

Wide World of Weill



Cécile McLorin Salvant

Cécile McLorin Salvant, one of the world's most acclaimed jazz singers, took a risk a few years ago by recording Mrs. Murrant's aria, "Somehow I Never Could Believe" from *Street Scene* (not exactly a standard), on her Grammy winner, *Dreams and Daggers*. At the EFG London Jazz Festival in November, McLorin Salvant went back in time to discover two songs from *The Threepenny Opera*, "Pirate Jenny" and "Barbara-Song." How many singers can you name who have performed all three numbers successfully? The Arts Desk noted, "With its dramatic imagery of bodies piling high, the chilling revenge fantasy 'Pirate Jenny' from *The Threepenny Opera* was a standout."

Berlin's Renaissance-Theater joins this season's Weill-Brecht-Hauptmann parade with a production of *Happy End* scheduled for spring 2022. The company will present the world premiere of the score and libretto as published in the Kurt Weill Edition. Dates and cast to be announced.

The new pops program composed of music from the Roaring Twenties, "Prohibition," returns to concert halls this season with two performances in May 2022. Both the New Bedford Symphony and the Nashville Symphony will present the program, which includes "Alabama-Song" and "Mack the Knife."

Acclaimed Danish pop singer Oh Land will make a role debut in *Die sieben Todsünden* at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. The production, opening on 15 May 2022, is paired with the world premiere of Louise Alenius's *Manualen*, with both conducted by Robert Houssart and directed by Patrick Kinmonth, a remarkably versatile artist with extensive credits as a director and designer who has also made his mark as a painter and curator.

The instrumental suite *Kleine Zauber-nachtmusik*, derived by John Baxindine from Weill's first stage work *Zauber-nacht* (1922), passed another milestone on 13 November 2021 with its U.S. premiere in Miami Beach. Guest conductor HK Gruber led the New World Symphony in a program that also included music by Jonathan Bailey Holland, Steve Reich, and Gruber himself. First performed in Germany in 2018, the suite deploys the same chamber ensemble as the original children's pantomime. One reviewer noted, "Weill's inventive and surprising creation was given a lucid performance that mixed instrumental brilliance and subtlety in equal measure."



The Kammerspiele der Josefstadt production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (see review on p. 13) is out on home video! The staging takes its place in a long series of the company's offerings as no. 55 in Edition Josefstadt Theater. The PAL DVD (region code 0) appears on the Hoanzl label; catalogue number H-1669.

Weill and Blitzstein each composed one work on the theme of aviation: *Der Lindberghflug* (1929) and the Airborne Symphony (1946), respectively. On 9 and 10 April 2022, the adventurous Orchestra Miami, conducted by Elaine Rinaldi, will perform both on the same bill in honor of the ninety-fifth anniversary of the founding of the now-defunct airline Pan Am. Wait until you hear about the venue: a Coast Guard airplane hangar, built in 1932, complete with airplanes. Three cheers for imaginative programming!

Jazz singer Wyatt Michael performed "Mack the Knife" on the 4 October blind auditions for NBC's *The Voice*. His rendition harked back to the mid-twentieth century crooners who did so much to make the song a worldwide hit, and it won over two of the four judges, Kelly Clarkson and Ariana Grande. Grande raved, "You have a time capsule in your throat" and praised Michael's "perfect balance between paying homage to that era and making [the song] your own." Clarkson simply noted his "timeless sound," and fellow judge Blake Shelton praised Michael's choice and his mastery of the vocal style. Despite Grande's enthusiasm, Michael chose Clarkson as his coach for succeeding rounds. The 25-year-old out of Fredericksburg, VA was eliminated by Holly Forbes in a battle round on 18 October.

The indefatigable Laurence Maslon has done it again with another radio program devoted to Weill. "Kurt Weill's Hit Parade" aired on 24 October 2021, joining shows from earlier in 2021 that chronicled the careers of Weill and Blitzstein. All three may be heard on npr.org as part of Maslon's podcast series, "Broadway to Main Street."

Portuguese baritone Ricardo Panella overcame numerous pandemic obstacles to release a brand-new all-Weill recording earlier this year, available as a CD on Artway Records and on Spotify and iTunes. *Berlin im Licht: A Kurt Weill Songbook* is home to a varied lineup: several selections from *The Unknown Kurt Weill*, all four of Weill's settings of Walt Whitman, and a handful of Broadway standards. Fellow vocalists Alberto Sousa and Susana Gaspar lend support; pianist Nuno Vieira de Almeida provides accompaniment throughout.



Bullock and Weill: Staying Power

2021 *Musical America* Artist of the Year soprano Julia Bullock has woven Weill into a number of her recital programs recently. Her selection of four songs performed consecutively—"Speak Low," "Denn wie man sich bettet," "Lost in the Stars," and "Wie lange noch?"—has lit up several of Bullock's concerts. On 13 July in Aspen, Bullock switched things up a bit, replacing "Speak Low" with "The Princess of Pure Delight," which she placed at the end of the sequence. She repeated the same combination at Wigmore Hall in London on 29 November.

Bullock's commentary on "Wie lange noch?" demonstrates Weill's continuing vitality and relevance as a social critic: "It was intended to be a sort of coded message to people back in Germany ... when I sing this song almost 80 years later, I can't deliver it with any sort of code ... because the reality is we continue to live through various crises that are frustrating and devastating, and none of us know for sure when there will be resolution."

LoveMusik Remembered

The concert series "Even If It Only Runs a Minute" at Studio 54 looks back fondly at underappreciated Broadway musicals. On 18 October (Lenya's birthday), the show conjured up musicals produced by Harold Prince that were not mega-hits, a small number alongside the lengthy roster of the ones that were. The program featured one of Prince's last shows, *LoveMusik* (2007), based on the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya and brimming with Weill's songs. Fittingly, original cast member Erik Liberman was on hand to help celebrate, performing "September Song" with a twist; as he described it, "the context being that I was Hal singing to young me about why he felt it was important to give back to the younger generation while he could." Liberman took Second Prize in the 2005 Lotte Lenya Competition, for which Prince served as a judge; less than two years later Liberman was invited to join the *LoveMusik* cast. Prince said of Liberman, "Erik is the real deal. Once you've seen him, you can't forget him."

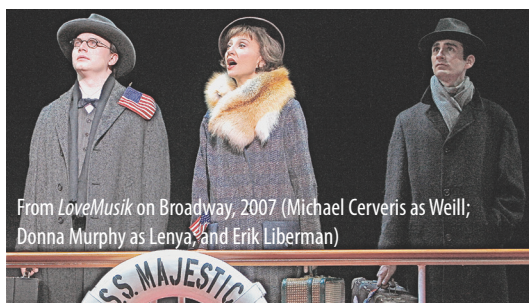


PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG

London Doings

London has an all-Weill program to look forward to at the Barbican on 28 April featuring mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená and the London Symphony conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. Or it can get a preview on 27 April, when *Die sieben Todsünden* will be the lone work on a "Half Six Fix" program, part of a series of informal concerts intended for younger audiences. The following evening, Kožená will take the stage again for another go at *Die sieben Todsünden*; this time the orchestra will add its share with the perennial crowd-pleaser *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* and *Vom Tod im Wald*, Weill's setting for bass and winds of one of Brecht's most forbidding poems. The LSO will repeat the program in Cologne (30 April) and Essen (2 May). The orchestra plans to release a complete recording of the concert on its own label.

Down Under but Not Out

Two productions in Australia slated for the fall of 2021 have been postponed, but they are now on the calendar for April and May 2022.

Melbourne Opera's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, victim of several pandemic postponements, will have its day at last with three performances 29 April, 3 May, and 5 May 2022, directed by Suzanne Chaundy and conducted by Peter Tregear. The opera will be performed in the English version of Jeremy Sams, premiered at London's Royal Opera House in 2015.

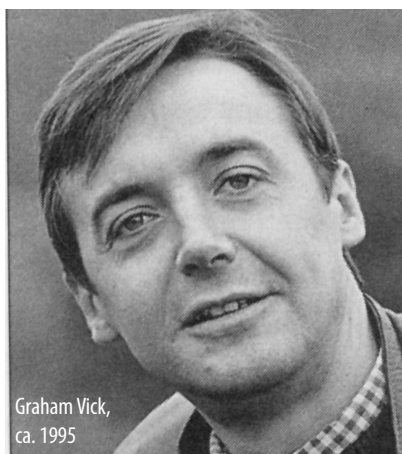
Red Line Productions in Woolloomooloo (near Sydney) will present its long-planned double bill of *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Die sieben Todsünden* in April and May 2022. Audiences will hear the *Todsünden* in the scoring for fifteen players by HK Gruber and Christian Muthspiel. Director Constantine Costi and adaptor Tasnim Hossain call it a "tap dance on the edge of the world" and promise "operatic cantata, dance, and theatrical mayhem." Cast to be announced.

Meanwhile, Victorian Opera in Melbourne remains on schedule with its staging of *Happy End* set for spring 2022, meaning that locals will receive a double dose of Weimar Weill next spring. Company Artistic Director Richard Mills sees it as the first of a three-season series of Weill productions that will also include *Der Silbersee* and a third work to be determined.

Lady in the Dark Comes Home

Vienna, once Sigmund Freud's stronghold, has its chance to enjoy the first musical based on psychoanalysis. The legendary Volksoper Wien planned to open *Lady in the Dark* on 13 December 2021 (subject to COVID restrictions) with a run in repertory through 23 January 2022. The team at the helm could not be more accomplished. Matthias Davids is not only one of Europe's finest directors of American musical theater, he is an old hand at the Weill-Gershwin-Hart show, having directed a landmark production in Hannover ten years ago. Musical director James Holmes has been and remains one of the world's leading authorities on Weill's music for the stage; his résumé dates back to the nineties with an epoch-making production of *Street Scene* (released on home video) and includes *One Touch of Venus*, *Love Life*, *Der Kuhhandel*, *Der Silbersee*, *Die sieben Todsünden*, and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (it is something of a surprise to learn that this will be his first crack at *Lady*). Holmes will work with Julius Rudel/Kurt Weill Conducting Fellow Davide Levi, an emerging Italian conductor who has already built an enviable record at opera houses across Europe (see p. 3).

Lady in the Dark will be performed entirely in Roman Hinze's German translation, now making its third appearance—the first in Austria—after presentations in Hannover (2011) and Mainz (2014). Hinze has also prepared acclaimed translations of *The Firebrand of Florence* and *One Touch of Venus*; the latter may be heard on the Dresden Staatsoperette's cast recording.



In memoriam

Several artists with Weill or Blitzstein connections have passed on during the last several months:

Graham Vick (1953–2021), opera director. Vick was noted not only for imaginative stagings, but for a strong egalitarian streak as well. He often cast community members

as supers in his productions and eschewed VIP receptions and high-priced tickets in the Birmingham Opera Company, which he ran. Vick directed *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* first at Maggio Musicale in Florence (1990); the production received a major revival in 1995 at the Opéra national de Paris, the first time the work had been performed there. In 2015, he returned to *Aufstieg* with a new production in Rome, revived the following year in Copenhagen. The *Guardian* called the 1990 staging “a huge success with both audience and Italian critics,” praising his “Felliniesque” approach.

Edward Asner (1929–2021), actor. Remembered primarily for his work on television (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Lou Grant*), Asner got his start in the theater in the same place as so many other stars: *The Threepenny Opera* off-Broadway at the Theater de Lys. Signed in 1956 to play a member of Macheath’s gang, he soon was promoted to Mr. Peachum, a part he held onto for nearly three years in a production noted for its revolving-door cast.

Bettina Jonic (1938–2021), opera singer. Like many American-born singers, Jonic pursued a singing and acting career in Europe. She starred in the U.K. premiere of *Happy End* at the Edinburgh Festival in 1964 and stayed in the cast when the production moved to London’s Royal Court Theatre the following year. Later she sang Jenny in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Her discography includes two albums, *The Bitter Mirror* and *Brecht with Music*, that featured Weill. An important voice on the U.K. Weill scene throughout the 1960s.

Micki Grant (1929–2021), actor. Best remembered today as the first woman to write book, music, and lyrics of a Broadway show, *Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope*, and as songwriter for *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God*, Grant broke many barriers in a long career. (She was the first Black actor with an extended run in a soap opera, for example.) Her early work included a brush with Blitzstein; as Ella Hammer, she sang the powerful labor anthem “Joe Worker” in the 1964 Theatre Four production of *The Cradle Will Rock*, appearing on the cast recording and a performance of numbers from the show on the television program *Camera Three*, still available on the Foundation’s YouTube channel.

In memoriam: Anna Krebs

Anna Krebs (1921–2021): In 1956, Anna Krebs, then working for Philips Records, met Lotte Lenya, then recording for Philips Records. The resulting friendship lasted until the end of Lenya’s life. The two never missed a chance to meet when Lenya visited Europe, and Krebs visited Lenya often in the U.S. Her help and support meant a great deal to Lenya, and after her death, Krebs continued to assist the Foundation with business in Germany. She rarely failed to attend a major Weill production there—or to send a program along with her report—and she provided needed support in the early days of the Kurt Weill Fest Dessau. We will miss her even as we admire a life well lived.

Gently Down the Stream

The pandemic has had mostly dire effects on the performing arts, and the long-range impact is still in doubt, but audiences have benefited from widespread streaming, as many performing organizations have brought out video of performances old and new, live and recorded. At the moment, a number of Weill-centered programs are available free of charge on-line:

- The 2021 Lotte Lenya Competition Finals on operavision.eu through 10 March 2022. This edited version includes the complete fifteen-minute program of each finalist; the Foundation’s tribute to the late Rebecca Luker, who served six times as a Competition judge; and the awards presentation.
<https://tinyurl.com/25bf8w8>
- The *Love Life* episode of “Inside the Revival” explores the March 2020 City Center Encores! production postponed by the pandemic. Available indefinitely.
<https://tinyurl.com/u45fjsuu>
- The first offering of the Berlin Philharmonic’s “Close-Up” series introduces viewers to Weill’s *Symphonie in einem Satz* (Symphony No. 1, sometimes known as “Berliner Sinfonie”) after the orchestra streamed a complete performance in February 2021. The film analyzes the work with help from conductor Kirill Petrenko, host Ute Frevert, orchestra musicians, and community members. In German with English subtitles; available indefinitely.
<https://tinyurl.com/8dxv4nj>
- Another Berlin Philharmonic performance: *Zaubernacht*, Weill’s first stage work, first streamed live in June 2021, available until June 2022.
<https://tinyurl.com/4z4u65s2>
- Miami’s New World Symphony has begun streaming its program from 13 November featuring the U.S. premiere of *Kleine Zaubernachtmusik* conducted by HK Gruber (see p. 15).
- The May 2021 symposium held in Turin, “Music, Cinema, and Modernism. The Works and Heritage of Kurt Weill between Europe and America,” remains available for streaming. The conference featured several Weill luminaries, including Naomi Graber, Nils Grosch, and Stephen Hinton.
<https://tinyurl.com/ywzfztfun>

Impressive Pressings

Live performance is only now beginning to recover from the effects of the pandemic, but recordings have moved right along, as a number of new releases featuring Weill's music make clear:

Baritone Lucas Meachem and pianist Irina Meachem have released their first recital album, *Shall We Gather* (Rubicon RCD1071), a collection of American songs. Lucas, who took the Lys Symonette Award in the 2002 Lotte Lenya Competition, included in the program Weill's setting of Walt Whitman's "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

Spanish pop singer Javier Botella, who follows in the footsteps of the great American crooners, released *It Never Was You*, featuring music of Gershwin, Porter, and Weill, on the Actúa label. Working with keyboardist Albert Sanz, Botella cut three Weill tracks: the title song, "Lost in the Stars," and "My Ship."

In a disc devoted to Jewish composers forced to flee from Germany, mezzo-soprano Constance Heller, who appears regularly on Germany's opera stages, included "Shir ha-Emek," one of Weill's two *Folksongs of the New Palestine*. Accompanied by pianist Gerold Huber, Heller sings the song in German, translated from the original Hebrew. The album, *Fantasie von Übermorgen: Lieder im Exil*, was issued on the Solo Musica label (SM 356).

River Songs (Centaur Records CRC 3853) is the latest from Steven Kimbrough, whom long-time Weill fans will recognize from his all-Weill CD's released in 1988 and 1993. Kimbrough revisits a Weill rarity, "River Chanty" from the never-completed musical version of *Huckleberry Finn*, which he first recorded over thirty years ago on *Kurt Weill: This Is the Life*.

In 2017, Swedish tenor Torsten Mossberg released an all-Weill 2-CD set, *Kurt Weill: A Portrait from Berlin to New York*. This year he revisits Weill in his latest effort, *Songs to Harp from the Old and New World* (Sterling CDA 1845-2), featuring Weill, Strauss, and Gershwin. Four Weill songs are arranged for voice and harp: "O Captain! My Captain!," "Dirge for Two Veterans," "Es regnet," and "My Ship."

Last but not least: two new jazz discs. Israeli jazz pianist Roy Mor leads a trio in a spirited rendering of "My Ship" on his album *After the Real Thing* (Ubuntu Music UBU0081). Japanese trumpeter and bandleader Yokoo Shojiro made room for two Weill numbers, "Speak Low" and "My Ship," on his latest, *Spring Has Gone* (Navy Blue Music NBMJ-002).



Has It Really Been 30 Years?

The 2021 Kurt Weill Fest Dessau split into two parts for the first time ever, thanks to the pandemic: five concerts in late February and early March followed by about twenty-five events towards the end of summer, mostly open-air performances. Pianist Frank Dupree, the Artist in Residence, figured prominently in both parts of the Fest, headlining the kickoff concert in February and returning in August for several more engagements. Star musician Christopher von Deylen (who tours as "Schiller") and renowned actor Axel Prahll also made appearances. The summer session drew more than 6,000 on-site spectators, with many more watching via stream around the world.

The thirtieth Kurt Weill Fest, scheduled for 25 February through 13 March 2022, will look more like the first twenty-eight, with thirty-five events already planned under the title "Spiegel der Zeit" (mirror of time). Singer Katharine Mehrling, who performs Weill regularly with Barrie Kosky as pianist, will serve as

Artist in Residence; she takes the stage for a rendition of *Die sieben Todsünden* with Ensemble Amarcord and the Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau for the opening concert. Frank Dupree and the dance artists Flying Steps will also appear. Will summer performances return this year? Not yet clear, according to Intendant Gerhard Kämpfe: "We've acquired a taste for them, but they are expensive. We're still discussing it." Find more details as they emerge at kurt-weill-fest.de.

Unconventional Concerto

Erin Keefe, concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra, has become a dedicated advocate of Weill's Concerto for Violin. She performed it for the first time in 2017 in Turku, Finland; the next season, she stepped out of the orchestra to play the solo part in Minneapolis. Keefe has acknowledged that she hadn't even heard of Weill's Concerto when she began to learn it for the 2017 performance, but she soon got excited about it: "It wasn't like anything I'd ever played before." She singles out the three-part middle movement as especially remarkable, with the Notturmo, an extended duet of solo violin and xylophone, leading to the cadenza and its "million trillion notes."

The Minnesota Orchestra closed out its season in June 2021 with a pairing of the Concerto and a new work, *Overture*, composed by Music Director (and Keefe's husband) Osmo Vänskä as a companion piece. Composer/conductor and violinist alike won plaudits from the local press for adventurous programming brilliantly executed. Keefe has joined the ranks of prominent violinists who have recently performed Weill's Concerto—James Ehnes, Gordan Nikolić, John Storgårds, and Carolin Widmann, to name a few—taking their place alongside stalwarts such as Kolja Blacher, Ernst Kovacic, and Christian Tetzlaff.

All's Weill That Ends Well: The 2021 Lotte Lenya Competition

by Michael Lasser

I've been attending the finals of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music's Lotte Lenya Competition at the Eastman School of Music for years—at least since 2007. Thanks to the pandemic, though, I had to watch the finals on-line this year. It'll do. In fact, it'll do fine. Like so many other fans of the Competition, I watched the live stream on 28 August from the beautiful Riverside Church on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. From three hundred miles away, I could still enjoy those glorious voices, that range of repertoire, and the capacity of these young men and women to make a song or aria come to life. Live or streaming, that doesn't change, and the result is often thrilling, whether it's Rodgers and Hart from 1929 or Flaherty and Ahrens from 1996. Or an aria by Verdi, Poulenc, or Donizetti.

This year, for the first time, an edited film version of the finals appears on operavision.eu through 10 March 2022. I was fortunate to see both, and to return repeatedly to the film version. Little of substance is lost in the edited version; in fact, it's crisper and cleaner than the stream.

From the time we started going to the finals, my wife, my friends, and I have handicapped the slate to pick our own winners. Sometimes we'd think the judges got it just right, sometimes not. During the breaks, we'd argue happily among ourselves for this singer or that. This year, I landed right on the nose. How could Andrew Polec not have won? If I'm remembering correctly, the judges took less time than usual to decide. Me, too. Watching him was like sitting in on a demonstration of how to



Andrew Polec



Victoria Okafor

turn pieces of music into moments of theater, so it's no surprise that he earned one of the highest scores in the history of the Competition. In announcing the award, the Competition's founder, Kim Kowalke, summed up the judges' consensus: Polec has a "special ability to communicate the center of every character. He has the 'it' factor."

Victoria Okafor, Second Prize winner, had the unenviable task of going first among the fifteen finalists. While she is most at home in opera, she found theater songs—"Will He Like Me?," for instance, from *She Loves Me*—that suited her voice but required her to take risks to communicate the substance of the character effectively.

I've seen Third Prize winner Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod in all four of her finals appearances. As the years passed, I wondered if she'd ever get the recognition she deserved. Neither her looks nor her manner is conventional, but she grabbed me with Weill's "Youkali," held me through the magnificent "Gepopo's Aria" by Ligeti, and then produced a convincing, idiomatic rendering of "Mr. Snow" from *Carousel*. I was delighted that she took a prize in her last Competition appearance. Charles Eaton, who also won Third Prize, has an extraordinary voice. I went back to the film several times to watch him give life to everything he did, from Weill and Alan Jay Lerner's "Here I'll Stay" from *Love Life* to the bluesy "A New Town Is a Blue Town" from Richard Adler and Jerry Ross's *Pajama Game*, a big hit in the 1950s.

The Competition requires both singing *and* acting. As Akselrod crowed in her video portrait, "It's not only singing, it's not only acting, it's everything!" (This year, for the first time, the Foundation commissioned six-minute video profiles of each finalist compiled from semifinal auditions, coaching sessions, and interviews, which remain on the Foundation's YouTube channel.) The task of shaping a program and rehearsing it musically and dramatically is daunting: In the space of fifteen minutes, each singer has to create four diverse characters in four musical numbers. One must be from a piece by Weill, one from opera or operet-



Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod



Charles Eaton



Andrew Polec with accompanist Zachary Peterson

ALL PHOTOS: MATT MADISON-CLARK



Taylor-Alexis DuPont

ta, one from a musical before 1968, and one from a musical after 1968. (When I once asked Kowalke why 1968, he gave me a one-word answer: “*Hair*.”) Contestants enrich their programs with old songs they hadn’t known, and new songs by young theater songwriters. Among the shows from pre-1968 Broadway whose songs made it to the finals this year: *Kiss Me, Kate*; *South Pacific*; *Carnival*; *Flora, the Red Menace*; and *Most Happy Fella*. From after 1968: Andrew Lipka’s *The Wild Party* (1999), Benj Pasek and Justin Paul’s *Edges* (2005), Aron Accurso and Rachel Griffin’s *We Have Apples* (in workshop), Zina Goldrich and Marcy Heisler’s *Allison Under the Stars* (2000).

Right now, the title song from Bock and Harnick’s *She Loves Me* (1963) is popular; three different men sang it this year. But Taylor-Alexis DuPont revived “Supper Time,” Irving Berlin’s great anti-lynching song written for Ethel Waters in 1932. It earned DuPont the inaugural Rebecca Luker Award—named for the inspiring Broadway star and Competition stalwart—for an outstanding performance of a selection from the Golden Age of Broadway musicals. DuPont’s heartrending performance made a ninety-year-old song timeless.

In addition to DuPont’s award, Rebekah Howell won the Kurt Weill Award, never previously granted, for an outstanding performance of two contrasting selections by Weill; Max Chernin, the Carolyn Weber Award for outstanding creativity in the design of a diverse program and exceptional sensitivity to the relationship between text and music; and Katrina Galka and Kaileigh Riess, Lys Symonette Awards for outstanding performance of an aria.

Only the finals proceeded normally this year. Because of the pandemic, says Brady Sansone, the Foundation’s Director of Programs, “Performers weren’t performing, at least not in the traditional sense,” and had more time and incentive to audition. The number of applicants this year leaped upward. The previous high was 282. This year, 500! They came from twenty-nine countries and thirty-nine states, with twenty-five percent from outside the U.S. That was a lot of videos to sift, and then the real judging began with the thirty-one semifinalists. The pandemic did a number on the semifinals, too: this year semifinalists submitted a video audition and were coached remotely by the judges, rather than in person. Not the best way to work together, but it was essential to retain coaching as part of what makes the Competition distinctive. The semifinal judges were Broadway and opera star Lisa Vro-



Katrina Galka



Rebekah Howell



Kaileigh Riess



Max Chernin

man, and, for the first time, two previous Lenya winners, Analisa Leaming (Second Prize, 2007) and Zachary James (Third Prize, 2009). By the time they finished, fifteen contestants had survived the winnowing.

The judges for the 2021 finals were Victoria Clark, the Tony Award-winning actress, singer, and director; Andy Einhorn, Broadway music director and conductor; and Mary Beth Peil, Obie Award-winning actress and singer. Their decisions governed the distribution of prize money; the total this year came to \$104,000 (First Prize \$20,000, \$15,000 for Second, \$10,000 for Third, along with other awards)—the largest amount ever given at the finals.

I’ve always known that the finals make for a wonderful show. It’s good to learn that filming the finals is a satisfying way to keep building audiences as this unique competition continues to thrive, whether in Rochester or New York City.

Editor’s note: The edited film version of the finals and the video profiles of each finalist were created by Kingsbridge Media.

LLC Winners Come Roaring Back

After a year of darkened stages all over the world put the careers of previous Lenya Competition prizewinners on hold, they have wasted no time resuming work at the Metropolitan Opera, on Broadway, and elsewhere. The list below includes some of the brightest highlights from their recent achievements and offers something to savor for all lovers of live performance:

Michael Maliakel (Third Prize, 2015) made his Broadway debut in the title role of *Aladdin* when the production reopened on 28 September.

Robert Ariza (Lys Symonette Award, 2014) appeared in the Public Theater's new musical *The Visitor*, starring David Hyde Pierce, 14 October – 5 December.

Nyla Watson (Lys Symonette Award, 2019) made her Broadway debut in the ensemble of *Waitress*. Watson will also appear in the world premiere production of the musical *Black No More* at the Signature Center, 11 January – 27 February.

Megan Marino (Third Prize, 2012) returned to the Metropolitan Opera this fall as Feodor in *Boris Godunov*, with fellow prizewinner **Rebecca Jo Loeb** (First Prize, 2008) covering the role.

Rodell Rosel (Second Prize, 2006) reprises his role as Monostatos in *The Magic Flute* at the Metropolitan Opera, 10 December – 5 January.

Nicole Cabell (Lys Symonette Award, 2002) and **John Brancy** (\$15,000 Winner, 2018) starred as Fiordiligi and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* at San Francisco Opera, 21 November – 3 December.

Briana Elyse Hunter (Lys Symonette Award, 2014) made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Ruby in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*.

Trevor Martin (Third Prize, 2019) will star as Captain von Trapp in the international tour of *The Sound of Music*.

Analisa Leaming (Second Prize, 2007) and Jacob Keith Watson (Second Prize, 2012) will perform an all-Weill concert entitled "A Tribute to Kurt Weill" in New York City on 21 May.

Jacob Keith Watson also appeared in NBC's *Annie Live!* on 2 December.

Kyle Scatliffe (Lys Symonette Award, 2010) has returned to the cast of *Hamilton* on Broadway as Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson.

Jonah Hoskins (Trustee Award, 2020) is making his Metropolitan Opera debut in Massenet's *Cendrillon* as the Dean of Faculty, 17 December – 3 January.

Zachary James (Third Prize, 2009) returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Amenhotep III in *Akhnaten*, 19 May – 10 June. The Met's recording, with James in the cast, is up for a Grammy.

Lucas Meachem (Lys Symonette Award, 2002) returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Marcello in *La bohème*, 9 November – 27 May.

Alen Hodzovic (First Prize, 2009) returns to *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* as Draco Malfoy at the Mehr! Theater am Großmarkt in Hamburg.

Lauren Michelle (First Prize, 2015) will appear in the Spoleto Festival's production of *La bohème*, directed by Yuval Sharon, which will be performed in reverse order (starting with Act IV and ending with Act I).

Michael Maliakel as Aladdin

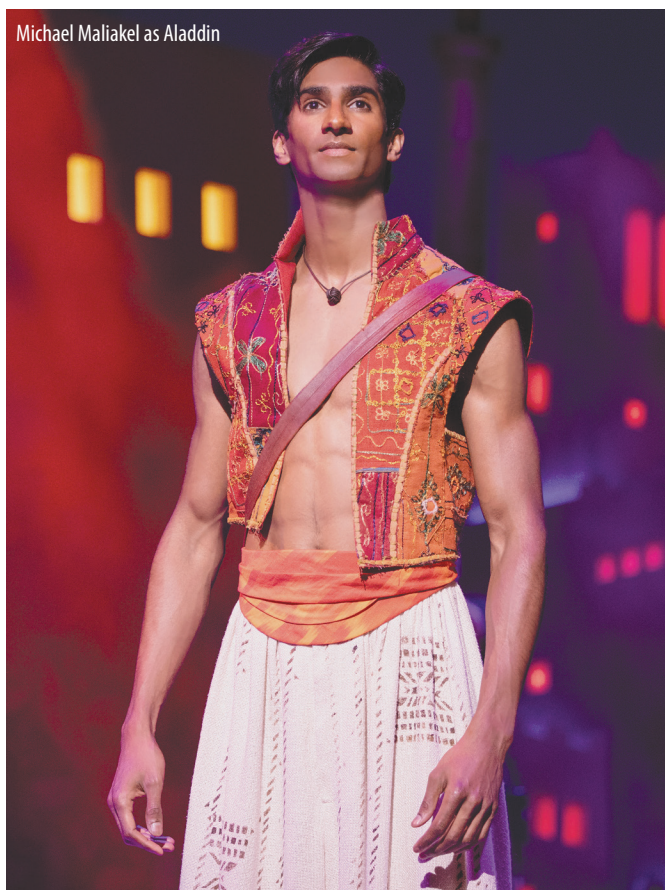


PHOTO: MATTHEW MURPHY

Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artists, 2021 Edition

Maintaining an annual tradition unbroken even during the plague year of 2020, the Foundation designated three Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artists in 2021, all finalists in this year's Lenya Competition:

Taylor-Alexis DuPont, Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Apprentice Artist at Santa Fe Opera. She joined two finalists from the 2020 Competition; no fewer than ten past Competition participants were represented among the apprentices this year.

Helen Zhibing Huang, Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Young Artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. She sang Pamina in a staged adaptation of *The Magic Flute* and participated in Glimmerglass's Young Artists Program.

Andrew Polec, Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist at the Old Globe Theater (San Diego). In addition to winning First Prize at this year's finals, Polec played a starring role in *Hair* at the Old Globe this summer. Polec commented on the "electrifying" production of *Hair*: "It's not too late to inspire people to positively change for the future and connect human to human and say 'we can make a better tomorrow,' and I think that's what we're doing on stage every night and I'm really grateful for that."

The Foundation sponsors Lenya Competition alumni at the "Artist" level, a designation reserved for principal roles in professional productions, and at the "Young Artist" and "Apprentice" level within appropriate programs.

Lenya Competition Songbook: The Next Round

Following on the first volume of sixteen theater songs in 2020, the Lotte Lenya Competition Songbook proffers a second installment! Contestants auditioning in 2022 may include in their programs repertoire from Volume Two, which contains twelve formerly hard-to-find gems selected because they provide opportunities to act as well as sing and thus meet the essential requirement of the Competition. For the first time in 2022, one or more prizes of \$1,000 will be awarded after the preliminary round for outstanding performance of a Songbook selection from either volume.

The *Newsletter* broke the story of the Songbook in the Fall 2020 issue. The new program had many goals: supporting emerging songwriters—each songwriter or team whose work has been selected for the Songbook has received an honorarium—and previous Competition prizewinners, who likewise received honoraria for recording last year's group of songs; encouraging diversity by providing material tailored for contestants of different races and genders (including non-binary); and opening up a new source of material for Lenya contestants, who this year will have twenty-eight songs across two volumes to explore. At the 2021

finals (see report on p. 19), past Competition prizewinners gave a recital of seven songs from Volume One. Each performance may be viewed on the Foundation's YouTube channel.

The essential data for Volume Two:

12 songs, selected from about 150 submissions (more than twice as many as in 2020);

6 songs intended for characters of color;

11 individual writers or teams represented;

5 teams or writers are or include people of color;

6 teams or writers are or include women.

Last year, contestants had access through kwf.org to a recording of each song by a Lenya Competition laureate, and sheet music was available for purchase through a third-party vendor or directly from the writers themselves. The same is true of Volume Two. Contestants may obtain sheet music and a "Song Profile" for each selection immediately; recordings of all twelve songs will be posted on kwf.org as soon as possible during the next several weeks.

And now, most important of all, the songs from Volume Two:

Song Title	Show Title	Composer/Lyricist
"If I Didn't Know Better"	<i>The Luckiest Girl</i>	Sonya Hayden
"Catch Me"	<i>She Reached for Heaven</i>	Oliver Houser
"An Ocean Away"	<i>The Family Resemblance</i>	Masi Asare
"Sorry"	N/A	Harry Castle
"Federico"	<i>Shoot for the Moon</i>	John-Michael Lyles and David Gomez
"Put Me to Work"	<i>Bread and Roses</i>	Jill Abramovitz and Brad Alexander
"I Could Get Used to This"	<i>Borders</i>	Arri Simon and Janine McGuire
"Nothing More"	<i>With the Right Music</i>	Tim Rosser and Charlie Sohne
"Not That Different"	Untitled show	Tim Rosser and Charlie Sohne
"The Love of Two Parents"	<i>Mother of Fyre</i>	Elsbeth Collard and Samantha Rosenblatt
"The Language Lesson"	<i>On This Side of the World</i>	Paulo K. Tiról
"The Second Time Around"	<i>Women on Love</i>	Katya Stanislavskaya

Group bow with pianist Zachary Peterson



ALL PHOTOS: MATT MADISON-CLARK

Volume One: From Page to Stage

Between the contestants' performances and the awards presentation at the 2021 finals (see report on p. 19), past Competition prizewinners celebrated Volume One of the Lotte Lenya Competition Songbook with a recital hosted by Tazewell Thompson. When Volume One appeared, the Foundation recruited a previous prizewinner to make a recording of each song to serve as a model for future contestants. At Riverside Church on 28 August, seven of those artists appeared live onstage with collaborative pianist Zachary Peterson and reprised the song they recorded almost a year earlier.

The songs: "A591" (music by Tidtaya Sinutoke, lyrics by Isabella Davis) sung by Michael Maliakel; "Coffee for Two" (music and lyrics by Katya Stanislavskaya) sung by Natalie Ballenger; "The Kettle Song" (music and lyrics by Daniel Zaitchik) sung by Amy Justman; "Loser Dumplings" (music and lyrics by Melissa Li and Kit Yan) sung by Brian Vu; "Lullaby" (music and lyrics by Anna K. Jacobs) sung by Analisa Leaming; "Moving" (music and lyrics by Mark Sonnenblick) sung by Nkrumah Gatling; and "New Year's Eve" (music and lyrics by Daniel Zaitchik) sung by Jim Schubin.

To enjoy each performance, visit the Foundation's YouTube channel.

Michael Maliakel



Nkrumah Gatling



Analisa Leaming



Brian Vu



Natalie Ballenger



Amy Justman



Jim Schubin



THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC, INC.

7 East 20th Street

New York, NY 10003-1106

USA

SAVE THE DATE

Lotte Lenya

THE LENYA COMPETITION

A program of The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

**Attend the 2022 Lenya
Competition Finals LIVE in NYC!**

Friday, 6 May 2022

Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center

Visit kwf.org/LLC for details in early 2022