Time*] about the life of Edward Grieg, with Grieg music—and too much of it. It has all the elements of the theatre which I despise—including the Russian ballet.²³⁴

Song of Norway tallied 860 performances, making it the second-most-successful show to open that season—*Carousel* would surpass it by only thirty performances.

Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg’s musical about suffragists, *Bloomer Girl* (Shubert Theater, 5 October 1944), was not an operetta, but it capitalized on the *Oklahoma!* phenomenon with its nineteenth-century American setting, its Agnes de Mille ballets, and its female stars Celeste Holm and Joan McCracken, both veterans of the original *Oklahoma!* cast. Inevitably, critics compared the two and found *Bloomer Girl* the weaker for it. Celeste Holm’s singing elicited more hostile comments than that of any other performer in a major production that season, *Firebrand* included. *Bloomer Girl* still managed a more-than-respectable run of 654 performances. The next costume musical, Fritz Kreisler’s *Rhapsody* (Century Theater, 22 November 1944), was a dull throwback

to central European operetta built around a pastiche of the violinist's show pieces. It folded quickly. *Up in Central Park* (Century Theater, 27 January 1945) was the last major success of Sigmund Romberg, whose name is still virtually synonymous with American operetta. With its setting in 1880s New York and its choreographed tableaux based on Currier and Ives drawings—"no dream ballet," one critic felt obliged to point out—it was yet another manifestation of the twin crazes for ballet and Americana.²³⁵ Many critics found it dull, the book scenes in particular: "a better history lesson than it is a show."²³⁶ The lesson's hero, played by Wilbur Evans, was the *New York Times* reporter who had exposed the political corruption of party boss William Marcy Tweed. That didn't stop the *New York Times* from quipping: "The park should form a wonderful setting for a musical show, but this one needs someone like Commissioner Moses to do a bit of landscaping or doctoring."²³⁷ Nonetheless, a wartime audience flocked to see this "souvenir album of tunes, dances, and tintypes" in numbers sufficient to ensure 504 performances. *Carousel*, Rodgers and Hammerstein's follow-up to *Oklahoma!*, opened at the Majestic on 19 April, four days before Max Gordon announced that he was closing *Firebrand*.

The only major new book musical of the 1944–45 season that was set in modern times was Bernstein-Comden-Green's *On the Town*. It reflected current Broadway fashion in other ways, notably through its extensive use of boldly choreographed dances, and it inaugurated a prestigious series of musicals directed and/or produced by Jerome Robbins and George Abbott. In a season marked by a surfeit of ballets, not every critic appreciated *On the Town*'s choreography. John Chapman griped, "There are ballets, of course. Cripes, what I would give to see a good old hoofing chorus again!"²³⁸ George Jean Nathan definitely found the new style not to his taste. How could a show devoted to youth be so unattractive?

It is not easy to dream of vernal beauty in the presence of a stage replete with physiognomy that is downright frightening, figures that disclose a heavy deficit, and legs become so knobby and knees so bruised from protracted terpsichorean gymnastics that ballets and dance numbers take on the appearance of alumni Rugby football games.²³⁹

One other book musical, a version of *Sadie Thompson* by Vernon Duke and Howard Dietz, did not last the season. New revues included *The Seven Lively Arts*, which Weill had turned down. It had become a cumbersome affair that folded after twenty-three weeks, despite songs by Cole Porter and a ballet by Stravinsky. More successful was Olsen and Johnson's *Laffing Room Only*. Unlike their *Hellzapoppin'*, it did not break records, but ran for a respectable 233 performances. Finally, there were a few operetta revivals, none as triumphant as those of recent seasons: DeKoven's *Robin Hood* played two weeks at the Adelphi, and there were brief, lackluster runs at City Center of *Der Zigeunerbaron* and *La Vie parisienne*.

In retrospect, the operetta revival of the mid-1940s, upon which *Firebrand* might have been expected to capitalize, was fleeting. The four revivals that enjoyed long runs included the two most celebrated Viennese operettas, *Die Fledermaus* and *Die lustige Witwe*, and those two Shubert Brothers chestnuts, *Blossom Time* and *The Student Prince*. This hardly constituted a mandate for European-style operetta. The failure of *Helen Goes to Troy*, which opened at the Alvin Theater on 24 April 1944, bears comparison to that of *Firebrand* beyond the coincidence of venue. The team of Max Reinhardt and Erich Wolfgang Korngold had been unable to match the success of their *Rosalinda*.²⁴⁰ It did not escape the critics that most of Offenbach's original score had been jettisoned—fourteen of its twenty numbers were Korngold arrangements of music borrowed from other Offenbach scores. Worst of all, an unwieldy production, which, like *Firebrand*, included ballet interpolations to showcase Jean Guélis, had smothered the wit and verve of the original. Critics deplored the adaptation and the staging in language that would be echoed in their reviews of Mayer's libretto and Anderson's direction eleven months later.

The surfeit of operettas and costume musicals, alongside waxing impatience with old-fashioned, stilted production values, may have hurt word-of-mouth ticket sales even more than the lukewarm reviews. In fact, when seen from the perspective of the entire 1944–45 season, the critical reception of *Firebrand* was not especially severe. Costume shows that enjoyed far longer runs had met with critical disapproval. At least the score and the lyrics of *Firebrand* were consistently and highly praised, and even those critics—Lewis Nichols of the *New York Times* among them—who felt that Weill and Gershwin had done better work in the past still treated their collaboration as a cultural event worthy of special notice. In contrast, theater critics did not even mention Yip Harburg's contributions to *Bloomer Girl*, and Arlen's score was roundly panned. No one paid much attention to Dorothy Fields' lyrics for *Up in Central Park* or to the Wright-Forrest lyrics to *Song of Norway*, although the music for these two efforts was deemed pleasant enough. Bernstein's score for *On the Town* earned its share of complaints for the lack of a particularly memorable number.

In short, the *Firebrand* reviews were decidedly mixed, but so were the reviews for most of its competition. To be sure, some of the harshest criticism came from two highly influential writers, Lewis Nichols and George Jean Nathan. But Nichols consistently gave bad reviews to operettas, including *Up in Central Park*.²⁴¹ Nathan gave a positive review to only one musical that season, namely *Carousel*. Based strictly on the published critical appraisal of each new book show's strengths and liabilities, a rational theatergoer might have elected either to see nothing except *Carousel*, or everything except *Rhapsody* and *Sadie Thompson*.

But theatergoers are not decision theorists. In 1945 they made their choices in a cultural climate that overwhelmingly favored American settings. It is unclear that a stronger book and cast would have made the crucial difference to *Firebrand*'s fate. To be sure, so watered down was Mayer's 1924 play, and so anodyne were the performances of Tyler and Wrightson, that most critics failed to notice any of the work's nontraditional, antiheroic qualities. Rather, they found a not-altogether-successful return to the swashbuckling 1920s operettas—and by now, Douglas Fairbanks and John Barrymore films were long forgotten. Even if Weill and Mayer had preserved the original tone of the play, creating a musical black comedy, it is still questionable whether a public suffused with the naive optimism of a still-young and soon-to-be victorious nation would have flocked to see it.

V. MUSIC AND LYRICS

Perhaps the most immediately striking aspect about *Firebrand* as a whole is the sheer amount of music (4,175 measures), especially by the standards of Broadway musicals, even those that were widely recognized as operettas. Weill envisioned such a score from the very beginning of his collaboration with Gershwin:

It probably will become almost an opera because I hear music almost all the way through, except for the comedy scenes. . . . I want to do a great deal of work on this score by myself so that when I go to Ira I have definite musical ideas. That seems very important in this case because the show depends to a great extent on the beauty of melody and on musical inspiration.²⁴²

Forty percent of the music is concentrated in just three passages of very nearly continuous music: the Prologue (No. 2, 621 mm.), the Act I finale (No. 13, 586 measures), and the Trial scene (Nos. 20–21c, 453 measures). Moreover, Nos. 1–4, taken as a block, comprise 1,059 measures during which there is scarcely any dialogue. The Prelude is harmonically open and merges directly with the Prologue, which constitutes the entire first scene; the few lines of dialogue in Scene ii are underscored; Scene iii opens directly with No. 3 ("Our Master Is Free Again"); and scarcely any dialogue intervenes between No. 3 and No. 4 ("I Had Just Been Pardoned"), or between the two strophes of No. 4. The rest of

Scene iii contains more dialogue, especially once the Duke enters and the comedy broadens. Still, No. 5 (“You’re Far Too Near Me”), No. 6 (“Alessandro the Wise”), and, in particular, No. 7 (Finaletto) are substantial. The final scene of Act II also contains relatively little dialogue: Nos. 24 (“Come to Paris”) and 25 (Gigue) form a continuous stretch of music, and much of the dialogue that intervenes between the end of the Gigue and the dance portion of No. 26 (Finale . . . Sarabande) is underscored. Dialogue predominates mainly in the material that features the Duke and Duchess. From the start, Weill planned to confine the comedy mostly to this pair. For Cellini and Angela, flexible recitative, ranging in style from *parlando* to lyrical *arioso*, often replaces dialogue: for example, No. 2, mm. 375–413 and No. 5, mm. 1–34.

The amount of music in *Firebrand* is impressive not only in its relation to the dialogue, but also in its variety. If ballets and reprises are excluded and discrete numbers within continuous musical scenes are individuated, the following musical layout can be discerned:

1. Hangman’s Song (dirge and comic male trio): When the Bell of Doom Is Clanging (from No. 2a)
2. Civic Song (rousing chorus): Come to Florence (No. 2b)
3. Funeral March (ensemble): Here They Come (from No. 2c)
4. Recitative and Aria (heroic ballad with chorus): Life, Love, and Laughter (from No. 2c)
5. Duet (charm song): Our Master Is Free Again (No. 3)
6. Arietta (narrative): I Had Just Been Pardoned (No. 4)
7. Love Duet (recitative and waltz): You’re Far Too Near Me (No. 5)
8. Duke’s Entrance (comedy song with chorus): Alessandro the Wise (No. 6)
9. Quodlibet (ensemble): I Was Happy Here (from No. 7)
10. Duchess’s Song (comedy ballad with male ensemble): Sing Me Not a Ballad (No. 9)
11. Madrigal (ensemble): When the Duchess Is Away (No. 10)
12. Trio (comedy song): The Nosy Cook (No. 12)
13. Tarantella (ensemble): The Night Time Is No Time for Thinking (from No. 13)
14. Waltz Song (female ensemble): The Little Naked Boy (No. 17)
15. Marching Song (male ensemble): Just in Case (No. 18)
16. Ode (comedy song with male ensemble): A Rhyme for Angela (No. 19)
17. Chant (male ensemble): Oh the World Is Full of Villains (No. 21a)
18. Recitative, Aria, and Waltz (with chorus): You Have to Do What You Do Do (No. 21b)
19. Arietta (with chorus): How Wonderfully Fortunate (No. 21c)
20. Duet (ballad): Love Is My Enemy (No. 22)

By way of comparison, *Carousel* contains only thirteen such numbers—if, on account of their multiple sections, one counts Nos. 3 (the June and Carrie Sequence) and 15 (Billy’s Soliloquy) twice. Indeed, a dozen numbers, more or less, was the norm for American musicals of the period. Rodgers’s score, like Weill’s, is remarkable for its extended musical sequences, which blur the outlines of American popular song form. Still, Rodgers’s usual method for constructing a musico-dramatic *scena* is to concatenate two or three discrete verses, linked by brief transitions, that culminate in a popular song refrain, either the thirty-two-bar AABA model or a variant thereof. The “Soliloquy” juxtaposes two such song complexes. In *Firebrand*, Weill’s Prologue also culminates in a thirty-two-bar popular song form (“Life, Love, and Laughter”), although it is an unusual one (see below). But the Prologue as a whole is constructed according to the chain principle of nineteenth-century operetta finales rather than Rodgers’s song principle. Although I have identified four principal numbers in the Prologue—unlike Weill, who identified only two²⁴³—there are also discrete musical sections belonging to the vendors, the apprentices, and the models. With the exception of Cellini’s aria (which was published in sheet music form as a potential hit), none of these other sections falls readily into popular song form. And linking these relatively discrete passages are about 120 measures of recitative and *arioso*, amounting to some twenty percent of the Prologue.

Where *Firebrand* does suffer by comparison with other Broadway musicals on offer in the mid-1940s is in its use of dance. Unlike Rodgers’s *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*, and unlike Weill’s own *One Touch of Venus*, none of the dances in *Firebrand* has narrative function. The longer

ones are set pieces for classical ballet dancers; in this respect, *Firebrand* resembles nineteenth-century French grand opera more than any Broadway musical of its day.

Because Weill turned to *Firebrand* at a time when he was contemplating an operetta in the Offenbachian mold, because he thought of it as a potential “property” for the international market, and because *Firebrand* diverges from the various strains of contemporaneous Broadway theater, it bears comparison to its European sources. Despite its two acts, *Firebrand* adopts the large-scale structure of the three-act operetta. This structure, found in certain works by Offenbach (*La belle Hélène*, *Les Brigands*), became the norm in Viennese operetta. Typically, the first two acts are roughly of equal length, about forty-five minutes each, while the third act is only half as long. The first two acts usually observe unity of time and place (although there might be a change of location within a geographic region). The third act could be set at a later date, and even in another part of the world. At or near the opening of the first act, there might be a long number that serves as an *introduzione*, establishing the local color, introducing some of the main characters, and even forming a discrete dramatic episode (the opening number of *Les Brigands*, some ten minutes of continuous music, is a case in point). The first two acts end with relatively long chain finales, culminating in either a waltz or a *galop* (the latter perhaps designated as a *Cancan* or *Polka schnell*). Offenbach, Strauß, and even the relatively minor Carl Zeller were masters at setting entire scenes to a conversational singing style over continuous dance music. The dance finales of classic operetta often have a social-critical function; *La belle Hélène* contains a *locus classicus* of the type.²⁴⁴ But they also invite a suspension of the critical faculties, a temporary abandonment of reason. The typical operetta device, an altered state induced by drink and dance that temporarily suspends the plot machinations, allows—as if through the distorted reflection of a champagne glass—a vision of utopia partially to emerge.

In Viennese and later French operettas, but not so much in Offenbach, the second act often precipitates a romantic crisis with no obvious solution. The function of the short third act is to bring about a denouement as quickly as possible, by a *deus ex machina* if necessary. In *Der Graf von Luxemburg*, for example, an elderly countess appears out of nowhere and claims Prince Basil Basilovitch as her betrothed. The Prince is led off with nary a protest, leaving the young lovers free to wed. Operetta third acts generally lack a full-fledged finale, reprising an earlier number instead. What is crucial is for a potential hit be inserted in the penultimate or antepenultimate slot: the *Lagunenwalzer* from *Eine Nacht in Venedig* or “Lippen schweigen” from *Die lustige Witwe*, for example. In *Firebrand*, the last scene, which lasts about twenty minutes, functions—despite its lack of a penultimate hit—as the third act of the classical model, inviting us to assess the structure of the whole accordingly.

Weill and Gershwin’s brilliant Prologue does not merely follow the nineteenth-century tradition of comic opera and operetta *introduzione*; it transcends it. It establishes the local color in much the same way as other operettas set in Italy (for example, *Eine Nacht in Venedig*), by populating a town square with a variety of peddlers, soldiers, peasant girls, and the like, but it also parodies that tradition with meta-dramatic devices. For example, one of the street vendors hawks mementos of Cellini’s execution as if he were selling a souvenir program in the lobby of the Alvin Theater. The Civic Song (“Come to Florence”) is set in the rhythm of Offenbach’s boleros, but the dance break (mm. 306–331) updates the rhythm with alternations between 6/8 and 3/4 meter that are characteristic of Latin American music. Weill described it as “a sort of Tarantella, Italian and Spanish at the same time.” The ensuing march to the gallows evokes similar moments in *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Knickerbocker Holiday*; here Weill deliberately revisited a topos he knew well—he dubbed it “a slow march à la Weill.”²⁴⁵ The Prologue is also unique insofar as it sets to music an entire episode in the life of the protagonist: his near-hanging and pardon. To my knowledge, there is no precursor for this kind of opening number in Broadway operettas. Friml and Romberg

works often open with a rousing chorus of some sort, followed by another chorus singing the praises of the heroine, and then by the latter's entrance song. The sequence in Romberg's *The Desert Song*—"Riff Song" (male chorus)—"Pretty Maid of France" (male chorus)—"Military Marching Song" (soprano solo with female chorus)—might be considered paradigmatic. One has to go back, perhaps, to Auber's *opéra-comiques* to find opening numbers in light opera analogous in their complexity to Weill's.

The first-act finale of *Firebrand* does not meet the expectations raised by its Prologue. The first half is indeed set to a nearly continuous tarantella rhythm, introduced with the words "The Nighttime Is No Time for Thinking." Thus instructed, the entire ensemble loses itself in an orgiastic aura of community, reminiscent of Strauß's dance finales in *Die Fledermaus*, *Der lustige Krieg*, and *Waldmeister*. There are three main problems with Weill's finale, however. First, the dance comes too soon. Subsequently, nothing remains to be done: the function of the operetta finale has already been fulfilled. The second half of No. 13 merely dredges up a series of reprises from Nos. 9, 11, and 12 that serve as underscoring for dialogue. With respect to the role of dance, the Trial Waltz from No. 21b ("You Have to Do What You Do Do") pays better homage to the operetta heritage, for it marks the climactic point of the musico-dramatic unit to which it belongs. The function of the waltz is to create a temporary world in which the incredible can appear logical; Cellini's philosophy, "You Have to Do What You Do Do . . . Nobody Is to Blame" requires a waltz to drive its point home. In short, the Trial Scene better approximates the dramaturgical model proposed by Dahlhaus in his discussion of Offenbach than does the finale (see n. 244).

The second problem with the first act finale is that the sung portion of the Tarantella is laid out entirely in blocks: three solo strophes of equal length exhibiting a I-vi-I modulatory pattern and framed by choral interjections (mm. 62–111), followed by a long choral refrain (mm. 111–152) and a ballet (mm. 153–381). By contrast, a more conversational tone predominates in the classic dance finales; the voices do not necessarily carry the principal melodic material. In finales such as the one that ends Act II of *Der lustige Krieg*, the increasing agitation of this tone lends the culminating moment, when the waltz finally emerges full-blown in the entire ensemble, an air of inevitability and a sense of release ("Sei's bei Tanz, bei Politik man dreht sich hier wie dort"). The theatrical setting of *Firebrand*'s first act finale—reminiscent of *Figaro*, with its palace garden, balconies and French doors, alcoves and shrubberies, entrances and exits, and mixed-up bedrooms—might have suggested a chain finale in which confusions reached an impasse, which the climactic Tarantella *cum* bacchanal would not so much have resolved as sublated.

A third weakness of the finale is its reliance on reprise. In one place, Gershwin uses reprise to good effect, keeping his original rhyme while respecting the altered dramatic context. "Everything warrants/Our singing of Florence" from the Prologue becomes "Nighttime in Florence/Is not for death warrants" in the first-act finale. For the most part, though, the reprise of earlier material is formulaic. Compared to the classical operetta finale, Weill's meanders. As pell-mell as Offenbach's finales appear, they exhibit a clear dramaturgical structure, one that owes much to Italian models. The Act I finale of *La belle Hélène* might be parsed as follows:

- (1) Chorus: "Gloire! Gloire!"
- (2) *Tempo d'attacca*: "Vaincu par un berger!"
- (3) *Pezzo (largo) concertato*: "O ciel! l'homme à la pomme!"
- (4) *Tempo di mezzo*: "Ainsi vous êtes gentilhomme"
- (5) *Stretta*: "Le roi plaintif qui s'embarque"

The midpoint of this finale is the *pezzo concertato* that extends temporally an instant of *stupore universale*. Offenbach's rhythmic verve makes convincing the irrational denouement that follows.

Weill comes closer to this aspect of comic opera in the Finaletto to Act I, Scene iii, where he sets the conflicting thoughts of the principal

characters as a quodlibet for vocal quintet and chorus (mm. 1–55), after the manner of the canon "Mir ist so wunderbar" from *Fidelio*. It is a true *pezzo concertato* that permits an instant of confused emotions to persist in time.²⁴⁶ In the piano-vocal score and the first version of the orchestral score, the moment is even more effective because it interrupts the proceedings several measures into the number at a moment of crisis for the lovers. Placing the quodlibet right after the Duke's comic dialogue, as in the final orchestration, mitigates its effect, though it otherwise tightens the number.

The second act of *Firebrand* begins with a series of short scenes, each requiring a set change (traditional operettas have no more than four sets). The first scene opens with two short reprises, followed by what may be the weakest number in the show, "The Little Naked Boy," performed by Angela and Cellini's models. The only way for this number to work today would be to perform it in an over-the-top Busby Berkeley mode, for that is exactly the sort of music Weill evokes here. The second scene is a soldiers' chorus performed "in one" that has no reason for being except to cover a scene change. The next scene in turn lasts only about ten minutes and is merely a pretext for introducing "A Rhyme for Angela." The fourth scene ("in one") and the fifth scene are musically continuous: here is where the second-act finale after the classic model begins. Indeed, Weill himself envisioned a true finale here:

[W]e are making a mistake by musicalizing just the first part of the trial. The whole trial scene right up to Cellini's departure for Paris should be another complete musical-lyrical conception, a complete equivalent (in form) to our opening scene.²⁴⁷

This version would have omitted the Fontainebleau scene and ended with Cellini cynically abandoning his mistress.

Only some of the suggestions preserved in Weill's 25 November letter to Gershwin were realized, resulting in the Trial Scene as it now exists. Unfortunately, Angela's harmonically daring aria, "How Wonderfully Fortunate," was radically shortened in the final orchestral version. Still, the Trial Scene retains something of the operetta finale. Dance is used to effect a suspension of reality, in support of a questionable premise taken to its logical extreme. Its effect, analogous to its role in the first act finale, is to put the Duke into a trance. Threatened with hanging, Cellini defends himself by adopting a hard-line variety of determinism, and his negation of free will soon has the entire courtroom waltzing with abandon. The last part of the scene, however, is almost entirely spoken, except, of course, for the magnificent duet "Love Is My Enemy." The scene finally peters out in a reprise of "Little Naked Boy." A haunting transition between these last two musical numbers survives only in the piano score.

Weill's conception of a true second-act finale was only partly realized within the Trial Scene, while the appended Fontainebleau scene is formally conceived as a revue in period costume; it does not even have the eleventh-hour hit that provided some justification for the contrived denouements of Viennese dramaturgy. Yet the alternative of ending *Firebrand* with a "tragic" finale in the manner of *Friederike*, which is what Weill seemed to be suggesting to Gershwin, clashes just as much with Mayer's original vision as does the tacked-on happy ending in the manner of *Der Zigeunerbaron*. Indeed, in light of Weill's derogatory 1929 comments about Lehár's "historical or at least aristocratic personalities utter[ing] their tragic outcry at the end of the second act," it is ironic to find him advocating the same strategy fifteen years later!²⁴⁸ In hindsight, the best solution would have been a second-act finale that preserved all of the existing music but then continued with a setting of Mayer's 1924 ending. *Firebrand* might well have failed in 1945 anyway, since its idiosyncratic manner of undercutting its own romantic pretensions would have contrasted all the more sharply with the manufactured sincerity of that season's successful costume operettas. But at least the tone of Weill's last operetta would have been consistent, both with what the collaborators managed to preserve of the play's satirical thrust and with the conception of the genre to which the composer had once subscribed.

When Weill first began work on individual numbers, he resolved to adopt the following stylistic plan:

We decided now definitely to treat great parts of the score in real opera style, without any attempt to write American popular songs. The part of Cellini will be treated in a kind of grandioso arioso style and, as I wrote you before, the whole thing might very well become an Opera for Broadway. . . . Darling don't worry about the part. The operatic music will be limited to Cellini and Angela. The Duke and Duchess will be written in comedy style.²⁴⁹

One might use this plan as a grid on which to plot individual sections of the *Firebrand* score. The musical differentiation of social strata to which Weill refers is, of course, nearly as old as opera itself, and was already well established in Monteverdi's Venetian works. Within the operetta tradition it had become common practice to assign the numbers written in up-to-date musical-comedy dance style to a secondary couple; by the 1920s, this was as true in Vienna and Berlin as it was in New York. What is unusual about Weill's proposal is that the aristocrats are given the lighter numbers, and the operatic music is reserved for commoners. This departure from standard practice was dictated by the portrayal of the Duke in Mayer's play as well as by the vocal capabilities of Lotte Lenya. Otherwise, the Duchess's "Sing Me Not a Ballad" and the Duke's "A Rhyme for Angela" fulfill the same dramaturgical function as comparable numbers in 1920s operettas with secondary couples: they occur within interpolated "in one" scenes that interrupt the main narrative thread with comic numbers and dance routines.

What did Weill mean when he wrote that the Ducal music would be written in a comedy style? It might mean that he planned to cast this material in the mold of the typical American musical comedy song. And indeed, a comparison of numbers assigned to the Duke and Duchess with those assigned to Cellini and Angela easily confirms that the most straightforward examples of the American popular song form involve the comic pair: "Sing Me Not a Ballad," "A Rhyme for Angela," and "The Cozy Nook." The latter is a trio involving Cellini and Angela, but it is essentially a comedic spot for the Duke. The sole exception to this generalization is the Duke's entrance song "Alessandro the Wise," which is in strophic form (ABAB) preceded by a march for orchestra and chorus.

In addition to the relative formal simplicity of their material, the Duke and Duchess are distinguished from the other characters by recurring motifs that signal their appearance on stage. The Duke's motif is the fanfare that heralds his first appearance (No. 6, mm. 1–4, trumpet 2). This figure later serves as the initial melodic material for the Duke's entrance song (mm. 36–43). But Weill goes further than that: in the orchestral introduction, the fanfare is heard at two pitch levels a semitone apart, outlining first a tonic triad (E♭-major) and then VII♯ (D-major). The subsequent expansion of the motif in the Duke's patter song involves the same transposition. Thus, mm. 36–51 of the Duke's verse and mm. 1–17 of the introduction, although in different keys, are both derived from the same harmonic plan: I-VII♯-V-I. Within this progression, two chromatic pitches are brought into play, ♯2/♭3 (F♯/G♭), and ♯4 (A). The two subsequent cadential progressions, broadly deployed over mm. 52–66 and mm. 76–82, exploit these same chromatic details. For instance, Weill briefly tonicizes ♭III (G♭-major) at m. 62. And at m. 79, an inner-voice G is inflected by F♯ just as the singer reaches his highest pitch thus far. One more detail binds this number together, while at the same time signaling that there is something not quite right about this Duke. In the dominant-seventh sonority that prepares the chorus's entrance (mm. 15–16), the fifth is flattened (Weill spells it F♯ rather than G♭), and the resulting tritone $\hat{1}/\hat{b}5$ forms the bass part. This particular alteration of the dominant seventh, known in jazz theory as "tritone substitution," is ubiquitous in Weill's European works, though somewhat less frequent in his adaptations of American popular song forms.²⁵⁰ At m. 99, at the name "Alessandro," there is another altered V7, this time the more common variant with raised fifth. Here it is emphasized by accented, muted trumpets that enter on the offbeats; Weill even adds the

direction "sharp" to enhance the effect. Both of these altered dominants, the one at m. 15 and the one at m. 99, are subsets of the whole-tone collection. The [V]7 sonority of the final cadential formula (mm. 124, 128, 135) stunningly combines both alterations, yielding an entire whole-tone set! Weill has already used the same collection, in the same harmonic context, at mm. 41–43 of No. 4, and he will use it again in No. 18, a soldiers' chorus that derides the Duke's territorial ambitions (mm. 1–6, 11–16).

The Duke's entrance song is also perhaps the number most indebted to Gilbert and Sullivan. The chorus that announces his arrival owes something to the "Procession of Peers" from *Iolanthe*:

Bow, bow, ye lower middle classes!
Bow, bow, ye tradesmen, bow ye masses!
Blow the trumpets, bang the brasses!
Tarantara! Tzing! Boom!

In Gershwin's hands, the idea becomes:

Make way for the noblest of nobility!
Make way or suffer his rebuke.
Bow low to show humility.
Bow, you peasants in the presence of the Duke!

Sing his praises to the skies—
Alessandro the Wise!
Hail the man you subsidize—
Alessandro the Wise!

All of the sources for this song text distort its form by splitting the last verse of the first quatrain into three separate printed lines of text (Bow you peasants/In the presence/Of the Duke). As shown above, Gershwin effectively counterpoints an ABAB end rhyme scheme, an AABB internal rhyme scheme (none in the first two verses), and an ABBA alternation of octo- and endecasyllabic verses. The third verse of the second quatrain ("Hail the man you subsidize") introduces a genially irreverent anachronism, reminiscent of Offenbach's court satires.

Having been announced, the Duke begins his patter song with a quatrain that contains the most humorous enjambments in the entire score:

A hundred years ago or so, the Medici—
That's my family—began to win renown—
When lovely Florence, be it to her credit, she
Got Grandpapa's Papa to rule the town.

The two most important of the Duke's character traits for the plot are his absent-mindedness and his concupiscence. Gershwin establishes these in just a few comic verses:

There never was a fellow who, ancestrally,
Could boast a genealogy like mine!
Lorenzo, the Magnificent and What's his Name? the Wondrous
And many and many another whose deeds were great and thund'rous. . . .
My art collection features Botticelli and Da Vinci
But also I collect young women who are plump and pinchy.

The Duchess, too, possesses her unifying motif, the credit for which may go to Ira Gershwin:

When we had to face the writing of a solo song for the Duchess, Kurt wondered what sort of melodic mood should be striven for. The page's little sing-song had echoed many times in my mind, and I suggested that its first line of ascending notes seemed a theme that could be developed into a refrain. Kurt thought this a good idea and, using the six notes of the first line, evolved this full and distinctive melody.²⁵¹

To Gershwin's remarks, we can add the following observations. The "first line of ascending notes" brings two pitches into focus, ♯4 (G♯) because of its chromaticism; and $\hat{6}$ (B♭) because of its duration, its dissonant state, its placement at the juncture of the first two subphrases, and its special status as apex and nadir of the entire phrase (see No. 9, mm. 44–50; also the melodic contour of the verse, mm. 1–13). The sixth scale degree not

only continues to be prominent throughout the number, but it forms part of the final cadential sonority. As for $\sharp 4$, Weill gives it special emphasis in mm. 56–59, the local melodic climax, where, through a startling harmonic elision, he baldly juxtaposes $A\sharp$ and $A\flat$. One can imagine a more “orthodox” harmonization of the passage, through a descending chain of fifth-related roots: F in m. 56, $B\flat$ in m. 57, $E\flat$ in m. 58, and $A\flat$ in m. 59. Instead, Weill progresses directly from an F7 to an $A\flat 7$, forcing the $\sharp 4$ to descend.

The Duchess may not want a ballad, but that is what she sings: a Broadway ballad with a verse in *parlando* style preceding a standard thirty-two-bar refrain. That the refrain is actually sixty-four bars would seem to change nothing; the cut time signature at this tempo creates obvious two-bar hypermetric units. Weill, however, manipulates the hypermetric organization, thereby deforming the popular song model. The bridge at mm. 76–83 is only half the expected length. At the same time, Weill cuts the prevailing durational units in half; quarter notes now prevail instead of half notes. The written measure has replaced the two-bar group as the metrical unit. Later, Weill restores the overall symmetry by repeating the cadential formula in mm. 92–99. The parody of the American popular ballad is intensified in the second chorus by the appearance of a male quartet. Admittedly, this male quartet wears Renaissance garb rather than top hats and tails. By placing it in the incongruous context of a historical operetta, however, Weill defamiliarizes the operetta and revue convention whereby a chorus line of formally garbed males salutes the glamorous prima donna, in the person of Lotte Lenya.²⁵² The male quartet returns once more in the production sequence from No. 19 (“A Rhyme for Angela”), this time in the guise of four poets. The vocal texture of solo backed by four male voices thus becomes another means by which Weill musically distinguishes the aristocratic comedy pair.

It would seem that even Weill’s simple comedy numbers are not so simple. The “Cozy Nook Song” is no exception. Once again, the underlying form is a verse followed by a thirty-two-bar AABA refrain. In the C-major refrain, the principal eight-bar idea undergoes a significant modification upon its second iteration: Weill modulates to the chromatic key area of $III\sharp$ (E-major). The verse has already adumbrated this modulation: the four-bar orchestral introduction modulates abruptly to $\flat VI$ ($A\flat$ -major) and the verse cadences in C-major only at m. 27. Within the context of the verse alone, the tonic C-major sounds like $III\sharp$ of $A\flat$, with the odd result that this re-establishment of the tonic prepares for the next departure away from it. The entire number is symmetrically balanced around C-major, flanked by its upper and lower major mediant. The slight extension of the thirty-two-bar form (mm. 67–72) is motivated by an evaded cadence, once again on $III\sharp$, this time initiating a chain of descending applied dominant sevenths to the concluding tonic. Note how Weill works the bridge motif into the accompaniment (oboe, mm. 67–68, cf. mm. 53–54). Finally, the tonic added-sixth recalls emphases on the sixth scale degree at mm. 38, 51 (in E-major), and 59–60.

With the music for Cellini and Angela, we leave the musical comedy world behind. A certain operatic tone, more than any specific motifs, unifies the music belonging to this pair. Cellini’s two large solos, “Life, Love, and Laughter” (No. 2, Prologue) and “You Have to Do What You Do Do” (No. 21b), however, exhibit a similar formal structure (recitative and aria with chorus) and share some material. Compare mm. 1–6 and 11–12 of No. 21b with mm. 375–382 and 391–394 of No. 2: the two passages are variants of one another and at pitch. The refrain of “Life, Love, and Laughter” begins at mm. 414–419 with sequentially descending third-related seventh chords ($D\flat 7$ - $B\flat 7$ - $G\flat 7$ - $E\flat 7$). The refrain of “You Have to Do What You Do Do” begins at mm. 39–50 with a sequence of descending third-related ninth chords ($A9$ - $F9$ - $D9$ - $B\flat 9$).

The tritone motif that permeates Cellini’s recitatives (mm. 391–394 of No. 2, mm. 11–12 of No. 21b, and so on) is another of Weill’s unifying devices. In the Prologue, the Civic Song (“Come to Florence”) appears at first to have little in common with Cellini’s ensuing recitative

and aria. In the *Allegro agitato* that links Cellini’s pardon with the reprise of the Civic Song, however, Weill makes explicit the connection between the head motif of “Come to Florence” and Cellini’s tritone motif. The former is transmogrified into the latter (mm. 569–584).

Weill does not completely abandon the thirty-two-bar song form in the music he composes for the romantic leads. Cellini’s first aria, the high point in the twenty-minute Prologue, does include a thirty-two-bar refrain. However, it is preceded not by a brief verse but by a forty-bar recitative that ranges from free, unmeasured declamation (m. 375) to *arioso* with choral interjections (mm. 379–403). The refrain is extraordinary. Its initial tonic (m. 414) is understated because it appears together with the leading tone as a major-seventh chord that initiates a descending sequence of third-related sevenths. The vocal phrases begin and end with this leading tone, now harmonized by tonic, now by dominant. At the end of the aria (mm. 460–461), the tonic seventh chord (now within $E\flat$ -major) is once again outlined, so that the unresolved leading tone that initiated the refrain ends it as well.

The first duet for Angela and Cellini (“You’re Far Too Near Me”) eschews popular song form altogether. A long, modulatory *arioso* precedes the refrain proper, a waltz in the form of an expanded parallel period. Again Weill makes much of an initial chromatic detail: in mm. 40–41, the melodic line unexpectedly becomes stuck on the $E\sharp$ that had appeared as a chromatic passing tone in the anacrusis to m. 34.

Weill reserves some of his most operatic music for the Trial Scene. Here, the *schwebende Tonalität* already suggested by the *arioso* passages from Nos. 2 and 5 comes to the fore. The principal section of No. 21b (the *Allegro non troppo* at mm. 37–160) carries a key signature of E-minor and is indeed ushered in by an unambiguous V-I cadence in that key (mm. 36–37). The melody through m. 64 behaves as if it is in E-minor. Yet the harmonic progression is tonally vague: a sequence of ninth chords in descending thirds, grouped into pairs of two ($A9$ - $F9$, $D9$ - $B\flat 9$). The whole-tone quality of the passage results from the set formed by each pair: it is one of only three hexachordal supersets of the whole-tone collection. The large-scale bass plan of mm. 39–55 invites us to interpret A as tonic: we observe a normative sequence connecting A to $B\flat$ (I- $\flat II$), then a chromatic descent to E (V), and back to A (I). Yet the clearest cadences are the ones that fall on C-major (such as m. 69). Key signature, melody, individual sonorities and local progressions, large-scale bass plan, and strongly articulated cadences do not come together to assert any one key unambiguously.

In “Love Is My Enemy,” Weill goes so far as to dispense with a key signature altogether. The duet follows a standard thirty-two-bar song form, subsequently repeated and expanded. Although the orchestral introduction appears to set up D-major as tonic, the refrain’s first sonority is a $B\flat M7$ chord, recalling the opening sonorities of “Life, Love, and Laughter” and the Finaletto. Characteristic of Weill, however, is that even as he withholds an overall sense of tonic, he presents a very traditional bass: falling fifths connect $B\flat M7$ to $B7$ (mm. 7–14), then $CM7$ to $C\sharp 7$ (mm. 15–22).²⁵³ The bridge (mm. 23–30) has $F\sharp 7$ as its goal. The return of the principal eight-bar idea is modified so that this time the falling fifths push on to E-major at m. 37, the first—and only—consonant triad in the thirty-two-bar refrain. (E-major recurs again at the end of the second statement, m. 67, and in the postlude, mm. 74–77.) As tonally vague as the contents of the individual phrases may be, the harmonic goals in Weill’s first iteration of the song form are clear enough: $B7$ (m. 13)- $C\sharp 7$ (m. 21)- $F\sharp 7$ (m. 29)- $B7$ -E (mm. 36–37), or $V7$ - $V7$ of $[V]$ - $[V7]$ - $V7$ -I.

The E-major cadence at m. 37 proves fleeting, for this ending overlaps with the beginning of the song form’s repetition (mm. 38–64), which lies a whole tone higher than the first iteration. In order to end in E-major, Weill once again has to stretch harmonic functionality to its breaking point. At mm. 64–66, everything leads the listener to suppose that Weill is preparing a cadence in $E\flat$ -major. Instead, at the last minute, he simply substitutes a cadential $6/4$ chord on B for the expected one on $B\flat$. While on the one hand Weill respects a certain large-scale tonal unity

by cadencing twice in E-major, these cadences—the final one in particular—sound in their immediate contexts like the arbitrary cessation of a cyclic process that, like Cellini's hesitation, might have continued indefinitely. The functional indeterminacy of the local harmonic progressions is yoked to the twin conventions of key and popular song form more by sudden willfulness than by any sense of traditional tonal logic.

Although *Firebrand*, like all of Weill's works, has its own *Klangbild*, the foregoing account has demonstrated several connections to his earlier works. Weill's first instinct when he began sketching *Firebrand* was evidently to ransack the score of his other failed operetta, although all borrowings were quickly discarded except for the incorporation of the National Hymn in "Alessandro the Wise." Although *Firebrand*, therefore, borrows less extensively from his European works than any of his Broadway shows except *Lost in the Stars*, it nonetheless exhibits several stylistic traits in common with them.²⁵⁴ The resemblances lie not only with the relatively large-scale harmonic and tonal techniques noted above, but also in more local characteristic configurations of rhythmic gesture and melodic profile.²⁵⁵ Compare, for instance, mm. 581–584 of No. 2 with *Der Silbersee*, No. 10, m. 226. Or again, the refrain of "You Have to Do What You Do Do" with "Der kleine Leutnant des lieben Gottes" at rehearsal 19 of *Happy End*.

Firebrand also abounds in melodic and harmonic pentatonic configurations, which may be interpreted as instances of the much-discussed Weillian *Urmotiv*.²⁵⁶ Several numbers either begin or end with such formations. Note, for example, the succession of rising fourths in the accompaniment of "How Wonderfully Fortunate" (C-F-B♭-E♭ at m. 20 of No. 21c) and the two descending fourths in the melody (E♭-B♭ and D♭-A♭ at mm. 20–21). The same number ends with the entire pentatonic collection, as does No. 5 ("You're Far Too Near Me"). The orchestral Tarantella in No. 13 stands out for its abrupt juxtapositions of pentatonic collections (for example, mm. 157–158) and whole tone collections (mm. 161–162). In this instance, the two collections occupy the same "cadential" position at the end of two parallel phrases. Nos. 9 ("Sing Me Not a Ballad") and 12 ("The Cozy Nook") end with so-called added-sixth chords. Although one could argue that such "added-sixth" cadential sonorities were Tin Pan Alley stocks-in-trade, for Weill they were something more. As it happened, Weill once had occasion to reply to a disgruntled critic, who complained that the composer had ended *Down in the Valley* with a tonic added-sixth chord, which was a radical enough device when Chopin had used it but had become overworked in the popular repertoire. Weill responded:

I am sorry that I offended your ears with the sixth in the last cord. But you can see in the piano score that I arrive at the sixth entirely out of "Stimmführung" (development of voices), so it is not used as an "effect." But here again, it offends your ear because it is being used a great deal in popular music today.²⁵⁷

The *Firebrand* score bears witness to the care with which Weill, throughout his career and in a variety of styles, sought an interpenetration of harmony, voice-leading, and motif.

Pentatonicism in *Firebrand* is linked to one more stylistic feature, namely its occasional archaisms. One of the first things Weill and Gershwin did when they started on this project was to play sixteenth-century madrigals and dances.²⁵⁸ The vestiges of these research sessions lurk in the imitative counterpoint that opens the Prologue (mm. 1–5), the use of the Dorian mode in the Hangman's Song (mm. 14–17), the pseudo-Phrygian cadence at m. 21, and the *faux-bourdon* in the apprentices' reply (mm. 24–27), which includes anachronistic parallel sevenths. Weill, surely in jest, claimed it sounded like Palestrina.²⁵⁹ The nearly *a capella* five-part texture in portions of the Trial Scene ("Oh the World Is Full of Villains") is in a similar vein and also vaguely recalls aspects of Weill's earlier music for *Männerchor* (for example, "Zu Potsdam unter den Eichen"). The madrigal "When the Duchess Is Away" includes a four-part canon (mm. 77ff.). In the latter, there is a mockingly amateurish quality to Weill's counterpoint, particularly in the abrupt modulation

to the subdominant at the end of the antecedent phrase (mm. 17–24); the music then remains "stuck" in that improbable key for the entire consequent (mm. 25–32). The pairing of Gigue and Sarabande in the Fontainebleau scene is meant to suggest French ceremonial court life, although there is no evidence that any Sarabandes were performed in France until the seventeenth century.²⁶⁰

The Finaletto to Act I, Scene iii also employs archaic formal devices in both text and music. Gershwin recalled that the music was supposed to suggest the quodlibet, a type of polyphonic composition popular in the Renaissance that could be created by successively combining several pre-existing melodies, one of which acted as a *cantus firmus*. In the Finaletto, none of the melodies, to my knowledge, were "pre-existing," but Angela's melody ("I Was Happy Here"), first heard only with orchestral accompaniment, does in fact serve as a *cantus firmus* of sorts, to which Weill eventually adds seven other vocal strands (Angela, Emilia, Cellini, Duke, and five-part chorus, with the first sopranos doubling Emilia). The text of this quodlibet, as Gershwin pointed out in the 1945 *Herald Tribune* interview, is based on the French triolet, a medieval form also known as the *rondeau simple*, composed of eight verses, usually octosyllabic, that exploit two rhymes in the scheme ABaAabAB (capital letters indicate repeated lines):

I am happy here.
Why then must I go?
Life is very queer.
I am happy here.
Fate comes from the rear,
Floors me with a blow.
I am happy here.
Why then must I go?

Gershwin modified the usual form, since his verses are trochaic trimeters, but he certainly could have found precedents for his pentasyllabic triolet in poetry dating from around 1500 (for example, François Villon's "Jenin l'Avenu").²⁶¹

VI. EDITORIAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS²⁶²

i. Privileging Sources

The array of sources for *Firebrand* is particularly rich. There survive sketches, drafts, holograph piano-vocal scores for all of the vocal numbers, holograph piano and short scores for most of the instrumental numbers, the holograph full score with Royal's contributions, and three versions of the script. Supplementing these sources, discussed above in connection with the genesis of the operetta, is a great deal of performance material. For instance, there are several marked copies of the rehearsal score and choral parts that copyists prepared from Weill's holograph piano-vocal score. By combining materials from the two archives in which the *Firebrand* sources are located, it is possible to reconstruct Maurice Abravanel's copy of the rehearsal score, which includes interpolated piano versions of otherwise missing passages. Particularly valuable is the complete set of orchestral parts used in the original production. These allow us to trace how the score was altered over the course of the orchestra rehearsals, tryout, and Broadway run. One lacuna in the source materials is a stage manager's script that would reflect precisely the evolution of dialogue and stage action during the same period. Of some help in this regard are dialogue revisions stemming from the Boston tryout. These survive on loose, typed pages that are numbered according to their insertion points in the script.

A central challenge in establishing the text of this edition has been to determine which of the countless modifications to adopt that accrued to the score over the course of the production. The "work" cannot be taken as congruent with Weill's holograph orchestral score and vocal parts as they appeared before the production was underway. Nor can it be assimilated to the final state of the instrumental parts and marked rehearsal

scores. Rather, the “work” lies somewhere between Weill’s notated “text” and what later emerged as the “script” for the 1945 Alvin Theater production. As a practical matter, the holograph full score, incorporating Royal’s scores as amended by Weill, has served as the privileged source for most dimensions of the edition score, while the holograph piano-vocal score has been privileged for vocal parts and text underlay. “Privileging” a source means that it is the first consulted for a given parameter, and it is upheld if not contradicted by another source. If it is contradicted and the edition adopts an alternative reading, then a note in the Critical Report documents and justifies that decision. The 1945 production materials have in many cases proved an indispensable resource for reconstructing the score, while in other cases they have provided information of mainly historical interest, worthy of mention in a critical note, though not of incorporation in the actual edition.

For the most part, the piano-vocal rehearsal score and ancillary chorus parts, all prepared by professional copyists, faithfully transcribe Weill’s holograph. Inconsistencies arise either from copyists’ errors or from Weill’s instructions to transpose a passage or to reorder material. From an editorial perspective, the rehearsal score has little value in establishing the text; its significance lies in the markings that accrued on the copies used in the original production, particularly those that passed through the hands of Maurice Abravanel. Abravanel’s extensively annotated rehearsal scores help resolve many discrepancies between vocal and orchestral sources, and they are the only source for the text underscoring in the second strophe of No. 6 (“Alessandro the Wise”). In general, however, the edition privileges the holograph piano-vocal score in establishing the vocal parts and underscoring, if for no other reason than that the rehearsal score accidentally omits many subtleties (such as hairpin dynamics). The vocal score can in turn be trumped by the full score; it would, for example, prove bizarre in most cases to retain a *piano* dynamic for the vocal part amidst an orchestral *fortissimo*.

The rehearsal score was not assembled all at once. The second choruses of Nos. 9 (“Sing Me Not a Ballad”) and 17 (“The Little Naked Boy”), and all of No. 20 (Procession) were evidently submitted later than their surrounding material. For instance, the verse and first chorus of No. 9 (“Sing Me Not a Ballad”) initially comprised the entire number. The beginning of the second chorus (m. 106 in the edition) does not fit with the original ending of the first chorus, which therefore needs adjustment. A similar situation arises at the juncture between the two choruses of No. 17 (“The Little Naked Boy”), and between No. 20 (Procession) and No. 21a (“Oh the World Is Full of Villains”).²⁶³

Lacunae in the piano-vocal scores reflect the purpose to which they were put: these scores were used to rehearse the singers, so they did not need the potpourri instrumental numbers that frame the acts: No. 1 (Prelude), No. 14 (Entr’acte), and No. 27a (Exit Music). Certain purely instrumental passages *within* vocal numbers were also added after the piano-vocal materials had been prepared: among others, a transitional passage in No. 2 (mm. 298–305); the introduction to No. 10 (mm. 1–4); and the introduction, interlude, and postlude in No. 18 (mm. 1–20, 89–104, 116–128). Absent as well from the holograph and rehearsal piano-vocal scores are some of the reprises: No. 3a (incidental music taken directly from No. 2), No. 15 (“You’re Far Too Far Me”—Reprise), and No. 27 (Finale ultimo—“Life, Love, and Laughter”). Although Weill was rarely content merely to duplicate an earlier orchestration for such reprises, the piano-vocal scores of the initial version could serve perfectly well in rehearsals. Neither do the rehearsal scores transmit most of the dances, whether they were independent numbers or routines interpolated into already existing pieces. These dance passages include a routine in No. 9 (“Sing Me Not a Ballad”) at mm. 170–217, the Tarantella dance in No. 13 (Finale) at mm. 153–381, a routine in No. 19 (“A Rhyme for Angela”) at mm. 99–182, a waltz in No. 21b (“You Have to Do What You Do Do”) at mm. 241–296, No. 25 (Gigue), and No. 26 (Finale . . . Sarabande). Determining how to coordinate these passages with the piano-vocal and text sources is not always a trivial matter.²⁶⁴

The full score exhibits several layers of added notation and instructions, for some numbers more than for others. Most are in gray pencil, and quite a few are in Abravanel’s hand. The textual status of these added markings, especially when they are not Weill’s, must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Nonetheless, it is possible to establish some general principles. For example, there are long stretches of the score for which the initial layer lacks any dynamics whatever, as in mm. 9ff of No. 11 (“Life, Love, and Laughter”). The dynamics in the pencil layer are in Abravanel’s hand, and they were copied into the orchestral parts during their initial preparation—that is, they were not added during rehearsals. Such markings do not contradict existing ones; they supplement a score that is, in a sense, incomplete.²⁶⁵

In some cases, Abravanel gave detailed instructions to the copyist, as in the score for No. 7 (Finaletto). There are two sets of parts for this number. The first set, unmarked and surely never performed, is based on the original layer of the full score. It was not discovered together with the other instrumental parts, which have generally been preserved in their individual folders. Rather, all the parts for the first version of No. 7 had been gathered together and set aside. The new set of parts, based on Abravanel’s instructions, was used in the 1945 production, and this version, which reorders, transposes, and cuts groups of measures in order to quicken the dramatic pace, is reflected in the marked rehearsal scores (choral and piano-vocal). The edition assumes that Abravanel would never have undertaken such wholesale restructuring of a number on his own initiative. Generally, the edition privileges all full-score notation incorporated into the original layer of the instrumental parts.

More problematic are conductor’s annotations in the full score that *postdate* the preparation of the parts. These prove genuinely useful if they supplement the source. Just as frequently, however, they prove to be markings that a conductor might typically introduce in rehearsal in order to refine the blend of orchestral colors, to accommodate an individual player, or to achieve a desired balance between stage and pit. The edition strives, as a regulative principle, not to confuse localized details of interpretation, associated with the “event” of the first production, with revisions that are potentially “compositional” in nature. If, for example, the full score and parts assign all instruments *piano*, then the later accretion of a *fortissimo* for a soloistic flute passage probably just means “attention: the flute is important here.” The same applies to parts marked *piano* within the context of a loud passage. Such exaggerated cautionary markings are part of a “script” aimed at specific players in a specific situation.

The instrumental parts, then, although not in themselves privileged for the edition as a whole, help establish which layers of the full score collectively constitute the point of reference for the edition. For some passages, moreover, they become the privileged source by default. No full score survives for No. 9 (mm. 170–217) and No. 27a. In two other cases, No. 3a (Incidental Music) and No. 27a (Finale ultimo), the parts are based on other portions of the full score, but without the parts we would not know which ones. On a more local level, performance indications, especially if added by a majority of players in a section, might become the basis for a reading, especially for passages that are otherwise sparingly marked.

Certain ancillary sources, such as the Boston and New York playbills for the original production can sometimes provide useful evidence. The playbills, together with evidence from the instrumental parts, have helped to establish which of the cut numbers (3, 4, and 21c) should be restored in the main text and which should be placed in an appendix (see p. 14 above). The playbills also shed light on the routining of production numbers. Consider No. 19 (“A Rhyme for Angela”). The holograph and copyist’s piano-vocal scores present a verse and a chorus, the latter repeated, although neither these sources nor the extant scripts include a lyric for the second chorus. The Duke sings the number, assisted by a male quartet of four poets, who are also mentioned in the libretto sources and credited in the Boston and New York programs. In his exemplar of the copyist’s rehearsal score, Abravanel provided some additional information about the second chorus: unspecified “boys”—presumably

the four poets—sing some of the Duke’s material in harmony. That concurs with stage directions in the scripts, which specify that “the poets join the Duke in a repeat of the refrain.” There is still no musical text for the second chorus, which survives only in a typescript of lyrics.

So far so good: two choruses, the second with a new lyric and enriched vocal texture. Weill’s orchestral score confirms this: one chorus is notated, but with a repeat sign at the end. Yet Weill’s manuscript includes a first ending only. The full score then continues in Royal’s manuscript with a modulatory second ending, followed by a third and fourth chorus, the latter abridged. Weill expands the fourth chorus with an intercalated sheet. The orchestration of the third chorus is heavier than that of the first two, and that of the fourth is heaviest of all. Rests and fermatas added to the third chorus at a later stage, after the preparation of the instrumental parts, suggest some sort of stage business, and the heavier orchestration could point either to a dance number or to a larger vocal ensemble. According to the 1945 playbills, the entire number was performed in 1945 by the Duke, poets, and ladies-in-waiting. But did the ladies merely dance, or did they sing as well? E. C. Sherborne of the *Christian Science Monitor* described the efforts of Melville Cooper (the Duke) “with the aid of four court poets, to find a rhyme for Angela. Ingenious extensions of this lyric are provided by the introduction of eight pretty girls, who in turn speak their names while the Duke improvises a rhyming verse to fit each one.”²⁶⁶ The review gives us the missing context for the third chorus and for the added rests and fermatas.

As delightful as this staging sounds, the edition has not incorporated these stops in the main text. The routine, evidently refined after Weill and Royal had provided the score, was built around the comedic talents of Melville Cooper. Even if it could be reconstructed, it remains a script for a particular production. A footnote in the edition at the beginning of the first chorus does alert the reader to the detailed discussion in the Critical Report, which describes all of these alternatives, including the precise location of every “stop” in the instrumental parts. The edition provides the number in its most complete form and leaves it up to the users to decide how much of it suits their production.²⁶⁷

ii. Case Studies

One of the principal tasks of the edition is to match the orchestration, as transmitted principally by the holograph score and the instrumental parts used in the 1945 production, with the vocal material, as transmitted by Weill’s holographs in piano-vocal format and the copyist’s rehearsal scores prepared from them. In matching the sources, a certain amount of speculation is sometimes unavoidable. The Duchess’s song, “Sing Me Not a Ballad” is a case in point. Cast in the American popular song form of a verse followed by a thirty-two-bar chorus, this ballad—for it is that, despite (or rather because of) the title—eventually became a production number. In the vocal scores, the number, entirely in D \flat -major, is routinized as follows:

1. Verse and first chorus (Duchess)
2. Instrumental interlude based on verse
3. Second chorus (Duchess and male quartet)

There are at least three versions of the orchestration, not all of which have survived fully in score, but whose chronological sequence can be traced by examining the instrumental parts, with their successive layers, each pasted over the previous one. By the time the show closed, the number had taken on the following design:

1. Verse and first chorus (Duchess) in D \flat
2. Second chorus (Duchess with humming male quartet) in D \flat
3. Third chorus (not in vocal score) in G \flat

The first and second choruses are linked through a phrase overlap. Marked copies of the vocal score document the deletion of the instrumental interlude that originally separated the two choruses.

But what should the Duchess sing at the phrase overlap? She cannot sing both the last measure of one chorus and the first of the next. It would be possible, but unmusical, for her to sing the last measure of the first chorus followed by the second measure of the second chorus. The solution in the edition has been to let the Duchess sustain the final note of the first chorus, allowing the orchestra and the humming male quartet to handle the music of the second chorus’s initial phrase. This was likely the solution in 1945 as well, because a copy of the rehearsal score with Abravanel’s markings includes a pencil annotation that assigns the Duchess a whole note B \flat 4 at the moment of overlap, m. 114 in the edition.

There is no mention of a third chorus in the vocal score, but one marked copy includes an annotation “G-flat . . . last strain with stops,” evidently a reference to mm. 202–205, where fermata rests are introduced, most likely to accommodate stage business or choreography of some kind. The final extant version of the libretto states that the song “becomes a production number,” with the Duchess’s sedan bearers joining the Duchess and the courtiers. Consequently, the edition presents the third chorus for orchestra with a note suggesting that it was used for a dance evolution. An alternative possibility would be to use the more fully orchestrated chorus for a production sequence in the middle section, with the second chorus concluding the number. The theory that the number was routinized this way in 1945 is precluded, however, by the instrumental parts. There, just as in Abravanel’s marked rehearsal score, the ending of the first chorus overlaps with the beginning of the second, and the G \flat third chorus, the most heavily orchestrated, comes last.

“Sing Me Not a Ballad” illustrates a significant difference between the full score of *Firebrand* and that of a work such as *Die Dreigroschenoper*. For *Die Dreigroschenoper* the original instrumental parts—some instrumental *Zwischenmusik* aside—supplement the orchestral score as a source. For *Firebrand* they are sometimes the *only* source. This is the case for the third chorus of “Sing Me Not a Ballad,” of which only four measures survive in full score, on a single sheet of pencil notation in Weill’s hand. Otherwise, the third chorus is transmitted only in the parts. We cannot even be sure who orchestrated the bulk of it. The orchestration of the second chorus is in Ted Royal’s hand, with Weill’s modifications penciled on intercalated pages. The one surviving page of full score from the third chorus could well be such a modification to a Royal orchestration, the full score of which is now missing. In any case, the instrumental parts give us information about the routining of a number that would be impossible to glean from the piano-vocal and orchestral scores alone. Consider the pencil instructions that Weill added on the left margin of page 18 in Royal’s score to No. 18 (“Just in Case”): “Write 2nd ending on 1st ending then copy 16 bars coup ending with repeat then go to *dal segno* letter B then new 2nd end. start with the X 1st end then copy from letter C with pencil notes.” True, all the symbols are there, and certain passages for the brass are good candidates for the “pencil notes” to which Weill refers. Still, it is reassuring to have the 1945 instrumental parts available to verify how it all turned out.

In several instances, consulting the instrumental parts prevents misreadings of the orchestral score. The Trial Scene, the aria in which Cellini defends himself by presenting a theory of hard determinism (No. 21b: “You Have to Do What You Do Do”), evolves into a “crazy waltz,” as Weill characterized it.²⁶⁸ According to the piano-vocal holograph and rehearsal scores, this waltz, sung in E-major, concludes the number. In the orchestral score, the instrumentation corresponding to this vocal waltz ends with a pencil annotation in Weill’s hand that reads “Trial Waltz.” There follow another seven pages of score, in G-major, which Weill notated hastily in pencil, as he did with all intercalated pages. The presumption that these seven pages constitute an orchestral dance evolution added during the course of the production is borne out by the orchestral parts, labeled “Trial Dance,” which were not copied by the same individual who prepared the parts for the rest of No. 21b. So far so good. But the orchestral score also exhibits pencil modifications and additions in Ted Royal’s hand to the vocal version of the waltz, and one

might assume that these superseded the original ink layer. However, the assumption is not borne out by the parts for that passage, which are more or less accurate transcriptions of the ink layer. The meaning of the pencil alterations becomes clear only upon studying another set of instrumental parts—physically separated from the parts to the rest of the work—labeled “Trial Waltz” and copied in the same hand that prepared the rest of No. 21b. These parts are marked, which means they were rehearsed, and it is clear from the physical evidence that this version at one time occupied the same position as the G-major “Trial Dance” that supplanted it. This earlier E \flat -major version of the orchestral dance matches the score of the vocal waltz, *including the pencil modifications*. Rather than creating an independent orchestral version of the waltz, Weill’s first impulse had been to have his accompaniment for the vocal segment somewhat enriched. Only the parts enable us to recognize Royal’s pencil layer in the E-major section as a stopgap dance evolution rather than the recomposition of an existing section.

Perhaps the most vexing aspect of the relationship between score and parts concerns the many reductions in the orchestration that were introduced during the course of the 1945 production. Often passages in the instrumental parts have been marked *tacet* by the individual performer. These directions usually correspond to a passage in the holograph orchestral score that was lightly crossed out in pencil. It is unclear whose hand is responsible for the deletions, although added pencil notations calling for a part to be muted are often in the hand of Maurice Abravanel, as are most cautionary dynamics. Because the edition is committed to presenting one version of the work as the main text, it becomes imperative to determine in each case whether a reduced orchestration is to count as a lasting, presumably composer-sanctioned alteration to the text, or merely as part of the script for the actual 1945 production, plagued as it was by singers with less vocal prowess than Weill originally had desired. If, as is likely, many of the changes in the orchestration were undertaken to accommodate specific singers, it may be significant that the instrumental parts to the Duchess’s material are scarcely ever retouched. The role, written for Lenya, is the only one for which Weill’s first choice of performer materialized. He took into account her relatively small voice from the start; witness the delicate orchestration of her solo material in No. 9 (“Sing Me Not a Ballad”), in which muted brass seldom intervene.

Although each passage involving orchestration reductions has been evaluated on a case-by-case basis, it has generally been presumed that such reductions, if they occur within heavily scored passages during vocal numbers, were generated by the specific physical circumstances of the 1945 production. They are not necessarily the orchestrations on which Weill would have settled had he ever had the opportunity or inclination to return to the score. Many such reductions would be unnecessary given the right singer, the technology of the recording studio, or modern theatrical amplification practices. Some result in rhythmically empty measures within a phrase; they have the effect of quick fixes rather than thoughtful reorchestrations. A case in point is the recitative that precedes Cellini’s aria “Life, Love, and Laughter” in No. 2. In mm. 383–386 and 391–397, the brass have been crossed out in pencil in the score and marked *tacet* in the parts. Yet in this passage, the brass parts, the solo trumpet in particular, perform a characteristically Weillian commentary on the proceedings. On the word “die” (m. 383) a drooping melodic figure features the chromatically flattened third and sixth scale degrees borrowed from the minor mode. In the following measures, on “glory,” the chromatic pitches have been “corrected” and the melodic figure expanded to include a fanfare in triplet rhythm. Without the trumpet material, beats two and three in m. 384 are rhythmically “dead,” and the imitation of the ascending triplet figure in the winds and strings in m. 385 appears unmotivated. In mm. 392–396, trumpet figures once again enliven the ends of subphrases, and they intensify the braggadocio of Cellini’s words:

But for the life of me I cannot see
Why death should be the death of me.

My work will bud and blossom and bloom
While Maffio yonder rots in his tomb.

On the one hand, then, Weill’s original conception of the orchestration ought to be preserved here. On the other hand, since the edition is intended for practical as well as scholarly use, the documentation of historical solutions to potential problems of balance could help conductors of future productions. The edition retains Weill’s original orchestration in these situations, but the deleted parts appear in cue-size notation. Users of the edition are invited to consider the orchestral reductions as viable alternatives, even if they are less than ideal, should problems of balance arise. Alterations to the orchestration of purely instrumental passages, however, which may have been aesthetically rather than acoustically motivated, are in some cases upheld, but all such decisions are explained and defended in the critical notes section of the Critical Report.

Matching score and parts, or vocal score and orchestration, entails decisions that are usually confined to local events. For the most part, correlating music and spoken dialogue is a straightforward process, since all surviving scripts include both book and lyrics, and the placement of musical numbers remains the same across the successive revisions. No authoritative, post-rehearsal version of the script seems to have been produced, and no stage manager’s copy has surfaced. Such a copy would document the final state of the dialogue when the production folded, much as the instrumental parts do for the score. Some relatively late stages of revision do survive, preserved on loose sheets intercalated within a copy of the latest extant draft of the libretto. These revisions, introduced during or just after the Boston tryout, provide valuable clues about the shape of the libretto during the New York run. Revisions have not surfaced, however, for the final scene, an epilogue set in Fontainebleau several months after the rest of the action, which otherwise observes the Aristotelian unities of time and place. Reconstructing this scene, and the placement of the instrumental Gigue and Sarabande in particular, requires a certain amount of cautious speculation. Nonetheless, evidence may be gleaned from the latest available version of the libretto, the final state of the orchestral parts and marked rehearsal scores, and the musical content itself.

The final scene comprises four musical numbers. According to the orchestral sources and the New York program, the order of these numbers is as follows:

- No. 24: Come to Paris
- No. 25: Gigue
- No. 26: Finale . . . Sarabande
- No. 27: Finale ultimo (partial reprise of “Life, Love, and Laughter”)

The Boston program lists Nos. 25 and 26 in reverse order. The libretto sources specify only the placement of No. 24 (performed “in one” before the curtain rises on the final stage set) and “the finale” (sung as the entire ensemble streams on just before the final curtain). Nos. 24 and 25 were scored by Ted Royal, but Weill added additional score pages linking the two numbers, material that was also pasted into the instrumental parts. Weill’s additions appear in the edition as mm. 132–136 of “Come to Paris” and mm. 1–8 of the Gigue. Both Weill’s inserts and the material pasted onto the individual parts end with the direction “segue Gigue.” Nos. 24 and 25, then, must have been performed as continuous music preceding the final stretch of dialogue. According to the programs, the Gigue was danced by nine “commedia dell’arte players,” led by Jean Guélis as Harlequin.

That leaves the problematic placement of the “Finale . . . Sarabande,” a number assigned to the “Choral Ensemble” in the original playbills, despite the absence of vocal materials or any other evidence that this segment was sung. Given that several sets of choral parts used in 1945 survive, it seems unlikely that, had parts for this number existed, they would have disappeared without a trace. Moreover, the musical content of the “Finale . . . Sarabande” scarcely suggests chorus participation. The first

part, following a two-bar trumpet fanfare, consists of lightly scored reminiscences of Nos. 9 (“Sing Me Not a Ballad”) and 19 (“A Rhyme for Angela”), ending with a fermata chord at m. 41. No piano score exists for this passage; what survives is a set of instructions on the routing of mm. 1–41 intercalated with the holograph piano score of the Sarabande. Verbal cues scattered here and in the instrumental parts correspond to portions of the dialogue in the latest extant script, such as the Duchess’s line “Entirely too saving.” These cues, taken in conjunction with the light orchestration, suggest that the reminiscences of Nos. 9 and 19 were used to underscore dialogue somewhere near the opening of the last scene. This evidence has informed the edition’s placement of the verbal text. The second part of No. 26, preceded by another trumpet fanfare and four more measures of introduction (mm. 42–47), presents an instrumental version of No. 22 (“Love Is My Enemy”); it is repeated with varied orchestration. The delicacy of the instrumentation, with its florid string and wind parts, suggests that this dance was not a choral number. It is more plausible that the Sarabande, like the Gigue, was performed by the *commedia dell’arte* dancers and not by the “choral ensemble” credited in the programs.

The trumpet fanfares are absent in the full score, although Abravanel writes “segue fanfare Sarabande” at the end of the Gigue, and there are similar cues at that point in some of the instrumental parts. Actual notation for the fanfare may be found at the end of the Gigue piano scores used by Abravanel. Moreover, in the full score of No. 26, Weill instructs the copyist to add “2 bars trumpet solo 4/4 fanfare” just before m. 44. The fanfare is indeed located there in the individual trumpet 1-2, along with the direction “segue Finale Act II” and further memoranda calling for the return of the fanfare before the Sarabande proper. The edition has followed these instructions in placing the fanfare both at m. 1 and at m. 42. Certain instrumental parts suggest that the fanfare may have introduced the *second* rendition of the Sarabande as well as (or instead of?) the first. For instance, the concertmaster’s part around m. 48 bears the direction “1x stopped, then fanfare.”

The fanfares provide further hints about coordinating No. 26 with the dialogue for the final scene. The final libretto gives the direction “music strikes up” at the moment the Major-Domo announces, “His Majesty, the King. Her Grace, the Duchess of Florence.” One of the piano rehearsal scores for the Gigue provides further evidence that No. 26 might begin at this point: the verbal cue juxtaposed with the fanfare notation is the almost identical “His Royal Highness, the King, and Her Grace, the Duchess of Florence.” The subsequent reminiscences of the Duchess’s music and of “A Rhyme for Angela” occur in the order in which these characters enter and speak. The dramatically motivated point at which a dance might interrupt the dialogue is the moment at which Cellini’s statue is ceremoniously unveiled. Indeed, the libretto calls for “a drum roll or trumpet fanfare signal” at this point, suggesting that the second of the two trumpet fanfares announces the ceremony. The Sarabande proper would then accompany that ceremony. Although the libretto calls for Angela and Cellini to sing their reconciliation as the statue is displayed, once again the ceremonial Sarabande rhythm and the highly figured, soloistic passages in the orchestration suggest a largely instrumental performance.

Cellini and Angela may well have *spoken* some of their reconciliation during this dance, however. In Weill’s holograph piano score for the Sarabande proper, another hand added dialogue in pencil, which was subsequently erased, though not so completely that portions cannot be read. The following is decipherable: “You love me madly . . . I never . . . and you . . . You told me never to interrupt you . . . If I could only believe you . . . No more sword play . . . Fanfare . . . Duke: The works of Benvenuto Cellini . . . page 6 opening Act I last part.” While these erasures only partially correspond to the end of the libretto, they are certainly related to the final exchange between the lovers. The erased dialogue tends to confirm that the Sarabande was not a vocal number, but that some of the text assigned to Angela and Cellini might have been spoken during it. The exact dialogue placement in No. 26 would, of

course, have been dictated by the pacing and staging specific to the 1945 production; it would belong more to the “event” than to the “work.” The cue “page 6” refers to the reprise of “Life, Love, and Laughter” that serves as No. 27 (Finale ultimo). In the piano-vocal score, page 6 of Cellini’s recitative and aria corresponds to the point at which the instrumental parts for No. 27 begin. It remains a matter of conjecture just how the Finale ultimo was juxtaposed with the concluding dialogue and stage action in 1945.

This partially hypothetical reconstruction of the final scene might correspond approximately to what was done in the final stages of the 1945 production, but without a definitive stage manager’s script, the accuracy of the hypothesis is something about which we have to remain agnostic. We may wonder further whether the resulting text is one that Weill would have cared to preserve. The composer had suggested several times in his correspondence with Gershwin that the operetta should end with Angela’s heartbreak as Cellini callously departs for France. Weill had envisioned a long finale of continuous music, from the opening of Cellini’s trial through the lovers’ separation. As it stands, the Trial Scene is musically very nearly continuous, but a long stretch of dialogue intervenes between Cellini’s pardon and his departure. Weill did compose some additional music for what became, against his wishes, only the penultimate scene, but this music was never used. The existing final scene has the “tacked on” quality of an artificial happy ending. A plausible explanation for the extant ending is that John Murray Anderson, with his extensive experience directing revues, wanted to make additional use of the well-known dancers employed in the production. It is difficult to imagine that Weill was satisfied with such a static ballet sequence at the end of the show, so different from the way in which dance is used in the classic operettas that were his models. The edition, in so far as it is historical, cannot, of course, reconstruct a new ending based only on desires that Weill once expressed. All it can do is transmit unused passages from the penultimate scene in the critical apparatus. It does not legislate, however, that the final scene always be used; after all, not all productions have at their disposal the kind of ballet stars for whom the dances were intended.

VII. A FUTURE FOR *FIREBRAND*

With *The Firebrand of Florence* Weill sought to realize an ambition he had harbored for some time: to compose a traditional operetta. He evidently believed that a Broadway audience would accept expanded musical forms more readily if they were couched in a historical comedy-romance fashioned as operetta. It was a way of leading American musical theater in a new, more operatic direction. Weill had turned to operetta before, and in a similar frame of mind. In the early 1930s, he looked to this *Zwischengattung* as a vehicle for reaching a relatively wide public while at the same time transcending the bounds of the “song style” that had garnered him such critical and popular acclaim. However, nothing came of a proposed collaboration in 1932 with the famed producer of revues and operettas, Erik Charell. The operetta he might have written with Georg Kaiser that same year turned into *Der Silbersee*. And the operetta he did complete, *Der Kuhhandel*, fell victim to political circumstances in 1934–35, was not completed in the form or language he originally envisaged, and was produced in an unfamiliar country (England) in a compromised form that pleased almost no one. A decade later, the situation seemed more favorable, for Weill had adapted successfully to the New York theatrical world, and his latest two shows had enjoyed the second and third longest runs of any Broadway book musical since *Show Boat* (1927). The success in the early 1940s of certain European operettas in revival suggested that an original work drawing on this continental tradition would find an eager public. Weill’s rivalry with Richard Rodgers, whose *Oklahoma!* had been received by some critics as a homespun version of operetta, must have further goaded him into putting his own stamp on the genre.

Despite Weill’s enthusiasm and hard work, however, *Firebrand* must

count among the great missed opportunities of his career. The work suffered from a fatal wavering between various, conflicting conceptions. The black comedy of the 1924 play was attenuated when efforts were made to sentimentalize the principal couple and broaden the humor of the secondary pair, yielding a more conventional musical-comedy dramaturgy. Elements that gestured towards the Offenbachian *bouffe* collided with those redolent of the stylized, romantic period piece. “Intimate” operetta was swamped by lavish spectacle. Weill himself was uncertain about which tone to adopt, vacillating time and again over the proper characterization of Cellini and the best way to end the second act. In the end, he may well have compromised with his collaborators, and with Max Gordon in particular, to a greater extent than his better dramaturgical instincts should have permitted. For what was probably a combination of reasons—time constraints, inadequate casting, Gershwin’s refusal to accompany Weill to New York in October of 1944, Edwin Mayer’s laziness, John Murray Anderson’s decision to end with a production number set in Fontainebleau—Weill proved unable or unwilling to finish the score as he intended, on a par with the standards he had established in the innovative opening number and the Finaletto to Act I, Scene iii. The first finale trails off into conventional musical-comedy-style reprises of potential hits heard earlier in the evening.²⁶⁹ The Trial Scene, after a spectacular first few minutes, is given over almost entirely to dialogue, resulting in a mere shadow of the form that Weill had outlined in his correspondence with Gershwin. The Fontainebleau scene, which has no equivalent in the 1924 original, contains no new music and little that was orchestrated by the composer himself. The *Firebrand* finales are all the more disappointing because in *Der Kuhhandel* Weill had proven himself in this form, composing two of the best-constructed operetta finales of the twentieth century, more ambitious in scope and in musical invention than anything that the Berlin operetta of the 1920s had offered.

And yet, although *Firebrand* never became the Broadway operetta to end all operettas, instead barely registering in the standard histories of the genre, its score is well worth preserving. Like all of Weill’s Broadway scores, it is *sui generis*, in the context both of Weill’s oeuvre and of the American musical theater. Notwithstanding the claims of writers as different as Theodor W. Adorno and Richard Taruskin that Weill’s American stage music scarcely departs from Broadway norms and represents a precipitous decline from his European works, *Firebrand* displays a musical inventiveness and formal breadth that one would be hard-pressed to discover in such contemporaneous Broadway operettas as *Up in Central Park* or even *Carousel*.²⁷⁰ Nor are Weill’s American works symptomatic of a schism in his creative life. His pronouncements about the future of Broadway musical theater are of a piece with the criticism he contributed to such journals as *Melos* and *Anbruch*. Aesthetic theories aside, Weill’s compositional techniques also exhibit marked continuities with his European works, even as he creates a unique *Klangbild*.

To be sure, a revival of *Firebrand* in anything like its original form would be impossible, if only because of the cost, already prohibitive in 1945. But the three productions based on this edition in its pre-publication form suggest a future for *Firebrand* beyond that of a curiosity for Weill specialists.²⁷¹ Revivals may well find their place in repertory companies devoted to productions of the classical operetta repertory. Indeed, one of the reviewers of the Viennese premiere at the Konzerthaus suggested that it could even provide the Volksoper with a sure “hit.”²⁷² On the same occasion, an Austrian journalist, deploring the tendency, so characteristic of Adorno’s generation, to excoriate the “American Weill,” described the aural pleasures of Weill’s score and hinted at connections to his earlier masterpieces:

Let’s not talk about how those who applauded his expulsion blamed him after the fact for having—like other Jewish artists—betrayed sublime

high art by fabricating commercial products during his American exile for the sake of gaining filthy lucre.

Let’s talk rather about his talent, about the catchy songs, the languorous melodies, the dashing ensembles. That brings us directly to our topic—the operetta “The Firebrand of Florence,” from the last year of the Second World War, ennobled by Ira Gershwin’s lyrics and furnished with the witty dialogue of Edwin Justus Mayer. . . . At one of the climaxes Weill suggests his Threepenny and Mahagonny days.²⁷³

An emerging postmodern sensibility among music critics and directors alike may also encourage reassessment of an operetta so manifestly composed against the grain of contemporaneous, avant-garde developments in music and theater:

Kurt Weill’s “The Firebrand of Florence” is a product designed for the [Broadway] musical market. The musical quality of the work, first performed in 1944 [*sic*], far surpasses, however, the usual level of the genre. Weill avails himself of the commercial American musical language with such sovereign mastery that one might think someone has written music about music. . . . The commercial calculation is reflected with a wink in the text: The Duke of Florence comments on a pure choral fugue with the line, “Your study in counterpoint really is clever, but oh, I’m afraid it could go on forever.” Ira Gershwin’s text and Weill’s music is full of such self-mirrorings, and it reflects the operetta genre and its tradition.²⁷⁴

The Viennese critics in 2000 were better situated than their 1945 counter-parts to address the ironicizing generic allusions of *Firebrand*. The BBC concert version brought the work’s parodistic elements brilliantly into focus by supplementing an abridged version of Mayer’s original dialogue with a versified narration by Samuel Brookes, delivered with mock earnestness by the distinguished British actor Simon Beale:

We were in rhyme heaven . . . for . . . *The Firebrand of Florence*, a wonderfully rich and imaginative musical about Benvenuto Cellini, in which the lyrics of Ira Gershwin were admirably matched by a new linking spiel in rhyming couplets by Sam Brookes (narrated by the incomparable Simon Russell Beale). Unbelievably it was a flop in New York in 1945, but on the basis of this rip-roaring performance it should definitely be given another chance on stage. As sung here by a mixture of opera and Broadway singers led by Rodney Gilfry and George Dvorsky, Weill’s sublime and memorable music brought the house down.²⁷⁵

The Vienna and London performances had in spades what the Alvin Theater production lacked: irony and wit in tone, verve in presentation, and star power in casting. In order for *Firebrand* to have succeeded in 1945, a leading man like Rodney Gilfry or Thomas Hampson, capable of negotiating Weill’s operatic score while delivering healthy doses of sex appeal, would have been indispensable. So would a comic baritone like Dvorsky, for an actor playing the Duke needs to lend the character not only buffoonery but also a certain physical charm, not to mention a voice able to project Gershwin’s lyrics.

Weill and Gershwin’s self-reflecting, meta-dramatic touches, reminiscent of Offenbach’s treatment of French opera, went largely unnoticed or unappreciated in 1945. More than half a century later, there is a distinct market for art that reflects on art and that uses traditional genres without quite belonging to them. In some ways, *Firebrand* was ahead of its time—perhaps not so obviously as *Love Life*, that odd precursor of the “concept musical,” but sufficiently so that some of its more original features have taken some years to emerge. If concert versions, dispensing with some of the Fontainebleau music and the longueurs of Mayer’s dialogue, have proven so successful in European venues, then Weill was not, after all, completely off the mark in predicting an “international market” for his last operetta, which is finally available for study and performance for the first time—a half century after the composer’s death.

Notes

1. Lenya's recording on Columbia KL 5229; reissue Sony Classical MHK 60647. Highlights on Koch Schwann 3-1416-2 (1995) and EMI 5-55563-2 (1996). For a review, see this author, "Kurt Weill on Broadway," *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 15/1 (spring 1997): 20.
2. Kurt Weill to Ira Gershwin, 15 May 1944; copy at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York, series 40; original in the Gershwin Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. All Weill-to-Gershwin correspondence cited from Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 40. All Gershwin-to-Weill correspondence cited from the Weill/Lenya Archive, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, series IV.B, box 48/33. Throughout this essay, all correspondence is quoted with its original spelling and punctuation and without recourse to "sic," following the precedent set by *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
3. David Drew, "Reflections on the Last Years: *Der Kuhhandel* as a Key Work," in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 217–267; Andreas Hauff, "Ein Komponist auf Abwegen? Kurt Weills Operette *Der Kuhhandel*," in *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Axel Beer, *inter alia* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1997), 501–516. The German "torso" was recorded on Capriccio 60013-1 (1992).
4. Stephen Hinton, "A New Edition of *Die Dreigroschenoper*: Challenges, Principles, and Solutions," *Notes* 56 (December 1999): 324.
5. Richard Middleton, "Pop Goes Old Theory," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 122 (1997): 313.
6. David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999); quoted in Frank Kermode, "Art among the Ruins," *New York Review of Books* 48/9 (31 May 2001): 63.
7. Gerald Bordman, *Jerome Kern: His Life and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 249–250.
8. The following example may be taken as representative. In December of 1943, with *One Touch of Venus* enjoying a run of 567 performances at the Imperial Theater and "Speak Low" at the top of the charts, Weill wrote testily to Max Dreyfus, the head of Chappell Music:

"After 'Speak Low' has been started on its way successfully, I think we should start work on some other songs from this score. . . . 'Venus' has become a huge stage success and the score is one of the most successful and most talked-about in recent years. Yet, so far, we have only one orchestration [a commercial arrangement of 'Speak Low'] out." (Weill to Dreyfus, 31 December 1943, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/3).
9. For instance, as perusal of the Jerome Kern papers at the Library of Congress confirms, none of the full scores for Kern's musicals contains vocal parts, and this observation applies whether the orchestrator was Frank Saddler, Hans Spialek, or Robert Russell Bennett.
10. In the cases of *Lady in the Dark*, *Street Scene*, and *Love Life*, approximately one year elapsed between the initial drafting of the book's outline and the start of rehearsals. For *Lost in the Stars*, there was about a nine-month lag. *One Touch of Venus* did not begin rehearsals for well over a year; this delay was caused in part by a change of librettist.
11. The *New York Times* announced the change of title from *The Firebrand* to *Much Ado about Love* on 22 January 1945, the same day it announced the beginning of rehearsals. Newspaper clippings relating to *Firebrand* may be found at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 50A, and in Max Gordon's scrapbook for this production, now in the Billy Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center, New York.
12. A memo from the set designer, Jo Mielziner, to the stage director, John Murray Anderson, dated 18 December 1944, confirms that the desirability of such a production number was still under discussion. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Jo Mielziner Papers, series IV, box 33/6.
13. See p. 22.
14. Quoted in Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H. M. S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 112. Hammerstein's remarks appeared in *Theatre Magazine* (May 1925). Note the interchangeable use of the terms "operetta" and "musical play," and also that the same words could in fact be used to describe the canonical status of musical plays from *Oklahoma!* onward.
15. "On y trouvera, plus exactement et plus agréablement qu'ailleurs, les mœurs et comportements, les tics, le langage et le tour d'esprit des personnes frivoles et élégantes du second Empire et de la troisième République." Jules Lemaître, *Impressions de théâtre* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, 1886–1920), 10: 181–182.
16. Brooks Atkinson, "The American Stage May As Well Take a Bow," *New York Times*, 24 January 1941.
17. Brooks Atkinson, "Struck by Stage Lightning: Comments on the Theater Wonders of *Lady in the Dark* with Special Reference to Kurt Weill and Gertrude Lawrence," *New York Times*, 7 September 1941.
18. *Lady in the Dark* played 467 performances at the Alvin Theater and eighty-three more during a re-engagement at the Broadway Theater in the midst of its road tour. *One Touch of Venus* did even better with 567 performances. But Cole Porter's shows did about as well during what seems in retrospect a low point between *DuBarry Was a Lady* and *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948). *Panama Hattie* (1940) enjoyed 501 performances; *Let's Face It* (1941), 547; *Something for the Boys* (1943), 422; and *Mexican Hayride* (1944), 481. Porter's shows had some unhappy effects on Weill's: *Let's Face It* robbed *Lady* of Danny Kaye, while *Mexican Hayride* prevented the dashing and popular Wilbur Evans from taking the part of Cellini in *Firebrand*.
19. Weill expressed these ambitions from the very start of his American career:

"The musical theater as it exists today consists on the one hand of the opera completely isolated from drama and on the other hand of musical comedy, which is to say a handful of topical events surrounding a group of hit songs. Without contesting the right to existence of both of these veins, since both have their audiences, it can be said that a re-establishment of the true musical theater is scheduled to take place inside of the enormous territory between the two genres; it has been ripe for a long time." [Kurt Weill, "The Alchemy of Music," *Stage* (November 1936): 63; repr. *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 4/2 (fall 1986): 7.]
20. "There is no one like me when it comes to discovering new grounds." Weill to Irving Lazar, 28 November 1945, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/9.
21. Weill to Gershwin, 13 November 1941.
22. Thus, after the rigors of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and *Die Bürgschaft*, Weill considered collaborating with Georg Kaiser on something in a more popular vein for the producer Erik Charell:

"It isn't to be an opera, but a work between genres [*Zwischengattungs-Stück*]. It remains up to me whether it is a 'play with music,' that is, with simple songs sung by plain actors, or whether I want to make greater musical demands and write music of the length and difficulty of a piece of an *Offenbach-Musiquette*. I would be more attracted to the latter, because I could go beyond the genre I created in the *Dreigroschenoper*." (Weill to Universal Edition, 29 July 1932; trans. Christopher Hailey [unpublished typescript, Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 41].)

The "play with music" became *Der Silbersee*; the "Offenbach-Musiquette" saw light as *Der Kuhhandel / A Kingdom for a Cow*.
23. On Offenbach's relevance, see "Offenbachs *Großherzogin von Gerolstein*," in *Kurt Weill: Musik und musikalisches Theater: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera (Mainz: Schott, 2000), 335–336, originally in *Der deutsche Rundfunk* 4/47 (21 November 1926): 3,331; and "Lortzings *Zar und Zimmermann* und Offenbachs *Orpheus in der Unterwelt* als Sendespiel," in *Kurt Weill: Musik und musikalisches Theater*, ed. Hinton and Schebera, 242, originally in *Der deutsche Rundfunk* 3/17 (26 April 1925): 1,069. On Offenbach and *gestus*, see Kurt Weill, "Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik," *Die Musik* 21 (1929): 419; trans. in Kim H. Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 491. Weill's operetta criticism was one manifestation of a more general Offenbach renaissance in Weimar-era Berlin fueled by Karl Kraus's polemical writings and culminating in Otto Klemperer's 1931 performance at the Kroll Oper of Kraus's *Périchole* adaptation. On Weill and Offenbach, see Drew, "*Kuhhandel* as a Key Work," 244–255, and Galand, "Operetta as *Revenant*," in *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 17/2 (fall 1999): 25.
24. Regarding the possibility of Gershwin writing the lyrics, see Weill to Gershwin, 13 November 1941 and 2 May 1942.
25. See Darius Milhaud to Weill, [early November] 1942, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.B, box 49; Weill to Russell Lewis, 14 November 1942, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/9.
26. Weill to S. N. Behrman, 9 May 1942, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/2.
27. For more on this aborted project, see David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 325–327.
28. Harold Bloom includes *The Children of Darkness* in a list of twentieth-century American works he presents as a "modest prophecy of survival possibilities." Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 564.
29. The contracts are located at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 33. They call for "an original book, score, and lyrics . . . for production based on 'Nell Gwynn,' starring Grace Moore." These contracts must not have been binding, for two weeks later, Gershwin wrote, "I honestly don't see why any of us should sign anything until

- Eddie is satisfied he has an idea worthy of the three of us" (Gershwin to Weill, 24 October 1942).
30. Weill to Lotte Lenya, 1 October 1942, as published in Symonette and Kowalke, *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, letter 306. All correspondence between Weill and Lenya is quoted from this source and referenced by letter number.
 31. In Berlin Weill may have heard Leo Fall's *Madame Pompadour* (1922), a huge success for Fritzi Massary. He could likewise have attended the glittering 1931 revival of Millöcker's *Gräfin Dubarry* at the Admiralspalast, in the new arrangement that the *Dreigroschenoper* conductor Theo Mackeben built around the charms of Hungarian soprano Gitta Alpar.
 32. Weill to Russell [Crouse], 30 September 1942, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 3/1. Despite the classification of this letter in the Weill/Lenya Archive, the recipient was probably Russell Lewis, the intended producer of both *Nell Gwynn* and the proposed new arrangement of *La belle Hélène*. Weill's notes on the *Nell Gwynn* project (Weill/Lenya Archive, series VIII, box 68/10) are along the same lines as his 30 September letter.
 33. Gershwin's recollections of work sessions are preserved as marginalia on his copy of a letter he wrote to Weill on 15 October 1942. For Mayer's film commitments, see Gershwin to Weill, 24 October 1942. Gershwin mentions the idea of doing a version of Cinderella with Mayer in Gershwin to Weill, 15 December 1942.
 34. Bruce McClung, "American Dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1994), 466. An updated *opéra-comique* did appear on Broadway the same season as *One Touch of Venus*: *Carmen Jones*, Oscar Hammerstein's adaptation of *Carmen*, opened in December 1943.
 35. Drew, "Kubhandel as a Key Work," 244, 247.
 36. Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 547. On the Rodgers and Hammerstein "musical play" as a "reinvention of operetta," see McClung, "American Dreams," 459–464, and Kim H. Kowalke, "The Golden Age of the Musical" (unpublished typescript), 20–21.
 37. Lewis Nichols, "'Oklahoma!' a Musical Hailed as Delightful, Based on 'Green Grow the Lilacs,' Opens at the St. James Theater," *New York Times*, 1 April 1943.
 38. Weill to Lenya, 14 July 1944, letter 324.
 39. Burton Rascoe, "One Touch of Venus Proves a Disappointment," *New York World-Telegram*, 8 October 1944.
 40. Wilella Waldorf, "'One Touch of Venus' Opens at the Imperial," *New York Post*, 8 October 1943.
 41. Weill to Gershwin, 3 April 1944.
 42. Kurt Weill, "Gibt es eine Krise der Oper?" *Neues Wiener Journal*, 20 April 1932; repr. Hinton and Schebera, *Kurt Weill: Musik und musikalisches Theater*, 137–138. Trans. slightly altered from Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 543.
 43. Weill to Lenya, 12 July 1944, letter 322. See also n. 38.
 44. Lenya to Weill, 7 July 1944, letter 318.
 45. Lenya to Weill, 22 August 1944, letter 352. Howard Barnes was the critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, not the *New York Times*. He was to be one of the more sympathetic reviewers after the opening night of *Firebrand* the following March.
 46. Symonette and Kowalke, *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, 382, n. 3.
 47. Later, Weill turned down Alan Jay Lerner's suggestion to adapt *Anna and the King of Siam*, which inspired Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*. The source for this anecdote is George Davis's notes on an interview with Lerner (Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 37, cited in Larry Stempel, "Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera," in Kowalke, *A New Orpheus*, 324, n. 12).
 48. George Jean Nathan recalled this event in his *Theater Book of the Year 1944–45* (New York: Knopf, 1945), 314–315. The passage does not appear in the original version of the article, "When There Is Little Left for a Critic to Say," *Journal-American* (12 April 1945). This background information was also reported in the *New York Times* on 18 March ("News and Gossip of the Rialto") and 22 March (Sam Zolotow, "'Firebrand' Opens at Alvin Tonight").
 49. Weill to Gershwin, 27 February 1944.
 50. Once the *Firebrand* project was definitely settled upon, Gershwin assured Weill that his "reservations about the 'Firebrand' . . . at the time were pointed solely at the lyrics" (Gershwin to Weill, 23 May 1944).
 51. Gershwin to Weill, 8 March 1944.
 52. Weill to Gershwin, 11 March 1944. In the 8 March letter, Gershwin had asked, "What about Billy Rose? Has he something that has to be done, despite the fact that it has to be done for Billy Rose?"
 53. Weill to Maurice Abravanel, 11 December 1943. Original at Marriott Library, University of Utah. Copy at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 30, box 15/6.
 54. Weill to Gershwin, 3 April 1944.
 55. Weill to Gershwin, 15 May 1944.
 56. For more on Hassard Short's involvement, see Weill to Gershwin, 30 May 1944.
 57. Kurt Weill to Hans Weill, 5 July 1944, as published in *Kurt Weill: Briefe an die Familie (1914–1950)*, ed. Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), letter 237.
 58. Gershwin Collection, box 5/27. A few other "suggestions" included: *Florentine Frolic*; *Renaissance Revel*; *Trio con Brio*; *Even in Those Days*; *Pardon Me, Duke*; and *They Were That Way Then*.
 59. The working methods Weill and Gershwin developed are described in detail in McClung, "American Dreams," 73–115.
 60. Regarding Gershwin's working methods with other composers, see Philip Furia, *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 61. Maurice Abravanel, interview with Alan Rich, Kim H. Kowalke, and Lys (Bert) Symonette, 26 August 1979, 29. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60.
 62. Weill to Lenya, 1 July 1944, letter 313.
 63. Max Gordon to Gershwin (cc. Weill), 24 July 1944, Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.B, box 48/35. All Gordon-to-Weill correspondence cited from this collection.
 64. Weill to Lenya, 20 July 1944, letter 328.
 65. Lenya to Weill, 10 August 1944, letter 343.
 66. Lenya to Weill, 31 July 1944, letter 336.
 67. The Dramatists Guild contract that the *Firebrand* authors signed has not yet surfaced. The principal clauses were summarized, however, by agent Arthur Lyons in an inter-office memorandum (A. & S. Lyons, Inc.) to Richard J. Madden dated 17 July 1944. Last-minute changes to the contract were stipulated in a memorandum from Lyons to Madden dated 7 August 1944. Lyons, an agent based in Beverly Hills, represented the *Firebrand* authors. Madden was a literary agent who seems to have handled the New York end of the negotiations on behalf of Lyons. Copies of both memoranda are now in the possession of the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trust.
 68. Weill to Lenya, 12 August 1944, letter 344. Note the mention of Verdi, Offenbach, and Mozart, a triumvirate that Weill frequently cited when looking to precedents.
 69. Weill to Lenya, 7 July 1944, letter 319.
 70. Information about the film rights is gleaned from Gordon to Weill (telegram), 30 June 1944; Lyons to Gordon (telegram), 6 July 1944 (copy in Weill/Lenya Archive); Irene Etkin to Lyons (telegram), 14 July 1944 (copy in Weill/Lenya Archive). Etkin worked in the Lyons office. According to the *New York Times* ("'Firebrand' Opens at Alvin Tonight," 22 March 1945), Twentieth-Century Fox had a twenty-five percent stake in the production.
 71. For comparison to "Guilbert Sullivan," see Weill to Lenya, letter 355. For "Broadway opera" and variants thereof, see Weill to Lenya, letters 322, 324, 334. For "comic opera" (*komische Oper*), see Weill to Caspar Neher, 2 July 1946, at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 40. For "*Cellini-Oper*," see Weill to Alma Mahler Werfel, 11 December 1944, in Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/15. He described it to his parents as "eine richtige Oper" (see Symonette and Juchem, *Briefe an die Familie*, letter 238).
 72. Weill to Lenya, 12 July 1944, letter 322. Not long thereafter, Weill conceded that Gershwin had a point: "Max, at my request, wrote Ira a letter asking him to come to N. Y. with me and work there. Of course, Ira refused flatly, and I must say in all fairness, from his point-of-view he is right. He can work much better here and he is afraid of the heat and his mother" (Weill to Lenya, 28 July 1944, letter 334).
 73. Weill to Gershwin, 15 May 1944.
 74. Weill to Lenya, 7 July 1944, letter 319.
 75. Weill to Lenya, 23 July 1944, letter 330.
 76. Weill to Lenya, 1 and 7 August 1944, letters 337 and 340.
 77. Weill to Lenya, 12 August 1944, letter 344.
 78. Weill to Lenya, 26 July 1944, letter 332.
 79. Lenya to Weill, 31 July 1944, letter 336.
 80. Lenya to Weill, 10 August 1944, letter 343.
 81. For the whisky saga, see Weill to Lenya, 6 August 1944, letter 340; Weill to Lenya, 14 August 1944, letter 346; Lenya to Weill, 31 August 1944, letter 358.
 82. Weill to Lenya, 17 July 1944, letter 325 (butler); 9, 12, 18 August, letters 342, 344, 350 (party).
 83. Copy of this diary entry at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 30, box 18/7. *Schnattergans* might be translated as "chatterbox," though it also carries connota-

- tions of the English “silly goose.” *Schnadahüpfeln* connotes the idea of “pretty little ditties” or “chicken dances.”
84. Weill mentioned the Tarantella in several letters to Lenya dating from early September. On the 2nd, he predicted that the first act would be completed in about two weeks, and he mentioned that the collaborators now had an outline of the entire second act.
 85. Weill to Lenya, 18 August 1944, letter 349.
 86. Weill to Lenya, 13 September 1944, letter 364.
 87. Weill to Lenya, 27 August 1944, letter 355.
 88. Weill to Lenya, 27 August 1944; Lenya to Weill, 31 August 1944, letter 358.
 89. Evidently, the “The Little Naked Boy” continued to be a problematic number well into the tryout period. On the problem of where to place it and to whom to assign it, see Critical Report.
 90. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
 91. Gershwin reported working on the second chorus of “Alessandro the Wise” the Sunday evening before election day (Gershwin to Weill, n. d. [5 November 1944]).
 92. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
 93. The *Johnny Johnson* material is located in Weill/Lenya Archive, series I.A, box 12/209. David Drew mentions this borrowing, as well as those from *Marie Galante*, *The River Is Blue*, and *Der Kuhhandel*—but not “The Westpointer”—in Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 345.
 94. Gershwin Collection, box 5/19.
 95. Ira Gershwin, *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 131. Gershwin mentioned in an interview with the *New York Herald Tribune* (15 April 1945) that he had been waiting twenty years for an opportunity to use spoonerisms.
 96. Weill to Lenya, 18 August 1944, letter 350.
 97. Clippings in Max Gordon’s scrapbook from *Herald Tribune* and *New York Times* (both 8 January 1945); *Christian Science Monitor*, *Morning Telegraph*, and *Boston Traveler* (all 11 January 1945).
 98. See, for instance, Sam Zolotow’s column in the *New York Times* (26 February 1945).
 99. Weill to Lenya, 26 July 1944, letter 332.
 100. Weill to Lenya, 27 August 1944, letter 355.
 101. Weill to Lenya, 12 August 1944, letter 344.
 102. Weill to Lenya, 28 July 1944, letter 334.
 103. Weill to Lenya, 20 July 1944, letter 328.
 104. Weill to Gershwin, 3 April and 15 May 1944.
 105. *Salonromantik* was the pejorative term that the acerbic Viennese critic Karl Kraus applied to the operettas of the so-called Silver Age, Franz Lehár’s included.
 106. Weill to Lenya, 25 June 1944, letter 309.
 107. Weill to Lenya, 5 July 1944, letter 316. The pairing of Ascanio and Angela is not found in the play; it was a suggestion of Lenya’s (see Weill to Lenya, 3 July 1944, letter 313).
 108. Weill to Lenya, 10 July 1944, letter 320.
 109. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
 110. Warren Storey Smith, “Music of Weill Called Unusual,” *Boston Sunday Post*, 26 September 1943.
 111. By way of comparison, *Lady in the Dark* called for twenty players (mcclung, “American Dreams,” 346). *One Touch of Venus* required twenty-eight musicians, including eighteen strings (8.4.3.2.1).
 112. On the 2:1 ratio in *Lady* and *Venus*, see mcclung, “American Dreams,” 346.
 113. Lyons to Madden (A. & S. Lyons inter-office communication), 17 July 1944.
 114. Lyons to Madden (A. & S. Lyons inter-office communication), 7 August 1944 (my italics).
 115. See Lenya to Weill, 22 August 1944, letter 352; Weill to Abravanel, 27 August 1944. Copy at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 40.
 116. First paragraph quoted in Mario R. Mercado, “A Podium With a View: Recollections by Maurice Abravanel,” *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 5/1 (spring 1987): 8. Second paragraph from Abravanel, interview with David Farneth and Lys Symonette, 8 August 1984, 27–29. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60. The text-critical status of Abravanel’s additions to the full score is explored further in Part VI of this essay (“Editorial Challenges and Solutions”) and in the Critical Report (“Statement of Source Valuation and Usage”).
 117. Weill to Abravanel, 8 November 1940. Copy at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 40.
 118. mcclung, “American Dreams,” 347.
 119. See Fritz Racek’s critical reports for *Die Fledermaus* and *Eine Nacht in Venedig* in *Johann Strauß (Sohn) Gesamtausgabe* series II/3 and II/9 (Vienna: Doblinger/Universal, 1970).
 120. Weill to Gershwin, 15 May 1944.
 121. Weill to Gershwin, 30 May 1944.
 122. Wilella Waldorf, “*Firebrand of Florence* Strikes Very Few Sparks,” *New York Post*, 23 March 1945.
 123. Gordon to Weill, 16 August 1944.
 124. Concerning Wilbur Evans, see Weill to Gordon 16, 19, 20, 22, and 24 August, 6 October 1944; Weill to Lenya, 21 August 1944, letter 351; Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
 125. Regarding John Raitt and Arthur Kent, see Gordon to Weill, 30 August 1944. Regarding Alfred Drake, see Gordon to Weill, 20 August 1944, and Weill to Lenya, 21 August 1944, letter 351.
 126. Weill to Abravanel, 27 August 1944. Copy at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 40. Abravanel’s reactions are handwritten between the lines.
 127. Gordon to Weill, 31 August 1944.
 128. The operatic baritones are mentioned in Weill to Abravanel, 27 August 1944. Gordon mentions Allan Jones, who was a tenor, in the letter to Weill of 30 August 1944. Regarding Don Ameche, see Weill to Lenya, 20 July 1944, letter 328, and Gordon to Weill, 24 July 1944.
 129. Gordon to Weill, 24 August 1944.
 130. At the 1983 Kurt Weill Conference at Yale University, Morris Stonzek recalled suggesting Pinza to Weill; apparently, Pinza’s salary demands were exorbitant. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 62.
 131. Abravanel, interview with Farneth and Symonette, 7 August 1984, 32. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60.
 132. Lys (Bert) Symonette, interview with Suzanne Goldklang, 8 December 1988, 3. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60. (Symonette was Lys Bert until she married Randolph Symonette, the Hangman in *Firebrand*, in 1950.)
 133. Foster, Madden, and Beverly Tyler, among others, appear on a handwritten list of casting possibilities in Gershwin’s hand (Gershwin Collection, box 5/23). In a follow-up to a phone conversation with Weill Gordon wrote, “Of course, if you can get Katherin Grayson, it would be a wonderful thing” (Gordon to Weill, 30 August 1944).
 134. Gordon to Weill, 6 August and 8 August (telegram) 1944; Weill to Lenya, 21 August 1944, letter 351.
 135. “ABC of acting” from Abravanel, interview with Farneth and Symonette, 32. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60. Some film biographies give 1924 rather than 1928 as Tyler’s birth date.
 136. Gershwin to Weill (telegram), 28 November 1944.
 137. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944. During the summer of 1944, Weill reported being favorably impressed by an unidentified seventeen-year-old girl: “I heard a girl who is a good possibility for Angela. She is 17 years old, lovely looking, a beautiful voice of the Susanna Forster type and highly talented” (Weill to Lenya, 27 August 1944, letter 355). Perhaps he was writing about Tyler. Weill was already considering Tyler for the part by 9 October (Gordon to Weill, 9 October 1944).
 138. Lys (Bert) Symonette, Recollections of Weill, delivered at the 1983 Kurt Weill Conference, Yale University. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 62.
 139. Weill to Lenya, 20 July 1944, letter 328.
 140. Gordon to Walter Slezak, 25 September 1944. Carbon copy in Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.B, box 48/35.
 141. Gordon to Weill, 16 October 1944. On 9 October, Gordon reports being “very strong” for Cooper (letter to Weill).
 142. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
 143. Weill to Lenya, 1 August 1944, letter 337.
 144. Weill to Lenya, 3 July 1944, letter 315.
 145. Weill to Lenya, 17 July 1944, letters 325–326.
 146. Lenya to Weill, 21 July 1944, letter 329; 10 August 1944, letter 343.
 147. Lenya to Weill, 7 September 1944, letter 362.
 148. Weill to Gordon, 17 October 1944. Copy in Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/6.

149. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
150. *Morning Telegraph*, 12 February 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
151. Gordon is quoted to this effect in "News and Gossip of the Rialto," *New York Times*, 5 March 1944.
152. Oral communication.
153. The Boston program listed twenty-one singing and speaking roles instead of seventeen. The additional four were minor speaking parts (for example, the petitioners in Act II, Scene iii) drawn from the two dozen members of the chorus.
154. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
155. Concerning Hart being asked to direct, see Gordon to Weill, 27 September 1944, and *Boston Traveler*, 11 January 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
156. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
157. John Haggott, who came from an architectural background, seems to have done a little bit of everything: as director, he worked mainly with the Westport County Playhouse in Connecticut, an important venue in those days. For example, in 1943 he had directed a production of *Othello* with Paul Robeson and José Ferrer. In 1945, he became a producer for Columbia Pictures. Later, he moved to television, directing shows for CBS. Finally, in the '60s, Haggott joined the architectural firm of I. M. Pei.
158. Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, *Out without My Rubbers: The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson as Told to and Written by Hugh Abercrombie Anderson* (New York: Literary Publishers, 1954), 201–202.
159. Symonette, *Recollections of Weill*, Yale University, 1983. Transcript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 62.
160. Cost according to Sam Zolotow, "'Firebrand of Florence' Quits on Saturday Night," *New York Times*, 23 April 1945. According to the *New York Times* (23 February and 23 April), the *Firebrand* investors included Twentieth-Century Fox, who owned the film rights and had a twenty-five percent investment in the production; Henry J. Topper, Bruce Cabot, and J. R. Maclean (these three collectively held a ten percent stake); Meyer Davis; and Max Gordon. The agent Louis Shurr had a stake of \$15,000 (Weill to Lenya, 11 April 1945, letter 367). Figures for *Lady* cited from mcclung, "American Dreams," 176. Costs of the other two shows cited from David Michael Kilroy, "Kurt Weill on Broadway: The Postwar Years (1945–1950)" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 1992), 107 and 237.
161. Most of the information regarding the rehearsal period stems from the recollections of Symonette preserved at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 62, and from personal communications. Symonette recalled the Belmont Hotel on Park Avenue and 42nd Street, but since it was torn down in 1939, it is possible that she was thinking of the Biltmore, only two blocks away, similar in design, built by the same architects (Warren and Wetmore), and likewise connected via underground passageways to Grand Central Station. The Biltmore was not demolished until the early 1980s.
162. In the argot of American popular music, these half-step modulations are known as crowbars.
163. See section VI ("Editorial Challenges and Solutions") for a more detailed discussion of the changes that some of these production numbers underwent.
164. Concerning the *Street Scene* production schedule, see Kilroy, "Kurt Weill on Broadway," 102–103. Symonette recalls no rehearsals with orchestra in New York (personal communication).
165. Personal communication. For the impact of these orchestration reductions on the present edition, see section VI ("Editorial Challenges and Solutions") and the "Statement of Source Valuation and Usage" from the Critical Report.
166. Travel dates according to a memo in the Mielziner papers. A clipping in Gordon's scrapbook from the *Newark Star Ledger* (19 February 1945) confirms the cast's departure that day.
167. The opening was originally announced for New Haven on Thursday, 22 February (*New York Times*, 22 January 1945). A memo among Mielziner's papers gives 22 February as the opening date for Boston as well. But the Boston reviews which appeared in the morning papers on the 24th confirm that the opening did not take place until the 23rd.
168. According to the *Newark Star Ledger* (undated clipping in Gordon's scrapbook). This figure differs from the estimates reported in *Variety*: \$10,000 for the first three performances, and \$22,000, \$25,000, and \$24,000 for the subsequent three weeks, yielding \$81,000. *Variety* acknowledged, however, that these estimates were low. See *Variety* 157/12 (28 February 1945), 45; 157/13 (7 March 1945), 53; 158/1 (14 March 1945), 53; 158/2 (21 March 1945), 53.
169. Elliot Norton, "Brilliant Comedy at Colonial," *Boston Post*, 24 February 1945.
170. David Beams, "Lotte Lenya," *Theatre Arts Magazine* 46 (June 1962), 18.
171. Peggy Doyle, "'Much Ado about Love' Real Dazzler in Colonial Opener," 24 February 1945 (clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center from unspecified journal).
172. Symonette, personal communication.
173. Anderson, *Out without My Rubbers*, 201.
174. "News and Gossip of the Rialto," *New York Times*, 4 March 1945.
175. Anderson, *Out without My Rubbers*, 202.
176. Symonette recalls that it was Kaufman who came up with the new Act I ending (personal communication and 8 December 1988 Goldklang interview, 3; see n. 132).
177. Beams, "Lotte Lenya," 18.
178. Symonette and Abravanel both recalled this affair. Symonette, interview with Donald Spoto, 1985, 10. Abravanel, interview with Farneth and Symonette, 8 August 1984, 17. Transcripts at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 60.
179. Weill's correspondence with a close friend during the tryout hints at his state of mind. Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.B, restricted collection.
180. The *Daily News* reported on this suit on 19 February (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook). For Gershwin's recollection of Feigay, see Ira Gershwin to Weill, 23 May 1944.
181. Sam Zolotow, "Anent 'The Firebrand'," *New York Times*, 22 June 1944.
182. *Boston Sunday Post*, 18 February 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
183. Advance sales and ticket prices according to *Morning Telegraph*, 12 March 1945. Pricing for *Lady* according to mcclung, "American Dreams," 186.
184. The sold-out preview was reported by Sam Zolotow in the *New York Times*, 5 March 1945.
185. Figures cited from *Variety* 158/3 (28 March 1945): 49; 158/4 (4 April 1945): 53; 158/5 (11 April 1945): 44; 158/6 (18 April 1945): 49; 158/7 (25 April 1945): 49. *Variety* did not report the receipts from the week the show closed.
186. Figures from *Variety*, 11 April 1945.
187. *Variety*, 11 June 1941, reported that *Lady* was taking a summer hiatus, having not quite recouped its costs of operation. It also calculated that the show had thus far played to 8,500 standees. Average gross according to mcclung, "American Dreams," 201.
188. *Bronx Home News*, 5 April 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
189. *Herald Tribune*, 23 April 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
190. Parts for the Jackie Mason arrangements are located at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 11a. Also at Weill-Lenya Research Center is a recording of a radio broadcast of arrangements performed by the Al Goodman Orchestra with soloists Robert Merrill (Cellini), Patrice Munsell (Angela), and Jack Smith (Duke). Mason's arrangement of "Life, Love, and Laughter" is included in a recording featuring vintage dance-band arrangements of Weill songs conducted by H. K. Gruber (RCA 09026-63513-2).
191. Quoted in Edward Jablonski, *Gershwin* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 344.
192. Weill to Lenya, 18 May 1945, letter 376.
193. Weill to Lenya, 14 April 1945, letter 368.
194. Weill to Lenya, 18 April 1945, letter 369.
195. Kurt Weill to Albert and Emma Weill, 30 April 1945, trans. Lys (Bert) Symonette (unpublished typescript at Weill-Lenya Research Center, series 45). Original German in Symonette and Juchem, *Briefe an die Familie*, letter 238.
196. Weill, Letter to the Editor, *Life*, 10 March 1947.
197. Howard Barnes, "The Theater: Ups and Downs of This Booming Season," *Herald Tribune*, 1 April 1945.
198. Arthur Pollock of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, 23 March 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
199. For an account of the veiled political implications of *Oklahoma!*, see mcclung, "American Dreams," 156–165. See also Gerald Bordman's view, n. 36.
200. George Jean Nathan, "The Merry Widow," *Theater Book of the Year 1943–44* (New York: Knopf, 1944), 33.
201. George Jean Nathan, "When There Is Little Left for a Critic to Say," in *New York Journal-American*, 2 April 1945.
202. Lewis Nichols, "The Firebrand of Florence," *New York Times*, 23 March 1945.
203. Louis Kronenberger, "Cellini Proves Dull Company," *PM Magazine*, 23 March 1945.
204. Lawrence Perry, *Cincinnati Times Star* (undated clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
205. *Newsweek*, 2 April 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
206. John Chapman, "'Firebrand of Florence' Has Hot Lyrics, Warm Score, Cool Book," *Daily News*, 23 March 1945. Aside from those cited here, at least seven other clippings review *Firebrand* as an operetta or even comic opera: *New York Sun* (Ward

- Morehouse on 23 March 1945, clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center); *Christian Science Monitor* (E. C. Sherborne on 23 March 1945, clipping in Gordon's scrapbook); *Brooklyn Eagle* (Arthur Pollock on 23 March 1945, clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center); *Newark Evening News* (Rowland Field on 23 March 1945, clipping in Gordon's scrapbook); *Home News* (Pincus W. Tell on 23 March 1945, clipping in Gordon's scrapbook); *Billboard* (Bel Francis on 31 March 1945, clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center); and *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold* (Henry Marx on 1 April 1945, clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
207. Chapman, "Hot Lyrics, Warm Score, Cool Book."
208. Irene Kittle in *Cue*, 31 March 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook); *Boston Daily Record*, 26 February 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook).
209. Burton Rascoe, "'The Firebrand of Florence' Casts a Feeble Flame," *New York World-Telegram*, 23 March 1945.
210. S. L. M. Barlow, "In the Theater," *Modern Music* 22 (1945): 276.
211. Robert Garland, "Cellini Set to Music at Alvin," *New York Journal-American*, 22 March 1945.
212. K. H., "The Firebrand of Florence," *Aufbau*, 30 March 1945 (clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center). "Nach 'Lady in the Dark' und 'One Touch of Venus' ist Kurt Weill mit der musikalischen Bearbeitung der alten Komödie 'The Firebrand' von Edwin Justus Mayer zur Linie seiner einaktigen Oper 'Der Zar lässt sich photographieren' zurückgekehrt—nach den Musicals im Broadway-Stil zur Opera Buffa. Das Stück . . . ist eine anmütige Komödie aus dem Florenz der Renaissancezeit. Aber in ihrer musikalischen Bearbeitung, zu der *Ira Gershwin* besonders witzige Gesangstexte geschrieben hat, gehört der Abend dem Komponisten. Lange hat Kurt Weill nicht mehr so sehr in seinen musikalischen Intuitionen geschwelgt. Die Komödie ist fast überall durchkomponiert. . . . Das Bild mit den Vorbereitungen zur Hinrichtung Cellinis am Galgen und später die 'Gerichtsverhandlung in Musik gesetzt' erinnern in ihrer scherzhaften Satire thematisch und musikalisch an die 'Dreigroschenoper'."
213. Nathan, "When There Is Little Left for a Critic to Say."
214. Bob Francis, "The Firebrand of Florence," *Billboard*, 31 March 1945.
215. Kronenberger, "Cellini Proves Dull Company."
216. Rosamond Gilder, "Notions, Foolish and Otherwise: Broadway in Retrospect and Review," *Theatre Arts Magazine* 29 (May 1945): 271–272.
217. "The Medici Is a Laugh," *Newsweek* 25, no. 14 (2 April 1945): 84.
218. Pincus W. Tell, *Home News*, 23 March 1945 (clipping in Gordon's scrapbook); Ward Morehouse, "The Firebrand of Florence Done at Alvin Burdened with Listless Book," *New York Sun*, 23 March 1945.
219. Kronenberger, "Cellini Proves Dull Company."
220. Nichols, "The Firebrand of Florence."
221. Nathan, "When There Is Little Left for a Critic to Say." Benay Venuta was the brassy female singer who played the Amazon Queen Hippolyta in Rodgers and Hart's *By Jupiter* (1942).
222. Rascoe, "Firebrand of Florence Casts a Feeble Flame."
223. Morehouse, "Firebrand of Florence Burdened with Listless Book."
224. Nathan, *Theater Book of the Year 1944–45*, 316.
225. Wilella Waldorf, *New York Post*, 23 March 1945. Other critics who commented on Tyler's vocal problems included Richard P. Cooke of the *Wall Street Journal*, Lawrence Perry of the *Cincinnati Times Star*, Rowland Field of the *Newark Evening News*, and Ethel Colby of the *Journal of Commerce* (24 March 1945), who wrote that Tyler was "inadequate vocally to Weill's difficult music." These last four cited from clippings in Gordon's scrapbook.
226. Gilder, "Notions, Foolish and Otherwise," 272.
227. Irving Hoffman, "Play by Play," *Hollywood Reporter* (clipping at Weill-Lenya Research Center).
228. Similarly, an anonymous critic for the *Daily Worker* (31 March 1945) singled out only Lenya, Cooper, and Guéris. Rowland Field of the *Newark Evening News* thought that she "at least has spirit."
229. Billy Rose, "Pitching Horseshoes." 1947 syndicated column, n.d.
230. The quote is from Chapman, "Hot Lyrics, Warm Score, Cool Book."
231. E. C. Sherborne, "Kurt Weill Musical at Alvin Based on Exploits of Cellini," *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 March 1945.
232. Howard Barnes, *Herald Tribune*, 22 August 1944.
233. Wilella Waldorf, "'Song of Norway' Immortalizes Grieg as the Hero of an Operetta," *New York Post*, 22 August 1944.
234. Weill to Lenya, 1 July 1944, letter 313.
235. John Chapman, "'Central Park' a Souvenir Album of Tunes, Dances, and Tintypes," *New York Daily News*, 29 January 1945.
236. Louis Kronenberger, "A Dull Tour of Central Park," *PM Magazine*, 29 January 1945.
237. Lewis Nichols, "Up in Central Park," *New York Times*, 29 January 1945. As Parks Commissioner, Robert Moses virtually created Greater New York. He was responsible for, among other things, the "landscaping and decorating" of the Van Wyck Expressway.
238. John Chapman, "'On the Town' Is Not as Carefree and Gay as Its Title Hopes It Is," *New York Daily News*, 29 December 1944.
239. Nathan, *Theater Book of the Year 1944–45*, 211.
240. Reinhardt had died a year earlier; *Helen Goes to Troy* was based on an adaptation that he and Korngold had created in Germany.
241. For the generally hostile attitude towards operetta in the *New York Times*, see Bordman, *American Musical Theatre*, passim.
242. Weill to Lenya, 3 July 1944, letter 315.
243. See Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
244. Carl Dahlhaus offers this brilliant description of the dance finale: "Offenbach's inversion of sentiment, with the music proceeding in disregard of the text, symbolizes a tacit acquiescence among swindlers and swindled alike—and here the two are indistinguishable. Namely, all consent to the corruption which holds them in thrall and which they collectively repress by fleeing into the euphoria of the waltz. Above all else, Offenbach knew full well that any music which owes its effect, and its inimitability, to a blend of melancholy and energetic verve will be most irresistible when it rises above tumultuous and seemingly insoluble conflicts with the triumphant indifference of Beauty." Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 228–229.
245. For Weill's depiction of the Prologue, see Weill to Lenya, 4 August 1944, letter 339.
246. This characterization of the *pezzo concertato* is Carl Dahlhaus's, in "Operndramaturgie im 19. Jahrhundert," *Acta musicologica* 59 (1987): 35. The formal divisions of the Offenbach finale are suggested by those codified in Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tofani, 1859; repr. Milan: Rugginenti, 2001).
247. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
248. Kurt Weill, "Korrespondenz über *Die Dreigroschenoper*," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 11 (January 1929): 24; trans. Stephen Hinton, "Correspondence concerning 'Threepenny Opera,'" in *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, ed. Stephen Hinton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 123.
249. Weill to Lenya, 14 July 1944, letter 324.
250. See David Drew's discussion of the bass tritone in *Der Kuhhandel* ("Der Mädchenraub," mm. 211–214) that "denies [Juan and Juanita] the rosy illusions of operetta." This tritone occurs in the same harmonic context as in "Alessandro the Wise." "*Kuhhandel* as a Key Work," 231.
251. Gershwin, *Lyrics on Several Occasions*, 106.
252. Weill had already parodied this convention in earlier works, notably *Royal Palace* and *Lady in the Dark* ("Oh Fabulous One in Your Ivory Tower"). See McClung, "American Dreams," 354, for a discussion of the latter.
253. Cf. Kowalke's characterization of Weill's European works: "Often the tonal implications of Weill's bass lines, permeated by fifths and fourths that the listener tends to hear as tonic-dominant relationships, conflict with the remaining harmonic material. . . . The resulting peculiar ambiguity and duality accounts for the suspended tension of many passages in Weill's scores. The listener cannot easily reconcile the conflicting tonal implications which usually remain unresolved until the final cadence" (Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 305).
254. *Street Scene*, like the finished score for *Firebrand*, has only one borrowing, but it is a substantial one: the orchestral introduction to Act II is from the 1928 incidental music to Lania's *Konjunktur*. *Love Life*, too, has one borrowing, more extensive than the one in *Firebrand*: the "Punch and Judy Ballet" includes the "War Music" from *Die Bürgschaft*.
255. See Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 124–129, for a table of these stock figures.
256. Kowalke has discussed how, already in 1919–21, Weill consistently used the diatonic collection and certain of its subsets, notably the tetrachord popularly known as the "added-sixth chord" and the pentachord known as the pentatonic, one manifestation of which is the Weillian *Urmotiv*. See Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 161–214.
257. Weill to Irving Sablosky, 24 July 1948. Quoted in McClung, "American Dreams," 306; original in Weill/Lenya Archive, series IV.A, box 47/14. What Weill writes here about the "added-sixth" could be said about almost any of the non-triadic cadential sonorities in *Firebrand*, including the seventh of "Life, Love, and Laughter."
258. Weill to Lenya, 1 July 1944, letter 313.

259. Weill to Lenya, 26 July 1944, letter 332.
260. Etymological dictionaries give 1605 as the earliest recorded use of the word *sarabande* in France. See also Rainer Gerstrein, *Die Sarabande: Tanzgattung und musikalischer Topos* (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 1997).
261. In fact, this poetic form had enjoyed something of a revival in nineteenth-century France; an example of its use in an *opéra-bouffé* is “Ce que c’est pourtant que la vie” from *La Vie parisienne*.
262. This section of the essay distills some of the issues broached in the Critical Report, particularly the sections entitled “Statement of Source Valuation and Usage,” “Commentary: General Issues,” and “Source Descriptions.”
263. I discuss No. 9 more fully below. Concerning Nos. 17 and 20, see the Critical Report.
264. All of these cases are discussed in some detail in the Critical Report. For Nos. 9, 21b, and 25–26, see also below.
265. On the close working relationship between Weill and his conductor, see p. 27 above.
266. Sherborne, “Kurt Weill Musical at Alvin.”
267. In the BBC production, a semi-staged concert version, the Duke (George Dvorsky) opted to sing the text of the second chorus to the orchestration of the third.
268. Weill to Gershwin, 25 November 1944.
269. David Drew, too, notes the problem of the first-act finale: “While the freshness of invention, the sheer musicality, of its best passages are quite unmatched in [*One Touch of Venus*], the stylistic and structural unity of music, book, and lyrics is much weaker. Thus the Act I finale, after a lively beginning in classical operetta style, dissolves into a succession of ill-motivated reprises.” In light of the many practical problems, enumerated above, that Weill faced, Drew’s conclusion seems conjectural, however: “What prevented Weill from completing the score as he had begun it was neither the pressure of time nor a failure of invention: it was a growing awareness of limits to the amount of ‘purely’ musical substance he could hope to convey to a Broadway audience in the 1940s” (Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 347).
270. Consider Adorno’s oft-cited remark that “it is difficult to distinguish the American Weill from Cole Porter” [“Vortrupp und Avantgarde: Replik an Horst Kögler,” *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 18: 544]. Richard Taruskin has asserted that in his Broadway works, Weill “adapt[ed] himself to a completely established theatrical code without in any way challenging its conventions” [Review of Kowalke, *A New Orpheus*, in *Kurt Weill Newsletter* 4/2 (fall 1986): 14].
271. All three productions took place during the 1999–2000 season as part of the festivities surrounding the centennial of Weill’s birth and the fiftieth anniversary of his death. In the summer of 1999, the Ohio Light Opera (Wooster, Ohio), a summer repertory company, presented a version that dispensed with the Fontainebleau scene and ended, as in the original play, with the lovers separating. In January 2000, the BBC Symphony, under the direction of Sir Andrew Davis, presented a concert version at London’s Barbican Centre that starred Rodney Gilfry as Cellini, George Dvorsky as the Duke, Felicity Lott as the Duchess, and Lucy Schauer as Emilia. In May 2000, the Radio Sinfonieorchester Wien presented a semi-staged version at the Wiener Konzerthaus. This production, under the direction of Dennis Russell Davies, featured Thomas Hampson as Cellini, Merwin Foard as the Duke, Angela Maria Blasi as Angela, and Jane Henschel as the Duchess.
272. “. . . in Kurt Weills fast vergessener Operette—‘The Firebrand of Florence’—ein hinreißend komisches Werk, das sogar der Volksoper einen Hit bescheren könnte!” (Karlheinz Roschitz, “Ein Wüstling, von dem alle träumen,” *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, 23 May 2000).
273. “Reden wir nicht darüber, dass die, die seine Vertreibung gutgeheiß haben, ihn hinterher beschuldigten, er habe—wie andere jüdische Künstler—die hehre hohe Kunst im amerikanischen Exil verraten, weil er aus Gründen schnöden Gelderwerbs kommerzielle Produkte herstellte. Reden wir von seinem Talent, von den zündenden Songs, den schmachtenden Melodien, den schmissigen Ensembles. Dann sind wir schon mitten beim Thema—der Operette ‘The Firebrand of Florence’, entstanden im letzten Jahr des Zweiten Weltkriegs, geädelt durch die Songtexte Ira Gershwins und versehen mit den witzigen Dialogen Edwin Justus Mayers. . . . Und an einem der Höhepunkte erinnert sich Weill an seine Groschen- und Mahagonny-Zeit.” (Derek Weber, “Ohrwürmer für Adlige,” *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 23 May 2000).
274. “‘The Firebrand of Florence’ von Kurt Weill ist ein für den Musical-Markt konstruiertes Produkt. Die musikalische Qualität des 1944 [*sic*] uraufgeführten Werkes hebt es jedoch weit über das genreübliche Niveau. Weill bedient sich der kommerziellen amerikanischen Musiksprache mit solcher Souveränität, dass man meint, da habe jemand Musik über Musik geschrieben. Das kommerzielle Kalkül wird im Text augenzwinkernd reflektiert: Eine lupenreine Chorfuge kommentiert der Duke of Florence mit den Zeilen ‘Your study in counterpoint is really clever, but oh, I’m afraid it could go on forever.’ Der Text von Ira Gershwin und die Musik von Weill sind voll solcher Selbstbespiegelungen und verweisen auf das Genre Operette und dessen Tradition” (Rainer Elstner, “Weill im Operetten-Stil,” *Wiener Zeitung*, 23 May 2000).
275. Matthew Rye, “Exploding Weill Myths,” *Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 2000.