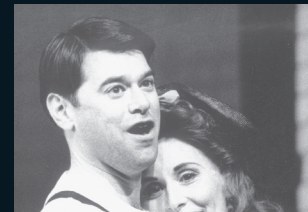


Kurt Weill Newsletter

VOLUME 40
NUMBER 1
SPRING 2022



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Street Scene at 75

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Cover: Collage of historical production photos of *Street Scene*, 1947–2020

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A variety of opinions are expressed in the *Newsletter*; they do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. Letters to the editor are welcome.

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Happy End: The Next Chapter

It's happening ... the world premiere of the critical edition of Weill, Hauptmann, and Brecht's *Happy End*. The complete score and script, edited by Stephen Hinton and Elmar Juchem and published in 2020, has hit the boards for the first time, in Berlin, fittingly enough. The Renaissance-Theater production, directed by Sebastian Sommer and conducted by Harry Ermer, opened on 13 May and will run in repertory through October. A seven-piece band faithfully renders Weill's score; the *Berliner Morgenpost* praised the "splendid" ensemble and the "authentic atmosphere" it provides.

We regret that due to supply-chain problems, the *Newsletter* is printed on lower-quality paper than usual. Thank you for your understanding.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Our feature articles both look to the past: the near past—the death of Stephen Sondheim last fall—and the more distant past, the Broadway premiere of *Street Scene* in 1947. Kim H. Kowalke, who has spent much of the last fifty years thinking about Weill and Sondheim, considers Weill's influence on Sondheim, Sondheim's reluctance to acknowledge it, and the crucial correspondences between these two giants of musical theater. And we weigh Weill's pronouncement around the time of the premiere of *Street Scene* that in seventy-five years it would be considered his “major work.” A prognostication so forceful demands consideration in 2022.

Streams and Podcasts

Live performance is becoming the rule again, but streaming is still with us, providing welcome access to performances past and present. For example, viewers may enjoy *The Seven Deadly Sins* produced by Opera North of Leeds, U.K. in November 2020. The cast and creative team were forced by the pandemic to rework a planned in-person staging so that it could be streamed live instead. Reviews were enthusiastic; the vast majority of critics congratulated director Gary Clarke and the entire company on adapting quickly and thoroughly to then-unfamiliar conditions. Masterly conducting of the fifteen-player orchestration from James Holmes and Wallis Giunta's bravura turn as Anna I certainly didn't hurt. Available through 8 October on operavision.eu.

Also on OperaVision: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* from Teatro Regio di Parma. Henning Brockhaus's new production ran for three performances at the end of April 2022; a video shot at the premiere streams on demand through 30 July. Christopher Franklin conducts.

On the podcast front: A new reference book, *Fifty Key Stage Musicals* (Routledge, 2022), offers a chapter on each show along with a supplementary conversation with that chapter's author, available gratis on broadwaypodcastnetwork.com. Of particular interest: chapter 9, *The Cradle Will Rock*, with Johanna Pinzler and Robert W. Schneider; chapter 13, *The Threepenny Opera*, with Lauren T. Mack and Andrew Child; and chapter 20, *Cabaret*, with Bruce Kimmel and Schneider.

Lady Emergent

Just over eighty years ago, Weill's first U.S. smash, *Lady in the Dark*, stopped Broadway in its tracks. There have been many major productions since then, but it has never had a year quite like 2022, which dawned shortly after the beginning of a successful run at Vienna's famed Volksoper under director Matthias Davids and conductor James Holmes (see review on p. 12). The Volksoper will bring *Lady* back in January 2023, and that's not all. In the fall of 2022, the Netherlands and Switzerland will host new productions at Opera Zuid in Maastricht and Theater Basel, respectively. Opera Zuid will adopt the script revised by Christopher Hart and Kim H. Kowalke and premiered by MasterVoices in 2019; Theater Basel presents the acclaimed German translation of Roman Hinze. Three new productions in three countries in one year—at that rate, she won't stay in the dark much longer.

A bonanza of performances in Australia this spring (or rather fall) anchors the review section, which also looks at a new production of *Lady in the Dark* in Vienna and two recent Weill-focused books. We offer news of Weill, Blitzstein, and the Foundation, with coverage of the latest Lotte Lenya Competition finals in New York City. We recommend that readers experience the finals for themselves by checking out the video, which contains every finalist's complete performance, on kwf.org.

Dave Stein



PHOTO: TRISTRAM KENTON

Pure Weill

Weill noted his enduring sympathy with “the oppressed, the persecuted” and stated that when his “music involves human suffering, it is, for better or worse, pure Weill.” Listeners around the world have taken note. On 14 April 2022, Teatr Wielki in Warsaw offered a program to benefit Ukrainian victims of Russia's invasion. The benefit included a performance of a ballet set to Weill's music by Krzysztof Pastor that was premiered in 2001 in Amsterdam. Weill's name was also invoked frequently this year on the United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January), when ensembles in Bosnia, Italy, Poland, and elsewhere performed Weill's music. Every day our world bears out the theme of the “Second Threepenny Finale”: we stay alive by hurting and destroying other people. As long as that continues, we will need all the Weill we can get.

2022 Grant Recipients

Professional Performance

London Symphony Orchestra, London, UK. *Die sieben Todsünden, Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Vom Tod im Wald* (live performances and commercial recording).

Orchestra Miami, Miami, FL. *Der Lindberghflug, Airborne Symphony* (Blitzstein).

OVO Theatre, St. Albans, U.K. *The Threepenny Opera*.

Renaissance-Theater, Berlin, Germany. *Happy End*.

Victorian Opera, Melbourne, Australia. *Happy End*.

College/University Performance

Sheridan College, Oakville, ON, Canada. *Happy End*.

University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI. *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*.

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI. *The Harpies* (Blitzstein).

Sondheim and Weill ... and (Foolish) Me

"Love Life was a useful influence on my own work, but it failed because it started out with an idea rather than a character." (Sondheim, 1975)¹

"Anybody who thinks that there's any similarity between the songs of Love Life and anything I've written is—I think—foolish." (Sondheim, 2003)²

by Kim H. Kowalke

Last fall's issue of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* didn't appear until after the death on 26 November of Stephen Sondheim, the foremost creator of intellectually ambitious musical theater in the second half of the twentieth century. Consequently the context for Barrie Kosky's radical assertions about Weill's impact on Sondheim, gleaned from an October interview, had changed profoundly:

Kurt Weill arrived in New York with an incredibly sophisticated idea of theater, and then proceeded to radically revolutionize the Broadway musical. Look at those shows! It's like a bomb going off on Broadway. I argue that Stephen Sondheim does not exist without Kurt Weill in New York. Period. End of discussion.

I wish Sondheim had lived and chosen to respond to Kosky's argument. I can't imagine he would have agreed. After all, when Weill died at age 50, Sondheim had just turned 20. Although he may have seen other Weill shows, he acknowledged attending only *Love Life*. His scattered comments on Weill's Broadway work are anything but appreciative, often downright dismissive and deeply conflicted, even betraying what Harold Bloom called "anxiety of influence."

*"Weill's musical language is anathema to me ... I mean, anathema like those fruity chords with the added sixths. They make me come over all queasy."*³

He protests—too much?—that Weill's work did not serve as precedent for his own, while over-crediting *Allegro* for its impact on his development as a composer/lyricist. Furthermore, Sondheim never acknowledged his similarities with Weill as a "collaborative dramatist": involvement in their works far beyond their official program credits, a desire to create new hybrid forms of musical theater, recruitment of a wide range of collaborators.

Personally and professionally, I've long needed and admired Weill and Sondheim, for many of those same reasons. Both have inspired my research, teaching, publications, performances, and standards for the best of musical theater. I came to know their stage works almost concurrently, beginning with the 1971–72 season, my first year in Yale's Ph.D. program in musicology. During Thanksgiving break I made my first-ever trek to Broadway and saw Hal Prince's unforgettable productions of *Company* and *Follies*, which set an impossibly high bar for my future theatergoing. Almost fifty years later, in 2019, I celebrated my imminent retirement from teaching with a trip to London to see the cross-gendered *Company* (now playing on Broadway) and the National Theatre's revival of its stunning 2017 production of *Follies*. The former struck me as a travesty in both senses of that term, while the latter almost surpassed my indelible memories of the origi-

nal. That semester I was bringing the curtain down on my professorial career by teaching my perennial undergraduate survey, "Sondheim and the Modern Musical Theater," and my last doctoral seminar in musicology—also devoted to Sondheim. My first, at Eastman in 1987, had been the inaugural graduate seminar on Kurt Weill anywhere, to my knowledge.

I encountered Weill's theater works for the first time in January 1972, a double bill of *The Seven Deadly Sins* and the *Mahagonny Songspiel* at the Yale Repertory Theatre in new English translations by Michael Feingold. After a revelatory American premiere of *Happy End* followed in April, I was irrevocably hooked. Would it be possible to write a dissertation on the composer who had written this idiosyncratic music and created such a unique sonic world? My immersion in Yale's *Rise and Fall of the City Mahagonny* in February 1974 reinforced that aim and prompted me to reach out to David Drew for his expert opinion on whether I should enter the world of Weill studies. I also met Lotte Lenya during the run, albeit fleetingly. A few months later, she surprised me by answering the doorbell of the apartment where I had been instructed to meet Drew for the first time. "You must be Mr. Kowalke [pronounced with Prussian perfection]. I'm Lotte Lenya. What kind of ice cream do you like? I get, while you and David talk." Four hours and a bowl of Rumpelmayer's chocolate almond later, the die was cast, even though approval for a dissertation on Weill's European career was anything but assured at Yale in 1974. One on Sondheim in mid-career would have been unthinkable premature. So Weill it was!

My first—and only—meeting with Sondheim had occurred at the closing-night cast party of *Mahagonny*. (He was in residence that spring to compose a score for the Rep's production of Aristophanes' *The Frogs* adapted by Burt Shevelove, staged in Yale's swimming pool.) Seeing the reticent but very recognizable figure leaning against the proscenium and looking a bit marginal, I worked up the courage to introduce myself and initiate what became a lively and lengthy conversation. I must say I regret making no notes to document our discussion, but I don't recall that we talked about Weill. A year later I would conduct my first *Threepenny Opera*, in 1979 my first *Company*. *West Side Story* followed after my appointment at Occidental College.



Then *Happy End*, *Street Scene*, and a massive Weill revue for Eastman Opera in Rochester in the '80s and '90s, *Sweeney Todd* in summer stock in 2003. During those four decades I attended the original Broadway and off-Broadway productions and revivals of all of Sondheim's stage works, with the exception of *Merrily We Roll Along*, which closed before I could see it. Those firsthand encounters with his challenging scores have underpinned both my academic courses and my musical theater workshop repertoire. Ironically, I taught Sondheim more often than Weill. I am immensely grateful that my career choices did not force me, like the Baker's Wife in the woods, into an either/or situation with Weill/Sondheim.

"I never liked his stuff except for *Threepenny* and some of his American stuff. There's a rumba version of 'Girl of the Moment' in *Lady in the Dark* that I like—and part of the overture to *Street Scene*—it's the theme that goes with the lyric [sings] 'Hoping that I would discover / A wonderful lover.'"⁴

I gave my first scholarly paper on Sondheim (and Weill) in November 1999, part of an unprecedented all-Sondheim session at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society. (Sondheim himself was prevented from attending by a workshop of *Wise Guys*, though he wished he could: "my ego can use all the massaging it can get.") Entitled "I Hate Brecht! *Love Life*, Sondheim, and the Concept Musical," the paper explored Sondheim's admission that he found *Love Life* useful for his own work. I also suggested that Brecht, and Weill, may have loomed larger in the Sondheim/Prince collaborations than Sondheim cared to admit. It was not difficult to connect the dots between *Love Life* and *Cabaret*, *Company*, *Follies*, *Pacific Overtures*, and *Assassins*—all but the last designed and co-conceived by Boris Aronson, who said there were enough ideas in *Love Life* for twenty musicals. And that Sondheim's indictment of *Love Life*—"more about ideas than characters"—might aptly describe some of his own musicals, particularly the three he wrote with John Weidman.

"I'm not a Brecht-Weill fan. I'm one of those heretics who likes Weill's Broadway music better. I do like *Threepenny Opera* very much, though. What I love about *Threepenny* is how harsh and dissonant it is. I like it when it's played by a small band."⁵

My latest essay about Sondheim to appear in print analyzes "*Sweeney's* Identity Crisis and the Dynamic Potential of Generic Hybridity" partly in terms of the debt Sondheim's musical thriller owes to Weill, Brecht, and *The Threepenny Opera*.

Sondheim's assertion that "Anybody who thinks that there's any similarity between the songs of *Love Life* and anything I've written is—I think—foolish" inspired me to interrogate that statement using the most directly related songs I could think of. For a musical theater conference at UCLA in 2007, I compared Weill and Lerner's "faulty memory" duet "I Remember It Well" with Sondheim's "I Remember That," written for the unproduced *Saturday Night* four years after *Love Life*. Anyone who doesn't

find a similarity between Sondheim's duet and that original version of "I Remember It Well" is—I think—foolish. The common setup, diction, and imagery strongly suggest that Sondheim remembered Lerner's lyric, if only imperfectly.

"I did see *Love Life*. If it influenced me, it was unconscious. I think all they're talking about is book, not about songs. I think they're talking about using vaudeville techniques to make a point and to relate somehow to human issues."⁶

Weill and Lerner introduced their song with underscored dialogue: Susan asks, "Do you remember the night you gave [this rocking chair] to me? It was just a few days after we came to Mayville." Sam responds, "Remember? I do indeed, Susan. I remember every detail of that evening just as if it were yesterday." He then recalls that "it was late at night," but Susan immediately counters, "it was six-fifteen." For the first two sections (AA) of the "Slow Waltz," they repeat that pattern: Sam's recollection followed by Susan's correction in two four-bar units, with Sam's attempt to recover with "That's right! I remember it well" extending the A sections to 12 bars each. A disagreement about the whereabouts of their two children at the time shifts the meter of the 8-bar bridge to duple and the tempo to *Allegretto*. Sam declares, "All alone the kids had flown upstairs to bed for the night." Susan gingerly rebuts, "When you brought the chair they both were there, but outside of that you are right." With a return to *Tempo primo* and waltz time for the final, expanded A section of the song, Susan agrees with Sam, finally, that "the moon was low," allowing him to confess: "And I loved you so, Yes, I did love you so, And it seemed even more, More than ever before; Am I right?" Susan responds, "Oh, yes, you're right," and they harmonize "I remember it well" to end the twenty-bar A' closure. Thus, the AABA' song form expands to 52 measures of 12+12+8+20.

Sondheim structured his duet by alternating strophes rather than sentences. In Hank's 28-bar conversational verse, "ruminatively, rubato," he boasts that he has "a memory for small details" and "a memory that never fails," before admitting "there's a date that I'm hazy on: That was the date we had, I remember, in early September, Or was it November three years ago?" His 40-bar chorus in foxtrot-derived duple meter then recounts how he had "arrived at seven," having bought a big bouquet along the way. Then they shared a sirloin steak, sat in a park in "the glow of moonlight," before dancing till dawn at Celeste's house. From then on Hank admits he's forgotten what happened, but he does remember "I'd fallen in love with you." In an eight-bar introduction to her rejoinder, Celeste claims that she "can remember some things that [Hank] left out." Her own 40-bar chorus tracks Hank's but declares that he arrived at eight, brought flowers but then couldn't pay the restaurant check, the glow in the park came from a policeman's flashlight, and they merely sat at her house before Hank poured coffee over her new dress. But at the same point as in Hank's strophe, she too remembers that "I did fall in love with you." Whether due to a faulty memory of how Lerner's lyric from *Love Life* functioned simultaneously as a comic number and a romantic ballad, or a conscious attempt at an alternative strategy, Sondheim's duet misfires when performed on the stage rather than read on the page. Celeste's corrections to the string of Hank's faulty memories are so long delayed that the audience

struggles to remember them. The humor and charm are much diminished, but the resemblance to Weill and Lerner remains unmistakable.

As I was contemplating this personal account, I kept returning to parallel assessments of Weill's and Sondheim's impact on the musical theater of their time, articulated in prominent obituaries. One could almost switch their names in the two documents without significant change, aside from dates. I suspect that future historical accounts of musical theater in the twentieth century will affirm both as major figures, and perhaps even adopt Kosky's lineage.

Virgil Thomson on Weill, *New York Herald Tribune*, April 1950:

Everything he wrote became in one way or another historic. He was probably the most original single workman in the whole musical theater, internationally considered, during the last quarter century. ... The loss to music and to the theater is real. Both will go on, and so will Weill's influence. But his output of new models—and every work was a new model, a new shape, a new solution of dramatic problems—will not continue.

Bruce Weber on Sondheim, *New York Times*, November 2021:

He was the theater's most revered and influential composer-lyricist of the last half of the 20th century, if not its most popular. He was the driving force behind some of Broadway's most beloved and celebrated shows. ... In the history of the theater, only a handful could call Mr. Sondheim peer. ... After the first decade of his career, he was never again a writer for hire, and his contribution to a show was always integral to its conception and execution. He chose collaborators who shared his ambition to stretch the musical form beyond the bounds of only entertainment.

New models, driving force, carefully chosen collaborators, integral to conception and execution—all these traits and more link Weill and Sondheim. They both stand out among musical theater creators for their common devotion to allusion, pastiche, irony, and paradox, and getting the relation between text and music exactly right for the character and situation. These are not just matters of technique, but a means of pursuing an ideal: perpetually challenging audiences to think and feel more deeply. So, for (foolish) me, Weill and Sondheim remain "Side by Side."

Kim H. Kowalke has published two recent papers on Sondheim:

"Give me time": Sondheim, a clever maid and "The Miller's Son," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 13.2 (2019), pp. 151–168.

"Sweeney's Identity Crisis and the Dynamic Potential of Generic Hybridity," *Sondheim in Our Time and His*, ed. W. Anthony Sheppard (Oxford, 2022), pp. 247–276.

Sources

1 From an interview conducted in 1975. Published in Foster Hirsch, *Harold Prince and the American Musical Theatre* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 17–18.

2, 3, 4, 6 From an unpublished interview with Steve Swayne, 2003.

5 David Savran, *In Their Own Words: Contemporary American Playwrights* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988), pp. 228–229.

SONDHEIM	"The Saga of Lenny"—with no apologies to Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin LAUREN BACALL PAUL FORD, piano
BERNSTEIN	"Make Our Garden Grow" from <i>Candide</i> (Finale) JERRY HADLEY (Candide) DAWN UPSHAW (Cunegonde) THE COMPANY SEIJI OZAWA conducting

From the program

Weill-Bernstein-Sondheim: Together at Last

Leonard Bernstein's seventieth birthday concert at Tanglewood (25 August 1988) was a lengthy, star-studded affair, with contributions from many of the world's most storied performers and composers. Weill himself showed up, though not under his own power. Considering the rather torturous relationship between Bernstein and Weill and between Sondheim and Weill, that may come as a surprise; no doubt the ready substitution of "Saga of Lenny" for "Saga of Jenny" was too good to pass up. Sondheim's rewrite of Ira Gershwin served as the eleven o'clock number for the evening, just before the finale, and he persuaded Bernstein's dear friend Lauren Bacall to sing it. The program neither concealed the *Lady in the Dark* parody nor attempted to excuse it: "with no apologies to Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin." Video of Bacall's performance, available on YouTube, cuts frequently to Bernstein in the audience and shows his unrestrained delight. A sample lyric:

Poor Lenny,
Ten gifts too many,
The curse of being versatile.
To show how bad the curse is
Will need a lot of verses
And take a little Weill—

THE SAGA OF LENNY (7/14/88) (7/21/88)

STEPHEN SONDHEIM

ALLEGRETTO QUASI ANDANTINO E RUBATO (♩ = 56)

ONCE WAS A BOY NAMED LEN- NY, WHOSE TAL- ENTS WERE VAR-IED AND

MAN-Y, SO MAN-Y THAT HE WAS IN- CLINED

From the manuscript

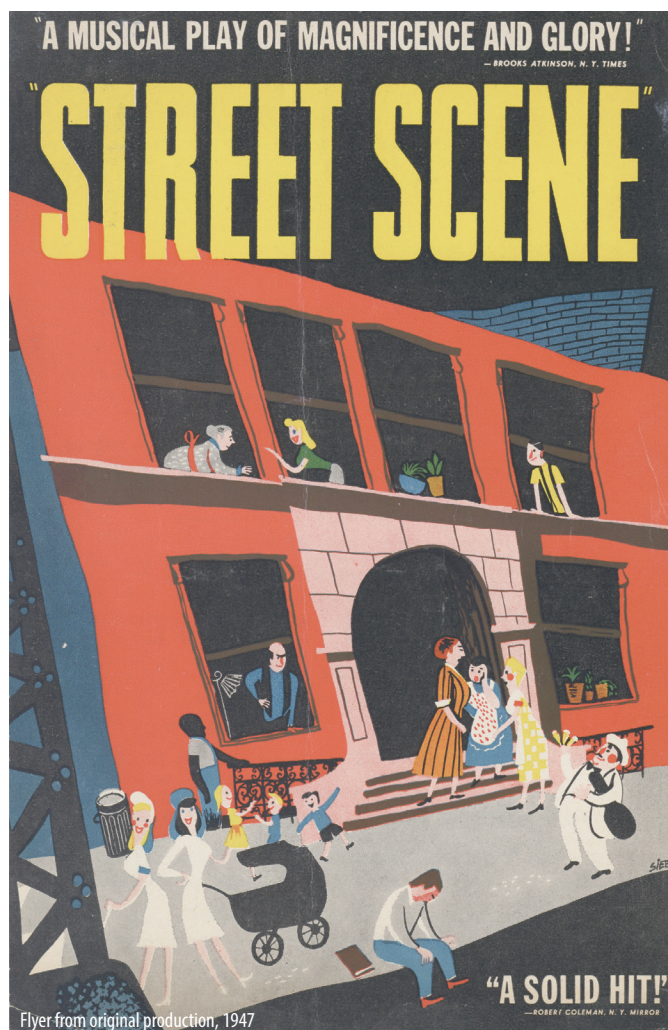
A Notable Anniversary: The State of *Street Scene*

"[Weill] spoke of his work with a dispassionate honesty most writers I had known until then would have blushed at. A year or two later [after spring 1945] I was to hear him say, 'Seventy-five years from now *Street Scene* will be remembered as my major work.'"

--Arnold Sundgaard, "Portrait of the Librettist as a Silenced Composer," *The Dramatists Guild Quarterly* 16.4 (Winter 1980), p. 26 (emphasis added)

Any consideration of Weill's prediction must begin with the outpouring of praise that greeted the Broadway debut of *Street Scene*—written with Langston Hughes and Elmer Rice—on 9 January 1947. One newspaper totted up the "scorecard" of opening night reviews at eight favorable to one unfavorable. (Richard Watts, who published the unfavorable review, later lauded the work's "high endeavor.") The chief theater and music critics of the *New York Times*, Brooks Atkinson and Olin Downes, respectively, showered it with superlatives, not only as an evening's entertainment, but as a new and auspicious direction for American opera and musical theater. Master showman Billy Rose, who had passed up an opportunity to invest, recorded his own rave. ("It was one of those rare nights when a show catches lightning in a barrel. The applause was like a 21-gun salute going off in a phone booth.") *Musical America's* Quaintance Eaton came closest to Weill's own formulation: "Mr. Weill's greatest achievement to date." (Eaton was at best dimly familiar with Weill's European work.) In April, Weill received an inaugural Tony Award for the score of *Street Scene*. Little wonder he was so matter-of-fact; most knowledgeable theater people at the time would have agreed with him.

Street Scene was billed as a "dramatic musical," a formulation that fooled no one; most critics grasped the work's operatic qualities even as the producers' publicists shrank from the word. It helped the cause no end that another American opera, *The Warrior*, opened at the Met at nearly the same time as *Street Scene* on Broadway. The music press lost little time comparing the two, to the detriment of Bernard Rogers's one-act opera based on the story of Samson and Delilah. It was the perfect set-up: a much-ballyhooed, "official" American opera at the Met pitted against a Broadway show that didn't even dare to advertise itself as an opera. *Street Scene* won the battle convincingly. Another "rival" was *Porgy and Bess*, premiered in 1935 and revived with greater success in 1942. Many scribes remembered *Porgy* and measured Weill's work against it; while the verdict was not as clear-cut, more than a few regarded *Street Scene* as a superior, and more promising, example of vernacular American opera. Later that season, Menotti brought a double bill of *The Telephone* and *The Medium* to Broadway, and about a dozen "Broadway operas" followed over the next ten years. If *Porgy* was a voice crying in the wilderness, *Street Scene* looked like the work that would lead American opera to the promised land. (*Street Scene's* stiffest competition on Broadway was a show with absolutely no operatic pretensions, *Finian's Rainbow*, which opened one day later. Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon* came along in March. Both *Finian* and *Brigadoon* ended up enjoying longer runs, but neither attracted the kind of genre-bending attention that *Street Scene* did.)



Then Weill himself provided competition for *Street Scene*. Before it could settle into the repertory, it was arguably supplanted by the shorter, less demanding *Down in the Valley* (libretto by Arnold Sundgaard)—critics in the late forties commonly referred to both as folk operas, despite the stark variance in settings (urban vs. rural), scale (*Street Scene* required a much larger cast and orchestra), and difficulty (*Valley* demands good singers, but not advanced opera training). Long before *Street Scene* became a favorite of schools and conservatories, *Down in the Valley* was taken up by students all over the U.S. with hundreds of productions and thousands of performances before 1959, when *Street Scene* saw its first new professional production in the U.S. at New York City Opera. The off-Broadway triumph of *The Threepenny Opera* (1954–1961) probably also had an effect, changing Weill's identity in the music and theater press, and in the public mind as well, to composer for Brecht from composer for Broadway.

What else happened between closing night on Broadway, 17 May 1947, and the City Opera production? Perhaps most important is what did *not* happen—a national tour of *Street Scene*. Over Weill's vigorous objections, the producers opted not to take the show beyond New York, largely for financial reasons. That was a setback; a tour to even a handful of cities would likely have solidi-

Dick (Philip Gould) and Mae (Susie Lee-Hayward), Scottish Opera, 1989

PHOTO: PETER DEVLIN



fied *Street Scene*'s position in the vanguard of American musical theater by allowing audiences elsewhere to see it for themselves. *Lady in the Dark* and *One Touch of Venus*, both of which traveled to several cities despite wartime restrictions and high cost, were adapted for television and remained fairly popular in summer stock throughout the fifties. *Street Scene* did not.

Not all the omens were unfavorable, however. In 1949, *Street Scene* saw three major concert performances, two in New York and one in Hollywood (the last now available as a CD on Naxos). Within a few years, Indiana University and the Eastman School of Music, both noted for opera programs, presented the work. The first production outside the U.S. opened in Düsseldorf, Germany on 26 November 1955; the production was revived at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in 1958. Most critics were dubious about the work, but they understood that the event was important, part of a necessary reckoning with Weill's compositions after he fled Germany. *Street Scene* occasioned an exchange in the press between the young Turk Horst Koegler and the old tyrant Theodor Adorno that foreshadowed the next fifty years of critical debate over Weill's artistic identity. Yet Adorno and Koegler's debate, essential for understanding Weill's reception history in the U.S. and around the world, probably had little direct effect on *Street Scene*'s fortunes on the U.S. stage.

When City Opera took up *Street Scene* in 1959 as part of a series of American operas, New York's critics looked at the work through a different lens. As in 1947, they tried to figure out whether *Street Scene* was worthy of membership in the august realm of opera. Theater critics responding to the world premiere had noticed lapses from standard operatic procedure but happily forgave them, because *Street Scene* was playing on Broadway. Reviewers in 1959 were more likely to object when the work was presented by an opera company. City Opera brought back *Street*

Scene five times in the next thirty years, including a new production in 1978, keeping it in the repertory during a time when few other companies would touch it. True, most of Weill's Broadway shows went into eclipse in the sixties; Weill's Broadway opera fared even worse. His faith in *Street Scene* and its future never seemed more misplaced.

Street Scene began gaining lost ground in the eighties, as more schools picked up the work, including Boston Conservatory and Rutgers, and Chautauqua Opera added it to the repertory. Most decisively, David Pountney directed a well-received production in Great Britain in 1989 at Scottish Opera and English National Opera, both of which led to recordings. In 1995, a Houston Grand Opera co-production helmed by Francesca Zambello and conducted by James Holmes made a triumphant stop in Berlin and enjoyed a very different reception from the 1955 premiere. (Adorno was long dead by then, but Koegler was still around to enjoy his vindication.) Since then, *Street Scene* has seen numerous professional productions, not to mention dozens in universities and conservatories all over the U.S. and Europe, exposing countless students to Weill and enhancing their musical and theatrical training. The trajectory has only continued upward. A string of major stagings in the U.S.—Chicago, St. Louis, St. Paul, Pittsburgh, Aspen, Wolf Trap, and more—has been matched by Europe—Turin, Dresden, Toulon, London, Madrid, Leeds, etc. (See the chronology of major performances for additional detail.)

Weill saw *Street Scene* as the fulfillment of two separate dreams: creating a uniquely American variety of musical theater; and perfecting a seamless blending of text and music, speaking and singing. Its successes over the last forty years show that he was not just satisfying himself but breaking new paths for others to follow. The passage of time has brought into focus *Street Scene*'s influence, not only on Broadway operas that followed such as Blitzstein's *Regina* but on works as chronologically and thematically divergent as Bernstein's *West Side Story* and Tesori's *Blue*.

As we look back over seventy-five years of feast and famine, *Street Scene* does not seem to have recovered fully from those early decades of neglect; the praise so liberally bestowed in 1947 has come back into fashion to some extent, but few would agree today with Weill's bold prediction of posterity's judgment. In Fall 2002, the *Newsletter* interviewed two of *Street Scene*'s most stalwart defenders, Julius Rudel and Horst Koegler; neither concurred with Weill. Koegler went so far as to say that "Weill erred," suggesting that *Dreigroschenoper* and *Mahagonny* have more staying power. (He might well have added one of his own favorites, *Die sieben Todsünden*.) In 1947, Weill—along with many others—considered *Street Scene* the dawn of a new age of American opera, leading the way inexorably to the future. The next thirty years cast such judgments into doubt, but since 1980 *Street Scene* has made enormous strides, and apparently will continue to do so. In last Fall's *Newsletter*, director Barrie Kosky said, "I'm sure I'll do [*Street Scene*] in the next ten years," as if it went without saying. In a world where cross-border migration continues to increase, *Street Scene*'s exploration of the tensions produced by immigration will remain disturbingly relevant. These are only some of the reasons for taking Weill's forecast seriously. Today several compositions might vie for the mantle of his "major work," and *Street Scene* is one of them. Their relative fortunes continue to shift. What if Weill had looked ahead one hundred years rather than seventy-five?

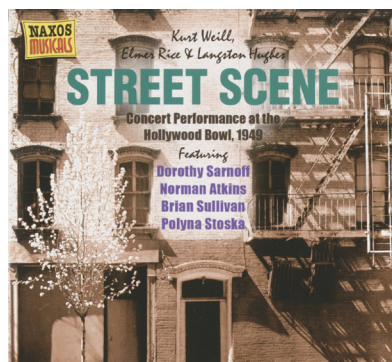
Street Scene: A Chronology of Major Performances

In each entry, the lead performers are listed in the following order: Anna Murrant, Frank Murrant, Rose Murrant, Sam Kaplan. The date of the opening is given for theatrical runs.

1947 Jan. 9: World premiere, Adelphi Theatre, New York. Charles Friedman, dir.; Maurice Abravanel, cond. Lead actors: Polyna Stoska, Norman Cordon, Anne Jeffreys, Brian Sullivan. Lys Symonette served as vocal coach and as Weill's musical assistant. Original cast recording of excerpts under Weill's supervision issued by Columbia; CD released on CBS Masterworks in 1988.

1949 Feb. 6: Concert (excerpts), 92nd Street Y, New York. Maurice Levine, cond. Lead singers: Polyna Stoska, Norman Atkins, Marguerite Piazza, Richard Edwards.

1949 Jul. 29: Concert (excerpts), Lewisohn Stadium, New York. Maurice Abravanel, cond. Lead singers: Polyna Stoska, Norman Atkins, Dorothy Sarnoff, Brian Sullivan.



1949 Aug. 20: Concert, Hollywood Bowl. Izler Solomon, cond. Lead singers: Polyna Stoska, Norman Atkins, Dorothy Sarnoff, Brian Sullivan. Recording issued by Naxos, 2009.

1950 Aug. 2: Indiana University. Walter Russell, dir.; Ernst Hoffman, cond. Lead actors: Hazel Shirley, David Aiken, Sara Ann Fisher, Richard Edwards.

1953 May 4: Eastman School of Music, Rochester. Leonard Treash, dir.; Ward Woodbury, cond. Lead actors: Eileen Ewers, William Dooley, Ruth Landes, Richard Gilley.

1955 Nov. 26: European premiere, Städtische Bühnen, Düsseldorf. Friedrich Schramm, dir.; Eugen Szenkar, cond. Lead actors: Hanna Ludwig, Randolph Symonette, Ingrid Paller, Karl Diekmann. German translation by Lys Symonette; set design by Caspar Neher.

1958 Jan. 31: Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Duisburg. Friedrich Wilhelm Andreas, dir.; Reinhard Peters, cond. Lead actors: Hanna Ludwig, Randolph Symonette, Eva Kasper, Karl Diekmann. German translation by Lys Symonette; set design by Caspar Neher. Revival with revisions of 1955 production.

1959 Apr. 2: New York City Opera, City Center. Herbert Machiz, dir.; Samuel Krachmalnick, cond. Lead actors: Wilma Spence, William Chapman, Helena Scott, David Poleri. First professional staged production in the U.S. following the Broadway

run. **1959-60 season:** Julius Rudel, cond. Lead actors: Elisabeth Carron, William Chapman, Helena Scott, Frank Porretta. Selected songs with piano performed on CBS television program, *Camera Three*, 1960.

1963 Apr. 26: New York City Opera. Herbert Machiz, dir.; Skitch Henderson, cond. Lead actors: Elisabeth Carron, Robert Trehy, Joy Clements, William Dupree.



PHOTO: NEW YORK CITY OPERA

1966 Feb. 24: New York City Opera, Lincoln Center. Herbert Machiz, dir.; Charles Wilson, cond. Lead actors: Eileen Schauler, William Chapman, Anne Elgar, William Dupree.

1978 Oct. 27: New York City Opera. Jack O'Brien, dir.; John Mauceri, cond. Lead actors: Eileen Schauler, William Chapman, Catherine Malfitano, Alan Keys. New production. Opening night broadcast on PBS television, "Live from Lincoln Center."

1985 Aug. 9: Chautauqua Opera. Cynthia Auerbach, dir.; John DeMain, cond. Lead actors: Karen Huffstodt, Spiro Malas, Carolann Page, Michael Davis.

1987 Apr. 26: U.K. professional premiere, Palace Theatre, London. Peter Walker, dir.; John Owen Edwards, cond. Lead actors: Hilary Western, Christopher Blades, Janis Kelly, Paul Harry. Cast included Elaine Paige as Second Nursemaid and Maria Friedman as Shirley Kaplan. One night only; gala performance to benefit London Lighthouse on International AIDS Day.



PHOTO: SARAH ANSLIE

1989 May 31: Scottish Opera, Glasgow. David Pountney, dir.; John Mauceri, cond. Lead actors: Kristine Ciesinski, Spiro Malas, Janis Kelly, Mark Beudert. Recording conducted by Mauceri issued on London and Decca with principal cast replaced by Josephine Barstow, Samuel Ramey, Angelina Réaux, Jerry Hadley; other cast members also replaced for the recording.

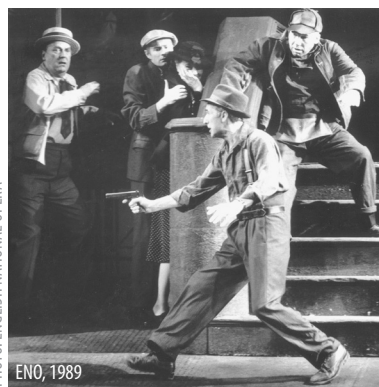


PHOTO: ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA

1989 Oct. 17: English National Opera, London. David Pountney, dir.; Carl Davis, cond.

Lead actors: Kristine Ciesinski, Richard Van Allan, Janis Kelly, Bonaventura Bottone. Cast included Catherine Zeta-Jones as Mae Jones. Cast recording issued on TER.

1990 Mar. 3: Bühnen der Stadt Bielefeld. Jörg Fallheier, dir.; Rainer Koch, cond. Lead actors: Maike Pansegrau, Gidon Saks, Dawn Marie Flynn, Werner Schwarz.



PHOTO:FRITZ STOCKMEIER

1990 Sept. 7: New York City Opera. Jay Lesenger, dir.; Chris Nance, cond. Lead actors: Margaret Cusack, William Parcher, Sheryl Woods, Kevin Anderson. Revival of 1978 production. Cast included Joyce Castle as Emma Jones.

1991 Apr. 5: Eastman School of Music, Rochester. David Runzo, dir.; Kim Kowalke, cond. Lead actors: Kristi Trimble, Adam Harris, Katrina Van Driel, John McVeigh. Cast included Anthony Dean Griffey as Lippo Fiorentino and Gabriel Kahane as Willie Maurrant. Performers coached by Lys Symonette.

1992 Feb. 13: English National Opera. Nicolette Molnár, dir.; James Holmes, cond. Lead actors: Janice Cairns, Mark Richardson, Lesley Garrett, Kevin Anderson. Revival with revisions of 1989 production.

1993 Sept. 22: Bayerisches Staatstheater, Munich. Frank Arnold, dir.; Herbert Mogg, cond. Lead actors: Andrea Catzel, Riccardo Lombardi, Katherina Müller, Volker Bengl.

1994 Jan. 28: Houston Grand Opera. Francesca Zambello, dir.; Ward Holmquist, cond. Lead actors: Sheri Greenawald, Robert McFarland, Lee Merrill, Kip Wilborn. Co-production with Theater des Westens and Theater im Pfalzbau.



PHOTO: JIM CALDWELL

1994 Dec. 17: Theater im Pfalzbau, Ludwigshafen. Francesca Zambello, dir.; James Holmes, cond. Lead actors: Ashley Putnam, Marc Embree, Teri Hansen, Kip Wilborn. Home video recording issued in 2001 by Image Entertainment. The same production opened at Theater des Westens, Berlin, on 15 January 1995.

1995 Dec. 12: Italian premiere, Teatro Regio, Turin. Giorgio Gallione, dir.; John Mauceri, cond. Lead actors: Malmfrid Sand, Mark Richardson, Madelyn Monti, Mark Beudert.

1999 July 10: Central City Opera, Denver. Michael Ehrman, dir.; John Baril, cond. Lead actors: Kay Paschal, Marc Embree, Karen Burlingame, Theodore Green.

2001 Oct. 2: Lyric Opera of Chicago. David Pountney, dir.; Richard Buckley, cond. Lead actors: Catherine Malfitano, Dean Peterson, Lori Ann Fuller, Gregory Turay.

2002 Jan. 16: Pittsburgh Opera. Sandra Bernhard, dir.; John Mauceri, cond. Lead actors: Karen Huffstodt, Dean Ely, Yvonne Gonzales, Tracey Welborn.

2002 Aug. 13: Aspen Festival. Edward Berkeley, dir.; Julius Rudel, cond. Lead actors: Yali-Marie Williams, Randall Levin, Alison Trainer, Andrew Lepri Meyer.



PHOTO: ALEX IRVIN

2004 Feb. 27: Kurt Weill Fest Dessau. Nicholas Muni, dir.; Golo Berg, cond. Lead actors: Janice Hall, Ulf Paulsen, Christina Gerstberger, Jörg Brückner. German translation by Stefan Troßbach.

2006 June 15: Opera Theatre of St. Louis. James Robinson, dir.; Stephen Lord, cond. Lead actors: Carolyn Betty, Jeffrey Wells, Jennifer Aylmer, Garrett Sorenson.

2008 Apr. 30: Manhattan School of Music. Jay Lesenger, dir.; Hal France, cond. Lead actors: Andrea Arias-Martin, Arthur Miller, Devon Guthrie, James Benjamin Rodgers. Cast included Fleur Barron and J'Nai Bridges in minor roles, and Jorell Williams as Henry.

2008 July 4: Opera Group, Watford Palace, U.K. John Fulljames, dir.; Patrick Bailey, cond. Lead actors: Elena Ferrari, Andrew Slater, Ruby Hughes, Adrian Dwyer. Toured to Buxton and London. Won the 2008 *Evening Standard* Award for best musical on the London stage.



PHOTO: ALASTAIR MUIR

2010 Mar. 12: French premiere, Opéra de Toulon. Olivier Bénézech, dir.; Scott Stroman, cond. Lead actors: Elena Ferrari, Laurent Alvaro, Ruby Hughes, Adrian Dwyer.

2011 June 19: Semperoper, Dresden. Bettina Bruinier, dir.; Jonathan Darlington, cond. Lead actors: Sabine Brohm, Markus Marquardt, Carolina Ullrich, Simeon Esper.

2011 Sept. 15: Opera Group, Young Vic, London. John Fulljames, dir.; Keith Lockhart and Tim Murray, cond. Lead actors: Elena Ferrari, Geof Dolton, Susanna Hurrell, Paul Curievici. Toured to Basingstoke, Edinburgh, Newport, and Hull; two performances in Vienna.

2012 Sept. 22: Musiktheater im Revier, Gelsenkirchen. Gil Mehmert, dir.; Heiko Mathias Förster, cond. Lead actors: Noriko Ogawa-Yatake, Joachim G. Maaß, Dorin Rahardja, Lars-Oliver Rühl.

2012 Nov. 15: Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Steven Goldstein, dir.; Mark Gibson, cond. Lead actors: Summer Hassan, Charles Z. Owen, Meghan Tarkington, Marco Cammarota.

2013 Jan. 25: Opera Group, Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. John Fulljames, dir.; Tim Murray, cond. Lead actors: Sarah Redgwick, Geof Dolton, Susanna Hurrell, Paul Curievici. Played in Barcelona 1–5 March.

2016 Jan. 24: Theater Pforzheim. Thomas Münstermann, dir.; Markus Huber, cond. Lead actors: Anna-Maria Kalesidis, Cornelius Burger, Dorin Rahardja, Johannes Strauß.

2018 Feb. 13: Teatro Real, Madrid. John Fulljames, dir.; Tim Murray, cond. Lead actors: Patricia Racette, Paulo Szot, Mary Bevan, Joel Prieto. Co-production with Oper Köln and Opéra de Monte Carlo. Home video recording issued in 2019 by BelAir Classics nominated for 2021 International Opera Awards.



2018 Oct. 6: Virginia Opera. Dorothy Danner, dir.; Adam Turner, cond. Lead actors: Jill Gardner, Zachary James, Maureen McKay, David Blalock.

2020 Jan. 18: Opera North, Leeds. Matthew Eberhardt, dir.; James Holmes, cond. Lead actors: Giselle Allen, Robert Hayward, Gillene Butterfield, Alex Banfield. Broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Weill on *Street Scene*

"My opera *Street Scene* has now been performed almost 100 times. Naturally, that's nothing compared to the musical comedies that I've put on here, but for an opera, it is a much greater success, as very few (or no) operas hit such performance numbers during their initial run. More important to me is that it represents real progress for opera in making a serious contribution to theater in our time. It is generally recognized here as the first American opera and was compared several times with *Entführung* [Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*] in terms of historical significance."

--letter to Caspar Neher, 25 March 1947

"*Street Scene* has opened and brought me a personal success which exceeded all my expectations. Almost unanimously, the papers called my work 'the finest work in the musical theater' and nominated me the outstanding composer in the American theater. ... The new form of musical entertainment which *Street Scene* has started could easily be translated into the field of motion pictures and could probably make film history as it has already made theater history. I think I have pretty definite ideas how this could be done, but I don't know if Hollywood would let me do it."

--letter to Arthur Lyons, 14 February 1947

"The great challenge for me was to find a form which translated the realism of the plot into music. The result is something entirely new and probably the most 'modern' form of musical theater, since it applies the technique of opera without ever falling into the artificiality of opera. It is a type of number opera, but I composed right through the spoken dialogues between the musical numbers, like a recitative, so that the dialogue melts into the musical numbers and creates a unity of drama and music such as I had never achieved before."

--letter to Caspar Neher, 16 February 1947

"It has been my opinion for a long time that the Broadway stage can become an important outlet for the American composer and might even become the birthplace of a genuine American 'musical theatre' or, if you wish, an American opera. That this theory has been widely accepted lately, is to me one of the most gratifying results of the success of *Street Scene*. ... I have always believed that opera should be a part of the living theatre of our time."

--"Broadway and the Musical Theatre," *The Composer's News-Record* no. 2 (May 1947), p. 1

"Among all the theatrical works I have written, operas, operettas, musical plays, musical comedies, ballets, pageants—about twenty-five altogether—*Street Scene* occupies a niche of its own. It means to me the fulfillment of two dreams which I have dreamed during the last twenty years and which have become a sort of center around which all my thinking and planning revolved."

--Liner notes for original cast recording of *Street Scene*, Columbia Masterworks M-MM-683