

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER

Volume 9, Number 2

Fall 1991

Dwight Deere Wiman and The Playwrights' Company present

STREET SCENE



A DRAMATIC MUSICAL

Cover of the original souvenir program, 1947

Decca/London and That's Entertainment Records release complete recordings of *Street Scene*. Jon Alan Conrad's review appears on page 23.

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University of California Press to Publish Weill Correspondence

The University of California Press has signed an agreement with the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music to publish at least four volumes of collected correspondence in critical editions over the next six years. Kim H. Kowalke will serve as the general editor of the series, which will include collections of the Weill-Lenya correspondence, the Weill-Universal Edition correspondence, the correspondence of Weill and his family, and that of Weill and his collaborators. The University of California Press volumes will appear in English; individual volume editors and editions in other languages will be announced as arranged.

The first volume, *Speak Low: The Weill-Lenya Correspondence*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke and Lys Symonette, will be published in Spring 1993 and featured in the publisher's Fall 1993 catalog. Hamish Hamilton will be the publisher in the United Kingdom.

mcclung Wins AMS 50

bruce d. mcclung, Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the University of Rochester/Eastman School of Music, has been selected as a recipient of the prestigious AMS 50 Fellowship Award for 1990-91. The stipend, instituted on the 50th anniversary of the American Musicological Society, is awarded on a competitive basis and given in support of final stages of research and writing of the doctoral musicology dissertation. Mr. mcclung, one of six AMS 50 Fellows, is completing a dissertation entitled "Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*."

Simon and Schuster Publishes New Weill Biography

A new biography, *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* by British author Ronald Taylor, was published in September by Simon and Schuster, London (ISBN 0-671-71070-2). A US publisher has not been announced. According to advance publicity, "Ronald Taylor's penetrating study draws extensively on primary material and on the testimony of people who knew the composer. Unravelling the many cultural and intellectual threads running through Weill's music and unsettled life, he paints an integrated picture of the man and his works, setting Weill's compositions against their historical and cultural background and assessing their position in the musical life of the twentieth century." Prof. Taylor made two extended visits to the Weill-Lenya Research Center and Yale University for his research. Taylor's other books include *Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945*, *The Art of the Minnesinger*, *The Intellectual Tradition of Modern Germany*, and biographies of Wagner, Schumann, and Liszt. His edition of Wilhelm Furtwängler's writings on music is due to be published in November by Scholar Press.

Three New Mahagonnys in Europe

New productions of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* figure in the 1991-92 repertoires of noted opera houses in Germany and Switzerland. Schauspiel Bonn and Oper Bonn collaborate on a new production, staged by Siegfried Schoenbohm and conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, newly appointed General Music Director of Oper Bonn. The premiere is set for 20 December 1991 and performances continue through 15 March. Ruth Berghaus will direct a new production for Staatstheater Stuttgart that opens 22 March 1992 and runs through 14 June. The Grand Théâtre, Geneva, stages *Mahagonny* in May. The creative team includes Kurt Josef Schildknecht, director, Jeffrey Tate, conductor, and Werner Hutterli and Renate Schmitzer, stage and costume designers. Performances are scheduled for 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23 May 1992.

London Discovers Love Life

The Victoria and Albert Museum will present a staged concert reading of *Love Life* as part of their 1991 season "Discover The Lost Musical." The program, directed by Ian Marshall Fisher, is designed to reintroduce neglected theater works by important twentieth-century composers. *Love Life* will be presented from script with piano, with pre-performance talks, over a five-Sunday period, beginning on 17 November and continuing through 15 December, in the Paintings Gallery, located in Covent Garden. Members of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera donate their services to this non-profit venture. Other works in the fall 1991 season include Frank Loesser's *Green Willow* and the Richard Rodgers-Arthur Laurents-Stephen Sondheim collaboration *Do I Hear a Waltz?*

University News

The University of Arizona School of Music will present *Street Scene* on 1 and 3 November, 1991, with director Professor Charles Roe and conductor Dr. Josef Knott.

The opera department of Carnegie-Mellon University plans a production of *Street Scene* in March 1992, directed by Janet Bookspan and conducted by Robert Page.

The Curtis Institute for Music will mount a double bill of *Mahagonny Songspiel* and the *Happy End Songspiel*, directed by Rhoda Levine and conducted by David Hayes, in the late spring of 1992.

Boston Lyric to Stage *Lost in the Stars*

Following a successful 1990-91 season that included a critically acclaimed production of Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, the Boston Lyric Opera continues its commitment to American works with a production of *Lost in the Stars* in its 1991-92 season. Performances are planned for 17, 19, and 21 January 1992. Bill T. Jones directs and Christopher Larkin serves as conductor for the performances that include Robert Honeysucker (Stephen Kumalo) and Pamela Dillard (Irina). Boston Lyric Opera's season continues in March 1992 with Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

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New Recordings Scheduled for Release

This season brings the release of several new recordings. Koch-Schwann has recently issued in Europe the *Four Walt Whitman Songs* for voice and orchestra, *Berliner Requiem*, and *Recordare*, recorded at the 24 March 1990 concert of the North Rhine Westphalia Kurt-Weill-Festival. Baritone soloist is Wolfgang Holzmair for the *Whitman Songs*, and the Niederrheinische Chorgemeinschaft Düsseldorf, Mädchenchor Hannover, and Chor der Studenten der evangelischer Kirchenmusik Düsseldorf, with members of the Robert-Schumann

KURT WEILL NEWSLETTER Vol. 9, No. 2; Fall 1991

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The Newsletter is published to provide an open forum wherein interested readers may express a variety of ideas and opinions. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the publisher's official viewpoint. The editor encourages the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for inclusion in future issues. The submission deadline for the next issue is 15 January 1992.

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Kammerorchester, under Willi Gundlach, perform the *Requiem* and *Recordare*.

Koch International will issue in late 1991 a recording entitled *An Unquiet Peace: The Lied Between the Wars*. The recording offers the premiere of *O'rah's Lieder* and includes "Cäsars Tod," "Die Muschel von Margate," and "Berlin im Licht." Soprano Cynthia Seiden, baritone Bill Sharp, and pianist Steven Blier are the featured artists. Songs of Strauss, Schoeck, Eisler, and Zemlinsky complete the recording.

The recording of Angelina Réaux's one-woman-theater piece, *Stranger Here Myself*, is also set for an end-of-the-year release by Koch International.

The Decca *Street Scene* CD [see review on page 23], already released in some international markets, will be issued in February 1992 on the London label in the United States.

Street Scene returns to ENO

The English National Opera is reviving its acclaimed Fall 1989 production of *Street Scene* with James Holmes conducting. The principal cast members include Janice Cairns (Anna Murrant), Mark Richardson (Frank Murrant), Lesley Garrett (Rose Murrant), Kevin Anderson (Sam Kaplan), Meriel Dickinson (Mrs. Jones), and Richard Halton (Harry Easter). Performances are scheduled for 13, 19, 22, 27 February and 2, 5, 11, 14, 19 March 1992 at the London Coliseum.

Tryout Reissued

DRG Records, Inc. has just reissued on CD (DRG904) an album entitled *Tryout*, a series of private rehearsal recordings of actual performances by Kurt Weill, both in solo and singing duets with Ira Gershwin. The Weill solos are from *One Touch of Venus*. Weill and Gershwin together sing two numbers from the 1945 Twentieth-Century-Fox film *Where Do We Go From Here?*

Venus at R & H

As of 3 December 1990, Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatre Library has added *One Touch of Venus* to its catalog of plays for stock and amateur licensing in the United States and Canada. *One Touch of Venus* joins other Weill theatrical properties administered by Rodgers & Hammerstein: *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Lady in the Dark*, *Street Scene*, *Lost in the Stars*, and the Marc Blitzstein adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera*.

Inquiries regarding *One Touch of Venus* should be made to Rodgers & Hammerstein Theatre Library, 1633 Broadway, Suite 3801, New York, NY 10019; telephone (212) 541-6900.

Fall Theater Conferences

The Actors Theatre of Louisville is presenting "The Theatre of The Weimar Republic: Germany 1918-1933," a weekend of performances, exhibits, lectures, and colloquia 18-20 October in Louisville, Kentucky. The Berliner Ensemble will perform *Love and Revolution*, a Brecht cabaret, and the Actors Theatre will present the winner of the 1931 Kleist Prize, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* by Ödön von Horváth in a translation by Christopher Hampton. Heinz-Uwe Haus is scheduled to lecture on the topic "Experiment and Mass Appeal: Theatre of the Weimar Republic" and John Willett will present "Weimar and Germany: The Twenties and Today." Panel discussions will tackle timely subjects: "Epic Theater and New Objectivity," "The Berliner Ensemble Today," and "Weimar and Reunified Germany." For further information, contact the Actors Theatre

of Louisville at (502) 584-1265; FAX (502) 583-9922.

The 1991 annual meeting of the American Society for Theatre Research will be held in conjunction with the Theatre Library Association meeting 14-17 November at the University of Washington, Seattle. Seventy scholars will present papers in thirteen sessions. David Kilroy of Harvard University, a Kurt Weill Foundation dissertation fellowship recipient, is delivering a paper entitled "Envisioning a New World Order in 1949: The Weill-Anderson Musical Tragicomedy, *Lost in the Stars*" and William Grange of Marquette University is speaking on the topic, "Legitimizing the East German State: Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble, 1949-1953." Registration information may be obtained by calling the University of Washington Conference Registration office at (206) 543-2310.

Necrology

Claudio Arrau, one of the foremost pianists of the 20th century, died on 9 June 1991 in Müzzschlag, Austria. He was 88 years old and lived in Munich. In a career that spanned eight decades, the Chilean-born pianist was esteemed for his interpretations of Liszt, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms. Arrau was on the teaching staff at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin from 1924 to 1940. Early in his career, Arrau studied composition for a short time with Kurt Weill.

Milton A. Caniff died in Manhattan on 3 April 1988 at the age of 81. He was the creator of the comic strips "Terry and the Pirates" and "Steve Canyon," which earned him a following of over 30 million readers. Caniff was a former neighbor and long-time associate of Weill and Lenya in New City, New York and one of the original members of the Board of Trustees of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music.

Leonore Strunsky Gershwin, wife of Ira Gershwin for 56 years, died on 20 August 1991 in Beverly Hills, California, at the age of 90. Since the death of her husband in 1981 at the age of 86, Mrs. Gershwin had devoted much of her time to preserving the music of both Ira and his brother, George, the composer. Two years ago she established Roxbury Recordings, which has plans to record *Lady in the Dark* in its entirety.

Maria Hubek, Lotte Lenya's younger sister, died in Vienna, Austria on 17 May 1991. She was 85 years of age. Mrs. Hubek is survived by her nephew, Max Blamauer, of Burlington, Ontario, Canada.

Boris Kochno, a creative spirit behind much modern ballet, died on 9 December 1990 in Paris at the age of 86. Mr. Kochno was artistic director and scenarist for major ballet companies including those of Serge Diaghilev, George Balanchine, and Roland

Petit. He co-founded Les Ballets 1933 with Balanchine and was instrumental in commissioning *Die sieben Todsünden* for that company.

Edwin Lester, founder and longtime director of the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera, died on 13 December 1990 in Beverly Hills, California. He was 95. Mr. Lester spent four decades bringing thousands of the most melodious hours in the American musical theater to Los Angeles and San Francisco. His productions included *Peter Pan* with Mary Martin, *Show Boat* with Paul Robeson, *Gypsy* with Ethel Merman, and *Coco* with Katharine Hepburn. Mr. Lester brought *Lady in the Dark* to both Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1943.

Mary Martin, 76, died on 4 November 1990 in Rancho Mirage, California. As America's leading lady of musical comedy, she captivated audiences as Ensign Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*, Maria von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, and the title role in *Peter Pan*. *One Touch of Venus* launched her stardom in 1943, in which she played the role of Venus and made memorable such songs as "That's Him," "Speak Low," and "I'm a Stranger Here Myself."

Ronald Sanders, a writer who specialized in Jewish history, died on 12 January 1991 in New York City. He was 58 years old. Mr. Sanders wrote extensively on the immigrant experience in New York and elsewhere, Jews in Palestine, and racism in America. His 469-page popular biography of Kurt Weill, *The Days Grow Short*, published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston in 1980, did much to increase the knowledge of Weill in the English-speaking world. Lighthouse Editions published a paperback edition, and Kindler published a German translation under the title *Kurt Weill*.

LETTERS

To the Editor:

I feel obliged to reply to Kim Kowalke's response in the last Newsletter to my essay in Stephen Hinton's Cambridge Opera Handbook *The Threepenny Opera*.

It is surprising to see my contention that Mrs. Peachum's music is intended to be sung an octave lower than written described as "startling." After all, there is a very considerable tradition here in Germany of performing it in this way (including in all probability the first production). This tradition stems from the fact that the actresses of the *Fach* to which the role of Mrs. Peachum belongs usually have deep singing voices. Kim Kowalke's joke about the "actress's baritone" is neither funny nor polite since the ranges of these two types of voice are indeed very similar.

My essay attempts to use historical and aesthetic argumentation to show that this tradition of interpreting Weill's and Brecht's work in this way is authentic. Kim Kowalke fails to convince me that my argumentation "self-destructs." On the contrary, I find his own reasoning seriously flawed.

It is true that vocal characterization does not only depend on tessitura. However, my aesthetic judgment insists that Mrs. Peachum's tessitura should be lower than that of her daughter. It does not disturb me at all that she therefore sometimes sings in the same octave as Mr. Peachum and Macheath. In fact this only serves to underline important aspects of these characters and the relationships between them. My "very strange definition of tessitura," by the way, is simply the *New Grove* definition expressed in statistical terms.

Kim Kowalke's suggestion that Erika Helmke transposed Mrs. Peachum's music down an octave on the 1930 Telefunken recording merely to disguise the fact that one singer is playing two characters is, of course, highly unlikely. He neglects to mention that on this recording Helmke also sings Polly in the *Liebeslied* without any apparent hint of disguise.

Kowalke's next argument "self-destructs" since there were certainly then, as there are now, plenty of actresses in Germany who could sing *c* (the C below middle C), if not *G* (the G below that). (The note *c* is the role's lowest except for *G* which has *d* as an alternative each time it occurs.)

The evidence of the accompaniment is not as easily dismissed as Kowalke would wish, since it is simply untrue that it is an accepted technique to consistently double the melody of a female voice an octave lower. I know of no single case of this, nor of any textbook which warns against doubling a voice at pitch. Such a book was evidently also unknown to Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner.

Finally, of course, it is the characterization of the role which is decisive in this issue. The fact that Kim Kowalke can only describe Mrs. Peachum as a "bourgeois matron" shows that he is not prepared to look very far for the essence of *Die Dreigroschenoper*. To make this oversimplification is to ignore the many instances of Brecht's text which suggest a much less refined woman who tries to appear bourgeois, but is, in fact, a partner in a criminal business and a drunkard. These and other unmatronly attributes lead one to expect an unrefined, deep and raucous voice rather than a "screechy-mezzo" (Kowalke). I can imagine

the latter being more at home in a soap-opera than a threepenny opera.

GEOFFREY ABBOTT

19 July 1991

Augsburg, Germany

Kim Kowalke responds:

Amid the ever widening concern with "authentic," "historical," and "historically informed" performance practice, I applaud Geoffrey Abbott's attempt to extend the discussion to *Die Dreigroschenoper*. These terms are, of course, "loaded" with aesthetic assumptions and ideological subtexts, and the vehemence of the ongoing debates in Early Music circles matches the complexity of the pertinent issues. What comprises "authentic" performance practice is especially uncertain in the domain of the theater, where every production, including the first, is conditioned by practical circumstances, cultural context, and localized exigencies. Particularly in the musical theater it's often difficult to reach consensus on what constitutes the "text" of a work, and therefore issues of textuality compound those of performance practice.

This is certainly the case in spades with *Die Dreigroschenoper*, so the various types of issues need to be "unpacked" very carefully. While performance history and tradition can tell us much about earlier interpretations of texts, both musical and dramatic, we must exercise caution to avoid confusing these *interpretations* with (or substituting them for) the *text* (or texts) itself. Whereas Abbott's valuable work with Mackeben's set of orchestral parts tells us something about both an early performance practice and musical text (and their interjection), his assertion that "Mrs. Peachum's music ... may require to be transposed up, since it was *intended* [italics mine] to be sung an octave lower than written" is essentially a matter of textuality, not of performance practice, authentic or other. The rationale underlying this, yes, "reckless speculation" remains unstated but nonetheless dubious: Weill's partitur (as well as all other scores of the piece published or rented during his lifetime) must be "corrected" or at least "completed" with respect to the notation of Mrs. Peachum's vocal line on the basis of early performance tradition. Abbott doesn't argue that Weill (and the various copyists and typesetters) "forgot" to indicate octave transposition here, there, actually everywhere in Mrs. Peachum's five musical numbers, but rather that the musical text was *intended* to be read in this way — despite the practical problems that arise from such a reading, which "may require [her music] to be transposed up."

That's the crux of the matter: *intended* by whom? I can only infer that Abbott means the composer. Yet even if Abbott were somehow to succeed in salvaging one, two, or even all four of the pieces of evidence he labelled "compelling" from the objections concerning their accuracy, relevance, and interpretation that I raised in the last issue, he would demonstrate little or nothing about authorial intention. On the contrary, there is no shred of direct evidence linking Weill to the transposition of Mrs. Peachum's music down an octave (or up therefrom!). In fact, the published materials and Weill's full score had already taken into account what the composer wished to preserve of his experience with the premiere, and thereafter he consistently cited the full score as the final authority

with regard to his *intentions* in both textual and performance matters.

I'm glad that Abbott makes explicit in his present letter what had been implicit in his essay: thorny issues of "authorial intention" have been entangled with those of "authenticity." The knockabout nature of the first production(s) of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, not to mention the piece itself (and its post-premiere process of revision), calls into question the applicability and even the very meaning of "authentic." The "considerable tradition" of what has cumulatively befallen *Die Dreigroschenoper* since Weill protested unauthorized changes to the music by the Frankfurt production in October 1928 is better characterized with some adjective other than "authentic."

I suggest that Abbott's campaign on behalf of baritone Mrs. Peachum would be more persuasive (or at least less objectionable) if it were couched in more appropriate terms. With a piece whose "textuality" is as "open" as *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s, he could instead plead his case on the basis of cultural convention ("That's how Mrs. Peachum is usually sung in Germany"), aesthetic preference ("Mrs. Peachum ought to sing an octave lower because it fits my interpretation of her character better"), stage-wise pragmatism ("actresses of the *Fach* to which this role belongs usually have low voices and can't sing it as written"), or even conductorial caprice ("I just like it better"). Then we could discreetly raise our eyebrows or shrug our shoulders — without feeling hoodwinked by an attempt to pass off an arbitrary choice as the composer's intention.

Rather than correcting Abbott's misstatements in his partial recital of my argument or rejoicing his reactions to several of its non-essential points, I would urge the devoted (by now, dogged) reader to reconsider the relevant passage from his essay on p. 179 of the *Handbook* in light of my (and Stephen Hinton's) original comments, not Abbott's tropes thereto. Under scrutiny his "historical and aesthetic argumentation" depends not on sound *musicological* evidence or keen *musical* perceptions but barely camouflaged personal taste.

To the Editor:

My contribution to the ongoing debate concerning Mrs. Peachum as bass baritone, belter, or transposed drag queen might, to modify Thomas Mann, perhaps be described as *Die Ballade der armen Frau Peachum oder Die vertauschten Kopfstimmen*. On reflecting on one of Mr. Abbott's points — the contention that Mrs. Peachum's role is actually to be sung an octave lower than written — I have come to the conclusion that there may be considerably more to this than meets either the eye of the careful score reader, or the ear of the attentive listener. Equally as relevant as the information about Rosa Valetti's freakish range — incidentally it must be a matter of considerable regret that Yma Sumac will now never have the opportunity to sing *all* versions of the role of Mrs. Peachum — is the hidden message embedded in the *musical* language of "Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit."

It has, of course, been commonly accepted that this number was omitted from the original production because of the "offensive" nature of the text. But if one reflects that, sung down the octave, the opening phrases bear a startling

resemblance to "In diesen heiligen Hallen," might it not be just as likely that the tale of offended sensibilities is a red herring, and that Weill was really afraid that the figure of Sarastro (clearly the alter ego for Mrs. Peachum) might have loomed too ominously and resonantly over the proceedings? In this connection it is hardly accidental that the keys of both numbers are so closely related (E flat and E) while the shape of the melodic line is, in each case, virtually identical, with its rising and falling pattern and alternating two-fold phrases.

On a more serious note, it may be that Geoffrey Abbott's analysis — presumably computer assisted — of the respective "tessituras" of Polly and Mrs. Peachum is accurate. I remain skeptical, however, as most singers in my experience pay scant attention to such tasks as calculating the proportional percentage of particular pitches and more to the actual occurrence and recurrence of notes round the upper and lower limits of their range. I have known baritones who go through scores marking the upper F sharps and G's they are required to sing, reckoning that anything more than half a dozen turns the evening into something like a series of 400-meter hurdles. If one adopts the same undoubtedly ad hoc, but entirely pragmatic approach for two of the numbers sung by Mrs. Peachum and Polly, the former in Number 4 has eight e-flat's and two f-flat's, while Polly in the first verse of the "Barbara Song" has eleven e-flat's and eight f's. Such rudimentary arithmetic suggests to me that Mrs. Peachum's "tessitura" is not as high as Polly's though I allow there may be a variety of arguments that might be put to demonstrate the opposite.

Mrs. Peachum may well sing in "The First Threppenny Finale": "ja dann ist's eben nichts damit, dann ist das eben alles Kitt"; but I feel this and related tessitural, archetypal, and hemidemisemiological questions could well provide a fruitful area for further research.

MICHAEL MORLEY

18 June 1991

The Flinders University of South
Australia

To the Editor:

I thought your readers would be interested in something I came up with on *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* when I was reading a new book on the life of Henry Stimson, *The Colonel* by Godfrey Hodgson (Knopf, 1990). In 1927, when Calvin Coolidge was president and the United States was involved in Nicaragua, there were businessmen involved in our Latin American policy, and they were called the mahogany people — Americans who owned lumber in the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua.

ANTHONY S. CICARIELLO

Cambridge, MA

To the Editor:

Unfortunately, I overlooked a mistake when checking the English translation of my review of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in Frankfurt for the last issue of the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*. As it turned out, the crucial sentence read: "The inhabitants of Mahagonny consume the cynical trial of Jimmy Mahoney simply as a spectacle of the mass media, not without considering, of course, what would become of them if they could no longer pay the bill." What I wanted to say, however, was just the opposite: The inhabitants of Mahagonny are consuming the trial

without considering what might happen to them if they were in Jimmy Mahoney's place. They probably begin considering when they start the big demonstrations that shape the finale of the opera. There is a turning point after Jimmy's execution, a turning point between the rise and decline of the city.

I believe this to be important because of two reasons which exceed the scope of my review, but might interest the readers of the Newsletter:

1. *Mahagonny* is now a very topical piece in Germany. For example, most West Germans have been watching the economic decline in East Germany with little concern about the situation of their fellow countrymen. Most of the West Germans still can pay their bills. Another example: we have seen this year, and still see, the return of war to the political agenda of Europe, and many people tend to watch these wars as a pleasant spectacle on the TV screen — it's not them who have to die. But how long will Mahagonny continue to rise? What's going to happen when we can't shrug off the miserable status of the world any longer? The Frankfurt performance ignored that there is a turning point in the history of the city of Mahagonny, as the authors have conceived it.

2. How do the authors bring about this sudden turning point? Of course, there is the placard with that famous inscription: "Und in zunehmender Verwirrung, Teuerung und Feindschaft aller gegen alle demonstrierten in den letzten Wochen der Stadt die noch nicht vernichteten für ihre Ideale unbelehrt." However, I can't believe that the dramatic impact of this message is strong enough to bring about the necessary change of atmosphere. In Leipzig 1930, there was a visual element that gave a sensuous dimension to the written announcement: Caspar Neher's projection showed a number of military aircraft flying towards the spectator. In his *Regiebuch*, Weill stated: "Die Projektionstafeln Caspar Neher's bilden einen Bestandteil des Aufführungsmaterials (sie sollen daher auch gemeinsam mit dem Notenmaterial an die Bühnen verschickt werden)." He repeated this after the Leipzig performance in his correspondence with Universal Edition regarding the following performances in other German cities. Up to now, nobody has tracked down all of Neher's projection boards so as to mount a fully authentic performance. But the visual element, and the part of Neher in the conception of this opera, I suppose, deserve far more attention than they have hitherto attracted.

ANDREAS HAUFF

11 September 1991

Mainz, Germany

To the Editor:

Niels Krabbe's description of the hitherto unnoted production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (in the Fall 1990 issue of the *Newsletter*) included a newspaper report that Weill listened to the performance on the radio from Vienna and sent a telegram to the opera company, saying: "It came through all right. The music was exactly as I had imagined it should be. Marvelous artists!" The report turns out to be bogus. While Lys Symonette and I were editing the Weill-Lenya correspondence recently, we were struck by a passage in a letter from Weill to Lenya of 12 January 1934: "The letter from 'Grete' (Margarethe Steffin) just arrived. I had no idea that *Mahagonny* was

given there (Copenhagen) and have not sent a telegram either." Although neither Steffin's nor Lenya's letters have survived, it's clear that the composer's stamp of approval for the Danish performance was some sort of unauthorized publicity ploy, which Steffin attempted to confirm with Weill. While it doesn't alter the fact that the production occurred, it does call into question its purported quality and nature.

KIM H. KOWALKE

22 June 1991

Rochester, NY

To the Editor:

David Hamilton's very thoughtful and well-informed review of the latest CD reissues of the old Weill and Lenya shellacs is the model of an excellent record review (*Newsletter IX/1*). Please allow me to expand upon some of Mr. Hamilton's remarks.

1) Hamilton writes "I'm sorry the elusive Fritzi Massary versions of "Seeräuber-Jenny" and "Barbara-Song" are not here, for they would represent the *Dreigroschenoper* interacting with yet another institution of this time, the world of Berlin operetta." I have known the legend of the Massary recordings for a long time, but after many years of looking for them (in close cooperation with the leading shellac collectors in Germany) there is no evidence that Massary really did record any *Dreigroschenoper* songs. The legend was, I contend, created by a mistake in the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Frankfurt am Main, where there is a tape copy of Carola Neher's chestrola record falsely attributed to Massary. (Another mistake with this Neher record happened on the LP reissue by Zweitausendeins in 1974 — there it was credited to Lotte Lenya, which also led to many confusions!) Further, Berthold Leimbach's new discography lists more than 80 recordings by Massary but includes no mention of any *Dreigroschenoper* pieces. By the way, one document of a Berlin operetta singer does exist: a Parlophon record of "Seeräuber-Jenny" and "Barbara-Song," sung by Beate Roos-Reuter and the Haller-Revue-Orchester recorded in 1929. Can this be mixed up with Massary too? The singing style of Mrs. Roos-Reuter is so poor that we decided not to include the record on the Capriccio CD.

2) Hamilton immediately recognized that for the 1930 Homocord record of two *Mahagonny* songs sung by Lenya, I gave in my discography (*Newsletter IV/1*) Weill as the conductor whereas the original label only says "mit Orchesterbegleitung." Hamilton is right. The reason for this mistake is the extreme rarity of some of the original shellacs. When I wrote the discography I had in my possession only a tape copy of the record with notes by the collector (who would not part with the original recording). When we finally found a second copy, the error could not be corrected. So the only way to be correct in all details is autopsy! (Another such case is the Bost and OWI records of the Forties. Although many points speak for the fact that Weill plays the piano parts himself, there is no evidence on the original record labels for it. So my notes on the Capriccio CD may be false, too!)

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ties of childhood, so the prolonged submediant inhibition, the insistent suspension of the jazzy sixth, represents the most primitive application of this principle in the sphere of dissonant chordal formations. (In chordal progressions, the consequences of the interrupted cadence V-VI are, of course, the prototypical example of such an increase of satisfaction.)

It is imaginable that the musical primitivity of this harmonic maneuver corresponds to a relatively unsublimated amount of, perhaps, infantile sexual energy behind it; this



"The Third Man" Words by Walter Lord. Based on music composed and arranged by Anton Karas.

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state of affairs would account for the "sexy" character of the tune to which a well-known singer has directed my attention, and which my own feeling confirms; it would also account for one's disgust at (i.e., unconscious, infantile love of) the tune's banality.

I immediately asked this singer whether he could think of another such sexy tune, and his associations anon supplied the one-time hit "Sous les toits de Paris" (from the film of, I believe, the same title) where, sure enough, the submediant (likewise arrived at chromatically from the dominant) also plays a strong and inhibitory role.

The primitive itself is not bad, aesthetically or morally. Rather is it beyond — better: before — good and evil. Prolonged *coitus* may revert to infantile pleasures, but as soon as it is practiced with a view to affording the woman gratification, it assumes a highly altruistic and thus adult significance.

Mr. Anton Karas's tune is in the main too primitive to be bad (except for the so far unmentioned and indeed unmentionable tonic resolution): a bare harmonic structure with an ornamental pattern instead of a melody. That the same harmonic device (in the same "primitive" key of C!) can serve as basis for something good is shown by Kurt Weill's "Moritat."

Weill indicates "Blues-Tempo"; to me the blues' influence seems even to extend to the

melodic-harmonic structure, in that the tune apotheosizes that submediant which we hear in certain blues in place of the leading note and with a VI⁷ implication: by an extreme inhibition of the tonic, the submediant here downright usurps it. Owing to the quality of the melodic line, we are no longer disgusted at the primitive inhibition, though in order to fully appease our unconscious conscience we may have to murmur something about the decadent German twenties. Decadent the tune certainly wishes to be, an aim which it achieves

by the submediant's *unbroken* dominance over the tonic: if we adhere to our psychogenesis, we may here be confronted with a musical phantasy of the so-called method of *Karezza*, i.e., prolonged *coitus* without *ejaculatio*. We in our civilization tend to regard this practice as decadent, but there are sects which have ritualized it, the purpose being a supreme and sublime test of willpower as well as concentration on the spiritual aspects of the beloved. From the purely medical point of view, it would seem that we are right, in that the practice is both physiologically and psychologically idiotic, but then, with Weill's tune, the medical point of view does not arise. Possibly, if unconsciously, Weill exhibits decadence as it were in inverted commas in order to show us that decadent art is never where we look for it: he seems to offer a parody, not so much of decadence, as of our conception of decadence. In any case, the art of love can tell us something about the love of art. Not much perhaps, yet much we do not readily think of.

*As reprinted in *Music Survey: New Series: 1949-52*. Edited by Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller. London: Faber Music in association with Faber & Faber, 1981. pp. 283-285. (c) Milein Cosman.

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3) That leads directly to Hamilton's question of whether we could find "any clues as to who the other singers are" in the *Mahagonny* Querschnitt of Electrola, which only indicates Lotte Lenya on the label. I am quite sure that the singers are Trude Hesterberg (Begbick) and Heinrich Gretler (Alskawolfjoe) from the original Berlin theater cast; I am not sure who sings Johann Ackermann (probably not Harald Paulsen) but all this is speculation, until perhaps one day we find original documents from the recording session. Obviously there were substitutions from the stage cast of the Theater am Kurfürstendamm because Hans Sommer conducts rather than Alexander von Zemlinsky.

The field of Weill shellacs remains a thrilling experience. Just recently we discovered two Japanese recordings from 1932-33 (excerpts from *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik für Blasorchester* with the Tokyo New Symphonic Orchestra, Hidemaro Konoe, conductor; and two *Dreigroschenoper* songs "Moritat" and "Ballade von angenehmen Leben," sung by Eiichi Uchida and the Taiyo Orchestra). I am sure these will not be the last discoveries.

JÜRGEN SCHEBERA

26 May 1991

Berlin

To the Editor:

I'm sorry that I rushed to criticize *Musik bei Brecht*, ed. Lucchesi and Shull, before I had had time to study it properly. Well, I have now done this and can agree with those who have said the book is a fine piece of scholarship and a useful item to have on one's shelves as a reference volume. I still hope someone will research the subject of music for Brecht texts composed in America — I use this last phrase to include composers, such as Stefan Wolpe, who might not be considered American composers even though they composed in America (and some of whom acquired American citizenship).

Then again much music for Brecht texts by Weill, Eisler, and Dessau was composed in America, and this music, to be sure, has already been adequately publicized. But there are many unpublished compositions of real interest which are in danger of being not only forgotten but totally lost unless scholars and librarians get busy.

ERIC BENTLEY

28 June 1991

New York