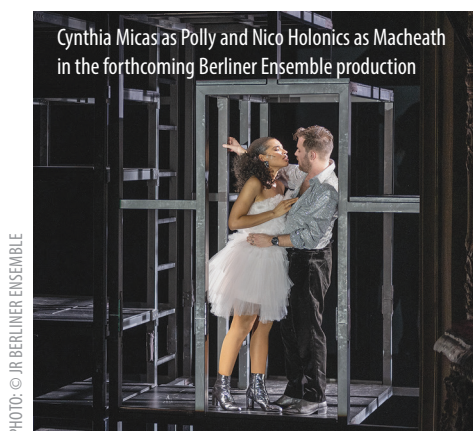


Wide World of Weill



Cynthia Micasas Polly and Nico Holonics as Macheath in the forthcoming Berliner Ensemble production

PHOTO: © JR BERLINER ENSEMBLE

Public performance plans remain unsettled in Germany, but preparations are continuing for the Berliner Ensemble's new production of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, directed by Barrie Kosky and conducted by Adam Benzwi. When permitted, it will open in the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, home of the 1928 world premiere. Stay tuned for updates on kwf.org or berliner-ensemble.de. Meanwhile, Berlin's Komische Oper continues to plan a new production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* next winter after its pandemic-related postponement.

The premiere of *Lady in the Dark* (Weill, Ira Gershwin, Moss Hart) at Vienna Volksoper is tentatively set for 4 December 2021. Matthias Davids, who led a highly acclaimed production at Staatsoper Hannover in 2011, will direct; James Holmes, one of the world's leading authorities on Weill's Broadway musicals, will conduct.

Vienna's Kammerspiele der Josefstadt presented three sold-out performances of *Die Dreigroschenoper* on 3, 5, and 6 June. This first major staging in Austria since Keith Warner's 2016 production at Theater an der Wien sprang from the same creative team that premiered *Lenya Story* in 2017: director Torsten Fischer, music director Christian Frank, and Dramaturg Herbert Schäfer.

One more COVID casualty: Alison Moritz's production of Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, scheduled originally for Summer 2020 at Union Avenue Opera in St. Louis and rescheduled for Summer 2021, will not take place this year. No word on when it might reach the stage.

Miami's New World Symphony plans a return to live performance (with option to stream) in the 2021–22 season, led by Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. Scheduled for 13 November: *Kleine Zaubernachtmusik* under the direction of HK Gruber, paired with the conductor's own composition *Northwind Pictures*, both U.S. premieres. *Kleine Zaubernachtmusik*, conceived and edited by John Baxindine based on Weill's 1922 stage work *Zaubernacht*, was originally set for performance in Miami in April 2020.

Professor Laurence Maslon, known for his broadcasts and podcasts under the title "Broadway to Main Street," turns his attention to Weill and Blitzstein this year. The first of three programs, "Kurt Weill in America" was broadcast on 28 March 2021 on NPR and is still available on npr.org. More to come: "Kurt Weill's Hit Parade" scheduled tentatively for mid-October and a program devoted to Marc Blitzstein's music in late June. Each show features numerous recordings interspersed with Professor Maslon's informed and entertaining commentary.

Kritzerland, the CD label specializing in obscure theater recording reissues, also gives concerts. This year on 28 March they threw a "celebration of the brilliant music of Kurt Weill, along with his equally brilliant lyricists" titled "All the Weill." Hosted by Bruce Kimmel with Richard Allen as music director, the show featured hits and rarities, and the cast included Judy Kaye, Gregory Jbara, Kerry O'Malley, and several others. Kritzerland has also reissued *Kurt Weill Revisited*, originally produced by Ben Bagley, with bonus tracks.

Frankfurt's Ensemble Modern has done great things for Weill and contemporary music in general over the last forty years. On 9 December 2020, it celebrated. The group commissioned a short work, between one and two minutes long, from each of forty different composers—including HK Gruber—on the theme "Winter – Christmas – Ceremony." Then they performed them all on the same program at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, conducted by Ingo Metzmacher. If you wish you had been there, the group took the precaution of recording the entire concert and releasing it as a 2-CD set, available under the title *Beschenkt*.

Horror film lovers take note: "*The Nightmare before Christmas* Live-to-Film Concert," scheduled for 29 October in Los Angeles, will feature Danny Elfman, composer with Tim Burton of the original film's songs, as the voice of Jack Skellington. Elfman noted, "We felt these songs should try to find a kind of timeless place that's not contemporary" and cited Gilbert & Sullivan, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and Weill as influences. Soloists, orchestra, and choir will be led by a conductor with a very long Weill résumé indeed, John Mauceri.

Nominated for the 2021 International Opera Awards: Teatro Real Madrid's *Street Scene*, issued on home video by Bel Air Classiques. It didn't win, but the nomination cements its status as an important recording of a major production and reminds us of another by Teatro Real, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, released in 2011, also on Bel Air Classiques. Fittingly, Teatro Real took home the 2021 award for Opera Company of the year.



You've probably heard the one about "Ella and her fellas" making a "wreck of Mack the Knife," in Fitzgerald's legendary Berlin concert of 1960. But did you know that she returned to Berlin in 1962 for another performance? Hardly anyone did until last year, when Verve Records brought out *The Lost Berlin Tapes* (B0032590-02) from that concert. She scats her way once again through "Mack the Knife," invoking Louis Armstrong and Bobby Darin, and even though she remembers the lyrics this time, she retains the reference to wrecking the song. Must be a Berlin thing.

The Scholars Have Spoken

May 2021 saw two much-anticipated symposia in which Weill played a prominent part:

12–15 May: The StageStruck Conference, organized by Professor Dominic McHugh of the University of Sheffield and sponsored by the Great American Songbook Foundation, focused on so-called Golden Age musicals. With twelve panels in all, plus presentations from the Songbook's archives led by Michael Feinstein, the symposium offered a comprehensive look at an often mentioned but not so well understood era in the history of American musical theater. The academic panels featured a wide variety of interests and approaches; one highlight was a panel on the scholarly editing of musicals with Kim H. Kowalke, Tim Carter, Joel Galand, all of the Editorial Board of the Kurt Weill Edition, along with Mark Clague of the Gershwin Project and Mozart scholar Cliff Eisen of King's College London. In another session, Galand offered a paper on *Love Life*. The industry panel was led by Melissa Errico, star of *One Touch of Venus* at City Center Encores! and headliner of the studio cast recording of the same work on JAY Records; Foundation Board member Victoria Clark also took part. The conference paid homage to Foundation president Kim H. Kowalke for a lifetime of essential scholarship devoted to the American musical theater. Michael Feinstein dedicated his final performance to Kowalke: "A Rhyme for Angela" from *The Firebrand of Florence*.

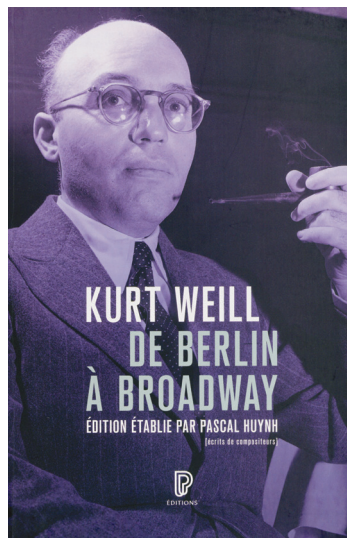
20–21 May: "Music, Cinema, and Modernism. The Works and Heritage of Kurt Weill between Europe and America" at the University of Turin featured a variety of presentations on Weill with an emphasis on his relationship with film music. Another all-star lineup of Weill experts participated, with keynote addresses from Stephen Hinton of Stanford and Nils Grosch of the University of Salzburg. Four extensive sessions packed into two days boasted a who's who of Weill authorities, including Kowalke and a number of younger scholars making their names in the field, such as Naomi Graber (University of Georgia) and Rebecca Schmid (Humboldt-University, Berlin).

At a time when the academic world, like everything else, has turned upside down and professors labor to find new methods of presenting and discussing their work, two substantial conferences in a single week is an auspicious omen for Weill scholarship, as younger and more experienced scholars meet and compare notes. Clearly, Weill's position in musicology is secure, with a rising generation already in place.

Land of Oz

Melbourne, Australia becomes a Weill hotbed later this year, as two separate companies put on full-tilt Weill productions. Melbourne Opera, which has already resumed live performance, will bring *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* to the boards (dates to be announced), while Red Line Productions produces a double bill of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (fifteen-player version) and *Mahagonny Songspiel* at the Old Fitz Theatre, due to open on 15 December. As we await further details, we can savor a note from Red Line's director Constantine Costi: "The Old Fitz has always been a space where anything is possible, and for the first time it will be home to a rowdy operatic spectacle. We cannot wait."

Good Year for Weill Books

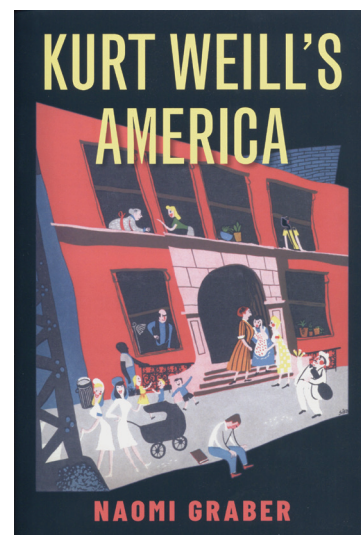


2021 is not even half over, and two new books devoted to Weill have already appeared:

Kurt Weill de Berlin à Broadway, edited by Pascal Huynh (Paris, Cité de la Musique) represents a revised and expanded version of a collection of Weill's writings published by Plume in 1993, also prepared by Huynh. This new edition of selected articles and interviews begins with Weill's first published article (on Richard Strauss), from 1924, and ends with a radio inter-

view given in January 1950, shortly before his death. Over 100 of Weill's texts are presented in chronological order, translated into French by Huynh and others.

Kurt Weill's America by Naomi Graber (Oxford University Press) is the first book-length monograph on Weill published in English in several years. The author examines Weill's entire American career through a series of thematic lenses: immigration, compositional style, his conception of American history and culture, gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity. The wide-ranging study builds on the work of earlier scholars and attempts to forge new understandings of Weill's American career, which has long since shed its reputation as an unfortunate appendix to his European work and proven to repay scholarly investigation.



If that's not enough for you, we can mention two more forthcoming books: Rebecca Schmid's *Weill, Blitzstein and Bernstein: A Study of Influence* (Academica Press), due out shortly; and a monograph by Emily MacGregor projected to appear in 2022, *The Symphony in 1933* (Cambridge University Press), which will examine Weill's *Fantaisie Symphonique* (Symphony No. 2) and Florence Price's *Symphony in E Minor*. MacGregor warmed up for her final sprint in February with a Zoom presentation on both symphonies under the auspices of City University, London.

Signature Recitals at Los Angeles Opera

LA Opera has done Weill fans a big favor with its ongoing series of streamed vocal recitals by some of the most exciting names in the field. Two, actually. Mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, one of America's greatest contributions to the opera stage of her generation, offers an all-Weill program; soprano Julia Bullock, named "Artist of the Year: Agent of Change" for 2021 by Musical America, presents a varied program of *Lieder* and songs from composers white and Black, living and dead, including four songs by Weill. Both programs from the Signature Recital Series stream until 1 July.

Graham's program includes "I'm a Stranger here Myself," "Lonely House," and "September Song." She describes it as a collection of her favorite Weill songs, and goes on to say, "The music of Kurt Weill has such variety of mood, expression, and story! Our selections encompass his compositional years from 1928 to the year of his death, 1950. The journey through this music is varied and fascinating, with some familiar tunes as well as some lesser-known ones."

Bullock closes the first half of her recital with a set of four Weill numbers: "Speak Low," "Denn wie man sich bettet," "Lost in the Stars," and "Wie lange noch?." She frames the set as follows: "Kurt Weill was one of those composers who could balance the dichotomies of life—love and loss, bitterness and sweetness, cynicism and humor—in a way that was biting and brilliant. Weill's music and stories always spoke to the times in which he was living, but what makes them classics, and what makes them timeless, is that they continue to speak to us in this moment."



Cabaret as You've Never Seen It

You don't have to be a Lotte Lenya fan to lament the fact that there is no surviving video recording of *Cabaret*, the epoch-making 1966 Broadway show that helped change the course of the American musical. The curator of the Theatre Division of the New York Public Library, Doug Reside, decided to do something about it. Drawing on the vast archive of stage photos housed there, Reside grouped together images of specific scenes or musical numbers and "stitched" them together using Google Photos, creating animations that approximate sequences (with no sound) from the original production. Two of Lenya's numbers, "So What" and "It Couldn't Please Me More" are reproduced in part. The complete results are on-line here: <https://tinyurl.com/yaxyhtk9>



PHOTO: FRIEDMAN-ABELES

City Center Keeps the Weill Fires Burning

Like most performing venues, City Center has not been able to present live programming this season, but they have made good use of other avenues. For the 2020 Gala on 9 December, Audra McDonald, accompanied by 2021 Lotte Lenya Competition judge Andy Einhorn, gave a program of songs filmed live on City Center's stage and streamed to ticket-buyers. "An Evening with Audra McDonald" included Weill and Maxwell Anderson's "It Never Was You." Part of her performance remains available on-line: <https://tinyurl.com/52zjnp69>

The Encores! series continues to be represented by a series of videos documenting past and planned productions under the title "Encores! Inside the Revival." The four entries so far include Weill and Lerner's *Love Life*, originally scheduled for performance in 2020. The fifteen-minute film reveals several video clips from rehearsals—tantalizing footage of Kate Baldwin and Brian Stokes Mitchell collaborating on "Here I'll Stay," a male quartet singing "Economics"—and interviews with director Victoria Clark, musical director Rob Berman, and former Artistic Director Jack Viertel that guide viewers through the challenges of the show and explain how they intended to address them. Clark noted, "The collaboration between Jack, Rob, myself, and our choreographer JoAnn Hunter was so much fun, like solving a giant puzzle."

New Encores! Artistic Director Lear deBessonet opens the video by saying, "We look forward to the day [*Love Life*] will be on our stages, soon." While you're waiting, stream it: <https://tinyurl.com/3uummy35v>

New Beginning for Happy End

Winnie Böwe has enjoyed a long career in German theater, and she has quite a history with Weill, too. Among a striking variety of roles, she has played Liza Elliott (*Lady in the Dark*) and Molly Grant (*One Touch of Venus*) in successful German stage productions; as a young performer she sang Lucy in the world premiere recording of the critical edition of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Her latest Weill venture: "Happy End für Eilige" (Happy End in a Hurry), a condensed version of the Weill-Brecht-Hauptmann play with music from 1929. Böwe's original plan, scuttled by the pandemic, called for live performance, but she adjusted on the fly and filmed the scenes in various locations in Berlin. While the basic plot is relayed, the point is the songs, which Böwe performs with accordionist Felix Kroll. The adaptation premiered in March at this year's Brecht Festival in Augsburg.

Gruber Lends a Baton

One of Weill's most steadfast international advocates, HK Gruber, will add one more feather to his illustrious cap when he makes another world-premiere Weill recording—the recently completed Kurt Weill Edition scores of the *Symphony in einem Satz* (Symphony No. 1) and *Fantaisie symphonique* (Symphony No. 2). The recording is due to come out on BIS Records. Gruber's most recent effort included world premiere recordings of the song cycle *Chansons des quais* and the critical edition of *Mahagonny Songspiel* (also Kurt Weill Edition) with Ensemble Modern. The latest essential addition to the discography follows on a streamed concert of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra on 9 April, in which Gruber conducted both symphonies along with music from *Der Silbersee*; he will lead the SCO in the new recordings. The preparation of rigorously edited versions of both works, undertaken by James Holmes and Elmar Juchem, marks a transition and an opportunity, and who better than Gruber to lead us into the future of Weill's symphonic music?

"Lonely House" Makes the List

Staff members at PBS Newshour asked a group of fifteen artists and authors each to nominate a song that they depended on to get through 2020 and presented the results last December. Then they decided to throw it open to all readers and viewers and presented a list of 101 "songs that you turned to in 2020." You would expect a wide range of music, and you would be right, but would you expect Weill to make the list? He did, checking in at no. 11 with "Lonely House" from *Street Scene* (lyrics by Langston Hughes). Contributor Glenn Herbert of Burlington, Ontario commented, "If the pandemic needed an anthem, this would be at the top of the list. 'Funny with so many neighbors / How lonely it can be.' Yup."

Just in Times

Weill appears regularly in the *New York Times*, even seventy years after his death. On 28 March, he received a full-page plug from Joshua Barone, senior staff editor on the Culture desk, who chronicled several major performances from the 2020–21 season in order to "trace an unbroken line from his earliest works, as a teenager, to his final projects for the American stage." Barone's survey identifies several persistent qualities of Weill's music and mind, citing in particular the "hallmarks" of Weill's transitional period between his flight from Germany and emigration to the U.S. in 1935—"high standards for collaborative partners, a knack for internalizing diverse styles, an ear for unforgettable melodies"—that paid off handsomely on Broadway. Read the full article: <https://tinyurl.com/rjee5x5e>



HK Gruber conducts the Swedish Chamber Orchestra

PHOTO: SWEDISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

2021 Grant Recipients

Professional Performance

Atlanta Opera, Atlanta, GA. *The Threepenny Opera* (concert version).

Blomst!/Arte Ensemble, Stuttgart, Germany. *Zaubernacht*.

Brigantes Symphony, Sheffield, U.K. *Symphonic Nocturne from Lady in the Dark*.

Melbourne Opera, Melbourne, Australia. *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

Red Line Productions, Melbourne, Australia. *The Seven Deadly Sins* (version for fifteen players), *Mahagonny Songspiel*.

Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy. *Die sieben Todsünden, Mahagonny Songspiel*.

College/University Performance

Florentine Opera Company (Young Artist Program), Madison, WI. *Mahagonny Songspiel*.

Orchestra of the Music Makers, Singapore. *Symphony No. 2*.

Phoenix Youth Symphony, Phoenix, AZ. *Symphony No. 2*.

Sydney Conservatorium, Sydney, Australia. *Down in the Valley*.

Publication Assistance

Rebecca Schmid, Berlin, Germany.

Support of publication of *Weill, Blitzstein and Bernstein: a Study of Influence*.

Media

Broadway to Main Street, WLIW 88.3 FM: Three episodes hosted by Laurence Maslon: "Kurt Weill in America," "Marc Blitzstein" and "Kurt Weill's Hit Parade."



Sponsored Artist

Even in a time of devastation across the performing arts landscape, the Foundation is keeping up a longstanding tradition of sponsoring a Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Young Artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. This year's recipient, Helen Zhibing Huang (pictured left), is a finalist in this year's Lotte Lenya Competition. She will sing Pamina in live, in-person, outdoor performances of a scaled-down version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* this summer and participate in Glimmerglass's Young Artists Program.

Naomi André Joins Board of Trustees

In January, the Foundation welcomed a new trustee, Professor Naomi André of the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on opera and issues surrounding gender, voice, and race; her latest book, *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement*, has drawn attention well beyond academia. She is now Scholar-in-Residence at Seattle Opera, the first to hold that position. Daughter of a trained soprano, young Naomi loved opera before she knew what it was. Now a leading scholar in the field, she has done much to diversify a traditionally white enclave. Her recent projects include the *Afro-Diasporic Opera Forum*, a three-day event focusing on operas composed in the past five years organized with the International Contemporary Ensemble; *Belonging in Opera*, a two-day symposium sponsored by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Washington University, St. Louis; and two panels sponsored by the Black Opera Research Network (BORN). Foundation President Kim H. Kowalke notes, “We are thrilled to add Naomi’s expertise, experience, and enthusiasm to the Board. She is already motivating all sorts of thinking about how the Foundation’s many endeavors can be more inclusive, welcoming, and diverse.”

Past LLC Winners On Stage

Winners of previous Competitions are working again! A selection of highlights:



Lauren Michelle at La Scala

Lauren Michelle (1st Prize, 2015) starred as Anna II and Jessie with Kate Lindsey in a double bill of *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Mahagonny Songspiel* conducted by Ricardo Chailly at Teatro alla Scala, which streamed 18–25 March (see p. 12).

John Brancy (\$15,000 Winner, 2018) and pianist Peter Dugan will be releasing their new album *The Journey Home: Live from the Kennedy Center* (available 28 May), a program inspired by the hundredth anniversary of the end of World War I. The sold-out concert originally took place in 2018.

Lucas Meachem (Lys Symonette Award, 2002) sang the title role in *The Barber of Seville* at San Francisco Opera (24 April – 15 May), with

a twist—with War Memorial Opera House closed due to the pandemic, the performance was staged as an outdoor drive-in. The audience applauded the end of the piece by honking their horns.

Taylor-Alexis DuPont (2021 Finalist) appeared in Florentine Opera’s production of *Mahagonny Songspiel*, 7 May (streamed until 1 June).

Zachary James (2nd Prize, 2009) stars as Cervantes/Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha* at Opera Saratoga, 8–10 July.

Jeremy Weiss (Carolyn Weber Award, 2019) co-created and starred in *The Wandering* (15 April – 15 May), an interactive theatrical performance inspired by the music of Franz Schubert. The production used a combination of live performance, online performance, and tasks assigned to audience members to create a multi-day immersive experience.

Megan Marino (3rd Prize, 2012) and **Jasmine Habersham** (Special Award, 2017) starred as Carmen and Micaëla in Atlanta Opera’s production of *Carmen*, 23 April – 2 May.

Matthew Grills (1st Prize, 2012) will perform as Don Ramiro in Nashville Opera’s *Cinderella*. The production, described as “Opera meets Beach Blanket Bingo!” will be staged in an outdoor beach amphitheater on 12 June.

2021 Lotte Lenya Competition

This year’s applicant pool of 500—of whom 30% identified as non-white and 21.4% come from outside the U.S. (29 countries in all)—shattered all previous records. Thirty-one semifinalists emerged from that remarkable group and submitted the next round of audition videos in April, marking the first time semifinalists have not auditioned live. Coaching sessions for the semifinals took place over Zoom with coach-adjudicators Lisa Vroman, a Competition stalwart who has judged four semifinals; and former prize-winners Zachary James and Analisa Leaming (see pp. 6–7), the first ever to serve as judges. They selected fifteen finalists—and, for the first time, two alternate finalists—who will perform live and in person on 28 August at the Riverside Theater in New York City. Finalists will compete for the usual prizes and awards with one addition this year, the Rebecca Luker Award for outstanding performance of a selection from the Golden Age of American musical theater (see p. 3). Furthermore, in recognition of the exceptional talent on display this year, and of the ongoing financial difficulties performers continue to face in the current environment, the Foundation has doubled awards given to all semifinalists (from \$500 to \$1000) and finalists (from \$1000 to \$2000). The Competition Finals will be streamed live on 28 August from kwf.org, and available free and on demand on OperaVision (www.operavision.eu) beginning 10 September. Check kwf.org/llc regularly for more details.

2021 Lotte Lenya Competition Finalists

Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod (Israel, 33)
 Max Chernin, (USA, 31)
 Ty Chiko (Bahamas, 32)
 Monica Dewey (USA, 31)
 Taylor-Alexis DuPont (USA, 30)
 Charles Eaton (USA, 30)
 Nicole Fernandez-Coffaro (USA, 28)
 Kaden Forsberg (Canada, 29)
 Katrina Galka (USA, 31)
 Rebekah Howell (USA, 29)
 Helen Zhibing Huang (China, 31)
 Victoria Okafor (USA, 25)
 Andrew Polec (USA, 32)
 Katherine Riddle (USA, 30)
 Kaileigh Riess (USA, 26)

Alternate Finalists

Julie Benko (USA, 32)
 Sacha Smith (Canada, 26)

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New York, NY 10003-1106

USA



WE SAVED YOU A SEAT...

Finals Judges:
Andy Einhorn
Victoria Clark
Mary Beth Peil

Lotte Lenya
LOTTE LENYA COMPETITION

A Program of The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

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Competition Finals broadcast
direct from New York City!
Two ways to watch:

28 August
Livestream on KWF.org

10 September
Premiere on OperaVision.eu