

Kurt Weill Newsletter

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The Golden Age

Old Shows, New Audiences

Published twice a year, the Kurt Weill Newsletter features articles and reviews (books, performances, recordings) that center on Kurt Weill but take a broader look at issues of twentieth-century music and theater. With a print run of 3,500 copies, the Newsletter is distributed worldwide. Subscriptions are free. The editor welcomes the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for consideration.

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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ON THE COVER: Echoes of *Gypsy*, *Oklahoma!*, and *My Fair Lady* linger on a darkened stage. Cover design by Mike Gerard.



Editor's Note



The state, and fate, of American musical theater command attention in this issue. Producers continue to grapple with changes in sensibilities and standards over time, which may cause audiences to interrogate or even reject musicals from decades ago. Professor Daniel Egan considers test cases from Weill's *oeuvre* and other repertory, discussing problems that revivals face today and principles for addressing them. From the front lines, producer-director Francesca Zambello explores the role of musical theater in the U.S. national

conversation, drawing on her own recent experience to discuss her chosen medium on a simultaneously personal, practical, and political level.

Our reviews and news show that Weill continues to resonate powerfully one hundred years after he began forging his identity as a stage composer; today's artists continue to gravitate to his work and embrace it, because it remains relevant. The 2026 Lenya Competition Finals, chronicled here, give hope that musical theater in general and Weill's work in particular will continue to be an essential and cherished part of the arts landscape. For his part, Weill believed that "The theater is always dying—but never dies." He knew musical theater will always meet the challenges it confronts and go on, because there is always a human need for it.

Dave Stein

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Keeping Up with Copyrights...

Contrary to common misconceptions, copyright protection of the works co-created by Weill, Brecht, and Elisabeth Hauptmann will not end in the European Union and other "Life plus 70" territories on 1 January 2027. Rather, *Mahagonny Songspiel*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Happy End*, *Der Lindberghflug*, and *Der Jasager* will continue to be fully protected until 31 December 2043. Expert legal opinions commissioned by rights holders have confirmed this. The Kurt Weill Foundation is happy to offer guidance and explanation, particularly with respect to translations, adaptations, editions, and derivative works of Weill that also remain protected. For additional information, see kwf.org/contact/copyright



Re: "Discovering Weill at Yale"

To the Editor:

To supplement Kim Kowalke's recollections of Weill performances at Yale during the 1970s (see Winter 2025–26 *Newsletter*): In 1971, I was a graduate violin student at Yale and had played in the orchestra for *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*—the first of the Weill programs that Kim chronicled. I became interested in Weill's concert music and started working on the Violin Concerto, which I performed a few years later. In a catalogue of Weill's music, I came across *Der neue Orpheus*, listed for soprano, violin, and piano, and thought it would be wonderful to include in a recital. But I couldn't find the music anywhere.

Someone suggested I contact Lotte Lenya, and Robert Brustein (director of the Yale Repertory Theater, which had produced the Weill premieres) gave me Lenya's address in New York. I went there one morning and sheepishly rang her bell. When she answered on the intercom, I explained I was a Yale student, loved her husband's music, and was looking for a score of *Orpheus*. "Oh! Come up!" she said. Having expected a brush-off, I was thrilled. We had a short, friendly visit, and she sent me away with the piano score of *Orpheus*, explaining that it was really an orchestral work—a cantata for solo soprano, with a solo violin obligato. It had been premiered in Berlin in 1927 and then forgotten. I took the score back to Gustav Meier, who had conducted the 1971 Weill performances, and we realized it might make a splash if premiered on a Yale Collegium orchestral program. We determined that the parts were available from Universal Edition in Europe, ordered them, and began rehearsing. The Yale publicity department decided to make a major event of the American premiere, but then Lenya suddenly tried to stop the performance because it wasn't under her supervision. Having rented the parts, we were within our rights to perform it, but the Music Department diplomatically decided not to call it a premiere. The performance took place on 5 October 1972, with grad student soprano Emilia Simone in the solo role. Lenya did not attend.

A final irony: the official U.S. premiere of *Der neue Orpheus* took place in the same hall a few years later, probably before some of the same audience members. Erich Kunzel conducted it with the New Haven Symphony, of which I had been concertmaster while at Yale but had left when I moved to Boston. I was pleased to attend that performance, which featured soprano Phyllis Curtin and violinist Ruggiero Ricci. As far as I know, Lenya was not there.

Sincerely,
Daniel Stepner

Yale DMA, 1978
Artistic Director, Aston Magna Festival and Foundation
Former Concertmaster, Handel and Haydn Society
Former First Violinist, Lydian String Quartet
Professor Emeritus, Brandeis University

Correction

In the Winter 2025–26 issue of the *Newsletter*, the photograph of Olim's castle on p. 10 comes from the production of *Der Silbersee* in Magdeburg, not Leipzig, as the caption implied. Caspar Neher did not design the sets in Magdeburg.

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Old Shows,
New Audiences:

Revival *or* Revision?

by Daniel Egan

Musical theater inevitably reflects the dreams, values, mythologies, and evolving attitudes toward popular entertainment of its historical moment. Musicals from roughly the first two-thirds of the twentieth century—including the so-called Golden Age of American musical theater—offer snapshots of American culture at a time when issues of race, gender, and women’s rights were generally viewed quite differently from how we see them today. Reviving these works therefore presents a recurring challenge: how can a new generation of creatives honor the intentions of the original while remaining responsive to contemporary audiences and values?

As an art form shaped by both commercial and artistic ambitions, American musical theater has always been tethered to changes in the social, economic, and cultural forces that inform its content. These shifts have altered the dramaturgical questions audiences bring to revivals and have encouraged creatives to seek ways of adapting older shows without sacrificing their essential character. The evolving style of newer musicals can also exert an influence on the revival of older works: by eschewing the presentational formality and often heightened theatricality of older musicals, they change audiences’ expectations for revivals as well.

These cultural shifts affect not only which stories get told, but also how they are told and who gets to tell them. As twentieth-century musicals grow older, many struggle to remain relevant—or appropriately sensitive—to changing attitudes toward race, gender, and representation. Should producers revise the libretto? Embrace or disregard race- or gender-conscious casting? Or should they preserve the original relationship between text, music, casting, and historical context without regard to contemporary sensibilities?

There is, of course, no universal solution—and crudely applying “presentism” to shows from another era robs these shows of their cultural context entirely, however flawed that context might seem to modern sensibilities. Every revival poses its own dramaturgical questions, requiring producers and artists to balance fidelity to the original with the demands of a changing culture. Rather than prescribing a single approach, it might be more useful to consider some recurring scenarios that illuminate different paths forward. Weill’s Broadway shows pose three scenarios frequently encountered across the musical theater canon: 1) works in which race is inseparable from the plot; 2) works where the treatment of gender reflects assumptions of their time; and 3) works whose libretti have become dramatically or culturally untenable without significant revision. Although there might be significant overlap—and certainly these are not the only possible categories—these three areas of exploration will nonetheless propel us into consideration of what best practices might be for the field going forward.

Let us begin with perhaps the clearest example, in which race is an indispensable element of the dramatic structure. In such cases, the relationship of race and plot cannot be altered without drastically changing the story. Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson’s *Lost in the Stars* (1949), based on Alan Paton’s novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, depicts early apartheid South Africa and the crisis of faith precipitated by racism and a divided culture. Altering those dynamics would, in effect, create an entirely different show, one divorced from the intentions of its creators. Today’s licensing agreements recognize the problem by requiring revivals to maintain the cast breakdown according to race from the original production. (In recent years, the Weill Foundation has authorized a revised script by Tazewell Thompson that restores previously cut material and replaces the original ending with a reprise of “Cry, the Beloved Country.” These revisions respect Weill and Anderson’s wishes while maintaining the fundamental relationships at the core of the story.)

Many musicals outside Weill’s *oeuvre* present a similar situation: *Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The King and I*, *West Side Story*, *The Wiz*, *Ragtime*, *In the Heights*, or more recently *Hamilton*, *A Strange Loop*, *Paradise Square*, and *Buena Vista Social Club*, to name a few titles. Where race or ethnicity is a fundamental part of the story, or where the thematic content focuses on issues of race, the original relationships of text, music, and story are essential parts

of the foundation and should not be altered. While certain cuts or amendments might be considered in light of shrinking attention spans (especially considering the length of shows like *Show Boat*) the relationship of race, culture, and style is integral to each work’s dramatic identity.

But even such a seemingly clear first approach can be complicated. To cite one example, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I* (1951) depends on the contrast of East and West as defined by race, culture, and sensibility, and thus demands a split cast of Asian and white actors. Written from the point of view of the West, however, the show has been criticized for exoticizing aspects of Asian culture at the expense of a more nuanced and realistic portrayal. This hurdle proves insurmountable to some, given the show’s Western point of view. Others ask if replacing the book might satisfy a changing worldview. Sravya Tadepalli in *American Theatre* (26 April 2021) suggests that a rewritten book could offer a satisfying narrative without stereotyping the King and people of Siam as backward and barbaric. Bartlett Sher’s recent Lincoln Center revival (2015) does not change the text, but adapts directorial perspective, design, and subtext to suggest that the cultural critique went both ways, not just from the point of view of the Westerners. David Henry Hwang and Jeanine Tesori’s original musical *Soft Power* takes another approach to *The King and I*, completely reversing the original’s exclusively Western view and rebalancing the storytelling to better reflect realities of Asian-American values and integrity. Another example: both the 2008 Broadway revival and 2021 Spielberg/Kushner remake of *West Side Story* on film address clichéd aspects of portrayals in the 1960 film by incorporating more authentic aspects of Puerto Rican culture through casting and the inclusion of Spanish in the text.

“Each generation inherits the responsibility of asking new questions of familiar works.”

While no two of these examples are exactly alike, they share with *Lost in the Stars* the component of race as an essential dramatic element and, indeed, rely on the relationship between characters of different backgrounds to create and release dramatic tension.

Lady in the Dark (Weill, Moss Hart and Ira Gershwin, 1941) exemplifies a second type of difficult-to-revive show, one whose plot relies on gendered behavioral assumptions based in its time, many if not all of them difficult to align with a more modern perspective. *Lady in the Dark* centers on fashion executive Liza Elliott, whose struggle to reconcile professional success with society’s expectations of marriage and domesticity reflects assumptions deeply rooted in 1941 America. The innovations of the original production included its exploration of Freudian psychoanalysis and Liza Elliott’s character, so different from the typical ingénue of the period. Over time, given advances in psychoanalysis and society’s understanding of the role of women and female agency, what seemed innovative at the time now often appears “hopelessly dated and sexist” (David Savran, *Tell it To The World*, Oxford University Press, 2024, p. 225), yet the show’s unique structure remains a milestone

of musical theater history, while Liza's quest for happiness is still recognizable today as a woman's journey toward self-acceptance.

Productions of *Lady in the Dark* in Europe have explored ways to revive this important work without requiring drastic changes to book, music, or lyrics, while acknowledging advances in society's understanding of gender roles since 1941. As discussed in *Tell it To The World*, the 2011 and 2021 productions directed by Matthias Davids (in Hannover and Vienna) manage "to stage the piece as both a 1941 period piece and a contemporary fable" (p. 226). Davids accomplished that by staging the piece metatheatrically. The production approaches Liza's dream sequences as "hallucinatory," "seductive," and "calculatedly over the top" where "each springs out of the memories, desires, and fears that are unleashed by Liza's hours on the psychiatrist's couch" (p. 226)—in direct contrast to scenes in Liza's office, which are contemporary and realistic in tone. Savran argues that the "cartoon-like" dream sequences illustrate "with great clarity Liza's desperate—and unsuccessful—attempt to internalize the pretty little fairy tale princess that her parents, and the culture around her, want her to become" (p. 227). Ultimately, these productions, as well as Martin G. Berger's Basel production in 2022, update Liza Elliott's emotional journey without robbing the show of its basic format and structure. Instead of treating psychoanalysis as prescriptive, these stagings leave the idea of a "cure" open-ended. Instead of making everything right when Liza yields control of her magazine to a man (Charley Johnson), the new productions emphasize her strength and independence through *collaboration* with Charley, instead of abject submission to his will. Berger's production goes one step further by making Charley gay, thereby removing any romantic element from the resolution of Liza's emotional journey.

Unlike the previous category, where a racial component in the storytelling created a fixed tension or dynamic, the directorial updating here is aided by the relative abstraction of the dreams in the original script and its clear differentiation of realistic spoken dialogue and the often-spectacular dreamscapes in Liza's subconscious. Thus, her journey toward happiness and self-acceptance can remain intact even as contemporary productions reinterpret the cultural assumptions surrounding her.

Lest we conclude that only European productions reinterpret motivation and subtext in classic musical theater, Bartlett Sher's recent Lincoln Center productions of both *South Pacific* (2008) and *The King and I* (2015, discussed above) offer American examples of changes in directorial point of view to uncover previously ignored aspects of the relationship of characters and the ethos of the time.

Our third example of an "unrevivable" musical illustrates

how difficult it is for *any* musical to succeed. *The Firebrand of Florence* (Weill, Gershwin, and Edwin Justus Mayer, 1945, based on Mayer's play) offers earnest work by all three collaborators but has a libretto that feels at odds with the tone and ambition of its musical setting. Weill envisioned the piece as an "intelligent, intimate operetta," and wrote it accordingly but the book (called "listless" and "soporific" by critics at the time) leans more heavily on musical comedy tropes and caricatures of the period. This juxtaposition was further complicated by a production directed by John Murray Anderson and produced by Max Gordon, both of whom were more inclined toward spectacle than theatrical realism.

The Firebrand of Florence might succeed as a concert work, but without substantial revision, its libretto makes a full theatrical revival difficult to imagine. This is regrettable, as Weill's score is among his most tuneful, featuring songs such as "Sing Me Not a Ballad" and "You're Far Too Near Me," while Ira Gershwin's lyrics display their customary elegance. The problem lies not in the music, but in a mismatched relationship among book, score, and production style.

There are many musicals whose plots have become dated, whose books sit uneasily beside their scores, or whose original dramatic premises no longer resonate with contemporary audiences for any number of reasons, including but not limited to matters of race and gender discussed above. Without substantial—sometimes radical—revision, such works are often considered unrevivable. During the early decades of the twentieth century, librettos frequently served as little more than scaffolding for a succession of

memorable songs. *No, No, Nanette* (1925), for example, underwent extensive revision by Burt Shevelove for its 1971 Broadway revival. Songs were added and cut, character motivations reconsidered, and the tone shifted from satirical to a more broadly appealing, family-friendly sensibility. Without those changes, Vincent Youmans's score, including standards such as "Tea for Two," might have faded from the repertoire.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* (1958) offers another example of a work whose original book has often been criticized as irredeemably dated. David Henry Hwang's 2001 adaptation reimaged the libretto, presenting the central Asian-American experience with greater nuance and far less reliance on stereotype. *Chess* (Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus, and Tim Rice) evolved through multiple incarnations after its 1984 concept album, West End premiere (1986), and revised Broadway production (1988). For decades, the show's score was widely admired while its book was



regarded as too weak to support anything beyond concert performance. The 2025 revival, featuring a new book by Danny Strong and directed by Michael Mayer, represents another attempt to create a dramatically satisfying theatrical structure for a beloved score by essentially fusing aspects of a concert and more traditional staging.

Sometimes, particularly when a musical has become deeply embedded in the repertoire, bold reinterpretation can be artistically revelatory. Daniel Fish's *Oklahoma!* (2019), for example, posed dramaturgical questions that generations of productions had largely ignored, particularly concerning the treatment of outsiders such as Jud Fry and the unquestioned privilege embodied by Curly McLain.

Bold reinterpretation can be artistically revelatory.

Such reinterpretations raise broader questions. Does a canonical work invite more radical reinvention than a lesser-known musical? How much historical fidelity should a revival preserve? Or, because musical theater is an inherently stylized art form, can it transcend the assumptions of its original time through new approaches to casting, design, and interpretation without losing its connection to the past?

These examples merely scratch the surface. This brief examination of race, gender, and changing cultural attitudes cannot hope to resolve the broader questions surrounding the revival

of musicals from the last century; every musical presents its own artistic, historical, and cultural challenges, and no single solution can accommodate every work. There can be no hard and fast rules governing the revival of classic musicals. Some works invite provocative reinterpretation through innovative casting or radically different directorial perspectives. Others require greater fidelity because their historical circumstances are inseparable from their dramatic meaning. The success of *Hamilton* likewise reminds us that sometimes, reimagining theatrical form and content can transform our relationship to history without abandoning historical subject matter altogether.

Ultimately, the goal of reviving great musicals of the past is neither museum-quality preservation nor wholesale revision. Rather, it is thoughtful stewardship in pursuit of preserving the essence of these works in a new time and cultural era—and introducing them to a new generation. Musical theater has always existed at the intersection of art, commerce, and culture, and each generation inherits the responsibility of asking new questions of familiar works. If classic musicals continue to challenge audiences—by testing their conceptions of race, gender, history, national identity, or other pressing issues—they remain not relics of the past, but living works of theater responsive to changes in the national ethos, capable of revealing new truths with every revival.

Daniel Egan is Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Shen Curriculum for Musical Theater at Yale.

ABOVE: Krista Marie Yu as Linda Low in East West Players' *Flower Drum Song*, Los Angeles, 2026. For this production, David Henry Hwang has revisited his earlier revision of the book (2001), further updating it to reflect today's concerns. PHOTO: MIKE PALMA

FACING PAGE: Damon Daunno (Curly McLain) and Rebecca Naomi Jones (Laurey Williams) in *Oklahoma!* at Circle in the Square, NYC, 2019. PHOTO: LITTLE FANG PHOTO





Asking the Tough Questions—*Together*

by Francesca Zambello

What does it mean to live within a federation of states? What is an individual's responsibility to the collective whole, and what is the nation's responsibility to those who live within its borders? As I write this essay, I am beginning rehearsals for a new production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, set in what was then called Indian Territory, just before Oklahoma became the 46th state to join the Union. It's a straightforward production, set more than a century ago, but the questions it poses couldn't feel timelier. It's a stage full of competing immigrant factions—the live-free-or-die cowboys, the fence-building farmers, the itinerant salesman looking to convince people that purchased goods are the path to happiness. And yes, the story centers on a classic love triangle—two of them, in fact—but the larger societal questions give the romances their tension and spark and continue to make *Oklahoma!* hit home.

I've never directed it before, but the piece has been part of my life for a long time. When I was five years old, my mother was doing summer stock on Cape Cod, where they used to perform a musical every week. I spent the evenings watching from the wings or waiting in her dressing room. (Of course, that would be totally illegal now, but it changed my life.) *Oklahoma!* made an impression on me, and I knew all the songs by heart by the

end of the summer. Little did I realize that the story deals with a complicated moment in American history.

As a director and as a producer, I've always looked for shows that work on two levels, that are simultaneously inviting and challenging. I've devoted my life to telling stories that encourage us to look at who we are and who we might become, for better and for worse. For me, the highest artistic values and popular entertainment go hand in hand; serious craft and audience appeal should, as well. You need plenty of both to write a memorable 32-bar song; a lot of self-styled "serious" composers couldn't manage it.

Some artists wear their esoteric inaccessibility as a badge of honor, but you can't have the big conversations if you can't get people into the room. Good theatrical storytelling makes us think, but it also makes us feel. And most importantly, it makes us feel together. Instead of tapping out strings of comments and emojis in the middle of a sleepless night, we commit to sharing space, to feeling each other's sighs, groans, and laughter.

This past January, as I was putting together a new production of *Ragtime* for Opera Montana, Washington National Opera (WNO) voted to leave the Kennedy Center, our home for decades. So I found myself split in two: in the early mornings and

late evenings, I was working with my WNO colleagues to reinvent the company. In between, I was in rehearsal with characters also wrestling with challenges of reinvention.

Even though *Ragtime* is set a few years after *Oklahoma!*, it still depicts America in a time of great social change. In fact, looking back, it's hard to think of a time when America hasn't been "in process." The show is set a century in the past, and while we now have greater aspirations to unity and fairness than we did one hundred years ago, our culture is still riven by deep divisions, often stemming from the divide between the haves and have-nots. Our production's slightly abstract esthetic, driven partly by practical/budgetary concerns, also helped make the bridge between then and now more explicit. Ultimately, for me, *Ragtime* is a piece about the urgency of building bridges between disparate worlds. That's what we desperately need today, which is why this show retains such power.

Meanwhile, as my WNO colleagues and I worked through the logistics of the move, our 2026 spring season was in the news in a way that it had never been before. There were some who assumed the titles were an intentional response to recent national events. *Treemonisha* is a story of the power of education. *The Crucible* warns against a mob cloaking its malevolence in virtue.

The narrative of *West Side Story* is, in Bernstein's words, an out and out plea for tolerance. That trio of shows might have seemed hand-picked for the moment, but they were on the docket long before Trump's coup at the Kennedy Center. As an opera producer, I don't have the luxury of programming shows based on the news of the day; our schedules are set a year or two in advance. In our programming talks, General Director Tim O'Leary and I are always looking for repertory with enough depth to provide resonance in whatever time they happen to hit the stage—and enough appeal to get people in the door. The musical styles represented in our spring 2026 season were very different, but for me, they represented three equally engaging modes of musical storytelling.

Inviting, yet challenging. Sometimes as a producer, I have to dig deeper to find the appeal, the "hook" that will sell tickets. (For instance, *Treemonisha* is not a familiar title, but everyone knows Scott Joplin; the name Robert Ward may not be on the tip of everyone's tongue, but a well-known title goes a long way.) Similarly, especially in the case of certain canonical operas, my collaborators and I sometimes have to remind our audience of the serious social and political messages that inspired the melodies that make them swoon.

Interestingly, my calendar these days seems split between opera and musicals. Fifteen years ago, when I announced that Glimmerglass would include a canonical American musical as part of every season, it caused a huge stir—not entirely positive. But I felt strongly that these works are our American way of continuing the art form that has never stopped changing. I remember some fierce debates we had in those early years. Could we sell *Candide* in the "musical" slot? Would audiences accept *Lost in the Stars* in the "opera" slot? Now those questions feel quaint and even irrelevant. Opera companies across the country, and around the

world, have finally embraced our American repertory. To me, the labels are the least interesting and least important things about these works; what counts is the impact on audiences. I had the opportunity to direct *Street Scene* in 1995, and I don't know why that piece isn't done more often. To me, it is like *Porgy and Bess*: a brilliant melding of the European and American traditions, with recognizable characters, great tunes, epic grandeur—and unsettling questions.

Oklahoma! is revolutionary for many reasons. As I revisit the piece in 2026, I am especially struck by the ending. The conventional plot—the pair of love triangles—is resolved about ten minutes before the end of the show. But then Jud challenges Curly to a fight, and Jud is accidentally killed when he falls on his knife. The settlers' argument about what to do next is an argument we are still having today. Can we rely on our instincts—individual or collective—to guide our behavior? Or are we better off with a system of laws and sacrosanct procedures that apply equally to all? I tend to believe that sensible laws are the best way to protect the interests of the most vulnerable. And then I think about what today's laws would have to say about a five-year-old child spending her evenings alone backstage: I would have missed out on an essential part of my life. Laws have limits, and striking the balance between protecting and suffocating is simply another tough question.

Good theatrical storytelling makes us think, but it also makes us feel. And most importantly, it makes us feel together.

Just like the world of *Oklahoma!*, the world of *Ragtime*, and the world of *Street Scene*, ours is a world that is changing fast, and it is easy to despair of ever reaching common ground. Gathering in the theater is an invitation to consider the challenges of modern life *together*. It is a powerful antidote to the virtual spaces in which algorithms

feed us "connections" that only reinforce our existing positions. I often think of how ideological opposites Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia used to sit side by side at the opera. I hope that my productions, whether labeled as "opera" or "musical," can draw people with incompatible beliefs into the same room to feel together and wrestle with the same questions as Oklahoma's farmers and cowhands. Who have we been? What are we becoming? How do we live together in peace?

Francesca Zambello is a renowned director of opera and theater and a leading light in the arts who has made an indelible mark around the world. Her home is New York City and Cooperstown but her work has graced the stages of the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Bolshoi, Covent Garden, the Munich Staatsoper, Paris Opera, New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and English National Opera, as well as Broadway and the West End. At Washington National Opera and Glimmerglass, she has commissioned over fifty short works, seven youth operas, and ten full-length works. As a producer, she has overseen not only her own productions but also produced over one hundred titles.

WEILL 2026-27 A NEW SEASON BECKONS

BARCELONA OJAI DUISBURG
ZURICH STUTTGART VIENNA
MUNICH LONDON THE HAGUE
PARIS WIESBADEN DRESDEN
NEW YORK MADRID ST. GALLEN
GENEVA DESSAU SAARBRÜCKEN
LEIPZIG UTRECHT AMSTERDAM

● 29 Jun – 17 Sept 2026 | Barcelona

La ópera de tres reales (Die Dreigroschenoper) enjoys a long run at the fiftieth annual Festival Grec. Director Marta Pazos promises an interpretation following “profoundly ecofeminist” principles without neglecting the work’s humor. Performed in a new Catalan translation by Marc Rosich. After the festival, the production moves to Teatre Lliure for nineteen additional performances through 11 October.

● 11–19 Sept 2026 | London

Charing Cross Theatre: *The Seven Deadly Sins* (double bill with Poulenc’s *La voix humaine*). “Performed together, these works trace a continuous psychological portrait of a woman pushed to her limits,” says the theater. Katherine McIndoe plays the lead in both works. The *Sins* will be performed in English in the arrangement for two pianos and percussion by John Greer, licensed by Schott.

● 17 Sept – 4 Nov 2026 | Zurich

Pfauentheater: *Die Dreigroschenoper*, directed by Pinar Karabulut, conducted by Bettina Ostermeier. The Schauspielhaus opens the season with a new production honoring the work’s anti-fascist tradition in what Karabulut calls a “glamorous, sharp-witted production.” (10 performances)

● 27 Sept – 25 Oct 2026 | Munich

Residenztheater: *Die Dreigroschenoper*, directed by Philipp Stölzl, conducted by Stephen Delaney. The theater management puts its finger on the world of the show: “everything—love, passion, crime—has monetary value and will be evaluated accordingly.” (6 performances)

● 22–23 Oct 2026 | Leipzig

Gewandhaus: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in concert, conducted by HK Gruber. **More on p. 13.**

● 12 Nov 2026 | New York

Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center: *Happy End* in concert, with Ana Karneža as The Fly; Rob Ainsley, music director. **More on p. 15.**

● 18 Nov 2026 – 23 Jan ‘27 | St. Gallen

Theater St. Gallen (Switzerland): *Tom Sawyer und Huckleberry Finn*, directed by Barbara-David Brüesch. Just before Weill died, he began work on a musical version of *Huckleberry Finn* with Maxwell Anderson. The five songs that he drafted have been given a new home, along with many other Weill-Anderson songs, in a dramatization of Mark Twain’s novels by the German playwright John von Düffel. Premiered by Deutsches Theater Göttingen in 2014, the show has been revived three times in Germany. (11 performances)

● 2–4 Dec 2026 | Amsterdam

Concertgebouw: *Der Silbersee* (concert version). Conductor Iván Fischer, a fixture at the Concertgebouw, has a history with *Der Silbersee*, having led a concert performance of the work in Berlin’s Konzerthaus in 2015 (“superbly conducted,” commented David Savran in the Spring 2015 *Newsletter*). He delivers again on a program that also includes Stravinsky’s *Firebird Suite*.

● 8–10 Jan 2027 | Netherlands

Rufus Wainwright reunites with the Metropole-Orkest, conducted by Chris Walden, for a brief tour of “Wainwright Does Weill,” now recorded (see review on p. 22). Three nights, three performances: the artists touch down in Amsterdam, Utrecht, and The Hague.

● 15–17 Jan 2027 | Madrid

Orquesta Nacional de España: *Die sieben Todsünden*. Ute Lemper sings Anna I and II in this concert performance conducted by Kent Nagano.

● 27 Feb – 22 May 2027 | Dessau

Anhaltisches Theater: *Tom Sawyer*, directed by Jana Eimer. A reworked version of *Tom Sawyer und Huckleberry Finn* (see p. 10) by von Düffel, with additional songs arranged by Kai Tietje. This crowd-pleasing, family-friendly show premiered at the Komische Oper Berlin in 2023 to wide acclaim and appeared at Oper Graz the following season (Graz revives it in October). Dessau’s new production will open the annual Kurt Weill Fest and remain in repertory. (7 performances)

● 3 Mar – 8 Nov 2027 | Vienna

Volksoper: *Die sieben Todsünden* paired with Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*, both with Wallis Giunta. As you might expect, the double bill emphasizes satirical treatment of bourgeois morals and greed. British director Rachael Hewer makes her company debut; Robert Houssart conducts. (15 performances)

● 30 Mar 2027 | Paris

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: *Die sieben Todsünden*, *Der neue Orpheus*, and *Fantaisie symphonique* (Symphony no. 2), conducted by HK Gruber, with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. **More on p. 13.**

● 3 Apr – 10 Jun 2027 | Wiesbaden

Hessisches Theater: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Director Wolfgang Nägele sees *Mahagonny* as an “artist’s rendering of consumer hell.” Weill veteran and Lenya Competition award winner Tora Augestad will take the role of Begbick. (7 performances)

● 3 Apr – 15 Jun 2027 | Saarbrücken

Saarlandisches Staatstheater: *Street Scene*, directed by Geertje Boeden. The first professional production in Germany since the 2018–19 season will be sung in English. (8 performances)

● 10 Apr – 3 May 2027 | Dresden

Staatsschauspiel: *Happy End*, directed by Tom Kühnel. Dresden has become something of a Weill hot spot, with major productions of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Street Scene*, and *One Touch of Venus* within the last fifteen years. *Happy End*, written by Weill, Brecht, and Hauptmann in 1929 to capitalize on the success of *Die Dreigroschenoper* the previous year, flopped memorably at its opening but has since joined the repertory. (3 performances)

● 17 Apr – 10 Jun 2027 | Duisburg

Deutsche Oper am Rhein: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, directed by Elisabeth Stöppler, conducted by Katharina Müllner. (6 performances)

● 30 Apr 2027 | Stuttgart

Philharmonic: *Der Lindberghflug*. In honor of the hundredth anniversary of Lindbergh’s historic flight across the Atlantic, as immortalized by Weill, Brecht, and Hauptmann, Hans-Christoph Rademann conducts the cantata for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra.

● 5–13 Jun 2027 | Geneva

Grand Théâtre: *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Barrie Kosky’s Berliner Ensemble production has visited Adelaide, Beijing, and Brooklyn, so a short run to Geneva won’t seem like much to the original cast, most of whom will perform there. The Ensemble will bring along Adam Benzwi, music director of the original production.

● Jun 2027 | Ojai

Ojai Festival: *The Threepenny Opera*. Details have yet to emerge, but the early buzz is tantalizing indeed. Newly installed festival Music Director Chris Thile is working on a new version of *Threepenny* with vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant and pianist Sullivan Fortner.

WIDE WORLD OF WEILL



Lady in the Spotlight

Hard on the heels of the first-ever published vocal score of *Love Life*, a new vocal score of its predecessor in the early development of the concept musical, *Lady in the Dark*, will go on sale later this year. Published by Kurt Weill Music and distributed by Hal Leonard, the piano score, matching other new materials derived from the critical edition, is intended for practical use. Copious instrumental cues are provided throughout, so that it can function as a conductor's short score. It also includes, for the first time, incidental, dance, and cut music. The piano reduction was prepared by John Bax-indine, with cover design by Mike Gerard.



PHOTO: SIMON PAULY

Berlin Can't Get Enough

9 July 2026: Joana Mallwitz took it outside with the Berlin Konzerthausorchester, leading an open-air performance of Weill's *Fantaisie symphonique* (Symphony no. 2) and Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and *Rhapsody in Blue*. The huge crowd enjoyed themselves, and no wonder; *Der Tagesspiegel* critic Ulrich Amling noted that in Weill's work, "Mallwitz and her orchestra bowled the audience over with a distinctively Berlin tone of brash elegance." Mallwitz has conducted the symphony frequently and recorded it for Deutsche Grammophon with the Konzerthausorchester, with which she recently extended her contract through the 2032–33 season.

Aix Equals the Unknown

The Aix-en-Provence festival, which has featured *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in recent years, brought in a new General Director following the untimely death of Pierre Audi in May 2025. American writer-director Ted Huffman has taken the reins. In an interview with *Opera Now*, he said, "I love a lot of the Kurt Weill pieces that aren't Broadway, from his German period." Weill's two best-known German stage works having been done recently at Aix, could that portend production of a less familiar entry from Weill's catalogue? Huffman, who has directed a version of *Street Scene* with artists from the Académie of Opéra National de Paris (see Spring 2024 *Newsletter*), didn't say.



Victoria Clark as Liza Elliott in *Lady in the Dark*

PHOTO: RICHARD TERMINE

We(i)l Deserved

The MasterVoices (formerly Collegiate Chorus) spring gala celebrated Victoria Clark and her remarkable career, which memorably included a star turn in *Lady in the Dark* (City Center, 2019) produced by MasterVoices, directed and conducted by Ted Sperling. The A-list performers at 54 Below on 21 April 2026 included Kate Baldwin and Brian Stokes Mitchell, who starred in the Encores! production of *Love Life*, adapted and directed by Clark. They serenaded the crowd with their big solo numbers, "Mr. Right" and "This Is the Life," and sang together in "I Remember It Well." Ben Davis, who appeared with Clark in *Lady*, joined the fun with a rendition of "This Is New."



PHOTO: PAUL KOLNIK

Choreography Preserved

Music Theatre International (MTI) Concert Dance division has announced that dances created by Lynne Taylor-Corbett are now available for licensing. Taylor-Corbett's repertory included *The Seven Deadly Sins*, staged at New York City Ballet in 2011, sung and danced by Patti LuPone and Wendy Whelan, respectively. Howard Kissel acclaimed Taylor-Corbett's "splendid" staging, which "manages the difficult task of balancing the sense of abrasive comedy abundant in the music with a lyricism that reflects its melodic melancholy." The *Sins* is one of the fifty or so of her works offered by MTI. Apparently, this is the first time that theaters and dance companies can license choreography for the *Sins*.



Just on Tour

Just in Time, the Bobby Darin biomusical in which "Mack the Knife" plays a prominent part, continues its lengthy Broadway run, with Jeremy Jordan having replaced Jonathan Groff in the lead role. It's been so successful that a national tour is in the works, set to begin 1 June 2027 in Schenectady, N.Y. See justintimebroadway.com/tour for the schedule.

Gruber Meets Weill in Leipzig and Paris

Landmark Performances at the Gewandhaus and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées during the 2026–27 season



holds special meaning for him as well. "To have a top-flight orchestra like the Gewandhaus along with a marvelous group of soloists and the MDR Chorus place their trust in me ... naturally has great symbolic value; more importantly, it gives us the opportunity to do justice to the authors' conception in every detail."

On 30 March, Gruber and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra swoop into the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées to recapitulate their recent recording for BIS (see review on p. 23) with a couple of twists. Instead of the Violin Concerto, Gruber has selected Weill's *Fantaisie symphonique* to round out the program (his recording of that work with the SCO was released on BIS in 2023). *Die sieben Todsünden*, meanwhile, will be sung in German by Nina Stemme, who takes the role for the first time. Soprano Jennifer France reprises her role as vocalist in *Der neue Orpheus*.

HK Gruber and Wallis Giunta at Carnegie Hall
PHOTO: STEPHANIE BERGER

Weill, Symphonist

The next volume of the Kurt Weill Edition will encompass his symphonic works: the *Sinfonie in einem Satz* (Symphony no. 1), the *Fantaisie symphonique* (Symphony no. 2), and Weill's first surviving composition for orchestra, the Suite in E Major (1918). Edited by James Holmes, the volume includes authoritative scores of both symphonies, with numerous errors from previous editions corrected. One striking change in the *Fantaisie symphonique*: The score edited by David Drew and published by Schott in 1966 omitted the percussion parts that Weill added after completing the manuscript and before the premiere. The newly edited score restores them as an option. Scores and parts of the symphonies have replaced the old performing materials and have already been battle-tested several times in recent years, notably by Joana Mallwitz both in live

performances and in her award-winning recording on Deutsche Grammophon, *The Kurt Weill Album*.

Weill's manuscript score of the Suite survives, but it contains very few dynamics and expressive markings. In the judgment of the KWE Editorial Board, it was impossible to prepare the work on the same footing as other works presented by the Edition; Weill simply did not leave enough information to derive an authoritative score. Weill's manuscript is transcribed in full and placed in an appendix. Holmes went on to add indications throughout the score to create a separate performing edition, which was given its world premiere by the Anhaltische Philharmonie at the Kurt Weill Fest Dessau on 5 March 2026. The performance was then broadcast on Deutschlandradio.

Listen

Weill's works continue to appeal to recording artists of all stripes, and every year sees a healthy helping of new CD's and streams. A sampling of what's new from the first part of 2026:



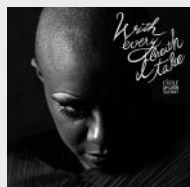
Dancing on a Volcano (Ensemble Modern Medien EMCD-053): This live recording, made in Cologne in 2025, relays a complete Ensemble Modern concert that was also performed at Carnegie Hall (see review in the Spring 2024 Newsletter), conducted by HK Gruber. Works by Hindemith, Korngold, and Schoenberg set the stage for the world-premiere recording of the fifteen-player version of *Die sieben Todsünden*, sung in German by mezzo-soprano Wallis Giunta and the male quartet amarcord. Clive Paget of *The Guardian* applied his seal of approval: "The jewel in the crown is Gruber and Christian Muthspiel's Kurt Weill Foundation-sanctioned arrangement of *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Wallis Giunta is more opera diva than Weimar chanteuse but there's no shortage of bite in her voice, while amarcord's male quartet kvetch and wheedle as her rapacious family. Gruber's razor-sharp yet flexible interpretation drips idiomatic venom" (15 May 2026).



The Seven Deadly Sins (BBC Music vol. 34, no. 5): American singer Storm Large has been one of the most prolific Annas over the last fifteen years, having performed Weill's *ballet-chanté* dozens of times during that span, accompanied by the male quartet Hudson Shad. Until this year, there were no commercial recordings of her work, but *BBC Music* magazine supplemented its March 2026 issue with a 2016 recording featuring the BBC Symphony conducted by James Gaffigan.



Berlin! Berlin! Berlin! Kabarett und Exil (BIS-2827): In a departure from her usual repertoire, mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter tackles nineteen German songs from the first half of the twentieth century, accompanied by the Salon Orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin under the expert guidance of conductor Adam Benzwi. The songs cover a striking emotional and political range. On the contemplative side, she offers Weill and Brecht's "Marterl" (Memorial) from *Das Berliner Requiem*, an homage to left-wing martyr Rosa Luxemburg. This marks the first time in over thirty years that von Otter has recorded Weill. *Speak Low* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1994) included *Die sieben Todsünden* along with thirteen songs; John Eliot Gardiner conducted the NDR-Sinfonieorchester.



With Every Breath I Take (Nonesuch 075597896121): Cécile McLorin Salvant's jazz vocals continue to win wide acclaim. Her latest disc includes a haunting rendition of "Barbara-Song" (from *The Threepenny Opera*) in Marc Blitzstein's translation. Salvant wrote, "Weill has a way of making lyrics come alive like no other ... His music goes places we don't expect; it is vast, ambitious, challenging and generous" (see Winter 2024 Newsletter). She repays Weill's ambition in her own repertory choices, with three songs committed to disc so far: "Somehow I Never Could Believe," "First Threepenny Finale" (The World Is Mean), and "Barbara-Song."



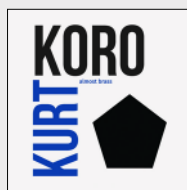
Mujer Fatal (Decca 487 2240): The youngest Carmen ever at both the Met and Royal Opera House, Aigul Akhmetshina has just brought out her second recital album, accompanied by Sir Antonio Pappano. The varied track list paints a portrait in music of "a woman in constant transformation, complex, emotional, strong and vulnerable." Weill is included among the sixteen composers represented, with "Speak Low."



Brooklyn Suite (Harmonia Mundi HMM 905400): Tenor Zachary Wilder and pianist/arranger Rob Mounsey collaborate on an album of "songs, lieder, and arias," mostly from the twentieth century. Weill makes two appearances with "Bilbao-Song" and "Lonely House," while the first track is Blitzstein's "Stay in My Arms" (1935). *Diario de Sevilla* (25 January 2026) noted that "Weill occupies a crucial spot in this cartography of sound. 'Bilbao-Song' and 'Lonely House' allow us to observe, from different perspectives, his conception of music with a social purpose, with room for political commentary, lyricism, and popular forms."



Kurt Weill Songs (Brilliant Classics 97704): Every year brings at least a couple of all-Weill song CD's. Greek soprano Eleni Lydia Stamellou and pianist Alexandra Listova collaborate to produce this recent entry, which boasts fifteen songs covering about twenty years of Weill's career. Stamellou selects songs from German, French, and American works, opening with "Alabama-Song" and closing with what has become a perennial Weill favorite, "Youkali."



Koro Kurt (Caligola 2377): The Italian jazz brass quintet Koro Almost Brass gives us a quirky Weill tribute, in which renditions of his songs (all arranged by saxophonist Cristiano Arcelli) are interspersed with new numbers inspired by Weill, either commissioned or composed by members of the band. The six Weill tracks—all jazz standards—range from "Mack the Knife" to "Lost in the Stars." The band's press release notes, "[Weill's] musical universe lies at the crossroads of highbrow and popular culture, jazz, and contemporary music, in perfect harmony with Koro's intentions."



Love of My Life (ACT 8040-2): Versatile Swedish trombonist Nils Landgren celebrates his seventieth birthday, and the long career that has led up to it, with this album. Along with a jazz trio, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and arranger Vince Mendoza, Landgren mixes his own compositions with a rich selection of others' works. That includes two Weill songs, "Lost in the Stars" (which Landgren has recorded previously) and "Speak Low." To give an idea of his musical ambit, *allmusic.com* notes, "Landgren has appeared on some 500 albums, including collections from artists as diverse as Herbie Hancock, ABBA, the Crusaders, and Wyclef Jean."



PHOTOS: BRENT DELANDY/THE GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL

Bilbao, Surabaya, Cooperstown?

A tour of seven cities in upstate New York, with an added stop in western Massachusetts, came to an end on 31 July 2026 at the Glimmerglass Festival. A new concert version of *Happy End* made the rounds, created by Kelley Rourke from Michael Feingold's familiar English adaptation of the original, with Weill/Lenya Artist Ana Karneža as The Fly. Fellow Lenya Competition alumni Christine Price, Lisa Marie Rogali, and Jason Zacher also took part. The show was helmed by Mary Birnbaum, Artistic Director of Opera Saratoga, and Glimmerglass Artistic Director Rob Ainsley handled music directing and keyboard chores and even took a small part onstage. The tour resulted from the cooperative effort of four organizations: Glimmerglass, Opera Saratoga, Finger Lakes Opera, and The Seagle Festival.

Reviewer Geraldine Freedman (Schenectady *Daily Gazette*) gave it a rave, admiring every aspect of the show with special praise for Ainsley ("sensational job playing piano") and Karneža ("superb diction").

Good news for New York City: The company will perform *Happy End* one night only, 12 November 2026, in Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center. Instead of the lone piano that accompanied performances during the summer tour, the November performance will boast a band of musicians from the Manhattan School of Music playing Weill's original orchestrations.

ABOVE LEFT: Ana Karneža as The Fly. ABOVE RIGHT: Gregory Feldmann (Bill Cracker), Jason Zacher (Benny), William Raskin (Jimmy).
BELOW RIGHT: Lauren Torey (Maryjane) with Benny and Jimmy.



Nina Simone Never Dies

Elton John paid tribute to singer-pianist Nina Simone recently in *Far Out* magazine: "Nina sang Kurt Weill songs, 'I Loves You, Porgy' by George Gershwin, 'I Put a Spell on You' ... And the great thing is, you listen to those songs today, and they still sound beautiful and fresh." Simone's "Pirate Jenny" in particular is often hailed as a hair-raising rendition of Weill and Brecht's classic dream of vengeance.



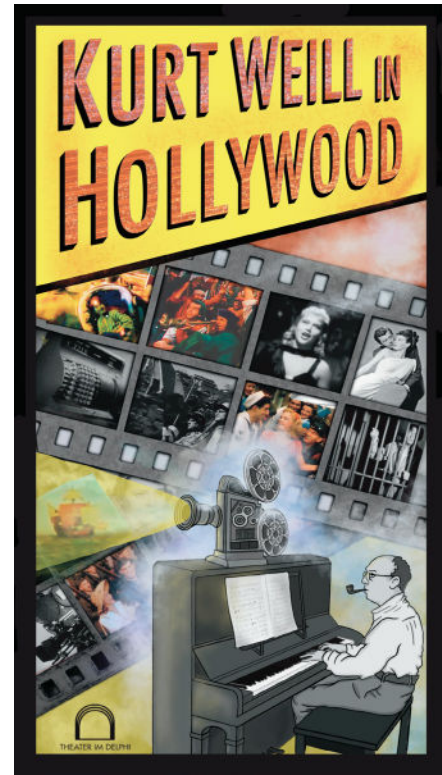
Weimar-Inspired

The PostClassical Ensemble of Washington, D.C. headlined a tribute to Weimar Germany at the embattled Kennedy Center on 11 March. With help from soprano Melissa Wimbish and conductor Angel Gil-Ordóñez, the ensemble presented several Weill songs, not all from *Threepenny Opera* and not all from Weimar, as "My Ship" and "Speak Low" crept onto the program. Also offered: "Berlin im Licht," "Bilbao-Song," "Hosiannah Rockefeller," and *Öl-Musik*, a suite derived from Weill's score for the 1928 play *Konjunktur*. Pulling no punches, the program also featured Eisler and Brecht's "Ballad of Paragraph 218," an attack on laws banning abortion.



"Sin"cinatti

Lenya Competition prizewinner Victoria Okafor is coming off her role debut as Anna I in *The Seven Deadly Sins*. The Summermusik festival presented the semi-staged performance on 22 August 2026, with Simone Muhammad as Anna II choreographed by Joshua Stayton, and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra playing the original orchestrations. The very next day, Okafor followed up with a recital focusing on seven virtues—antidotes to the deadly sins—that included "Mack the Knife."



POSTER DESIGN: LIOR STERN

Unforgotten: Weill in Hollywood

The music that Weill composed for films is not often heard. Pianist and impresario Philip Headlam aims to change that, and he kicked off his project with a concert at the Theater im Delphi, a venerable Berlin cinema, on 24–25 April 2026. The program of “Kurt Weill in Hollywood” reached back to Weill’s songs from *You and Me* (1938, lyrics by Sam Coslow and Johnny Burke) and *Where Do We Go from Here?* (1945, lyrics by Ira Gershwin), while plucking rarities from an unused score that Weill composed in 1937 under the title “The River Is Blue” (released as *Blockade* in 1938 with score by Werner Janssen) and *Salute to France*, a film made for the U.S. government during World War II. The program included several world premieres. The songs were delivered by soprano Katherine Manley and baritone Michael Todd Simpson; video designer Barbara Weigel combined clips from the films, documentary footage, and photos to place Weill’s music in context. Headlam assembled the program, created the arrangements—sometimes from fragmentary source material—and served as pianist.

About a month later, on 30 May in Los Angeles, longtime Associate Conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra Scott Dunn led his eponymous orchestra in a film music concert that included “Speak Low” as performed in the film version of *One Touch of Venus*, orchestrated by Leo Arnaud. The program, titled “From Hell to Hollywood,” placed the spotlight squarely on European Jewish refugees who scored films in the U.S., featuring a dazzling variety of composers and exploring their influence on the American film industry. Dunn noted, “The film orchestration [of “Speak Low”] is quite different from the original—a lovely bossa nova,” not the beguine Weill composed for the stage.



Springtime for September Songs

Larry Weinstein’s 1995 film *September Songs* made an impression, with performances by a veritable pantheon of singers—Betty Carter, Elvis Costello, Lou Reed, Teresa Stratas, to name a few—in a series of music videos created with the assistance of cinematographer Horst Zeidler and interspersed with biographical information about Weill and Lenya. Sony released a CD and the film was available for special screenings, but it never made it into theaters, and over time it disappeared from the memory of all but a few fans. Now it’s back; Sphinx Productions has restored the film. It has already been shown in São Paulo, Tel Aviv, and Cologne, with further screenings scheduled this year in Copenhagen, Vancouver, and Toronto.



Greta Lee and Willem Dafoe | LATE FAME

Now in Theaters LATE FAME

Kent Jones’s film *Late Fame*, starring Willem Dafoe, premiered at the Venice Film Festival last year and has screened at several festivals since. It made the jump to theaters as of 7 August 2026, distributed by Magnolia Pictures. Screenings are already scheduled around the U.S. The film has attracted attention because of a crucial scene for lead character Gloria, played by Greta Lee, who performs “Surabaya-Johnny” in a bar. Bilge Ebiri on vulture.com admired her “riveting cabaret performance.” Owen Gleiberman in *Variety*: “She’s mesmerizing.” Jones himself agreed that “Surabaya-Johnny” is “at the core” of the film.

In Memoriam



PHOTO: BRIGETTE LACOMBE

Michael Tilson Thomas

(1944–2026)

So much has been written about this towering figure of American music—his artistry, his pedagogy, his sheer range and reach. It remains for the *Newsletter* to point out that he was a cousin of Marc Blitzstein through his father, who worked on the premiere of *The Cradle Will Rock*. Thomas paid homage to Blitzstein by helping to edit the score of *No for an Answer*, a labor opera following in the footsteps of the much more successful *Cradle*. Before the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco opened a two-week run of *No for an Answer* in 2001, Thomas and musical director Peter Maleitzke prepared the score, which involved cuts and interpolations. Thomas was uniquely qualified for the task, having heard members of the original 1941 cast singing portions of the opera in his family home.

His reach extended to Weill as well and included a memorable addition to the discography: *Die sieben Todsünden* and *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* with soprano Julia Migenes and members of the London Symphony (CBS Masterworks, 1988), at that time only the fifth complete recording of the *Sins*. In 1992, Thomas conducted the Violin Concerto with the New World Symphony, an orchestra for promising young musicians that he co-founded in 1987.

Meriel Dickinson

(1940–2026)

Dickinson was a memorable part of a cast of British singers who descended on the 1975 Berliner Festwochen to perform five of Weill’s German works and went on to record them for Deutsche Grammophon. The extensive Weill programming at the Berlin festival, organized by David Drew, sought to broaden appreciation of Weill’s work. Dickinson participated in *Mahagonny Songspiel* and *Happy End*, including memorable renditions of “Surabaya-Johnny” and the “Sailors’ Tango.” Conductor David Atherton called her “second to none” as a Weill interpreter. She went on to play Mrs. Jones in the 1989 Scottish Opera and English National Opera productions of *Street Scene*, but she recalled that Mrs. Jones’s dog got more attention than she did: “The dog walked to the front of the stage and relieved herself. The audience roared their approval” (*The Guardian*, 26 June 2026).

Rex Reed

(1938–2026)

In 1966, brash young critic Rex Reed wrote a memorable piece about Lotte Lenya, then beginning her long run on Broadway in *Cabaret*. It was first published in *Queen* magazine and later included in an anthology of his personality profiles titled *Do You Sleep in the Nude?* (1968). To him we owe the striking description of Lenya’s face, “like a clock without a second hand,” and a wider dissemination of Lenya’s legend (and a few myths) among eager American readers. Years later, Reed wrote to mutual friend Dolores Sutton, “Lenya and Bertha [Case, Lenya’s agent] were such an important part of my formative days in New York. I will love them always.”

Brian Large

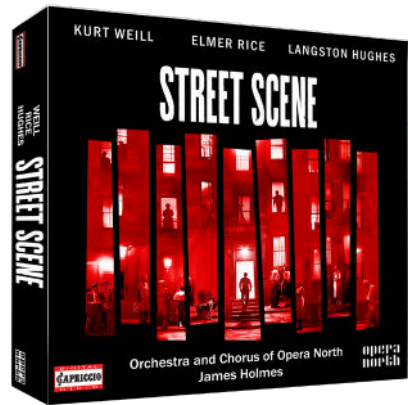
(1937–2026)

The first production of a Weill opera at the Met took place in 1979, with *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* directed by John Dexter and conducted by James Levine, with Teresa Stratas portraying Jenny for the first time. Brian Large’s career at the Met began at exactly that moment; he directed the television broadcast seen on Great Performances (PBS). He went on to direct over seventy televised productions for the Met, his longevity being due as much to his musical acumen as his mastery of camera angles and close-ups. In a review of the video in the Spring 2011 *Newsletter*, Rodney Milnes praised Large’s “quietly efficient filming,” which never gets in the way of the performance onstage. The broadcast performance was issued by the Met on DVD.

Robert Kimball

(1939–2026)

The word “encyclopedic” seems inadequate to describe Kimball’s knowledge of American musical theater. After serving as curator of Yale’s musical theater collection, he made a profound contribution to everyone’s knowledge in 1982, when he unearthed a vast trove of manuscripts, many created by famous composers, in a Warner Brothers warehouse, discovering complete scores of shows as well as songs that had never been published or performed. In addition to writing widely respected books on Cole Porter and the Gershwins, he edited volumes of lyrics by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Frank Loesser, and several others—most notably for Weillians, *The Complete Lyrics of Ira Gershwin* (Knopf, 1993).



Leading from Leeds

Opera North’s long history with Broadway shows includes an acclaimed production of *Street Scene* in 2020. The show opened in Leeds, U.K. in January, but a March tour of cities in northern England was curtailed by the pandemic. Fortunately, the proceedings had already been recorded, and BBC Radio 3 broadcast the production in April 2020. The next stop for the audio recording is general release on CD and streaming services by the Capriccio label, due out in October. It marks the first CD release of *Street Scene* since 1991, when productions by Scottish Opera (with new principal singers) and English National Opera came out on Decca and TER, respectively.

Speaking of previous releases, Opera North’s *Street Scene* is conducted by James Holmes, who also did the honors in 1995 when Houston Grand Opera took its production to Germany. That performance was immortalized on home video and is available on Youtube. Featured singers in the upcoming Opera North release: Giselle Allen (Anna), Robert Hayward (Frank), Gillene Butterfield (Rose), and Alex Banfield (Sam), all under the direction of Matthew Eberhardt.

If the names Holmes and Eberhardt sound familiar, that’s because the duo was also responsible for *Love Life* at Opera North. That account was released by Capriccio in October 2025, the first ever complete recording of Weill and Alan Jay Lerner’s groundbreaking 1948 Broadway show. It promptly won the Preis der Deutsche Schallplattenkritik in the Opera category for the first quarter of 2026. Manuel Brug wrote for the jury, “With this excellent recording from Opera North, Capriccio has added an important cornerstone to its Weill edition.”

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING:

Parabola and Circula

On 21 September 2025, the Bauhaus-Archiv presented a world premiere of Blitzstein’s one-act opera *Parabola and Circula*, performed in concert as part of Musikfest Berlin (see Winter 2025–26 *Newsletter*). Blitzstein’s opera, composed in 1929, tells a familiar story of true love destroyed by outside influences, but, as the title suggests, the characters represent geometric forms. The libretto by George Whitsett wanders into surrealist territory as various shapes, portrayed by human singers, take the stage. The composition survived only in manuscript, from which modern performing materials were generated. The performance was given in conjunction with a symposium on connections between the Bauhaus school and opera, which is fitting, because the Bauhaus archives hold evidence that *Parabola* was considered for performance in 1930.

Berlin audiences had only one chance to hear the work, but that single performance was broadcast, with the audio recording due for release by Capriccio in November 2026. The world premiere cast included Aleksander Nohr and Mari Eriksmoen in the title roles, supported by Karl-Heinz Steffens conducting the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. The recording will inaugurate a new series, “Bauhaus Music,” intended to shed light on the little-known role that music played in the history of the short-lived Bauhaus school—in this case, an unknown opera.

Weill and his music remain a rewarding subject of commentary. In February, broadcasters in Germany and Portugal devoted extensive programs to his life and career. In Germany, Hessischer Rundfunk (hr2) offered “Ein Zar als Protagonist – Die frühen Opern von Kurt Weill,” that honored the hundredth anniversary of Weill’s first opera premiere, *Der Protagonist*, considering it in the context of his early stage works. Meanwhile, Portugal’s national broadcasting service, RTP, aired a full retrospective of Weill’s career, “Kurt Weill: do Teatro Épico a Broadway,” which sought to demonstrate that Weill reinvented himself in the U.S. without sacrificing dramatic power. Two weeks earlier, RTP had celebrated Aaron Copland and Marc Blitzstein as composers who molded American modernism in “América real e idealizada.”

All three podcasts may still be streamed:



GREAT BRITON!

Lila Chrisp takes First Prize, making it back-to-back wins for the U.K.



When Lila Chrisp won First Prize (\$25,000) on 9 May 2026 in Rochester, she became the second U.K. contestant in a row to do so. Last year, George Robarts of the United Kingdom also won First Prize; this year marks the first time that consecutive top prize winners have come from outside the U.S. The pair are already working together on a fully staged variety performance of songs from 1920s Berlin by Weill and his contemporaries.

Chrisp left little doubt of the outcome. The distinguished panel of judges—Jeanine Tesori, Kyle Scatliffe, and Ted Sperling—lauded her “stunning range of repertoire, spanning more than three centuries in three languages, from Monteverdi to Blumenkrantz. Every word she sang was inflected to articulate character and the dramatic moment.” Competition founder Kim H. Kowalke noted that she “did it all, singing her four selections idiomatically and acting each with consummate artistry.” Chrisp has been a resident member of Theater Freiburg in Germany since 2019.

The composite scores for Claire Griffin and Ilanna Starr were too close to call, so the judges awarded each of them a Second



Prize of \$20,000. A \$6,000 award for Extraordinary Promise went to Matthew Dexter, auspiciously presented by Scatliffe, who had won the same award in 2010 and has since become a Broadway and West End mainstay. Erik Grendahl took home the Teresa Stratas Award (also \$6,000), which recognizes outstanding performance of an opera aria, for his account of the “Confession Aria” from Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*.

This year spectators at the Finals again chose the recipient of the Audience Choice Award, an evening “mini-competition” preceding the awards ceremony, with each contestant delivering a number that was not part of their Finals program. In a tight contest, Grendahl took home the \$3,000 prize for his rendition of “Me” from *Beauty and the Beast*. The remaining five finalists—Dominic Delzompo, Stavros Koumbaros, Francesca Mehrotra, Gemma Nha, and Sadie Spivey—each received \$3,000. A total of \$120,500 was awarded in this year’s Competition.

ABOVE LEFT: First Prize winner Lila Chrisp during the Competition

ABOVE RIGHT: Standing L to R: Claire Griffin, Ilanna Starr, Kim Kowalke, Lila Chrisp, Matthew Dexter, Kyle Scatliffe, Erik Grendahl; Seated L to R: Ted Sperling, Jeanine Tesori

FROM THE WINNERS



MATTHEW DEXTER

“The Lenya Competition afforded me the very unique opportunity of trying my hand at musical theater repertoire, which I hadn’t explored since high school. While I never quite reached the level that I hoped, it challenged me and allowed me to learn a quite a bit.”



CLAIRE GRIFFIN

“I appreciate the feedback we received at every step in the process—especially during the coaching portion of the semifinals—which was intended to help us craft the best performance possible with storytelling at the forefront. I consider this competition to be “audition dessert,” as it was a joy to piece together a set of songs that resonate within us and allow us to give an honest portrayal of our characters.”



LILA CHRISP

“The competition was brilliantly organized; I got to meet all the lovely, artistically like-minded fellow contestants at the finals; I enjoyed two amazing trips to the US; and came away with a prize which I suspect will change the trajectory of my career. Truly a highlight of my musical life!”



ILANNA STARR

“What I didn’t expect to find in a competition was such a strong sense of community. My fellow finalists were not only wonderful artists but also generous, supportive colleagues. Watching them perform was a joy, and I left with new friendships and a network of artists I’m excited to cheer on and reconnect with throughout our careers.”



ERIK GREND AHL

“Every time you step onstage, you discover something new about the music, the character, and yourself. Opportunities that foster that kind of artistic discovery are rare, and I’m thankful to have been part of it. My only regret is that I didn’t participate sooner!”



DER SILBERSEE

Chicago Opera Theatre

Lawrence Edelson, director
Premiere: 4 March 2026

A Timeless Warning

The belated Chicago premiere of *Der Silbersee* by Chicago Opera Theater, coming nearly a century after the work’s first performances in Germany in 1933, was nothing if not topical. Indeed, the brilliant new production by general director Lawrence Edelson at the Studebaker Theater struck the audience like a splash of ice-cold water from the titular lake.

One of the composer’s finest theater scores, *Der Silbersee* (The Silver Lake) was the last work Weill composed before he was forced to flee Nazi Germany. The play with music (subtitled “a winter’s fairy tale”) he created with dramatist Georg Kaiser amounts to a searing critique of a society teetering on the brink of catastrophe, sounding a timeless warning of the consequences of authoritarian abuse, wealth inequality, and police overreach.

Sung and spoken in the original German, with English subtitles integrated into the set design, the Chicago Opera Theater performances were arguably more faithful to the original than any previous professional staging of *Silbersee* in the U.S. (A Broadway-glitzy adaptation that I attended at the New York City Opera in 1980 mangled the piece almost beyond recognition.) All of Weill’s music was retained, with judicious cuts to the dialogue bringing the show in at roughly 2-3/4 hours, including intermission. The German diction of cast and chorus was generally good. The performances were a notable milestone for a company whose central mission has long been to seek out important if overlooked twentieth-century stage works.

If the text for *Silbersee* is less mordantly ironic, and the ending rather more hopeful, than that of the Weill-Brecht *Threepenny Opera* and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, the tuneful score, with its typically Weillian blend of jaunty jazz rhythms and captivating ballads, breathes dramatic conviction into the existential journeys of the central characters, the police

official Olim and the downtrodden Severin, whom Olim wounds and later cares for following the latter’s theft of a pineapple from a grocery store. The issues—guilt and penance, retribution and forgiveness, injustice and justice—must have hit close to home with Weimar Republic audiences and were too uncomfortably real for Hitler’s goons to ignore.

Edelson’s staging, with costumes by Erik Teague and lighting by Marcella Barbeau that supported its theatrical purposes most effectively, struck a potent balance between the farcical elements as represented by the rather two-dimensional villains Frau von Luber and Baron Laur and the serious moral conflicts that link Olim and Severin in unholy alliance.

Designer Jeffrey D. Kmiec’s ingenious two-tiered set framed the episodic structure within a child’s bedroom, thereby filtering the moral conflicts through the innocent perceptions of a young girl who later becomes the work’s central female figure, Fennimore, before returning to her “real” life at the end.

The bass-baritone Justin Hopkins, a fine singing actor whose résumé includes a variety of Weill roles, inhabited the largely spoken part of Olim with sympathy and conviction. He handled the long stretches of spoken text with respectable German diction, plausibly charting the character’s psychological journey from implacable instrument of the law to guilty caregiver.

Chaz’men Williams-Ali was nearly his equal in the singing role of Severin, a stand-in for society’s hungry and downtrodden. His powerful vocalism welled up from the depths of the wounded thief’s thirst for vengeance on the unknown man who wronged him. The sweet-voiced soprano Ariana Strahl brought ingenuous charm to Fennimore’s song about Caesar’s death—the demise of a tyrant—that scuttled Olim’s hopes of forgiveness. Strahl’s wide-eyed manner felt right for a *dea ex machina* far less dipped in wry than most of Weill’s stage heroines.

Leah Dexter sank her comedic teeth into the villainous housekeeper von Luber, a cackling delight in the “Schlaraffenland” duet with Dylan Morrongiello’s wonderfully antic Baron Laur; the latter also brought razor-sharp comic timing to the oleaginous Lottery Agent. Kudos, too, to COT’s excellent eighteen-member vocal ensemble that served a crucial function as Olim’s conscience and as the Greek chorus-like commentator on the drama.

After Olim and Severin, Weill’s orchestra is effectively the third protagonist of *Silbersee*. Conductor James Lowe knows the idiom inside and out, and he drew crackling vitality and lyrical finesse from his committed instrumentalists.

John Von Rhein
Chicago

TOP Chaz'men Williams-Ali (Severin) BOTTOM LEFT: Justin Hopkins (Olim), Leah Dexter (Frau von Luber), Dylan Morrongiello (Baron Laur), Ariana Strahl (Fennimore)
PHOTOS: MICHAEL BROSILOW



Rise and Fall of the City of

MAHAGONNY

English National Opera

Jamie Manton, director
Premiere: 16 February 2026

Having It All Ways

Mahagonny forms an essential part of the story of English National Opera, which gave the British premiere on 16 January 1963. “It made an overwhelming impact,” wrote Susie Gilbert in her history of the company, *Opera for Everybody*. Conducted by Colin Davis with singers including April Cantelo and Alberto Remedios, the production impressed the demanding Desmond Shawe-Taylor of the *Sunday Times*, who judged that “despite all its shortcomings this first English production of an entirely novel and unique opera achieved a remarkable measure of success ... none should miss it.”

Thus it made an informed and fitting choice for the debut of ENO’s music director designate André de Ridder (he takes over in 2027). If the impact of the piece was not quite so overwhelming as six decades ago, much of that could be ascribed to the straitened financial circumstances in which ENO now finds itself, leading to extremely limited rehearsal time for a piece which remains complex and confrontational.

The new staging by Jamie Manton did not quite cohere, despite the use of Jeremy Sams’s clever English translation. In Milla Clarke’s design, the Coliseum stage starts empty, and then a white box storage unit is wheeled on. That neutral space proves versatile as the piece progresses: daubed with the name of the city in red paint, it then opens out as part of the action, and finally is lifted to create a canopy over the boxing ring where the grisly denouement takes place. That is all suitably Brechtian, but the opening scenes with Rosie Aldridge as a strong Widow Begbick are chaotic, the action poorly focused and lit. But suddenly the director gets a grip, and the clustered chorus forms vivid pictures onstage, notably when the hurricane threatens Mahagonny. A very neat and stylish tap dancer dressed as a weather forecaster with a bright red arrow galvanizes the proceedings as the hurricane looms and then suddenly detours around the city. The fast-moving parade of vices, all well evoked, follows: excessive eating by Jack (Elgan Llŷr Thomas); obsessive sex for which all queue up; a boxing match in which Joe

(David Shipley) dies; and drinking—this last being a problem only because there is no money to pay for it.

In many ways this is an ensemble show in ENO’s best tradition, with singer-actors Mark Le Brocq (Fatty) and Kenneth Kellogg (Trinity Moses) both outstanding, but its success here depends on two outstanding leads. Simon O’Neill portrays the blustering, tragic Jimmy MacIntyre, who leads his lumberjacks to Mahagonny but is eventually executed for lack of money. His stentorian, Wagnerian voice rings out convincingly. He is matched in personality if not in volume by Danielle de Niese as Jenny Smith, the prostitute with whom he forms a fragile partnership. She is a flamboyant figure in a red wig (abandoned in the third act), and her showbiz presence (with the help of a microphone) ensures that the great songs like “O Moon of Alabama” come across and exert their heart-tugging effect. But she has no time for Brecht’s touching moment of sentiment as Jimmy is led to his death, and laughs cruelly.

The tension between the acute social criticism of the libretto and the musically attractive tunes of Weill’s diverse score has always been difficult to resolve. It cannot be denied that there are longeurs as the catalogue of capitalist sins recurs with stubborn persistence; some of this material demands a lighter touch. But conductor André de Ridder’s characterization of Weill’s musical styles, honed by his training in Berlin and knowledge of cabaret, pays dividends in pungent, sharply-etched playing—a good omen for his future music directorship at the company. And it is really beyond criticism that the company can achieve so much on so little rehearsal, for only three performances in a thin season.

In the end this troubling piece manages to have it all ways, both repulsive and attractive. Paradoxically, the utter nihilism of the final choral tableau after Jimmy’s death—“nobody can ever help a dead man”—has an oddly cathartic effect.

Nicholas Kenyon
Chief Opera Critic, London *Telegraph*



The cast of ENO’s *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*
PHOTOS: TRISTRAM KENTON

I'm a Stranger Here Myself: Wainwright Does Weill

PHOTO: RYAN CLEMENS

I'm a Stranger Here Myself: Wainwright Does Weill
Rufus Wainwright, vocals
Chris Walden, conductor and arranger
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Finding His Spiritual Home

Rufus Wainwright wraps his high keening tenor around fourteen Kurt Weill songs with suitably lush backing from the Pacific Jazz Orchestra on his latest release. The surprise isn't that the 52-year-old Canadian-American singer-songwriter has dedicated an entire album to the work of Germany's premiere pre-war composer. It's that he's taken so long to get around to it.

A well-known artist with a substantial following, Wainwright has always jumped between styles and genres, some of which have proven more congenial than others. He captured the sweet spot between high drama and confessional songwriting on 2003's *Want* and surrendered himself to camp theatricality on 2007's Judy Garland tribute *Rufus Does Judy at Carnegie Hall*. He has composed two operas and released an album of Shakespeare sonnets. In 2023 he recorded an album of earthy folk ballads, possibly a nod to his parents Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle; his baroque approach proved unsuited to the material. A highly educated opera fan, Wainwright has embraced not just the most florid aspects of twentieth century song, but also the most troubled and complex. In the music of Weill, he has found his spiritual home

Recorded live at United Theatre on Broadway in Los Angeles on 2 March 2024—Weill's birthday—Wainwright inhabits songs by Weill in English, French and German. (Two songs were

“ Sex, death, passion, and pain never go out of fashion.

recorded elsewhere: “Lost in the Stars” with the Metropole Orkest and an alternate rendition of “Surabaya Johnny” at the Café Carlyle, where Wainwright tried out much of this material.) He proves equal to the oompah-oompah cabaret of “Die Muschel von Margate,” a punning number about an old man selling seashells in the insalubrious British resort of the title, only for his son to strike it rich under the sand with “Shell” oil. Nobody captures the sadness of love like Weill, and Wainwright plays it straight on the gloriously

tortured “It Never Was You.” As he sings about being reminded of his lover in the call of a meadowlark or the light of a star, only to realize that nothing and no one can substitute for her, the pathos is real, the pain convincing.

“Mack The Knife” gets in there, of course, and the jolliest, snappiest song about a psychopathic murderer, rapist, and arsonist ever written is given the full razzle-dazzle. The orchestra provides '40s-style big-band jazz, and Wainwright sounds positively flirtatious as he completes his rendition with the come-hither, “Look out, old Mackie's back.” It's the Weill song everyone knows, interpreted by Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, and countless others. Bobby Darin's uptempo hit is the definitive pop version, but Wainwright adds something else here, menace, as he switches from German to English and elongates the vowels in those visceral words, “a body, oozing life.”

Even the songs that have been interpreted hundreds of times are effective after Wainwright refreshes them with his own personality. “Surabaya Johnny” may be the heartbreak tale of a woman scorned and lied to, a centerpiece of Weill and Brecht's score for *Happy End*, but he makes it sound like he's singing from experience—and still stinging from the whole affair. His stretched notes on “September Song,” in which he promises to spend his autumn days with the one he loves, could have been delivered with his German husband Jörn Weisbrodt in mind. And he brings out the florid tragedy of “Je ne t'aime pas,” performed against a lonely piano in *chanson* style, as he protests too much about not loving someone, while the passion of the delivery tells another story.

From Lotte Lenya to Ute Lempert, there has been no shortage of powerful Weill interpreters. By approaching this material as a singer-songwriter, well-versed in turning life's experiences into poetry, Rufus Wainwright reminds us of a quality not always associated with a figure cemented in the public mind as the essence of Weimar Germany: modernity. Sex, death, passion, and pain never go out of fashion, and Wainwright's approach to this rich, nuanced material, filled as it is with the darkness of the everyday, is proof of that.

Will Hodgkinson
Times of London

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

The New Orpheus, Violin Concerto
Wallis Giunta, Jennifer France, Benjamin Herzl
Swedish Chamber Orchestra, HK Gruber
BIS-2779

Sharper Than Ever

It's just Anna I and Anna II—singer and dancer. Both are embodied by the strikingly expressive Wallis Giunta, whose bold vocal pirouettes are subtly and at times powerfully projected. One Anna is “beautiful,” the other “practical”; together they have “one heart and one savings account.”

Weill and Brecht's unvarnished realism, and critique of capitalism, in *The Seven Deadly Sins* require neither scenery nor updating. Everything is already there in the words and music. The two Annas journey through a postcard version of America and encounter all seven sins—yet return upright, with the money needed to buy the little house in Louisiana for the family, portrayed by the excellent vocal quartet of Mats Carlsson, Love Tronner, Lars Johansson Brissman, and Andreas Olsson. A powerful text (sung in Auden and Kallman's English translation), and a score that remains wonderfully forceful, having lost none of its freshness, are presented here quite unadorned. And they prove their worth in the expert

“ This is Kurt Weill one hundred years on: polished to a high gloss.

hands of the grumbling, purring, and blaring Giunta. HK Gruber, who leads the Swedish Chamber Orchestra with a wonderful feel for the Berlin swing of Kurt Weill's original orchestration, tinged with American influences, has proven his affinity with this music before and will doubtless do so again.

Berlin stays in the spotlight in the offbeat, jazz-inflected sound of the Twenties which shapes Weill's 1925 cantata *Der neue Orpheus*—Iwan Goll's text set for soprano, solo violin, and orchestra—alongside its biting social criticism. Like the *Sins*, *Orpheus* contains a kind of culinary critique of capitalism, though the score is more expressive and flirts with free tonality. Guided by Gruber, soprano Jennifer France delivers David Pountney's English translation with both objectivity and precision, while delighting in its sensuality and a sound world sometimes at odds with the text. Both vocally and instrumentally, they strive not merely to revel in nostalgia but to give the shimmering, richly multifaceted score a contemporary profile—even a certain hardness. This is Kurt Weill



one hundred years on: polished to a high gloss, as the import of his work comes through sharper than ever. The music works wonderfully in this unsentimental yet deeply bitter rendition.

Gruber knows exactly how to emphasize the edges and corners of these seven variations, how to distill parodic echoes of popular and traditional motifs, impressionistically flowing passages, and sardonic cabaret elements. He sharply accents the wind entries, skewers religious quotations, and switches effortlessly between compositional avant-garde and popular music. In this urban panorama, which at times cries out for Mahlerian melancholy, Eurydice has become nothing more than a prostitute. As for Orpheus, who seeks to redeem her, and all humanity, while remaining “alone in the waiting room,” only suicide remains. A bitter ending, but one realized with great dramatic effect.

The slalom through the work's varied stylistic elements—from aria to ballad and *chanson*—is beautifully realized, particularly in the second half, when the roughened string cadenzas of Katarina Andreasson's violin, symbolizing Orpheus and his instrument, join in, adding lush, iridescent colors to Jennifer France's somewhat monochromatic voice. What an extraordinary mixing of musical traditions was possible back then!

Weill gave himself over to musical theater early on and left behind only a small number of instrumental works. The Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, composed in the spring of 1924 for an ensemble he had not experimented with before, was premiered in Paris in 1925. The restrained mood of the opening movement, with its recurring references to the *Dies irae*, may allude to Busoni's fatal illness. Salzburg violinist Benjamin Herzl takes his time here, listening attentively to the music's atmosphere. In the central movement, assembled from three character pieces and recalling Mahlerian fragmentation, Gruber and Herzl clearly differentiate the dusky, capricious Notturmo with its acrobatic xylophone, the trumpet-accompanied Cadenza, and the delicate Serenata, in which the oboe and flute also emerge as soloists.

By contrast, the lively Tarantella of the third movement, reminiscent of Stravinsky, sweeps along at a brisk pace, as Gruber consistently maintains the concerto's chamber-orchestra character, urging the wind players toward transparency and precise ensemble playing. Benjamin Herzl ensures the most balanced sound possible, confidently mastering the technically demanding solo part with beguilingly sweet melodic lines.

Manuel Brug
Berlin

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