

Toward a new Kurt Weill Reception: A Study of Influence in the Music Theater
of Marc Blitzstein and Leonard Bernstein

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Abstract

Theodor Adorno verkündete, das Model von Kurt Weill lasse sich nicht wiederholen. Seine Bühnenwerke wurden trotzdem zum unvermeidlichen Präzedenzfall für Komponisten auf beiden Seiten des Atlantiks. Diese Promotionsarbeit erkundet insbesondere die Rolle seiner formalen Innovationen im Musiktheater von Marc Blitzstein und Leonard Bernstein. Dabei haben die Komponisten seinem ästhetischen Beitrag zur amerikanischen Tradition entweder widerstanden oder ihn heruntergespielt. Komparative Analysen aufgrund von Harold Blooms „Anxiety of Influence“ und anderen intertextuellen Methoden decken auf, dass die Grundsätze von Weills Opernreform eine einheimische Bewegung von anspruchsvollem, sozial-engagierten Musiktheater katalysierten.

Die folgende Studie richtet den Fokus auf Werke, die verschiedene Phasen seiner Mission vertreten, die Gattung der Oper zu erneuern, eine Entwicklung, die sich von der *Urform* in *Die Dreigroschenoper* bis zum Musical Play (*Lady in the Dark*) und zur Broadway Opera (*Street Scene*) erstreckt. Blitzstein und Bernstein wiederum überwandten die formalen Grenzen zwischen Oper und Musical mit *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Regina*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Candide* und *West Side Story*, teil einer kurzlebigen Bewegung in Amerika des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Dieselbe überschnitt sich mit einer Renaissance für Weills deutschsprachige Werke im Anschluss an die Premiere von Blitzsteins Übersetzung *The Threepenny Opera* unter Bernsteins Leitung. Das unveröffentlichte *A Prayer by Blecht*, für welches Bernstein sich an Stephen Sondheim und Jerome Robbins, seine Kooperationspartner in *West Side Story*, wieder angeschlossen hat, vertieft den Bezug von Bernsteins Musiktheater-Ästhetik auf Weill.

Abstract

Theodor Adorno famously proclaimed that the model of Kurt Weill could not be repeated. His stage works nevertheless set an inescapable precedent for composers on both sides of the Atlantic. My dissertation explores how Weill's formal innovations in particular laid the groundwork for the music theater of Marc Blitzstein and Leonard Bernstein although they either resisted or downplayed his aesthetic contribution to American tradition. Comparative analysis based on Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and other modes of intertextuality reveal that the principles of Weill's opera reform would catalyze an indigenous movement in sophisticated, socially engaged music theatre.

The following study focuses on works that represent different phases of his mission to renew the genre of opera, evolving from the *Urform* (original or primitive form) in *Die Dreigroschenoper* to the musical play (*Lady in the Dark*) and Broadway Opera (*Street Scene*). Blitzstein and Bernstein in turn defied the formal boundaries between opera and musical theater with *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Regina*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Candide* and *West Side Story*, part of a short-lived movement in mid-twentieth century America that coincided with a renaissance for Weill's German-period works following the premiere of Blitzstein's translation, *The Threepenny Opera*, under Bernstein's baton. The unpublished *A Pray by Blecht*, – for which Bernstein rejoined Stephen Sondheim and Jerome Robbins, his collaborators on *West Side Story*, – deepens the connection of Bernstein's music theater aesthetic to Weill.

Introduction

“I think surely Leonard Bernstein knows every note of Kurt Weill. ...he is the one who... left off after his death...His *West Side Story* and also...his *Candide*...those are the things Kurt Weill would have done, too, would he have lived, you know?...He paved the way for – those things to come.”

- Lotte Lenya¹

When Kurt Weill died of cardiac arrest on April 3, 1950 in New York, his ambitions for American opera were not yet fulfilled. He had begun collaborating with Maxwell Anderson on a musical adaptation of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and had dreams of turning Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* into an opera. He had also jotted down interest in setting *Gone with The Wind*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and other American classics.² His opera *Street Scene* had been declared “Broadway's First Real Opera” upon its 1947 premiere but did not run for more than 148 performances³ (his former publisher Universal Edition had expressed interest in presenting the opera in Germany, an event which Weill never lived to see). The 1948 “folk opera” *Down in the Valley* had made the most impact during his lifetime, receiving 250 performances by 1950 and becoming the first American television opera – or at least one of the first music theater works to be produced for television – when it was broadcast nationally by NBC in January of that year.⁴

¹ Lenya, Lotte. *An Oral History Interview* conducted by David Beams (partial transcript, 1962). Weill-Lenya Research Center (Series 60). Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

² Lenya, Lotte. Letter to Olin Downes, July 12, 1950. WLRC Series 30, Box 8, Folder 17 and project memo “Opera Ideas of 15 January 1950” via Kowalke, Kim H. “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera” in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill* (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003), 301. Weill further included Brecht's *The Good Maiden of Sezuan* (written in U.S. exile), *Spoon River Anthology*, *Dulcinea*, *Green Mansions*, *Body* and *Winterset* in what Kowalke calls “a veritable Who's Who' of American letters.”

³ See “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera,” in Danuser and Gottschewski, eds., *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*, 285-7.

⁴ “Kurt Weill's *Amerika/America*” in Danuser and Gottschewski, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*, 11; Downes, Olin. “Kurt Weill, Despite Formidable Training, Sought to Reach Wide Audience” in *New York Times*, April 9, 1950; and Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage*, 292. Compare with: <https://www.kwf.org/pages/kw-detailed-chronology-1945-1950.html>

Shortly before his death, Weill indicated in letters to his parents that he was on the brink of an exciting new period in his career. Recounting a critic's observation that "Kurt Weill will be known to later generations as the founder of American opera," he wrote in July of 1949, "you can imagine what this means to me...since this recognition of my endeavors now allows me to work once more in the field of opera."⁵ Two months later, he reported: "It almost looks as if I could reap some kind of harvest after twenty-five years of heavy, indefatigable work – not in a financial but in an idealistic sense."⁶

The extent to which Weill's wide-ranging legacy had yet to be processed emerges in a *New York Times* obituary of April 4 declaring: "wrote music for 'One Touch of Venus,' 'Lady in the Dark' and other Broadway Hits/ALSO TURNED OUT OPERAS." The article, whose author remains unknown, goes on to cite the early operas *Der Protagonist* and *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* – both which had fallen into obscurity – as the composer's "best-known works."⁷ Yet despite low box office numbers for Weill's American-period shows, critical reception made clear his central role in shaping a national tradition of sophisticated sung theater. The anonymous obituary references a theatre review of his first commercial success, *Lady in the Dark*, praising Weill's ability to produce "organic music that can bind the separate elements of a production and turn the underlying motive into song."⁸

The music critic Olin Downes declared in his *New York Times* obituary that *Lady in the Dark* and *Street Scene* "bespoke a new, modern and essentially American

⁵ Letter to his parents (originally in German) of 11 July 1949 via "Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America" in Edler, Horst and Kowalke, Kim H., eds. *A Stranger Here Myself. Kurt Weill-Studien*. (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1993), 51.

⁶ Kowalke, Kim and Symonette, Lee, eds. and translators. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*. The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 482.

⁷ "Kurt Weill Dead; Composer, was 50" in *New York Times* (April 4, 1950). Kowalke explains in his lecture "What Makes Weill Weill?" (forthcoming, University of Buffalo Press, 2021) that these one-act operas "indeed had almost instantly established Weill's standing as the foremost operatic composer of his generation in Germany. But by 1950 both had all but vanished – on both sides of the Atlantic."

⁸ The review in question is by *New York Times* drama critic Brooks Atkinson who, according to Kowalke, may have contributed to the obituary. *Lady in the Dark* in 1941-3 ran for a total of 777 performances, 462 of which took place in New York.

approach to the lyric stage.”⁹ He also maintained that *Down in the Valley* had solved the puzzle faced by “half a dozen well-known American composers” about “how to make an opera out of American folk song,” citing “Weill’s creative attitude toward American folklore, and imagination in its use” as just one example of “the range and the diversity of his efforts.”¹⁰

Theodor Adorno, meanwhile, somewhat sneeringly remarked on Weill’s transformation from a “surrealist” to a “Broadway composer” in his obituary for the *Frankfurter Rundschau* while also noting how composers in Weill’s post-exile period had “fed off the trove of *Dreigroschenoper*” as they tried to be at “once modern and popular” – an “anti-experimental regression” that he considered inextricable from Weill’s “conscious experiments.” But he believed that “the model [‘a kind of Offenbach of the century’] could not be repeated.” Rather, his melodies – that “most ephemeral” – would outlive him.¹¹

Virgil Thomson, in the *New York Herald Tribune*, identified what is perhaps Weill’s most important legacy, as a formal innovator, while also noting the loss of a singular voice in history:

He was probably the most original single workman in the whole musical theater, internationally considered, during the last quarter century... a master of musico-dramatic design, whose structures, built for function and solidity, constitute a repertory of models that have not only served well their original purpose but also had wide influence on composers as examples of procedure.

Although Thomson compared the American scores unfavourably to his Weimar-period works, he considered the former “important to history” and the product of “a master’s hand.” He predicted that his “skills” might be “replaced by the ability of [Gian Carlo]

⁹ Downes, Olin. “Kurt Weill, Despite Formidable Training, Sought to Reach Wide Audience” in *New York Times* (April 9, 1950).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Ihm war die Fähigkeit verliehen, zum Bilde von Jahreszahlen deren eigene Melodie zu finden, und dies Allvergänglichste an ihm mag dauern.“ „Kurt Weill“ (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15.04.1950) in Adorno, Theodor. *Musikalische Schriften V*. Gesammelte Schriften Band 18. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), 544-7.

Menotti, Blitzstein and other classically trained composers to hold public attention through constructed tragic music dramas” while lamenting that Weill might have gone on to write lighter works that “bridged the gap, as he did in Germany, between grand opera and the *singspiel*.”¹²

Despite these observations upon Weill’s death, his influence on composers of music theater has yet to be the subject of a detailed study. My book explores how his formal innovations, in particular, laid the groundwork for the music theater of the composers Marc Blitzstein and Leonard Bernstein although they either resisted or downplayed his aesthetic contribution to American tradition. Comparative analysis will reveal that the principles of Weill's opera reform, which found their first full expression in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, would continue to ferment and catalyze an indigenous movement in sophisticated, socially engaged music theater.

The following study focuses on stage works that represent his reform at different phases, evolving from the *Urform* (original or primitive form) in *Dreigroschenoper* to the genres of musical play (*Lady in the Dark*) and Broadway Opera (*Street Scene*). Weill’s American-period output, far from abandoning his mission to renew opera for the current time and place, revealed the possibility of a mixed genre that spoke as directly to a native sensibility as it rooted itself in European tradition. Blitzstein and Bernstein carried forth this aesthetic principle in stage works that defied the generic boundaries between opera and the American musical: *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Regina*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Candide* and *West Side Story* were part of a short-lived movement that came to a close in the late 1950s, one that coincided with a renaissance for Weill’s German works following the premiere of Blitzstein’s translation *The Threepenny Opera* under

¹² Thomson, Virgil. "Music in Review. Kurt Weill," in *New York Herald Tribune* (April 9, 1950). Echoing Thomson, Robert Sabin of *Musical America* maintained that Weill’s American-period scores “never measured up to this work in the 1920s” but attested to both “his adaptability and his industry”: “No matter how long Weill’s music lasts, his place in the history of musical theatre is secure, and his influence will be felt in the popular and experimental theatre works of young composers for a time to come.” (Sabin, Robin. “Kurt Weill: Theatre Man of his Time” in *Musical America*, April 1950).

Bernstein's baton. I have also taken into account the unpublished *A Prayer by Blecht*, an experimental work for which Bernstein rejoined Stephen Sondheim and Jerome Robbins, his collaborators in *West Side Story*.

I have isolated concepts from Weill's writings and set out to trace how they were absorbed and transformed into the musical dramaturgy of the above works. In addition to *Zwischengattung* (mixed genre), *Urform* and "Broadway Opera," analysis of select scenes and numbers will consider the role of irony in a „seriously intended“ manner; opera as a "plot-building element;" the "gestic" fixing of musical material; and the genre of Song as a building block.¹³ I also explore harmonic and melodic constructions that bear the imprint of Weill. The theoretical approach draws upon Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence and other modes of intertextuality, perhaps most importantly Christopher Reynolds' recent work based on "motives for allusions."¹⁴ While it is my objective to uncover the spectre of Weill in the scores of Blitzstein and Bernstein, I also explore the implication of allusions to such composers as Bach, Mozart and Wagner within the context of Weill's pursuit to renew operatic tradition.

Until now, scholarly observations about his influence have been scattered and presented without extensive musical analysis. Larry Stempel identifies *Street Scene* as "the keystone in the conceptual arch which connects such American operas that followed it to Broadway" as *Regina* and *West Side Story*.¹⁵ Kim Kowalke has also pointed to the role of *Street Scene* in "ushering in a series of operas on Broadway by

¹³ These terms emerge above all in "Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik," "Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper" "Anmerkungen zu meiner Oper *Mahagonny*" in Hinton, Stephen and Schebera, Jürgen, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*. (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1990), 56-76 and „Aktuelles Zwiegespräch über die Schuloper zwischen Kurt Weill und Dr. Hans Fischer" in Hinton and Schebera, eds., *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*. (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 2000), 451.

¹⁴ Reynolds, Christopher. *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*. (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Reynolds, Christopher. *Wagner, Schumann and the Lessons of Beethoven's Ninth*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

¹⁵ Stempel, "Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera" in Kowalke, Kim, ed. *A New Orpheus. Essays on Kurt Weill*. (Ann Arbor: Yale University Press, 1986), 325.

Blitzstein, Menotti, Bernstein, and others during the next decade.”¹⁶ He maintains that “although arguably its most adventurous experimenter during the 1940s, Weill would not live to participate in the musical theater’s golden age.”¹⁷ Buried with Weill, he has written, „were his inimitable visions for American opera. Others would eventually resume the quest, some under Weill’s influence and with notable success.”¹⁸

The impact of *Die Dreigroschenoper* on Blitzstein did not escape listeners when *The Cradle Will Rock* premiered in 1937, as will be documented in Chapter 2.

Wolfgang Rathert calls the “Play in Music” nothing less than “an American answer to *Die Dreigroschenoper*.”¹⁹ In his essay “*The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted*,” Kowalke provides what is until now the most comprehensive look into the connection between *Die Dreigroschenoper* and the output of both Blitzstein – who “was discovering his own voice” as he came to “appreciate Weill’s” – and Bernstein, who emerged with *Candide* and *West Side Story* “as the leading composer of the ‘serious musical.’”²⁰ Elsewhere, Weill’s role in Blitzstein’s evolution from a modernist to a composer of popular theater has been downplayed. Maria Christina Fava offers insightful observations into the psychology behind Blitzstein’s relationship with Weill in her dissertation *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City* but ultimately underscores Blitzstein’s originality, as does David T. Little in *The Critical Composer : Political Music during and after "The Revolution."*

¹⁶ “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera” in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*. (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003), 284.

Even Stravinsky hoped for a Broadway premiere of *The Rake’s Progress* (“Theorizing the Golden Age of Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” 9 in *A Music-Theoretical Matrix: Essays in Honor of Allen Forte* (Part V), ed. David Carson Berry, *Gamut* 6/2, 2013, 164).

¹⁷ “Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,” 48.

¹⁸ Kowalke, “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera,” 301.

¹⁹ “Die beste aller musikalischen Welten” Leonard Bernsteins *Candide* und die Idee des ‘Crossover’ in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts” in Schall-Gotthardt, Susanne, Schader, Luitgard and Winkler, Heinz-Jürgen, eds. “...das alles hätte auch anders kommen können. Beiträge zu Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts.” (Mainz: Schott, 2009), 267.

²⁰ *Die Dreigroschenoper. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score*. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1996), 11-17.

Far from making clear Weill's precedent, as is the objective of this study, Weill, Blitzstein and Bernstein are sometimes mentioned in one breath as figures who brought their classical training to Broadway. Stempel writes that all three "had been moving in the same general direction – seeking to mine 'that vast unexploited field between grand opera and musical comedy,' as Weill had put it, and come up with a "“musical play of operatic proportions.”” In another instance, he identifies Weill and Blitzstein as “populist composers with European training” who “looked to Broadway to extend their reach and invigorate their work.”²¹ Raymond Knapp, in his book *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, writes even more generally that “neither composer forgot his training...each found ample opportunity within ‘popular’ idioms to indulge the more innovative harmonic and melodic language typical of modernism.”²²

To be sure, Bernstein, came naturally to the crossroads of Old World opera and popular theater. In the words of Joseph Swain, “the easy alliance of jazz idioms and symphonic textures are as nothing to one who was a practicing jazzman and Koussevitsky protégé at the same time.”²³ Stephen Hinton, however, writes that Bernstein knew Weill's American works “firsthand”: “Weill's creative path no doubt seemed paradigmatic for a composer with a background in high culture and deep aspirations to reach a broader public, especially on Broadway.”²⁴ Quoting Lotte Lenya, who stated that Bernstein “is the one who took up after Weill's death,” Bruce McClung²⁵ and Paul R. Laird make explicit the connection between Weill and Bernstein

²¹ Stempel, Larry. *Showtime. A History of the Broadway Musical Theater*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010), 370 and 378. He quotes Weill's notes to *Street Scene* from a 1947 recording (Columbia OL 4139).

²² Knapp, Raymond. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 114.

²³ Swain, Joseph. *The Broadway Musical. A Critical and Musical Survey*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 217.

²⁴ Hinton, Stephen. *Weill's Musical Theater. Stages of Reform*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 471.

²⁵ McClung spells his name in lower case.

as composers who worked in both “cultivated forms” and “vernacular genres” while also drawing musically on their Jewish heritage.²⁶

Nils Grosch explores the extent to which *West Side Story* is an American Opera in the tradition of *Street Scene* in his 2016 article „Oper als Strategie der kompositorischen Selbstinszenierung und Wertbegriff: *Street Scene* (1946) and *West Side Story* (1957)” but is foremost concerned with defining opera in contradistinction to the American musical.²⁷ Nigel Simeone notes the thematic parallels between the two works in his study of *West Side Story* but overlooks structural, harmonic and motivic elements in the music, instead pointing to the influences of Stravinsky and Copland as well as allusions to Beethoven and Wagner.²⁸ Andreas Jaensch traces Bernstein’s career at once back to Gershwin, Blitzstein und Weill while making observations that inadvertently connect Bernstein’s aesthetic specifically to Weill. He notes, for example, that Bernstein landed with *West Side Story* upon his “own new style in that he combined the arias, duets and ensemble technique of traditional opera with the form schema of popular song.”²⁹

He does acknowledge, however, the impact of Weill’s *Lady in the Dark* and, – more generally, the 1920s tradition of one-act *Zeitoper*, for which Weill was a chief representative, – on Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*.³⁰ Richard Rischar has undertaken the most detailed comparative discussion of these works thus far in “Dashed Utopian Suburban Dreams in Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*,” citing both the topic of

²⁶ Everett, William A. and Laird, Paul, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 168.

²⁷ Döhl, Frédéric and Herzfeld, Gregor, eds. “In Search of the ‘Great American Opera’” *Tendenzen des amerikanischen Musiktheaters*. (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2016), 101-112.

²⁸ Simeone, Nigel. *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*. (Burlington, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 75 and 83.

²⁹ Jaensch, Andreas. *Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 2003), 167. Also see 38, 83-85, 98 and 170.

³⁰ “...die zentrale Rolle des Song-Stils in den Werken Weills findet sich bis zu einem gewissen Maße in Bernsteins Einakter wieder.... Bernsteins Einakter lehnt sich allerdings aufgrund seiner Bestrebungen, eine amerikanische Oper zu schaffen und den damit verbundenen Wurzeln in der ‘Musical Comedy’ und dem ‘American Popular Song’, starker an Weills für den Broadway geschriebenen Musiktheaterwerken – wie beispielsweise ‚Lady in the Dark‘ – an, als an die deutsche Zeitoper der 1920er Jahre.“ Ibid, 209.

psychotherapy in *Lady in the Dark* and the critique of suburbia in *One Touch of Venus* as evidence of “Weill’s theatrical influence on Bernstein.”³¹ Helen Smith, on other hand, concludes that both *Tahiti* and *Cradle* “combine the influence of *Die Dreigroschenoper* with the structure of Broadway shows.”³²

The impact of Weill’s “Vaudeville in Two Acts” *Love Life* on Bernstein’s *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, both collaborations with the lyricist Alan Jay Lerner, has already been documented and will not be explored in this study since a proper analysis of *Love Life*’s influence by necessity extends to concept musicals of the 1960s and 70s. As Kowalke documents in “Today’s Invention, Tomorrow’s Cliche: *Love Life* and the Concept Musical,” Stephen Sondheim acknowledged the influence of the stage work, which in the meanwhile has been established as a kind of prototype for concept musicals.³³ Henry Marx, in “Das amerikanische Musical in den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren und die Rolle Kurt Weills,” presents the former observations as fact with regard to *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Company* and *Follies*.³⁴

mcclung and Laird, in their chapter “Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein,” make their most specific observations with regard to *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, noting that, like *Love Life*, the work “skipped through history and followed one or more themes, drawing parallels between different times.”³⁵ Hinton – discussing Weill’s posthumous impact in the coda to his 2012 book *Weill’s Musical Theater. Stages of Reform* – similarly emphasizes the importance of *Love Life*

³¹ Rischar, Richard. “Dashed Utopian Suburban Dreams in Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*” in Schebera, Jürgen and Weiss, Stefan, eds. *Street Scene. Der urbane Raum im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts*. (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2006), 112.

³² Smith, Helen. *There’s a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein*. (Burlington, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 47.

³³ Schall-Gotthardt, Susanne, Schader, Luitgard and Winkler, Heinz-Jürgen, eds. “...das alles hätte auch anders kommen können. Beiträge zu Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts.” (Mainz: Schott, 2009), 175-193.

³⁴ „*Love Life* ist allerdings ein Vorläufer des späteren ‚concept‘ Musical Genres, das beispielsweise durch John Kanders *Cabaret* und *Chicago* und Sondheims *Company* und *Follies* vertreten ist.“ Farneth, David; Kortländer, Bernd; and Meiszies, Winrich, eds. *Vom Kurfürstendamm zum Broadway. Kurt Weill (1900-1950)*. (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1990), 67-74.

³⁵ Everett, William A. and Laird, Paul, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178.

in shaping *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* and musicals by Sondheim and Kander and Ebb: “A topic-based study of reception tracing connections like these...,” he concludes, “provides a necessary complement to the chronological approach that narrates how Weill’s image changed over time.”³⁶

Given the link to Bernstein’s output, the instances in which Weill is *not* mentioned are all the more striking. Studies of “serious” American music theater works often emphasize either European or American influence, a divide which Weill in effect bridged in hybrid works on the cusp of opera and musical theater tradition. Carol J. Oja, in her otherwise invaluable article “*The Cradle Will Rock* and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s,” leaves Weill out of her discussion when she notes that,

following in Blitzstein’s path, both Bernstein and Sondheim have written works that defy categorization as ‘opera’ or ‘musical theater,’ that delicately balance complexity with accessibility, and that use the Broadway stage as a medium for exposing the underside of society.”³⁷

Her more recent study *Bernstein meets Broadway. Collaborative Art in a Time of War* acknowledges that the arrival of émigrés such as Weill “had a direct impact on figures involved with” Bernstein’s first Broadway show, *On the Town*, specifically mentioning how the daring use of dance in *One Touch of Venus* set a precedent, not least through the casting of the Japanese-American dancer Sono Osato. While she writes that *On the Town* “emulated the crossover aspirations of Blitzstein, Gershwin and Weill,” she never links the use of parody and “structural montage” to the example of Weill, however, instead concluding that “all these imaginative choices emerged from the collaborative energy of working with like-minded colleagues.”³⁸

Rathert has drawn an important connection between *Dreigroschenoper* and *Candide* through the notion of “Crossover,” while Michael Schwarte never mentions

³⁶ Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 472.

³⁷ Oja, Carol J. “The Cradle Will Rock and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s,” in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (1989), 460.

³⁸ Oja, Carol J. *Bernstein meets Broadway. Collaborative Art in a Time of War*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 221-6 and 268-9.

Weill in an article exploring parody, musical borrowing and genre bending in Bernstein's "comic operetta."³⁹ In his chapter "Tragedy as Musical," Joseph P. Swain links *West Side Story* to Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Jerry Bock but never Weill.⁴⁰ Allen Shawn, in his indispensable musical biography, makes a similarly glaring omission when he writes that "in *West Side Story*, Bernstein found a way to speak in his own accent, building on precedents in Gershwin, Copland, and Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and *L'Histoire du Soldat*, which he had been studying since his undergraduate years."⁴¹ Introducing a discussion about eclecticism in Bernstein's music, Jack Gottlieb writes in his 1964 dissertation that "the shadows of Strauss, Berg, Hindemith, Stravinsky, Gershwin, Copland and others weave in and out of the pages" of Bernstein's scores.⁴²

When Gottlieb describes specific elements such as the "unexpected 'side-slipping' of tonality characteristic of Prokofiev or the construction of pyramid chords for expressive intent (after the example of Berg)," the observations again overlook Weill's flexible use of tonality as a missing link (Berg, in addition, admitted in 1928 that "the likes of us cannot make up our minds in favor of a 'Threepenny Opera' or a 'Ten-Thousand-Dollar Symphony,'" an "aesthetic quandary" that Hinton observes would express itself in *Lulu* as the composer integrated popular music into his twelve-tone idiom).⁴³ Laird, in his 2002 *Guide to Research*, places Bernstein's adventurous but tonal harmonies in the tradition of Copland, Harris, Schuman and "a number of other

³⁹ "Die beste aller musikalischen Welten" Leonard Bernsteins *Candide* und die Idee des 'Crossover' in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts," 261-82; "Parodie und Entlehnung in Bernsteins *Candide*. Bemerkungen zu einem musikgeschichtlichen Gattungs-Chamäleon" in Beer, Axel and Lütteken, Laurenz, hrsg. *Festschrift Klaus Hortschansky zum 60. Geburtstag*. (Tutzing: Verlag bei Hans Schneider, 1995), 566-80. Schwarte, Michael, "Parodie und Entlehnung in Leonard Bernsteins *Candide*," in Beer and Lütteken, eds., *Festschrift Klaus Hortschansky*, 567-80.

⁴⁰ Swain, Joseph. *The Broadway Musical. A Critical and Musical Survey*, 205-46.

⁴¹ Shawn, Allan. *Leonard Bernstein. An American Musician*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 75-6.

⁴² Gottlieb, Jack. *The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations*. Diss., University of Illinois (1964), 11.

⁴³ Gottlieb, *The Music of Leonard Bernstein*, 14 and Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 372.

composers.” The absence of Weill’s name is especially conspicuous when he notes the rarity of “effective counterpoint” in the “scores of Broadway musicals.”⁴⁴

This will be the first study to reveal how signature elements from Weill’s music theater scores were appropriated into Bernstein’s personal idiom. The opening chapter provides an overview of literature on the subject of influence and adopts the holograph score of *Die Dreigroschenoper* as an artefact in which to investigate the confrontation of Blitzstein and Bernstein with the precursor of Weill. I will also document Blitzstein’s contact with Weill and revisit a long-standing discussion about the implications of eclecticism in Bernstein’s music. The remaining chapters revolve around select scores. Chapter Two compares *Cradle* with both *Dreigroschenoper* and Weill’s first American work, *Johnny Johnson*. The third chapter explores how *Regina* derived impulses from both *Street Scene* and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

Chapters Four through Seven are dedicated to Bernstein. I have proceeded according to the chronology of his output with the exception of the final chapter, as previous comparisons provide context for Bernstein’s mission to write a sophisticated but accessible American opera. Following inter-textual analyses of *Candide* with *Dreigroschenoper* and *West Side Story* with *Street Scene*, I explore the extent to which the unfinished and unpublished *A Pray by Blecht*, archived at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., is a response to Weill’s work in the genre of the *Lehrstück*, in particular *Der Jasager* and *Der Lindberghflug*. Chapter Seven explores the influence of *Lady in the Dark* on *Trouble in Tahiti*, a work which Bernstein mentioned in a 1940 letter to Copland. The epilogue touches upon Weill’s legacy in the present day, also including original interview material with the composers HK Gruber and John Adams. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁴ Laird, Paul R. *Leonard Bernstein. A Guide to Research*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 37.

Chapter 1: Why Influence?

The notion of influence is a necessary consideration in assessing an artist's originality and place in history. A composer's aesthetic value, whether he writes for the present or posterity, exists in relation to his predecessors, contemporaries and successors.⁴⁵ Recent scholarship has transcended the theory that Weill's American period represents a complete departure from the musico-dramaturgical principles he championed in Weimar Germany.⁴⁶ Weill research has yet to trace, however, the compositional reception of his music theater aesthetic. As a composer who straddled the worlds of opera and popular theater, Weill leaves behind a legacy which is all the more difficult to catalogue given the bifurcation of musical life since the 20th century.⁴⁷

Tracing influence in compositions of the 20th and 21st centuries is further complicated by the complex relationship between the past and the present, or even their irreconcilability, which demands new structural solutions. As Bernstein himself

⁴⁵ "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone," writes T.S. Eliot. "His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism." (Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1960, 49)

⁴⁶ With regard to the influential theory of David Drew, Hinton writes that "the 'two Weills' theory, based on the idea of unbridgeable schism in his development as a composer, draws on traditional notions of integrity that have as much to do with biographical method as they do with compositional aesthetics" (*Stages of Reform*, xii).

For Naomi Graber, the "polyglot" or "transnational" character of Weill's works transcends questions of German or American identity (*Found in Translation: Kurt Weill on Broadway and in Hollywood, 1935-1939*. Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013, 376-384).

Kowalke's essay "Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America" offers a nuanced and thorough account of Weill's assimilation into American culture; the extent to which he reinvented himself as a composer; and the intrinsic value of his American-period works (see in particular 35-37).

Also see Geuen, Heinz. *Von der Zeitoper zur Broadway Oper. Kurt Weill und die Idee des musikalischen Theaters*. (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 1997), 17.

⁴⁷ "The problems encountered in Weill scholarship may be symptomatic of those of twentieth-century music in general," writes Kowalke. He quotes a 1980 review by Christopher Hailey arguing that "the exclusivity of our musical cultures has made a comprehensive approach to his [Weill's] music difficult" ("Looking Back: Toward a New Orpheus," in Kowalke, Kim, ed. *A New Orpheus. Essays on Kurt Weill*, 14).

Geuen writes of a "double strategy" (in Weill's compositional reception (*kompositorische Rezeption*) induced by the polarization of popular and art music which, in Weill's opus, are "processed side-by-side" (see *Von der Zeitoper zur Broadway Opera. Kurt Weill und die Idee des musikalischen Theaters*, 17-18).

illustrated in his 1976 Norton Lectures at Harvard University, composers of the modern era produce with a certain insecurity vis-à-vis tradition:

We tend to view our century as so advanced, so prosperous and swift in its developments, that we lose sight of its deeper, truer self-image, the image of a shy, frightened child adrift in a shaky universe, living under the constant threat of Mummy and Daddy about to divorce or die....The new century must speak through a mask, a more elegant and disguising mask than any previous age has used.⁴⁸

This phenomenon is none other than the anxiety of influence, which Bloom believed to be symptomatic of the post-Enlightenment age. For Joseph N. Straus, who has offered one of the most useful applications of Bloom's theory to twentieth-century music, "artistic ambivalence is worked out through a conflict between old and new elements, and through an attempt by the new elements to subsume and revise the old ones."⁴⁹

A post-Enlightenment poem, according to Bloom's theory, it is not a self-contained whole but exists in relation to its precursor: "There are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts. These relationships depend on a critical act, a misreading or misprision, that one poet performs upon another."⁵⁰ Straus transfers this view to modern music: "In their combination of stylistically and structurally disparate elements, many twentieth-century works are truly relational events as much as they are self-contained organic entities."⁵¹ Confronted with the burden of the past, the poet cannot avoid "misreading" or misappropriating elements in the creative act, a swerve or act of revisionism which redefines the source of influence in the process.⁵² An influence must be held distinct from a model, in which a composer consciously fashions a musical work in response to the precursor, whether with ironic or reverential intent. While working with a model is a wilful act, the composer does not choose to be influenced.

⁴⁸ Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question. Six Talks at Harvard*, 375-6.

⁴⁹ Straus, Joseph. *Remaking the Past. Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990), 12.

⁵⁰ Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 3

⁵¹ Straus, *Remaking the past Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, 16

⁵² Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of influence. A Theory of Poetry*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 14

"No strong poet can choose his precursors, any more than any person can choose his father," writes Bloom.⁵³

The anxiety of influence involves an Oedipal struggle in which the poet must wrestle his father, the precursor, to the ground in order to emerge with a strong, or individual, voice. Both hero and victim, he cannot escape the weight of history. The pursuit of individualism that intensified in the Romantic era makes the poet or composer more subject to victimization "because the anxiety of influence is strongest where poetry is most lyrical, most subjective, most stemming from the personality."⁵⁴ It is when he recognizes the present that exists in the past (Bloom's "Covering Cherub"⁵⁵) that he finds freedom, liberating himself from the yoke of the proverbial father. "True poetic history is the story of how poets as poets have suffered other poets, just as any true biography is the story of how anyone suffered his own family," writes Bloom.⁵⁶ A repression of the aspiration to be like the father will only pave the road to imitation: "Reject your parents vehemently enough, and you will become a belated version of them, but compound with their reality, and you may partly free yourself."⁵⁷

Although the strong poet must overcome "the precursors standing between him and the Muse,"⁵⁸ "the initial fixation of influence" is a necessary step toward finding his own way. He or she represses creative freedom and then revises that repression in order to "become and remain strong."⁵⁹ According to Bloom, American poets are the most "consciously belated" in the history of Western poetry, but they also achieve a "curious

⁵³ Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 12.

⁵⁴ Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 62.

⁵⁵ For Bloom, the "Covering Cherub," is the "demon of continuity; his baleful charm imprisons the present in the past." (*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 39). He concludes his study: "Our poet who are capable still of unfolding in their strength live where their precursors have lived for three centuries, under the shadow of the Covering Cherub" (Ibid, 155).

⁵⁶ Ibid, 94.

⁵⁷ *A Map of Misreading*, 38.

⁵⁸ Bloom, Harold. *Poetry and Repression. Revisionism from Blake to Stevens*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 27.

detachment" toward the crisis: the "anxiety is not so much expectation of being flooded by poetic ancestors, as already *having been* flooded before one could even begin."⁶⁰

Kevin Korsyn, in his study *Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence*, goes as far as to define the anxiety of influence as the discovery of poetry "with a sense of belatedness, with feelings of guilt and indebtedness towards his predecessors."⁶¹ The sense of "indebtedness towards his predecessors" involves a mix of love and hatred, echoing Straus' theory of ambivalence.⁶² Only by re-writing the precursor, or the father, in his own image can the strong poet give life to his own poetry.⁶³ In this sense, the very act of creation is a struggle to overcome his own sense of belatedness.⁶⁴

Defining Influence between Bloom and Eliot

For the purposes of this study, influence is the force by which a composer cannot avoid confronting the precursor in the act of creation. The confrontation may be violent and assertive, in the sense of Bloom's theory, or one in which the past is harmoniously absorbed, as championed by the poet T.S. Eliot. For Eliot, succumbing to the power of the precursor is not cause for anxiety but a positive force in the creative process. Rather than struggle with the inescapable weight of tradition, "the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past" and "continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career." In that process, he surrenders himself to something greater than his own individualism, "something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *A Map of Misreading*, 53.

⁶¹ Korsyn, Kevin. "Toward a New Poetics of Musical Influence," in *Music Analysis*, Vol.10, No. 1/2 (Mar.-Jul. 1991), 7.

⁶² *Ibid*, 10.

⁶³ *A Map of Misreading*, 19.

⁶⁴ "Any strong poet declines to be merely a latecomer. His way of returning to origins, of making the Oedipal trespass, is to become a rival creator to God-as-Creator" (*Ibid*, 37).

⁶⁵ Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," pp. 52-3

Whether one ascribes to Eliot or Bloom, it is by acknowledging and absorbing the past in the present that the poet creates a timeless work of art.⁶⁶ Returning to Straus, modern composers turn to the past only with a profound sense of ambivalence: "By incorporating traditional elements, twentieth-century composers enter into dialogue with their predecessors; by radically reinterpreting those elements, they inject a spirit of anxious revisionism into the dialogue."⁶⁷ The twentieth-century poet or composer confronts the precursor through both works of art and his own writings. For Straus, the latter may itself bespeak an anxiety about the past and represent an attempt to justify the composer's own "trespass:"

composers begin for the first time to write knowledgably and analytically about music of the past, including the distant past. This development is clear evidence of their preoccupation with their predecessors. And they engage, also for the first time, in intensive self-analysis. This change suggests a high degree of historical self-consciousness and bespeaks their anxiety about their place within the tradition. When twentieth-century composers write about their own music, they generally do so in a competitive way, comparing themselves, often favorably, to their predecessors.⁶⁸

Straus cites Schönberg's relationship to Brahms as an example, noting the desire to "remake the predecessor in his own image." Schönberg emphasized continuity within the German tradition as he deconstructed it, "to see himself not as the latest and least in a dwindling line, but as the culmination of all that has come before."⁶⁹

Rather than an anxiety of influence, Straus opts for an anxiety of style in which "a composer can respond compositionally to generally shared attributes."⁷⁰ Taking *The*

⁶⁶ "The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence," writes Eliot. "The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature from Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (Ibid, 49).

⁶⁷ Straus, *Remaking the Past. Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 21. Thomas Schäfer on the other hand argues that "production and reflection of the artist," or Poesis and Poetik exist in a direct, dialectical relationship with one another. See *Modellfall Mahler. Kompositorische Rezeption in zeitgenössischer Musik*. (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999), 89. The composer-as-critic is of course a tradition which first emerged in the nineteenth century, "the unstable, fluid mixture of criticism and composition" which "is at the center of Romantic creativity." See Reynolds, Christopher. *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*. (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003), 99.

⁶⁹ Straus, *Remaking the Past. Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, 31.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 18.

Rake's Progress as an example, he illustrates how Stravinsky “misreads” Mozart's *Don Giovanni* by alluding to the harmonic scheme of the title character’s descent into hell as he turns the tonal structure “inside out:” The scene of Nick Shadow’s descent into hell undermines the tonic-dominant relationship of Mozart’s d-minor passage by transplanting its most remote key, B-flat minor, to the center. Furthermore, a prominent chord throughout Stravinsky’s stage work overlays Mozart’s original harmonies. The score as such “acknowledges its roots in *Don Giovanni* even as it ironically distances itself from the precursor.”⁷¹

The boundary between adaptation and (mis-)appropriation, irony and self-aggrandizing, is not always clear. In one of the earliest musicological studies exploring influence, Charles Rosen detects in Brahms' Scherzo, op.4 an "unmistakable allusion" to Chopin's Bb-Minor Scherzo which he argues becomes incorporated "as part of the symbolic structure of the work," and yet Brahms claimed not to know Chopin's works when writing the piece.⁷² Korsyn identifies in Brahms's preoccupation with the past an *askesis*, the Bloomian term for self-purgation: "His pieces become self-deconstructing, questioning their own closure, subverting their own status as independent works by constantly invoking other texts."⁷³ In the *Romanze*, op.118, no.5, he notes an allusion to Chopin's *Berceuse*, op.67 which takes on an ironic quality as the latter's diatonic stability is undermined.⁷⁴ Such a "metonymic" reference also serves to "puncture the precursor" in a thoroughly non-ironic fashion, however, "repressing the *Berceuse* to attain a sublime climax."⁷⁵

Applications of Bloom's theory to musicology have also met with fierce skepticism. Martin Scherzinger points out that Korsyn deliberately sets out to misread

⁷¹ Ibid, 155-161.

⁷² Rosen, Charles. "Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration," in *19th-Century Music*, Vol.4, No.2 (Autumn, 1980), 94.

⁷³ Korsyn, *Toward a New Poetics of Musical Influence*, 53.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 54.

Bloom (his own "clinamen") in an attempt to adapt a system originally conceived for poetry. His main criticism, however, is the attempt to translate the theory into Schenkerian analysis, whose nature he considers "overtly intratextual."⁷⁶ Richard Taruskin has argued more broadly that Bloom's theory is of limited use since neither style, compositional technique nor structure "play any significant role."⁷⁷ One might add to the list of complaints the fact that Bloom's approach is essentially patriarchal and thus problematic if dealing with female composers.⁷⁸

Christopher Reynolds' *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music* has opened new avenues by exploring intertextuality in Romantic music less in terms of a battleground "for asserting oneself against an intimidating predecessor" than "a means of embracing a particular symbolic image or a way to honor an esteemed colleague."⁷⁹ An allusion can be "assimilative" or "contrastive," either transferring the meaning of the earlier text to a new context or endowing it with "contrary meaning."⁸⁰ But he also notes the role of repression, taking the possible influence of Bach's *Musical Offering* on the Adagio of Schumann's Symphony No.2 as an example: "the more famous the original, the greater the need was for concealment - or in Bloomian terms, the better known the poetic source, the greater the need for a strong misreading."⁸¹

Reynolds understands the re-appropriation of music which was originally set to words as an inherent comment on the textual context (what he calls "texting," or the

⁷⁶ See "The 'New Poetics' of Musical Influence: a Response to Kevin Korsyn," in *Music Analysis*, Vol.13, No.2/3. Twentieth-Century Music Double Issue, Jul.-Oct. 1994, 300 and 307.

⁷⁷ "Revising Revisionism," in Taruskin, Richard. *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 355.

⁷⁸ An Oedipal struggle might have to be re-appraised as an Elektra complex if one were to evaluate the relationship of a female composer to her male precursor.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, Christopher. *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*. (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 41-2.

"reuse of instrumental music as the basis of a song or choral work").⁸² In Beethoven's *Fidelio*, for example, Reynolds writes that Beethoven "evidently intended" the prayerful nature of Haydn's "Abendlied zu Gott" (in which the poet thanks God for life) as "the background for Leonore's aria" by assimilating the head motive of the song in Act I, no.9 (Leonore's "Komm Hoffnung"): "An evening song to God of a different kind, it is a prayer that the audience could assume with confidence would be answered."⁸³ This inference presumes that Beethoven's assimilation of Haydn's melody (a diatonic rise from G to C followed by a descent by fifth from C to F) was not just a conscious decision but one with a specific spiritual message. More convincing is Reynolds' observation of "ironic parody" in Schumann's *Schlußlied des Narren aus Was ihr wollt*, op.127 as it transforms the famous bass line of Schubert's *Erlkönig*, op.1: "Instead of a father and his doomed son riding a horse through night and wind, Schumann sets up a rocking-horse rhythm for the 'winzig Bübchen' facing rain and wind."⁸⁴

Irony, for Reynolds, is a device predicated on reception by an informed audience. An ironic allusion creates more than one layer of meaning, relating as it does to the composition at hand and that of its precursor. An allusion can also have the effect of temporal displacement. "A menacing or a joyous performance of a Bach keyboard work on piano or in transcription for orchestra is a performance in which nineteenth-century values have been read into eighteenth-century music," he writes.⁸⁵ In an example of assimilative allusion, Reynolds applies Bloom's theory of *apophrades*, or return of the dead, to Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, "a musical prophecy of Bach's *St. John Passion*, so that Bach's work appears to be theologically and musically a successor to Mendelssohn's."⁸⁶ As Bloom writes, in bringing the dead to their "former houses," poets

⁸² Ibid, 88.

⁸³ Ibid, 55.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 74-5.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 170-1.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

"achieve a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being imitated by their ancestors."⁸⁷

The example of Mendelssohn suggests that a poet becomes strong by bringing his knowledge of the past into a dialectical relationship with his quest for individuality.

For Eliot,

we dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of this work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.⁸⁸

And yet this self-conscious recourse to the past may evince Bloom's theory that "the covert subject of most poetry for the last three centuries has been the anxiety of influence, each poet's fear that no proper work remains for him to perform."⁸⁹ The modern poet or composer fears tradition as he sets out to conquer it, his engagement with the past residing in an ambivalent place somewhere between this consciousness of the titans against whom he is willingly or unwillingly forced to measure his own artistry and Eliot's more magnanimous view.

As Reynolds explains, "there is no question that composers after Beethoven labored in his intimidating shadow as Beethoven had in Mozart's, and that Beethoven borrowed from Mozart even as he asserted himself against Mozart." He concludes that if Bloom's "theories and misreadings do not adequately account for the intertextual processes" he describes – in which an allusion is "more a matter of rhetorical strategy than personal struggle" – "neither can Bloom be completely dismissed."⁹⁰ Andreas Meyer, in his study tracing the lineage of Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Stravinsky, Ravel, Delage and Webern, argues that a methodological study of influence is most

⁸⁷ *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 141.

⁸⁸ "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 48.

⁸⁹ *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 148.

⁹⁰ *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*, 66-7.

useful if it does not focus on the concept of similarity to the predecessor. Rather, he defines influence as a “dynamic occurrence which in the most interesting case is to be recognized not in patent similarities but original reinterpretations, in fragmented, 'damaged' borrowings.”⁹¹

The Beethoven Paradigm

The case of Beethoven occupies a central position in literature on compositional reception.⁹² By stretching the formal possibilities of the symphonic genre, he challenged composers to carry on tradition without confronting him.⁹³ One nineteenth-century image capturing Beethoven's influence was that of the sun around which other composers orbited, feeling a gravitational pull.⁹⁴ As Dahlhaus wrote, specifically with regard to the motivic structure which made it impossible for composers to return to classical form, “one heard in Beethoven what one practiced as a composer” in the late nineteenth century.⁹⁵

Musical influence is intrinsically connected with canonic processes. An “unmistakable sign of canonic value,” writes Jan Assmann, “is the absorption and confrontation with the precursor in the works of other great composers.”⁹⁶ Beethoven

⁹¹ Meyer, Andreas. *Ensemblelieder in der frühen Nachfolge (1912-17) von Arnold Schönbergs Pierrot lunaire op.21. Eine Studie über Einfluß und "misreading."* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000), 20.

⁹² See Bonds, Mark Evans. *After Beethoven. Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996); Dürr, Walther. *Wer vermag nach Beethoven noch etwas zu machen? Gedanken über die Beziehungen Schuberts zu Beethoven* in: Metzger, Heinz-Klaus and Riehn, Rainer, publishers. *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband. Franz Schubert.* (Munich: Johannesdruck Hans Prebil KG, 1979); Kropfing, Klaus. "Komponieren nach Beethoven" in: *Das Orchester, Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Kongressbericht zum VIII. Internationalen Gewandhaus-Symposium vom 10. bis 12. Juni 1993. (Leipzig: Gewandhaus zu Leipzig, 1996); Kropfing, Klaus. *Art. Rezeptionsforschung* in *MGG Online*, Lütteken, Laurenz, publisher. (Kassel, Stuttgart, New York: first published 1998, published online in November 2016); Kropfing, Klaus. *Wagner und Beethoven. Untersuchungen zur Beethoven-Rezeption Richard Wagners.* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1975); Reynolds, Christopher. *Wagner, Schumann and the Lessons of Beethoven's Ninth.* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

⁹³ See Kropfing, Klaus. "Komponieren nach Beethoven," 82.

⁹⁴ See Bonds, *After Beethoven. Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony*, 73.

⁹⁵ „Was von Beethoven als Teilmoment gemeint war, wurde im späteren 19. Jahrhundert als selbstständiger, isolierbarer musikalischer Gedanke aufgefaßt: Man hörte aus Beethoven heraus, was man selbst kompositorisch praktizierte.“ Dahlhaus, Carl, „Problemgeschichte des Komponierens,“ in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 6 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003), 448.

⁹⁶ “Das untrügliche Kennzeichen kanonischer Geltung aber ist die Aufnahme und künstlerische Auseinandersetzung in den Werken anderer großer Komponisten,“ Assmann, Jan, *Kanon und Klassik am*

grappled with the genius of Mozart as he established, in the words of Lydia Goehr, the precedent of a “liberated composer” who could take “advantage of the autonomous art of music.”⁹⁷ Anne Shreffler considers him “the first – and the prototypical – canonic composer of the European tradition” as she illuminates the tendency toward de-canonization and multiple canons since the twentieth century.⁹⁸

And yet composers from Brahms to Mahler could carry the symphonic genre forward only by confronting or “misreading” him. In a similar vein, Blitzstein and Bernstein had no choice but to consciously or unconsciously absorb the formal innovations of Weill if they were to write Broadway Opera, a term which Weill was the first to use.⁹⁹ Not unlike the symphony, which was perceived as an inherently Austro-German genre in the mid-19th century,¹⁰⁰ Broadway music theater defined itself through a New World sensibility.¹⁰¹ The term “Broadway” immediately puts any discussion of

Beispiel Händels in Pietschmann, Klaus and Wald-Fuhrmann, Melanie. *Der Kanon der Musik. Theorie und Geschichte. Ein Handbuch.* (Munich: Edition text+kritik GmbH, 2013), 113.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Klorman, Edward. “Mozart’s Influence on Nineteenth-Century Composers,” in S. Keefe, ed., *Mozart in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; doi:10.1017/9781316848487.033), 273-282.

Lydia Goehr attributes the “Beethoven Myth” to “much more than aesthetical grounds alone,” concerned as she is here not with compositional reception but rather modes of reception determined by performance and production. See *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 208. The “work-concept,” however, also involves compositional procedures (see 223 ff).

⁹⁸ Shreffler, “Musical Canonization and Decanonization in the Twentieth Century,” published in German as “Musikalische Kanonisierung und Dekanonisierung im 20. Jahrhundert” (translated by Fabian Kolb) in Pietschmann and Wald-Fuhrmann, eds. *Der Kanon der Musik. Theorie und Geschichte. Ein Handbuch,* 606-625.

More recently, Philip A. Ewell has challenged the “white racial frame” in which the Austro-German tradition of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries determines the dominant practices of institutionalized music theory (“Music Theory and the White Racial Frame” in *Music Theory Online*, Vol.26, No.2, September 2020).

⁹⁹ Stempel, *Showtime*, 372. The author calls the term “ambiguous and of limited applicability” but “useful nonetheless in reference not only to Weill’s output at the time [around *Street Scene*] but also to a broad spectrum of highly original work from around the middle of the twentieth century that has no more suitable generic designation.”

¹⁰⁰ Bonds, noting the “unmistakable streak of national pride running through contemporaneous German criticism of Beethoven’s music” writes that “the symphony itself was widely viewed as a distinctively “German” genre at the time - even the French were prepared to concede this.” He also notes: “More than any other single category of instrumental music, it was perceived to embody the central musical aesthetic problems of the day” (*After Beethoven. Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony*, 7 and 95).

¹⁰¹ “In contrast to the transplanted institutions of symphony orchestra and opera,” explains Kowalke, “the American musical was largely a home-grown product. It reified egalitarian, secular, pragmatic, and anti-elitist values basic to the predominant self-image.” “Theorizing the Golden Age of Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” 9 in *A Music-Theoretical Matrix: Essays in Honor of Allen Forte* (Part V), ed. David Carson Berry, (Gamut 6/2, 2013).

musical theater into a modern American framework," writes Stempel. "Literally, it locates the street and geographic epicenter in New York City."¹⁰²

That the "Broadway musical" encompasses everything from operas for Broadway to musical plays and comic operettas does not undermine its legitimacy as a distinct genre. Rather, references and borrowings create, according to Stempel, a sense of "shared tradition."¹⁰³ Bonds points out that "a work's generic designation inevitably conditions the listener's response. It is an open invitation and at times a challenge to the listener to integrate the new work into an established body of comparable works."¹⁰⁴ His study of Beethoven's symphonies "is not concerned specifically with the influence of Beethoven's *style* on subsequent composers, but rather with this influence on the nature of symphony as a *genre*."¹⁰⁵

By allowing the symphony to become a vehicle for philosophical ideas, Beethoven transformed its formal scope.¹⁰⁶ Bonds specifically notes the "trajectory of struggle leading to victory" in which "musical ideas can represent conflicting forces, and that the symphony, in turn, is comparable to a drama in which the struggle of opposing elements necessitates an ultimate resolution." This led to Wagner's "theory of the symphony as an implicitly dramatic genre."¹⁰⁷

Submitting to Beethoven's influence did not necessitate a sacrifice of individuality. Tracing the gestation of the Ninth Symphony in Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, Reynolds compares both poetic and musical stimuli to "seeds from diverse gardens" which impregnate the "androgynous poet-musician of the future."¹⁰⁸

Kropfingher writes similarly in his study on Wagner and Beethoven of "imported

Also see Kowalke, "Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera," 292.

¹⁰² Stempel, *Showtime*, 14.

¹⁰³ *Showtime*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Bonds, *After Beethoven. Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony*, 27.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 6. Emphasis is my own.

¹⁰⁶ As Mahler wrote, a symphony had to "have something cosmic within itself, must be inexhaustible like the world and life, if it is not to make a mockery of its name" (via *Ibid*, 16).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*, 164-6.

elements of musical material" – specifically motivic – that function as "kernels of crystallization."¹⁰⁹ Wagner achieved, through Beethoven, a kind of "self-realization"; what is more, he considered it his rightful duty to allow the principles of Beethoven's Ninth to evolve into the genre of *Musikdrama*.¹¹⁰

The notion of a seed or kernel that gestates and grows in the mind of work of another composer is a fruitful metaphor for exploring influence. A score is not a dormant object but may be seen as an organism which comes to life when it is read – in this case, in the imagination of the receiver – or performed. Reception, whether compositional or not, is a process of aesthetic communication in which author, work and recipient are equally involved.¹¹¹ A work of art activates a dialogue between author and reader, past and present. The "implicit" reader or listener is not confined to the time frame or mentality of the precursor when he absorbs a work; rather, his or her horizons are "flexible."¹¹²

The active reader, however, can only escape the fate of the precursor by transforming the material with his or her own method.¹¹³ In this process of self-liberation, a negation of the precursor – or "correction" of a previous work – is implicit.¹¹⁴ For the purposes of this study, the notion of active reception must of course be limited to compositional reception (a direct translation of "kompositorische Rezeption," as it was coined by Dahlhaus).¹¹⁵ Friedrich Geiger has written in response to Dahlhaus that "compositional reception can be understood as a partial area of productive reception in which composers – just as interpreters or musicologists, to name

¹⁰⁹ Kropfner, *Wagner und Beethoven. Untersuchungen zur Beethoven-Rezeption Richard Wagners*, 196.

¹¹⁰ Kropfner, "Komponieren nach Beethoven," 80 and 94.

¹¹¹ Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1991), 19.

¹¹² "Wie sich die Potentialität des Werkes in der Geschichte seiner Rezeption entfaltet, so ist auch der Horizont des »impliziten Hörers« – im Zusammenhang mit der historisch sich differenzierenden Hörkompetenz – als flexibel denkbar." (Kropfner, *Art. Rezeptionsforschung*, in *MGG Online*).

¹¹³ Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, 30.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹⁵ Dahlhaus, Carl. „Probleme der Rezeptionsgeschichte,“ in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1, 143.

two further variants of productive reception – productively deal with the music which they receive (*rezipieren*).”¹¹⁶ Such an inquiry must not be limited to abstract notions of influence but trace intertextual relationships to reveal how elements of style and form were adopted and transformed by a given composer.

The Threepenny Opera

The holograph score of *Die Dreigroschenoper* provides an artefact in which to explore the confrontation of Blitzstein and Bernstein with the precursor of Weill. In June 1952, Bernstein premiered Blitzstein's English adaptation, *The Threepenny Opera*, in concert performance at Brandeis University's Festival of Creative Arts. Blitzstein crossed out the German titles on the manuscript of the full score to *Die Dreigroschenoper* with red pencil and replaced them with English translations, while Bernstein entered conductor's markings and text cues based on Blitzstein's narration in red and blue pencil.¹¹⁷ In light of Bloom's theory, these markings can be interpreted as an act of patricide: Blitzstein and Bernstein graft their own handwriting onto the score as if to assert that it is their rightful inheritance (Figure 1).

They also made changes to *Die Dreigroschenoper* that are not entirely in keeping with Weill's intentions. Kowalke writes that "Blitzstein's final pre-rehearsal script, with dialogue sharpened, lyrics polished, and the action restored to Victorian England, adhered to Brecht's original play more closely than his musical adaptation would conform to Weill's full score," citing the expansion of the orchestra from seven to

¹¹⁶ „Kompositorische Rezeption kann als Teilgebiet der produktiven Rezeption verstanden werden, indem Komponisten – wie Interpreten oder Musikwissenschaftler, um nur zwei weitere Spielarten produktiver Rezeption zu nennen – mit Musik, die sie rezipieren, produktiv umgehen, wobei das ‚Produkt‘ nicht in einer Interpretation oder wissenschaftlichen Einlassung besteht, sondern in einer Komposition, für deren Gestalt und Machart von der rezipierten Musik mehr oder minder stark Impulse empfangen wurden.“ Geiger, Friedrich, „Probleme“ – und Perspektiven – „der Rezeptionsgeschichte“ in Geiger, Friedrich and Janz, Tobias, hrsg. *Carl Dalhaus' Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte. Eine Re-Lektüre*. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink GmbH & Co. Verlags-KG, 2016), 219.

¹¹⁷ See Farneth, David “The Score as Artefact” in *Die Dreigroschenoper. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score*. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1996), 20-21, for a full list of markings and Kowalke, *The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted* (Ibid, 14-15) for a history of how the manuscript was used for rehearsal purposes.

eight players, the reduction of multiple instruments "to the standard 'doubles' covered by guidelines of the American Federation of Musicians" and the reassignment of parts "of the omitted instruments." Among the changes to individual numbers, "Pirate Jenny" was assigned to Jenny (the 53-year-old Lenya) rather than Polly; transposed down a third; and moved from number six to number eleven.¹¹⁸

The Threepenny Opera, thanks in particular to royalties from the song "Mack the Knife," would be the most lucrative undertaking of Blitzstein's career.¹¹⁹ As Kowalke has written, the Blitzstein translation also "guaranteed for Weill what his Broadway works had not: a posthumous impact on the course of American musical theatre."¹²⁰ The first staged production of *The Threepenny Opera* at New York's Theatre de Lys in 1954 became the longest-running musical in the history of American theatre, with 2,611 performances.¹²¹ The production promoted Weill and Blitzstein in equal measure, with program notes at the Theatre de Lys featuring their names in the same-sized font, while Brecht's appeared smaller. Lenya, – although she had granted permission for the translation, not least due to her own financial concerns – , did not spare Blitzstein her ire on more than one occasion as she suspected that he was getting too much credit.¹²²

If the anxiety of influence is considered outdated in some musicological circles, it provides an apt framework for tracing Blitzstein's evolution from a fierce critic to a "devoted disciple," in the words of Fava,¹²³ who in fact exaggerated the extent of his

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 15.

¹¹⁹ Blitzstein biographer Howard Pollack writes that while "the success of *Cradle Will Rock* brought some monetary relief in the late 1930s," it was "not until the mid-1950s, thanks largely to this adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera* (1954) and its "Mack the Knife" that he attained "a measure of economic security." See *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 24).

¹²⁰ Kowalke, "The Threepenny Opera in America," in Hinton, Stephen, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 79.

¹²¹ Ibid, 111. Blitzstein's *The Threepenny Opera* broke the record previously set by the Rodgers-and-Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!*, which had a Broadway run of 2,248 performances in 1943.

¹²² Pollack, 359-60; and Lehrman, Leonard, Interview with the author, June 20, 2019; and Kowalke, *The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted*, 13.

¹²³ See Fava, *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City*, 274.

contact with Weill's German works following the composer's death in 1950. The process by which he stylized himself as the natural heir to the play with music could not conform more closely to Bloom's notion of *apophrades*, or "the return of the dead."¹²⁴ It was not until after Weill's passing that Blitzstein was able to fulfil his ambitions of adapting *Die Dreigroschenoper* to American audiences and, in the process, create his own "Weill-Blitzstein" tradition.¹²⁵

The producer Stanley Chase documents his reaction as Blitzstein performed selections from *The Threepenny Opera* in 1953: "We actually got chills. Marc played this song and that one, and he always had a cigarette dangling from this mouth. He had this little - this upright piano, and he was just alive with Weill."¹²⁶ On a recording of the Brandeis premiere, one can hear Blitzstein introduce the work to a laughing audience: "The hangout of thieves, racketeers, sailors, bums and panhandlers and pitchmen, a cop or two, and the ladies of pleasure....here, one early spring evening in 1870, you could hear a street singer recounting the exploits of one Macheath, head of the five-point gang."¹²⁷

Weill and Blitzstein, meanwhile, never had extensive contact. Although Blitzstein spent time in Berlin, studying briefly with Schönberg at the Akademie der Künste in 1927, there is no evidence that he met Weill that year. It was in Paris, in 1935, that Blitzstein first approached him about translating *Der Weg zur Verheißung*.¹²⁸ In January of that year, Weill wrote that an "American musician named Blitzstein" asked to collaborate on a "musical adaptation or translation" but concluded, "I don't

¹²⁴ With *apophrades*, "the uncanny effect is that the new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work." (*The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 16).

¹²⁵ Meanwhile, in an uncanny twist of fate, Blitzstein was born on the same day as Weill: March 2, five years later than the latter, in 1905.

¹²⁶ via Pollack, Howard. *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 357.

¹²⁷ See a reproduction of Blitzstein's annotated typescript in *Ibid*, 147. The audio recording is available on *Leonard Bernstein Historical Recordings. 1941-61*. West Hill Radio Archives (WHRA-6048), 2013.

¹²⁸ Drew, David. *Kurt Weill. A Handbook*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 62.

know if such a collaboration is at all necessary. In addition, I don't know Mr. Blitzstein well enough to judge if he is capable. He seems to be more of a music writer than a musician."¹²⁹

Weill's opinion seems not to have changed since his first assessment. His close friend and collaborator Maurice Abravanel went as far as to say that he “hated Blitzstein.”¹³⁰ In November of 1936, Blitzstein met with Weill and Brecht to try to arrange a Broadway performance of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in New York (he had also written to Weill in June 22 of that year requesting a perusal score of “AnnaAnna” [*Die sieben Todsünden*] but never received a response).¹³¹ In 1938, while in talks about the pageant *Railroads on Parade*, Weill wrote to Lenya, “I wouldn't be surprised if the screen- and songwriter Helen Deutsch has “already brought little Blitzstein out to Max,” with reference to Maxwell Anderson. “I'm under the impression that all of them here hate me, because I'm more of a match for them.”¹³² In 1942, while in discussions about *The Pirate* with the Playwrights' Producing Company, he confided to Lenya, “I would love to tell them to go to hell, but I am afraid they'll steal my ideas and some louse like [Marc] Blitzstein will get the credit.”¹³³

While Blitzstein and others maintain that Weill jumped on the opportunity to have Blitzstein translate *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the commission was never approved

¹²⁹ Weill, Kurt. Letter to Dr. Kommer, Jan.15, 1935. Photocopy from Yale University (box 47, folder 8) at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.

Weill passed on the commission to Ludwig Lewisohn, an assistant of Max Reinhardt, whose translation *The Eternal Road* premiered two years later at the Manhattan Opera House. For more, see Fava, *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City*, 264.

¹³⁰ *An Oral History Interview* conducted by Donald Spoto and Lys Symonette. (New York City, 1985 - location and date unconfirmed). Weill-Lenya Research Center (Series 60), 5. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

Also see Hirsch, Foster. *Kurt Weill on Stage. From Berlin to Broadway*. (New York: Random House Publishing, 2000), 312-320.

¹³¹ Lehrman, Leonard J. *Marc Blitzstein. A Bio-Bibliography*. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 581 via Farneth, *Kurt Weill: a life in pictures and documents*, 164 and 342.

¹³² Kowalke and Symonette, eds. and translators. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, 268-9.

¹³³ Kowalke and Symonette, eds. and translators. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, 357. The work in question has been identified as *The Pirate* thanks to Dave Stein, the Kurt Weill Foundation's archivist.

until after Weill's death.¹³⁴ In a 1954 article, Blitzstein recounts his version of the story: "You do it," he quotes as Weill as saying. "You're the one for it...I was happy at their enthusiasm, but other work called. In April of that year Kurt Weill died. I attended the funeral. Coming home, I found myself haunted by another number from the 'Dreigroschenoper'..."¹³⁵ The producer Cheryl Crawford also claims in her memoirs that Weill enthusiastically responded to Blitzstein's "new version" of several songs from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, while Weill's musical assistant, Lys Symonette, maintained that he was only annoyed by Blitzstein's interest in adapting his work, griping, "He's a better writer than a composer. I wish he'd stop trying to imitate me. Now he wants to translate *Dreigroschenoper*."¹³⁶

That did not stop Blitzstein from perpetuating mythology about his relationship to the play with music. "*Die Dreigroschenoper* is a musical stage work I have known and loved since my student days in Berlin," he wrote in the *Herald Tribune* in 1954.¹³⁷ In fact, he was not in Berlin for the work's 1928 premiere and first experienced it a year later in Wiesbaden, together with Aaron Copland. "I practically went to school" to the *Dreigroschenoper*," he wrote in 1958. "I can remember vividly its effect on me, and my scandalizing my fellow students at Arnold Schönberg's master-class at the Berlin Hochschule, when I sat at the piano and croaked in execrable German and a composer's squeal the 'Mack the Knife' and 'Jealousy Duet' songs..."¹³⁸ In another account of 1962, he recounts that he "went again and again to see it, and after a while I had it practically memorized."¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Kowalke, "The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted," 13.

¹³⁵ Blitzstein, Marc. "Threepenny Opera is Back," in *New York Herald Tribune*, March 7, 1954.

¹³⁶ Kowalke, "The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted," 342.

¹³⁷ Blitzstein, "Threepenny Opera is Back."

¹³⁸ Blitzstein, Marc. "On Mahagonny," in *Saturday Review* (May 31, 1958), 40.

¹³⁹ Blitzstein, Marc. "On the Threepenny Opera," in *Musical Show, Newsletter of Tams-Witmark Music Library, Inc.* (October 1962) at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.

A Gift from Heaven

Bernstein encountered *Die Dreigroschenoper* in 1937 as a college student at Harvard, through a recording with Lenya singing the role of Jenny. “I instantly fell in love with the *ganze Ehepaar*,” he recalled nearly four decades later, describing Weill’s music as “at best a gift from heaven, and at the worst always interesting. Even the works of the ‘American period,’ usually considered less authentic than the Berlin ones, are fascinating to my mind, original and always professional, down to the slightest show tune.” But he credited “long talks” with Blitzstein for his

knowledge of the man (whom I never really came to know because of his tragically early death). ... Through Marc I came to feel that I knew Kurt Weill. His drives, his courage, his foibles and his great humanity. At one point I became so intensely involved with Marc’s translation of *Mahagonny* (alas, uncompleted) that I felt I was actually in the presence of the master.¹⁴⁰

Bernstein’s career became intertwined with that of Blitzstein when he mounted a student production of *The Cradle will Rock* in 1939, directing from memory at the piano (he first experienced the “Play in Music” at New York’s Mercury Theater a year previously).¹⁴¹ Blitzstein himself travelled to Boston and made such an impression on the young Bernstein that he described the composer, who was 13 years his senior, as “the giant who had written those notes which seduced my soul.”¹⁴² In a 1938 letter to Copland, Bernstein identified Blitzstein’s formal innovations as a key element in his college thesis on nationalism in American music: “I will try to show that there is something American in the newer music, which relies not on folk material, but on a

¹⁴⁰ Bernstein, Leonard, “A Gift from Heaven” in Marx, Henry, ed. *Weill-Lenya*. (New York: Goethe House, 1976)

¹⁴¹ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 52.

¹⁴² “Tribute to Marc Blitzstein,” in Bernstein, *Findings* (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 224.

Blitzstein in turn told Bernstein that he seemed to be “a spitting reincarnation of himself” and that the student production “packed a thrilling wallop for me – second only to the original NY opening” (Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, London: Faber&Faber Limited, 2017, 54).

See Ibid 52ff and Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 184-5 for more about the composers’ close relationship. “The two men – both from Jewish immigrant backgrounds, both predominantly homosexual – became, in Bernstein’s words, ‘instant and lifelong friends,’” writes Burton. When Blitzstein was murdered by sailors on the island of Martinique in January of 1964, Bernstein wrote to his sister, Shirley, “I’ve lost an arm.”

native spirit (like your music, and maybe Harris' & Sessions' - I don't know), or which relies on a new American form, like Blitzstein's."¹⁴³

As I will explore in the following chapter, it was Blitzstein who advanced the notion that he had independently arrived at a “new form” with *Cradle*, integrating “recitatives, arias, revue-patters, tap-dances, suites, chorales, silly symphony, continuous, incidental commentary music, lullaby music.”¹⁴⁴ Perhaps taking Blitzstein’s lead, Bernstein downplayed Weill’s precedent. In Bernstein’s 1976 Norton Lectures at Harvard, Stravinsky’s music emerges as the foremost model of neo-classicism and bi-tonality, while Weill is mentioned only once as an example of a German composer who couldn’t help but be seduced by American vernacular. Playing an excerpt from “Mackie Messer,” Bernstein maintains, “even some Germans are going to be affected by this dose of fresh air” but that “Stravinsky thought of it first, as usual,” in *L’Histoire du Soldat*.¹⁴⁵

Did Bernstein dismiss Weill in order to correct his own “swerve?” As Richard Taruskin has written, “acknowledged debts are the easy, discountable ones.”¹⁴⁶ A composer suffering from anxiety of influence would, by contrast, be inclined to repress the historic importance of the precursor. Weill, for his part, was not afraid to acknowledge the precedent of Stravinsky and *L’Histoire* in particular, calling it “the most important and valuable musical work of our time” in 1926¹⁴⁷ (his writings and

¹⁴³ Simeone, Nigel, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 24. Copland wrote back the next month: “...composing in this country is still pretty young no matter how you look at it” (Ibid, 26).

¹⁴⁴ Blitzstein, Marc. “Lines on ‘The Cradle,’” in *The New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1938.

¹⁴⁵ Bernstein, Leonard. *The Unanswered Question. Six Talks at Harvard*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1976), 265.

¹⁴⁶ “Revising Revisionism” in Taruskin, Richard *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays*. (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 374.

¹⁴⁷ “Stravinskys *Geschichte vom Soldaten*” in Hinton, Stephen and Schebera, Jürgen, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*. (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1990), 229.

radio broadcasts further indicate Bach, Beethoven, Verdi, Mozart and his teacher Busoni as his important sources of inspiration for his own music¹⁴⁸).

Perhaps it was inconvenient for Bernstein to place Weill in the foreground of his lectures given the latter's ultimate embrace of the American commercial culture industry. Most émigrés forged at least part of their careers in the academic realm: Hindemith, Milhaud, Schönberg, Bloch, Martinů, Krenek and even Eisler were all teachers or lecturers¹⁴⁹; Stravinsky arrived in the U.S. as a Norton Lecturer, in 1939.¹⁵⁰ By elevating Stravinsky over Weill, Bernstein distances himself from the popular establishment within a "serious" academic context and tacitly enshrines himself in a European-oriented tradition.

On a similar note, Wells considers it "strange" that Bernstein included so few American composers in his lectures, rather turning to "only the European, high-art examples."¹⁵¹ She also questions his motivation in directly citing Stravinsky. "Is Bernstein simply trying to absolve himself of any unintended plagiarism by allying himself with the most canonic composers?" she asks rhetorically.¹⁵² While Wells posits that *West Side Story* became "a conduit through which other works from the repertoire could be discussed in the wider project of music appreciation" to which Bernstein was

¹⁴⁸ See Kurt Weill. *Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*. It is worth recalling that, for the purposes of this study, an influence must be held distinct from a model, which is a willful act on the part of the composer. Weill's student, the conductor Maurice Abravanel, recalled that he that openly worked "with models": "Most of the time he got it looking at something and then, you know, doing his own version of that." He cited a symphonic movement which used the "alla Turca" of Mozart's A-major Sonata, "which in the Twenties was the one Mozart piano sonata that everybody knew. And I was shocked that he had picked that model, and changed it so little that you could recognize it right away." *An Oral History Interview* conducted by David Farneth and Lys Symonette. (Tanglewood, Aug.7, 1984). Weill-Lenya Research Center (Series 60), 49. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

¹⁴⁹ See Hamm, Charles. *Music in the New World*. (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.,1983), 555; Heilbut, Anthony. *Exiled in Paradise. German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 147; or Lamb Crawford, Dorothy. *A Windfall of Musicians. Hitler's Emigrés and Exiles in Southern California*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁰ His lectures were published as *The Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, as translated by Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, in 1947.

¹⁵¹ Wells, *West Side Story. Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical*. London, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 90.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 60.

devoted, she raises the question of whether allusions to canonic European works deliberately set out to place *West Side Story* within that lineage.¹⁵³ This is especially plausible given the “inner conflict between composition and conducting, between classical music and the popular realm”¹⁵⁴ that plagued him in his final years.

For Wells, the Norton Lectures reflect

the dichotomy between self-doubt and self-confidence which made up Bernstein’s unique psychology. By creating a kind of evolutionary narrative of musical style, Bernstein ultimately places himself within a tradition that extends at least back to Berlioz...without appearing to be so presumptuous as to badly state this.¹⁵⁵

She also notes, however, that Bernstein’s unusual facility to memorize repertoire and play by ear may have naturally “allowed many of the most famous or effective moments from music history to be melded together.”¹⁵⁶ The conductor-scholar Leon Botstein was less charitable in the 1980s. While calling Bernstein “probably the most gifted musician of twentieth-century America,” he identified his talent as the possible grounds for a lack of originality in his compositional output: “Imitation, the necessary skill, came easy to Bernstein, so easy that borrowing became a bad habit. Instead of finding his own voice, Bernstein copied so well that he got away with it.” He also drew a comparison to Weill:

What his best scores from the 1940s and 1950s show is a gift for brilliant effect, a complex and colorful texture, and striking shifts in mood. Like Kurt Weill, but with less originality, Bernstein studied the techniques of “serious” composers and adapted them for the popular stage.¹⁵⁷

In Laird’s view, Bernstein overemphasized the principle of eclecticism in his analyses of Stravinsky and Beethoven, composers whom he acknowledged as direct influences, as a possible justification for “what many might consider the derivative nature of his music.” In a 1982 interview, the composer asked rhetorically, “who are

¹⁵³ Ibid, 62-3; 71 and 89-90.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 60.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 90.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 12.

¹⁵⁷ Botstein, Leon. “The Tragedy of Leonard Bernstein” in *Harper’s* (May 1, 1983), 40.

you if not the sum of everything that's happened before? Everything that has been significant in your experience, unconsciously mainly."¹⁵⁸ To be sure, Bernstein's activities as a conductor only made it more difficult to free himself from others' music. He complained that the first phases of composing necessitated purging others' voices: "It takes two weeks to get those other guys out of my head – Ives and Haydn and Copland and Brahms. *Then* maybe I can go about finding my own notes."¹⁵⁹

The discussion about the eclectic nature of Bernstein's music has yet to abate. Frédéric Döhl, in a recent essay focusing on *Candide* and *Mass*, rather inconclusively maintains that "the interplay of original and pre-existing elements is central for musical productivity...In this sense all music is eclectic."¹⁶⁰ Jaensch provides an overview of the extent to which one can break down Bernstein's "personal style" given the eclecticism that is a defining feature. He concludes that while melodies are typified by the "the unusual mix of a popular means of design and the central use of dissonant elements," there are less "clear indications of a typical personal style within the realm of harmony."¹⁶¹

In the Norton Lectures, Bernstein ultimately finds solace in the view championed by Eliot that succumbing to the power of the precursor is a positive force in the creative process:

Eliot, Joyce and Auden speak for all us frightened children, grasping for security in the past. Does it betoken an impoverishment of our resources, that we must have recourse to the past? On the contrary, it reaffirms our links with the past, our traditions, our roots; only we disguise that relationship by coating it in our tough, cool vernacular.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Laird, Paul R. *Leonard Bernstein. A Guide to Research*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 14.

¹⁵⁹ Rockwell, John. „Bernstein Triumphant,“ in Ledbetter, Steven, ed. *Sennets & Tuckets. A Bernstein Celebration*. (Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1988), 14.

¹⁶⁰ Eichhorn, Andreas, ed. *Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*. (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2017), 137. Also see Oja, *Bernstein meets Broadway*, 222 and Gottlieb, *The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations*, 13 for further discussion on eclecticism.

¹⁶¹ Jaensch, *Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 173-5. Jaensch draws freely on Gottlieb's intervallic analysis of Bernstein's scores, which I will explore vis-à-vis works by Weill in Chapters Four and Five.

¹⁶² Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question. Six Talks at Harvard*, 378

On the surface, Bernstein offers a definition of neo-classicism, as exemplified by Stravinsky. But by admitting to a “disguise,” he also lays bare the twentieth-century anxiety of influence toward “the past, our traditions, our roots.” Was this inner conflict of particular immediacy to Bernstein as both the first American-born conductor to gain international stature and as a composer who, unlike Copland or Blitzstein, never studied abroad?¹⁶³ On the one hand, having come into his own under the tutelage of Copland, the Harvard professor David Prall and others as they forged a native tradition,¹⁶⁴ Bernstein was confident about the particularity or exceptionalism of his country’s music. On the other hand, he reveals in the Norton Lectures a need to prove himself worthy of being accepted into the canon of European “greats.”

New World, New Deal, New Traditions

This tension between anxiety and awe, emulation and resistance, may have been a reaction to cultural developments in mid-twentieth century America.¹⁶⁵ By the mid-1930s, the movement to create music both indigenous and modern was in full swing.¹⁶⁶ The development coincided with both the return of expatriate composers, who had studied above all in Paris, and a flood of European émigrés.¹⁶⁷ So while a new spirit of isolationism emboldened American composers to throw off the shackles of European cultural authority,¹⁶⁸ native- and foreign-born composers were now on the same territory, competing and collaborating as they forged a new tradition.

¹⁶³ See Gay, Peter. “‘We miss our Jews.’ The Music Migration from Nazi Germany” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 21-22.

¹⁶⁴ Seldes, Barry. *Leonard Bernstein. The Political Life of an American Musician*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009), 21-22.

¹⁶⁵ I am grateful to Wolfgang Rathert for his insight into this matter.

¹⁶⁶ Zuck, Barbara A. *A History of Musical Americanism*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), 92. Graber, Naomi. *Found in Translation: Kurt Weill on Broadway and in Hollywood, 1935-1939*. Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2013), 12 and Crist, Elizabeth B. *Music for the Common Man. Aaron Copland during the Depression and War*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 42.

¹⁶⁷ Zuck, 92; Graber, 8, and Gay, “‘We miss our Jews.’ The Music Migration from Nazi Germany” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 22.

¹⁶⁸ The composer Henry Cowell in 1933 remarked that “American composition up to now has been tied to the apron-strings of European tradition.” *Trends in American Music* (1933) in *American Composers on*

European-born composers were arguably better trained, at least in what Hamm identifies as the “aesthetic bases” of western classical tradition, and had a wealth of knowledge to share with their younger American counterparts.¹⁶⁹ Hamm points out that the compositions of émigrés such as Milhaud, Bloch, Hindemith or Martinů “were more often played and their mere presence prompted a greater interest in contemporary music; they were celebrities who were interviewed, photographed, quoted, and talked about.”¹⁷⁰ The unrivaled prestige of Old World musicians in previous decades was already “a source of some frustration for the native born,” as Gay explains. “What set the flood from the early 1930s apart,” however, “was its concentration, its numbers and the lasting shaping power of its talents.”¹⁷¹

Korngold, Eisler, Schönberg, Toch and others steered and enriched American culture as they adapted – more or less successfully – to their new home. When Weill arrived in the U.S. in September of 1935, the ground was fertile for him to continue writing serious musical plays that reflected socio-political realities. Federal programs of the New Deal to combat the Great Depression by creating professional opportunities at all levels of society, along with the Popular Front movement to combat fascism, had cemented a fascination with native folklore.¹⁷² Functional music became the new ideal in order to reach a wider public as attendance declined at traditional institutions, while opportunities to write theatre music grew.¹⁷³

American Music. A Symposium via Juchem, Elmar, “Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA” in Grosch, Nils; Lucchesi, Joachim; Schebera, Jürgen, eds. *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Vol.II (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998), 58.

¹⁶⁹“Surely Stravinsky was a composer of greater genius than was Roy Harris,” writes Hamm, “and had a more profound grasp of the techniques, traditions, and aesthetic bases of western European classical tradition. Schönberg had a firmer grasp of compositional devices than did George Gershwin. ... Younger American composers would have been foolish not to learn from these men, to take advantage of their presence in the New World...” (*Music in the New World*, 562)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 555.

¹⁷¹ Gay, “‘We miss our Jews.’ The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany, in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 21-22.

¹⁷² See Crist 42; Seldes, 16; Graber 20.

¹⁷³ Zuck, 95-7.

Both the émigrés and native-born composers forging a native classical music tradition were predominantly Jewish.¹⁷⁴ And yet American Jews were not always welcoming to these new arrivals; in particular, there were tensions between American Jews of Eastern European descent and German Jews.¹⁷⁵ So strong was the sense of fear or intimidation that the Society for the Advancement of American Music, created in 1930, was reorganized in 1939 as the Society of Native American Composers, as Dorothy Lamb Crawford writes, “to avoid confrontation with the arriving foreign modernists” and “to exclude composers not born in America.”¹⁷⁶ As late as 1940, Weill suggested to fellow émigrés Bruno Frank and Erika Mann the formation of an “Alliance of Loyal Alien Americans” to convince “the authorities and the public opinion in this country that we are strongly anti-Nazi ... and that they can consider us in every way as faithful ‘American citizens.’”¹⁷⁷

Naomi Graber has documented that, far from immediately entering the commercial sphere, Weill initially found work in left-wing communities in Hollywood and New York. His involvement in film, however, was mostly doomed to creative and social frustration.¹⁷⁸ By 1938, he entered a collaboration with Maxwell Anderson and the Playwrights’ Producing Company on the Musical Comedy *Knickerbocker Holiday*, which Graber considers a vehicle to depict European immigrants rejecting Old World tyranny in order to counteract “suspicion of German émigrés.”¹⁷⁹ She maintains that Weill initially struggled to find the right tone in his dealings with publishers and came across as “a stuck-up European”: “It took Weill at least two full years to feel

¹⁷⁴ See Hamm, 551 or Lamb Crawford, *A Windfall of Musicians. Hitler’s Emigrés and Exiles in Southern California*.

¹⁷⁵ Heilbut, 45.

¹⁷⁶ *A Windfall of Musicians. Hitler’s Emigrés and Exiles in Southern California*, 27-8.

¹⁷⁷ Letter from Weill to Erika Mann, June 17, 1940, WLA Box 47, Folder 11 via Graber, 267. She explains that „the project never moved beyond the idea stage.”

¹⁷⁸ See Graber, 135-7 and Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 346-358.

¹⁷⁹ Graber, iii and 32.

comfortable in the U.S. theatrical world,” she explains, “and another three to produce a real success in January 1941, with *Lady in the Dark*.”¹⁸⁰

And yet Weill may have been poised to become a tastemaker in his adopted country given a musical style that was as “American” as it was “German” even before exile.¹⁸¹ To be sure, a trans-Atlantic tradition had been emerging since the late 19th century.¹⁸² By 1903, the cakewalk had conquered Europe, thanks to both the traveling dance acts of African Americans and the brass bands of John Philip Sousa.¹⁸³ As such, Tobias Faßhauer has concluded that the orientation of *Les Six* and, subsequently, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement toward jazz and the more general spirit of *Amerikanismus* in the 1920s can be understood as a development characterized by continuity.¹⁸⁴ Lydia Goehr has noted that while American motifs had already entered the idiom of Dvorak, Puccini, Ravel, they were given “increasing political urgency” in the music of Milhaud, Chavez, Krenek, Hindemith, Zemlinsky and Weill.¹⁸⁵

With the forcible exile of leading composers in the 1930s, tradition was turned on its head: Having absorbed Americanisms into continental tradition, European music now dug roots on American soil. Gay calls the migration of Germans and Austrians to the United States a “two-way street” and considers Weill “the most brilliant instance of

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 36 and 42.

¹⁸¹ Goehr, “Music and Musicians in Exile. The Romantic Legacy of a Double Life” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 78. Also see Geuen, *Von der Zeitoper zur Broadway Oper. Kurt Weill und die Idee des musikalischen Theaters*, 87; and Hinton, “Misunderstanding The Threepenny Opera” in Hinton, Stephen, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 186.

¹⁸² Deaville, James, “An American Dance in Paris: African-American Entertainers, the Cakewalk and Debussy”; Faßhauer, Tobias, „Das Amerikanische in der Musik aus europäischer Sicht. Sousas ‚Descriptive Music‘ als exemplarischer Fall”; and Guerpín, Martin, “Once again came to us from America a new dance which was to become very popular”. American dances and “chansons américaines” in France (1890s–1918) and the Americanisation of French music” (*Über’n großen Teich“*. *Transatlantischer Musiktransfer vor 1918*, International Online Workshop, Universität der Künste Berlin, September 25-26, 2020).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ See Faßhauer, „‘Wagner was a brass band, anyway.’ Wagnerismus, Amerikanismus and populäre Orientierung bei John Philip Sousa” in *Wagner Spectrum*, 16/2.

¹⁸⁵ “Music and Musicians in Exile. The Romantic Legacy of a Double Life” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 85.

this musical symbiosis.”¹⁸⁶ The composer himself ostensibly felt no need to make an aesthetic distinction between his pre- and post-exile periods, as he repeatedly emphasized in his statements and writings: “The special brand of musical entertainment in which I have been interested from the start is a sort of ‘dramatic musical,’” he told the *New York Times*, “a simple, strong story told in musical terms...”¹⁸⁷

Weill’s exposure to *Porgy and Bess* one month after his arrival in the U.S. meanwhile reinforced his conviction that it would be possible write serious musical plays for the American stage. He later reflected:

Some of the shows in this form which I wrote in Europe ("The Three Penny Opera," "Mahogany," [sic] "The Silver Lake"), indicated that there was a vast, and at that time almost untouched, field for a musical theatre somewhere between opera and musical comedy. Then, a few weeks after my arrival in this country eleven years ago, George Gershwin invited me to an orchestral rehearsal of "Porgy and Bess." Listening for the first time to that score I discovered that the American theatre was already on the way to the more integrated form of musical that we had begun to attempt in Europe. ¹⁸⁸

With Gershwin’s death in 1937, it was a German-born composer who picked up the mantle of developing a formula for a popular strain of American opera. In 1942, Weill served as an advisor to the producer Cheryl Crawford for a posthumous revival of *Porgy* that replaced most of the recitative with spoken dialogue. Stempel surmises that the production’s success “established a precedent for the general viability of producing quality work of operatic ambition on Broadway’s terms – including Weill’s own.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶“‘We miss our Jews.’ The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 26-30.

¹⁸⁷ See "Score for a Play. 'Street Scene' Becomes a 'Dramatic Musical'" in *New York Times* (Jan. 5, 1947).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Showtime*, 390-1.

Weill wrote to Lenya on February 5, 1942 praising the new production as “more of a show now and less of an opera” but comparing it as a whole unfavorably to his own stage works: “The songs are still magnificent, but the rest of the score pretty bad. I listened to the first dream of ‘Lady’ and in the evening and decided that it was much better music” (*Speak Low*, 287). That Weill teamed up with George Gershwin’s brother, Ira, in *Lady* after George’s death would open an inquiry into what extent he was rivaling Gershwin with his American stage works; the question, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

Underlying his goals as a composer was his sense of identity as an American citizen. “Although I was born in Germany, I do not consider myself a ‘German composer,’” Weill said to *Life Magazine* in 1947, the year of *Street Scene*’s premiere. Later that year, following his first and last visit to Europe, he wrote to Maxwell Anderson, “wherever I found decency and humanity in the world, it reminded me of America.”¹⁹⁰ His stage works manifest this moral conviction while also casting a critical glance at the country’s social fabric, combining the compositional rigor and biting satire of the Old World with the wide-eyed optimism and unabashed affection for the upbeat popular idioms of the New.

Weill’s very flexibility may have been a catalyst for intimidation or resentment among American-born composers. As he and other émigrés put their schooling in service of a new homegrown tradition, perhaps it became necessary for natives to assert Americanism as a standard to live up to, – rather than the other way around, – even as they drew inspiration from foreign-bred innovations. Copland, a musical pioneer who captured the country’s open landscapes and free spirit in his film and symphonic scores, provides a case in point.

Upon returning to New York from Paris in 1924, he set out to write music both modern and distinctly American.¹⁹¹ Underlying Copland’s notion of “imposed simplicity” was his exposure to developments in France and Germany, in particular the *Gebrauchsmusik* movement. “It was quite natural that in a country where music was more highly cultivated than anywhere else,” he wrote of Germany, “composers should be made painfully aware of their lack of contact with the musically educated public.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Letter from Weill to Maxwell and Mab Anderson of 22 June 1947 via Kowalke, „Kurt Weill’s Amerika/America,“ in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerikanismus/Americanism/Weill*. (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003), 9.

¹⁹¹ Crist, 74 and Seldes, 15.

¹⁹² Copland, Aaron. *The New Music 1900-1960. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1968), 82.

“Music for use” allowed Copland to align modernist techniques with left-wing politics, specifically his sympathy for the communist cause. While the political climate at home naturally gave rise to a movement of functional music, it was impossible to avoid the precedent of developments across the ocean. But Copland set out to surpass Weill and Hindemith. He snubbed the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* as “a series of pseudo-popular songs in the jazz manner” and called Hindemith’s *Hin und Zurück* “merely diverting.” His own school opera, *The Second Hurricane*, would by contrast represent what he coined “*Gebrauchsmusik* with a difference.”¹⁹³ Meanwhile, Copland and his librettist, Edwin Denby, turned to the examples of *Mahagonny* and *Johnny Johnson*, as well the *Singspiel* model.¹⁹⁴

Copland’s ostensible dismissal of Weill foreshadows the attitudes of Blitzstein and Bernstein, who masked their competitive attitudes through critical remarks. As a foreign-born, and perhaps in particular as a German-born, composer, Weill would not be fully granted insider status. Though he moved in some of the same circles as Copland, Blitzstein and eventually Bernstein through his collaborations with left-wing groups such as the Group Theatre and the Federal Theatre Project, he reportedly “kept his distance” from what Virgil Thomson called the “Homintern” sector of “homosexual Jewish leftist composers.”¹⁹⁵

Perhaps Weill’s behavior was shaped by his own prejudices and ambitious streak. According to his close friend and long-time collaborator, the conductor Maurice Abravanel, “you couldn’t mention other composers” without awakening his jealousy.¹⁹⁶

Weill makes no attempt to disguise his competitive nature in letters to Lenya, going as

¹⁹³ Crist, 74-6. Copland experienced the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* and *Hin und Zurück* at the Deutsche Kammermusik Festival in Baden-Baden in 1928. He also saw *Die Dreigroschenoper* and Hindemith’s *Neues von Tage*, together with Marc Blitzstein, in 1929.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 79 and 90.

¹⁹⁵ See Kowalke, *The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted in Die Dreigroschenoper. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score*, 12.

¹⁹⁶ *An Oral History Interview* conducted by Donald Spoto and Lys Symonette. (New York City, 1985 - location and date unconfirmed). Weill-Lenya Research Center (Series 60), 43-44. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

far as to write in March of 1937 that “Gershwin seems to be shitting in his pants because of me.”¹⁹⁷ But perhaps it is also possible to isolate Weill as an “original single workman,” to quote Thomson,¹⁹⁸ whose international stature was so towering that other composers had to conquer their fear of standing in his shadow. As Gay notes, Weill “surely was one of the most adaptable musical geniuses on record.” Even as he “continued to weave German music into his American productions...he became more and more authentically American.”¹⁹⁹

Could Weill’s success as an “American composer” have posed a threat to Bernstein as he set out to bridge the gap between European opera and American music theater in an “authentic” manner? Or was Bernstein the composer who naturally continued what Weill began, as Lenya implied?²⁰⁰ Wells believes that Bernstein had “a very personal stake in creating a work that grew as organically as possible from American roots and was grounded in tonality, but measured up to European standards in its symphonic scope and perceived progressiveness within its genre.”²⁰¹ If *West Side Story* was the “first postmodern musical” through its use of intertextual allusion,²⁰² then such a formal device can by no means be traced back to Weill alone, nor can one deny that Bernstein distilled a vast knowledge of music history, both classical and popular, into a score of such vitality and compassion that it remains part of the American national fabric.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ See Kowalke and Symonette, eds. and translators, *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, no. 176.

¹⁹⁸ Thomson, Virgil. “Music in Review. Kurt Weill,” in *New York Herald Tribune* (April 9, 1950).

¹⁹⁹ Gay, “‘We miss our Jews.’ The Music Migration from Nazi Germany” in Brinkmann and Wolff, eds. *Driven into Paradise. The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 26-30.

²⁰⁰ “I think surely Leonard Bernstein knows every note of Kurt Weill. ...he is the one who... left off after his death...His *West Side Story* and also...his *Candide*...those are the things Kurt Weill would have done, too, would he have lived, you know?...He paved the way for – those things to come.” *An Oral History Interview* conducted by David Beams (partial transcript, 1962). Weill-Lenya Research Center (Series 60). Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

²⁰¹ Wells, 12.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 91.

²⁰³ In a sign of the work’s unabated popularity, a Steven Spielberg version of *West Side Story* is scheduled for release in December of 2021.

And yet Bernstein so effectively camouflaged the intertextual relations of *West Side Story* to *Street Scene* that Wells devotes no extensive analysis to Weill, rather uncovering the traces of Chopin and Diamond, Berlioz and Wagner, Stravinsky and Gershwin. The fact that Bernstein did not conduct Weill in his late career does not diminish the importance of such works as *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Lady in the Dark* and *Street Scene* to the development of his aesthetic. The few documented comments he made about Weill evince the ambivalence, conflict and competition that drive the anxiety of influence. In a letter to Copland of 1940, he called *Lady in the Dark* “overslick.”²⁰⁴ Following a performance of *Street Scene* in 1947, Bernstein was heard backstage by Weill’s assistant and piano coach, Lys Symonette, muttering “This isn’t worth *drei Groschen!*”²⁰⁵ It makes sense that, having expressed skepticism toward Weill on the few occasions that his name arises, Bernstein downplayed the composer in his writings, lectures and compositions. It was only after Weill’s death, – when he could no longer rival Bernstein as a singular figure on the cusp of American and European tradition, – that Bernstein acknowledged his music as “at best a gift from heaven, and at the worst always interesting.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Simeone, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, 114.

²⁰⁵ Symonette in interview with Kowalke, 3 April 1991, in “*The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted*,” in *Die Dreigroschenoper. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score*. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1996), 12.

The remark echoes Berg, who in 1928 admitted that “the likes of us cannot make up our minds in favor of a ‘Threepenny Opera’ or a ‘Ten-Thousand-Dollar Symphony’” (Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 472).

²⁰⁶ Bernstein, Leonard, “A Gift from Heaven” in Marx, Henry, ed. *Weill-Lenya*. (New York: Goethe House, 1976).

Chapter 2: “Have you seen my new opera?”

“I have written some harsh things in the past about Kurt Weill and his music,” wrote Blitzstein in a review of *Johnny Johnson* that appeared in the fall of 1936. “I wish now to write a few good things. He hasn't changed, I have.” Blitzstein found in *Johnny* a “fresher and more appealing” alternative to the “smart-striving social-climbing Broadway songs” with which he associated American music theater. If he considered the message in *Johnny* “soft-voiced” or “velvet propaganda,” he acknowledged that “Weill has practically added a new form to the musical theatre. It is not opera, although it partakes of the 'number' form of Mozart. And it is decidedly not revue-form.”²⁰⁷

In July of that year, Blitzstein had attended a lecture Weill gave in Trumbull, Connecticut for the Group Theatre, the New York-based, left-wing collective that premiered *Johnny*, his first American stage work. “I feel that I can here at last continue what I have built up in Europe,” said Weill,

that I can bring to you my experiences and be certain that you will use them in the right way, and that your experiences will be helpful to me in the my efforts toward the goal which I have set for me since the beginning of my career: the creation of a musical theatre for our time.²⁰⁸

From July 29 to Sept.2, Blitzstein composed his first full-length stage work, *The Cradle Will Rock* at what he later described as “white heat” to process the loss his wife, Eva Goldbeck, who had died of anorexia in May.²⁰⁹ He had already conceived and performed, however, what would become *Cradle*'s main number, “Nickel Under the Foot,” for Brecht during a gathering at the home of the music writer Minna Lederman in December of 1935. According to Lederman, Brecht walked up to the piano and

²⁰⁷ Blitzstein, Marc. “Weill Scores for Johnny Johnson” in *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Nov.-Dec. 1936).

²⁰⁸ Weill, *What is Musical Theatre? Lecture for Group Theatre* (WLRC Ser.31, Box 1). Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

²⁰⁹ Lehrman, *Marc Blitzstein. A Bio-Bibliography*, 221.

encouraged Blitzstein to write “a whole play about all forms of prostitution – the press, the clergy and so on.”²¹⁰

Blitzstein had also begun to cultivate a relationship with Lenya. In December 1935, he heard her sing “Seeräuberjenny” in concert. Struck by her “magnetism and raw lovely voice,” he noted that “her stylized gestures seem strange because of her natural warmth; but in the strangeness lies the slight enigma which is her charm.”²¹¹ In June 1936, he composed a song for her entitled “Few Little English,” about a street-smart European immigrant who aligns herself with a gangster and evades the authorities. Lenya likely refers to the number in a 1938 letter to Weill in which she describes a nightclub program: “I always sing only the [Marc] Blitzstein song, “Barbara,” “Surabaya,” and “Pirate Ballad” and sometimes also “Bilbao.” Plus “Kanonensong” almost always, and “The Right Guy.”²¹²

Lehrman has noted the parallels between “Few Little English” and numbers from *Die Dreigroschenoper*: “with this newly discovered song for Lenya,” he wrote upon discovery of the manuscripts in 1997, “the early link to her, and to Weill, is established.”²¹³ Set in E-flat major, the verse melody of “Few Little English” rises and resolves diatonically, while the refrain slows down and includes a “chromatically descending underpinning in the inner voices that adds a definitely Weillian touch of pathos.”²¹⁴ The melodic shape of the verse and its variation through shifting by a half-tone (from G-flat to G-natural) upon the third iteration recalls, in addition to numbers

²¹⁰ Lederman, “Memories of March Blitzstein, Music’s Angry Man” in *Show* (June 1964), 22.

²¹¹ Blitzstein, Marc. “New York Medley” in: *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1936).

Lehrman considers the observation “one of the earliest American understandings of Brechtian epic theater” (Lehrman, Leonard J. “Few Little English. A Forgotten Song by Marc Blitzstein for Lenya” in *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, Vol. 15, Nov. 2, Fall 1997, 8).

²¹² Lenya may also be referring to a song from Blitzstein’s radio cantata *I’ve Got the Tune*, broadcast by CBS in October 1937, in which she played the role of Suicide. See Kowalke, Kim and Symonette, Lee, eds. and translators. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love). The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, 255-6.

²¹³ “Few Little English. A Forgotten Song by Marc Blitzstein for Lenya,” 8-11.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

from *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the verse melody of “Johnny’s Song” (examples 1A and 1B).

In October of 1937, Lenya made her American radio debut singing the role of Suicide in Blitzstein’s radio opera *I’ve Got the Tune* alongside the composer himself, who played the role of Mr. Musiker. The approximately 30-minute work is an allegory for the quest of the composer to find meaning for his music.²¹⁵ Mr. Musiker begins with a tune but no words for it, enlisting the stenographer, Beetzle, as he searches through the streets of New York. His melody is repurposed into a parody of Schönberg at the home of the aristocratic Madame Arbatus and adopted by an army of fascists until Suicide confesses to have overheard Mr. Musiker at work and comes up with her own text to the full melody: “They tell me there’s a war/ I don’t know what it’s for...I think I won’t be gallant anymore,” she sings before slipping away and falling to the ground.

The tune ultimately finds its home with a crowd of marching high-school students (originally conceived as workers at a communist rally but changed to appease radio censors), sung over fixed, motoric accompaniment. Blitzstein, aka Mr. Musiker, has found his purpose by writing for the masses. But the encounter with Suicide has allegorical proportions of its own. He and Beetzle rescue the personification of despair long enough for her to reveal that she is a secret mouthpiece for his melody. Even after she takes her life, Mr. Musiker declares, “And I’ve still got the tune.”

If Blitzstein managed to establish a rapport with Lenya, who would authorize his translation of *Die Dreigroschenoper* after Weill’s death, the rapprochement may also embody an attempt to compete with him by writing for his wife and muse. Weill noted the attempt for rivalry in no uncertain terms: According to Lederman, after *Cradle* took

²¹⁵ Pollack offers a slightly different reading when he writes that *I’ve Got the Tune* addressed the “very issue of the composer’s role in society.” (*Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 199-205).

the stage in June to July of 1937, Weill “had the ungenerous habit of rushing around New York asking...‘Have you seen my new opera?’”²¹⁶ The comment may reveal how closely Blitzstein imitated the precursor at this stage in his career. As will be explored in the next chapter, the competition with Weill escalated when Blitzstein lured Maurice Abravanel away to conduct his opera *Regina*.

Up until 1936, Blitzstein had expressed at times scathing views of Weill's music. “Success has crowned Kurt Weill, with his super-bourgeois ditties,” he wrote in his 1933 essay “Popular Music – An Invasion,” “... harmonized with a love of distortion and dissonance truly academic.”²¹⁷ In his 1934 article “Towards a New Form,” he called Weill a “Popularist” composer:

Their ideology, displayed in music for the masses, is Communist Russian; their idol is Erik Satie, the Celtic Frenchman; their social system is Central-European (not their utilitarian *Gebrauchsmusik*); they have found practical uses for the virus of jazz, bred in America and spread the world over. They are internationalists. Krenek's *Jonny* was their first considerable and dismal success. Weill's *Dreigroschenoper* is their second.

In the same article, he writes off the notion of stylistic purity or individualism:

Even when one cannot cite instances of combined tendencies in a single composer, his music will display technical borrowings – of procedure, manipulation – from alien territory. Legitimate borrowings, so long as the work turns out to belong to itself...everything is usable – even the scraps – ‘this pulp that makes the pancake.’²¹⁸

He came closer to expressing admiration about *Der Weg zur Verheißung* (The Road to Promise) in 1935, after he had proposed his services as a translator, calling it “Weill’s best score, and also his most uneven” while implying that his aesthetic had the tendency to grow static:

It has long-range communicability, and sufficient variety inside its own curious limitations. The ghetto-ballads, the more severely-paced choral-numbers, the hurries and the sharp easy-rhythmed orchestral interludes, compromise his equipment; and he

²¹⁶ The remark was denied by Lenya but confirmed by Lys Symonette. See Lehrman, “Few Little English. A Forgotten Song by Marc Blitzstein for Lenya,” 11.

²¹⁷ Blitzstein, Marc. “Popular Music - An Invasion: 1923-1933” in *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. X, No. 5 (Jan.-Feb.1933), 101.

²¹⁸ Blitzstein, Marc. “Towards a New Form” in *The Musical Quarterly*, Part II of Vol. XX, No.4, Oct. 1934, 218.

uses it all, and in the same way, for almost every work. You can sing it, it is all thrice familiar, it is *proved* theatre-music.²¹⁹

In revising his evaluation of Weill to embrace an amalgam of popular and classical idioms in the theater and, more importantly, the formal possibilities engendered by that amalgam, Blitzstein found his voice as a stage composer. As Bloom writes, “the poet confronting his Great Original must find the fault that is not there.”²²⁰ In that process of finding fault, he represses his admiration, by which course he inevitably finds himself on the road to imitation. Maria Christina Fava concludes, “in fighting Weill, perhaps, Blitzstein was unconsciously fighting against his own creative imperatives,” specifically “his inability to accept the use of popular idioms in his own music:”

One cannot but wonder why Blitzstein persevered in using Weill as a point of reference every time he addressed the pressing issue of the “invasion of popular music,” while at the same time wanting to create an artistic connection to Weill, even a collaboration with him.... Yet, having come of age artistically in the enclaves of a discriminatory American modernist milieu, he might have felt compelled to repress his interest for vernacular idioms in favor of, especially in his articles for *Modern Music*, a more academic or, as some might put it, 'serious' approach to music.²²¹

David T. Little, although he downplays the influence of Weill, similarly concludes that *Johnny* provided Blitzstein with a crucial breakthrough: “One wonders if Blitzstein withdrew his previous criticism because he saw in Weill’s work a potential solution to his own compositional dilemma.”²²²

Composer’s Collective and Genesis of *Cradle*

Blitzstein’s move away from modernism and toward a more accessible style was also stimulated by socioeconomic factors. In 1935, when he returned from Europe, both

²¹⁹ Blitzstein, Marc. "Theatre Music in Paris" in *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (March-April 1935), 133.

²²⁰ Bloom, *The Anxiety of influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 31.

²²¹ Fava, *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City*, 264. Emphasis is my own.

²²² Little, David T. *The Critical Composer: Political Music during and after "The Revolution,"* Vol.1 Diss., Department of Music, Princeton University (May 2011), 50.

his father and his wife of two years, the writer Eva Goldbeck, had become involved in left-wing causes.²²³ Goldbeck was a disciple of Brecht, translating his essay about epic theater (“The Usage of Music in the Epic Theater”) as well as letters and contemporary essays that appeared in the communist publications *New Masses* and *Daily Worker*.²²⁴ Perhaps not coincidentally, Blitzstein's words in 1935 recall Weill's own writings in the wake of sweeping socio-economic changes in 1920s Germany. Blitzstein identified “a state of crisis” in which “no new work is having any direct or alive contact with the public”:

One thing is certain - the face of our musical life must change, if we are once again to traffic with the public. This time it will be the entire public - everybody; an economic fact which will induce certain consequences. It may mean the end of the platinum Orchestra Age.²²⁵

In 1935, Blitzstein joined and would eventually be voted secretary of the Composers Collective, a group affiliated with the American Communist Party and devoted to creating a musical style that would reach a broad audience while also maintaining elements of personal expression.²²⁶ That same year, Blitzstein composed "First of May," "Send in the Militia" and "People," songs in a popular style that anticipated *Cradle*.²²⁷ For Oja, while Blitzstein's turning point came with his appreciation of *Johnny Johnson*, “it was through work with the Collective that Blitzstein translated those changes into action.”²²⁸

²²³ Ibid, 76.

²²⁴ Lehrman, *Marc Blitzstein. A Bio-Bibliography*, 30-31.

²²⁵ Blitzstein, Marc. "Coming - The Mass Audience!" in *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. XIII, No.1 (Nov-Dec.1935), pp.23-4.

Compare with “Fort vom Durchschnitt” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 22. „Konzertleben unserer Großstädte, das einer vergangenen Epoche bürgerlichen Wohlstands seine Entstehung verdankt, ist heute nutzlos, unbrauchbar, und überlebt. Das Musikgeschäft ist unrentabel geworden.”

²²⁶ Oja, "The Cradle Will Rock and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s," 447. Also see Pollack, 104-106.

²²⁷ See Oja, “The Cradle Will Rock and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s,” 457-8 and Pollack, 151.

²²⁸ Oja, "The Cradle Will Rock and Mass-Song Style of the 1930s," 449.

The Collective was heavily impacted by the mass songs of Eisler, who made his first trip to the States in the spring of 1935.²²⁹ Blitzstein found in Eisler's music the combination of popular and avant-garde elements in service of a specific political cause.

He wrote in July 1936,

The composer is now willing, eager, to trade in his sanctified post as Vestal Virgin before the altar of Immutable and Undefilable Art, for the post of an honest workman among workmen, who has a job to do, a job which wonderfully gives other people joy. His music is aimed at the masses; he knows what he wants to say to them.²³⁰

Although he believed that "one can talk of Eisler and Weill together," Blitzstein compared Eisler favorably to Weill: "Weill is flaccid (he wants to 'entertain'); Eisler has spine and nerves (he wants to 'educate')." ²³¹

In elevating Eisler above Weill, Blitzstein may have been able to save face as a committed communist and pre-emptively ward off any accusations that his music had found inspiration in "super-bourgeois ditties."²³² If it was through contact with Eisler in 1935 that Blitzstein was able to sanction his abandonment of art for art's sake, it was in Weill's work for the theater that he found the form he needed to put that agenda into action with *Cradle*. "The new composer," Blitzstein wrote in 1936, "...will write everything, from political songs to chamber music to bugle-fife-and-drum fanfares. He must have an idiom, a language, a vehicle which will carry them as well as him."²³³ But he associated this movement with a political agenda: "It is in a way ripe for revolutionary treatment."²³⁴

²²⁹ Ibid, 452. By the fall, he began lecturing annually at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan. He settled in New York City in 1938 (Lamb Crawford, 190).

²³⁰ Blitzstein, "The Case for Modern Music," in *New Masses*, July 21, 1936.

²³¹ Blitzstein, "New York Medley" in *Modern Music. A Quarterly Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1936), 37.

²³² In the words of Richard Taruskin, "acknowledged debts are the easy, discountable ones" (*The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays*, 374). See p.33 of this book.

²³³ Blitzstein, "The Case for Modern Music," July 21, 1936.

²³⁴ Ibid

The circumstances of *Cradle's* first performance made for something of a *succès de scandale*. Budget cuts and a personnel reduction to the Federal Theatre Project, a publically financed agency that mounted plays around the country at affordable prices and provided work to unemployed Americans as part of the New Deal, prevented a full staging in June 1937.²³⁵ When the Works Progress Administration (a New Deal agency) padlocked the doors of New York's Maxine Elliott Theater, the young Orson Welles, presiding over direction, landed upon the Venice Theatre and made the impromptu decision to replace the orchestra with Blitzstein at the piano while the singing actors stood in the audience (*Cradle* received its first full public orchestral performance ten years later, with Bernstein leading the New York City Symphony).²³⁶

Lederman noted that “presented in this so-to-speak skinned-down manner, *The Cradle* had the immediate air of a Weill-Brecht Singspiel” but emphasized the influence of the latter:

a less superficial approach to the work will discover its compelling inspiration in Brecht's poetry of rebellion. For it was the force of Brecht's impact upon Marc's youthful *Weltanschauung* which elected the synthesis of his disparate resources – his awareness of the American scene, his feeling for popular speech and music idioms, his militant social consciousness and his skill as a serious composer.²³⁷

Lederman contradicts herself, however, when she points to a "novel amalgam of popular song forms with complex harmonic structures."²³⁸ This "novel amalgam" is a pithy if simplistic description of Weill's own Songstyle.

In the eyes of many viewers and collaborators, Blitzstein succeeded at transferring the ideals of the Brecht-Weill collaborations to a contemporaneous, specifically American setting. That Weill had already shown the possibility of doing so

²³⁵ Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 171-2.

²³⁶ Ibid, 176 and liner notes to *The Cradle Will Rock*. First Complete Recording. John Mauceri, conductor, recorded live at Opera Saratoga, 2018 (Bridge 9511A/B).

²³⁷ The remark was denied by Lenya but confirmed by Lys Symonette. See Lehrman, "Few Little English. A Forgotten Song by Marc Blitzstein for Lenya," 11.

²³⁸ Lederman, "Memories of Marc Blitzstein, Music's Angry Man," 19.

in *Johnny* seems to have escaped their attention. Group Theatre co-founder Harold Clurman noted that “while it is true that without Brecht and Weill there would never have been a *Cradle*, Blitzstein has given the *Cradle* its very particular quality”:

What it typifies is a certain permanent American big-city young-man cockiness, a derisive unwillingness to take any guff - political social or casual...Blitzstein is less sophisticated than his German models; more acid in anger, more tearful in heart."²³⁹

Lehman Engel, who conducted *The Cradle's* first performance with orchestra, scenery and costumes at New York City Center in 1960 (and presided over dress rehearsals in 1937), wrote that the work's “musical forefather is Kurt Weill, and its theatrical inspiration is Bertold Brecht,”

but its true style was distilled out of American vaudeville and minstrel shows...The individual scenes of *The Cradle* are like vignettes, like vaudeville 'turns,' strung together on Mr Mister's attempt to foil the union and Larry Foreman's idio-bright determinism.²⁴⁰

Fava considers Blitzstein's *Cradle* the culmination of opportunities "to conceptualize his brand of socially relevant music and theater," also observing that "he experimented with novel—and, according to contemporary critics and audience, distinctively American—approaches to music and drama."²⁴¹ Blitzstein's stage music, she concludes, "stemmed more from his own artistic and personal development rather than from emulation of Weill." In a slight contradiction, however, she acknowledges that *Cradle's* distinctly American brand of music theater would not have been possible without *Johnny*:

...the German composer showed Blitzstein the possibility of integrating multiple styles and genres within a single piece, the usefulness of the song as an effective dramatic tool, and the artistic quality that could be achieved by filtering these elements through a composer's own musical creativity. Ironically, it may have taken a German composer's infatuation with American music to inspire the Americanness of Blitzstein's *Cradle*.²⁴²

²³⁹ Loggia, Marjorie and Young, Glenn, eds. *The Collected Works of Harold Clurman. Six Decades of Commentary on Theatre, Dance, Music, Film, Arts, Letters and Politics*. (New York: First Applause Theatre Books, 1994), 195.

²⁴⁰ Engel, Lehmann. *The American Musical Theater*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1967), 148.

²⁴¹ Fava, *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City*, 225.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 268-9.

Opera Reform

In notes for his 1936 lecture “What is Musical Theatre?,” Weill identified the song as “the most important element of musical theatre: Not only lyrical, not only expression of sentiments, but: clarification of the idea of the drama. the clearest, most intense expression of an idea....”²⁴³ The genre of “Song,” coined with the *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, embodied Weill's pursuit to write functional music that both renews operatic form and reaches a mass audience.²⁴⁴ Rather than adhere to accepted formulas, the Song radically flouted the “stereotyped harmonic progressions and regular phraseology of the American popular form,” writes Kowalke, “and instead let the content of each number determine the framework of its musical setting.”²⁴⁵ Wolfgang Ruf, in his study of the “Alabama Song,” similarly observes that Weill’s “self-imposed task” was to use the Song for a larger musico-dramatic form.²⁴⁶

While American popular song, not to mention jazz and other dance forms, informed his German-period works, it was only after he emigrated to the U.S. that he incorporated the conventions of Tin Pan Alley.²⁴⁷ Weill continued his pursuit of bridging the gap between what he perceived as the outmoded institution of opera and contemporary forms of theatre. On the second page of the notes for his lecture, he cites the “situation of musical theatre” in the U.S. as being split between the Metropolitan

²⁴³ Weill, Kurt. *What is Musical Theatre? Lecture for Group Theatre*. Photocopy from Yale University (box 68, folder 17) at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York (Series 31, box 1).

²⁴⁴ “Anmerkungen zu meiner Oper *Mahagonny*” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 76.

²⁴⁵ *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 137. Kowalke considers Weill's strophic structure “a logical reflection of his aesthetic and sociological goals” (*Kurt Weill in Europe*, 137), citing the composer's statement that the songs in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* are “expression of the masses” (See *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 78).

²⁴⁶ “Gebrauchsmusik in der Oper. Der “Alabama Song” von Brecht und Weill,” in *Analysen. Beiträge zu einer Problemgeschichte des Komponierens. Festschrift für Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht zum 65. Geburtstag*. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1984), 414.

²⁴⁷ Morley, Michael, “I Cannot/Will Not Sing the Old Songs Now”: Some Observations on Weill’s Adaptation of Popular Song Forms in Horst Edler and Kowalke, Kim H. and, eds. *A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill-Studien*, 219-22 and von der Linn, Michael “‘Johnny,’ ‘Mahagonny,’ and the Songs of Tin Pan Alley in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*, 162.

Opera – “worst example of old fashioned (museum) on the one side” and “musical comedy, which tries to be sophisticated and low brow at the same time, on the other side. Nothing between.” He recounted how he moved away from "l'art pour l'art," or "music for a few chosen people" to "popular art, which has a real appeal to the masses and which at the same time gives the masses something to think about, to learn." Faced with the movement of theater away from its roots as a popular art toward an "aristocratic art," he says, "I had to leave the opera house. I had to go the theatre. So I wrote the first opera for actors. *Dreigroschenoper*."²⁴⁸

In the “play with music,” Weill returned to an *Urform* (original or primitive form) of opera in which the “simplification of musical language” was a central virtue.²⁴⁹ The *Urform* embodies a return to classical values much in the spirit of Weill’s teacher, Ferruccio Busoni, whose idea of Young Classicality entailed renewing or rebuilding upon the past to create “art that is at once old and new.”²⁵⁰ Holding up Bach and Mozart as ideals, Busoni emphasized formal unity and clarity of expression.²⁵¹ If Weill may have deluded himself about the extent to which he upheld his teacher’s principles as he adapted to the commercial demands of American theatre,²⁵² the composer – at least in own eyes – never abandoned his cause: “I have learned to make my music speak directly to the audience,” he wrote in 1949, “to find the most immediate, the most direct way to say what I want to say.”²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Weill, "What is Musical Theatre? Lecture for Group Theatre." Misspellings are kept intact.

²⁴⁹ „Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper“ in *Kurt Weill Musik und musikalisches Theater, Gesammelte Schriften*, 73.

²⁵⁰ „Junge Klassizität“ in Busoni, Ferruccio. *Von der Einheit der Musik. Von Dritteltönen und Junger Klassizität von Bühnen und Bauten und anschließenden Bezierken. Verstreute Aufzeichnungen von Ferruccio Busoni. Kritische und kommentierte Neuausgabe herausgegeben von Martina Weindel.* (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel Verlag, 2006), 95.

²⁵¹ „Entwurf eines Vorwortes zur Partitur des ‚Doktor Faust‘ enthaltend einige Betrachtungen über die Möglichkeiten der Oper“ in *Ibid*, 105.

²⁵² Hinton observes a kind of reverse Anxiety of influence given that Weill may have overplayed the teachings of Busoni in his last years (*Stages of Reform*, 42).

²⁵³ Weill, Kurt. Letter to Dr. Stellenbosch, Feb.14, 1949. Photocopy from Yale University (box 47, folder 14) at Weill-Lenya Research Center.

Later that year, he admitted to a friend in Germany that “everybody thought I was crazy when I started with serious musical plays,” as opposed to the revues and musical comedies of which Broadway consisted “almost entirely” upon his arrival in the U.S.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Weill remained committed before and after exile to what he in 1928 coined “theater music (in a Mozartean sense)” in which form, above all, determines a work's viability.²⁵⁵ “The ideal composer is the one (like Mozart) who gives all these different elements of music equal importance so that they all contribute equally towards the one aim which is form,” he wrote in 1949.²⁵⁶ Weill’s montage of different styles after exile remained rooted in what we know as the *Zeitoper* movement which, in addition to tackling current events, oriented itself toward a broad audience, including the commercial theater; took an ironic stance toward Romantic forms (specifically, Wagner); and integrated disparate elements such as jazz and modern dance music.²⁵⁷

The “mixed genre” (*Zwischengattung*) which Weill coined in 1926 – citing Stravinsky's *L'Histoire* as a precedent – would, in many ways, prove to be “future-proof.”²⁵⁸ His ability to fuse musical popular elements into classical structures is a crucial factor in his success and resilience as a composer for the theater. His stage works also strike a tone at once serious and satirical. In the essay “The Alchemy of Music,” written upon the premiere of *Johnny* in November 1936, Weill cited “balancing of the

²⁵⁴ Letter to Heinz Jolles of 27 May 1949, WLRC Series 40.

²⁵⁵ “Zeitoper” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 50.

²⁵⁶ Weill, Letter to Dr. Stellenbosch, Feb.14, 1949.

²⁵⁷ Grosch, Nils. *Die Musik der Neuen Sachlichkeit*. (Stuttgart, Weimar: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 1999), 18-19, 161 and 180. Grosch understands the concept of “Zeitoper” less in terms of “content-related purpose” than “a basic new orientation and changing modes of action in Music Theater,” specifically the “transformation into a popular medium that leaves behind the concept of opera and opens itself to the market.” Compare with Cook, Susan. *Opera for a New Republic. The Zeitoper of Krenek, Weill and Hindemith*. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 101.

²⁵⁸ “Die neue Oper” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 29-30.

opposed values of humor and tragedy” as “one of the most difficult form problems” for the stage composer.²⁵⁹

In a musical play the author can mingle these elements with far greater freedom; his comic scenes can be more comic, his tragic more tragic, since music creates the balance...But all this is possible only on the basis of intimate collaboration between author and composer from the day the play is conceived to the night it achieves its first performance, so that the composer...assists in the construction of every scene of the action, to the point where his music becomes an integral part of the whole.²⁶⁰

Beyond Brecht-Weill

A full appreciation of Weill's integrity as a composer for theater necessitates illustrating the extent to which his stage aesthetic evolved independently from the ideas of Brecht. Weill and Brecht approached the challenge of writing music theater from different and - as long as the collaboration lasted - complementary vantage points.²⁶¹ Both were interested in writing for new audiences, but Weill never shared Brecht's commitment to Marxist ideology. As such, while both were interested in opera reform, Weill did not share Brecht's antipathy toward the institution of opera or absolute music.²⁶²

The backdrop of their relationship is key to understanding the ironic relationship of music and text in their collaborations but also the extent to which Brecht attempted to cast their stage works in his image. As David Drew wrote,

Brecht had reason to fear the seductive power of music, however he might love it. If the intrinsic worth of a musical setting of his text was too great, the audience would not be in a proper frame of mind to hear what *he* had to say. The music written for Brecht's plays by Weill's successors is almost always interesting, and makes a vital contribution

²⁵⁹ Hinton has noted that the *Urform* which Weill discussed in his German period evolved into “form problems” in his American-period writings (*Stages of Reform*, 48).

²⁶⁰ Weill, Kurt. "The Alchemy of Music" in *Stage*, Vol. 14, No.2 (November 1936), 63-4.

²⁶¹ David Drew writes of "the affinity between two such dissimilar yet strikingly complementary minds" until "the tension had begun to manifest itself in terms of the age-old rivalry between worlds and music." ("Kurt Weill and his Critics in *Times Literary Supplement*, Oct.3, 1975).

²⁶² See Hinton, Stephen. "The Concept of Epic Opera. Theoretical Anomalies in the Brecht-Weill Partnership," in: Danuser, Hermann, ed. *Das musikalische Kunstwerk Geschichte, Ästhetik, Theorie. Festschrift für Carl Dahlhaus zum 60. Geburtstag.* (Laaber Verlag, 1988) for a breakdown of the conceptual divergences between the Epic Opera of Brecht and that of Weill. See "Brecht versus Opera," in: *The Score. A Music Magazine*, No.23 (July 1958), 8.

to the dramatic whole. But even with a composer of the quality of Hanns Eisler, the music does not challenge the supremacy of the words.²⁶³

Brecht penned his theoretical writings after he had completed his Marxist studies; emigrated from Germany; distanced himself from Weill; and joined forces with Eisler.²⁶⁴ Published after Weill's own essays had appeared, these writings attempt to cast Weill's music as part of his own overall vision for their collaborations. His essay *Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater* emerged during a time of artistic isolation in Scandinavia, eight years after the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*.²⁶⁵ Brecht claimed that the "Song" was created when he requested from Weill a one-act opera for the Baden-Badener Musikfestwoche.²⁶⁶ In fact, it was Weill who had received the commission, not Brecht. Furthermore, according to Lenya, it was Weill who approached Brecht to compose the poetry collection *Hauspostille* on which the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* is based.²⁶⁷

Nowhere is the rivalry between Weill and Brecht more clear than in their respective writings about the opera *Mahagonny*. In March 1930, Weill had published his *Anmerkungen zu meiner Oper Mahagonny* in which he documents the inspiration behind the genre of Song.²⁶⁸ Brecht, in turn, published his own *Anmerkungen* following the first performance of the *Mahagonny* opera, at once borrowing and undermining Weill's ideas about opera.²⁶⁹ That Brecht's understanding of music was shaped by that of

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ See Kowalke, "Brecht and music: theory and practice," in Thomson, Peter and Sacks, Glendyr, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht. Second Edition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 246 and Lucchesi, Joachim and Shull, Ronald K., eds. *Musik bei Brecht.* (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1988), 27.

²⁶⁵ Lucchesi and Shull, eds. *Musik bei Brecht*, 43.

²⁶⁶ "Der Song dieser Art wurde kreiert, als ich Weill aufforderte, für die Baden-Badener Musikfestwoche 1927...einfach ein halbes Dutzend schon vorliegender Songs zu vertonen." See Ibid, 43.

²⁶⁷ See Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 144-5 and Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 98.

²⁶⁸ Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 76.

²⁶⁹ Kowalke writes that "Weill's personal experience with Busoni's *junge Klassizität*, Stravinsky's 'epic' endeavors, and the historical models of Mozart, Weber and Beethoven clearly enriched Brecht's unfolding design for epic theater," noting that Brecht turns to "Weill's perennial operatic models, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Figaro* and *Fidelio*, to serve as examples" in his theory about operatic reform (*Kurt Weill in Europe*, 146 and 358).

Weill and not the other way around might be demonstrated in a journal entry of Finnish composer Simon Parmet, who began composing a score for *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* in 1940-1: "Brecht's wishes were directed toward not more and not less than that I should create a worthy match of *Die Dreigroschenoper*....he insisted that I consciously imitate the style of the music."²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Brecht, managed to perpetuate himself as the common denominator in all his musical collaborations. This extends in particular to Weill and Eisler, Brecht's most famous partners. According to Drew:

The parallactic view of Brecht's musical collaborators that rendered them figuratively and even functionally indistinguishable from Brecht himself was supposed to justify the idea that resemblances between (for instance) the music of Weill and Eisler were simply attributable to the influence of Brecht.²⁷¹

An extensive analysis of Eisler's scores is beyond the scope of this study.

However, Dietrich Stern offers a detailed view into how Weill played a central role in Eisler's aesthetic shift after 1928, suggesting that Eisler drew upon the "socially critical songs of Weill... harmonic relationships, melodic turns and rhythmic models" or the "new musical style" (the "Songstil" Weill had developed in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, *Happy End* and the *Berliner Requiem*).²⁷² Although Eisler broke

²⁷⁰ "Brechts Wünsche in Bezug auf die Musik zu *Mutter Courage* zielten auf nichts mehr und nichts weniger als darauf, dass ich ein würdiges Gegenstück zur Musik der *Dreigroschenoper* schaffen sollte. Ja, er ging noch weiter. Er drang darauf, daß ich eine bewußte Nachahmung des Stils in der Musik zu diesem großartigen Werk erstreben und daß meine Musik nach Inhalt und Form mit Couplets nach dem Vorbild der *Dreigroschenoper* gestaltet werden sollte." (via Lucchesi and Shull, *Musik bei Brecht*, 41 and 79). Parmet's score was ultimately not used for the 1941 Zürich premiere of *Mutter Courage*; the music was entrusted to the Swiss composer Paul Burkhard.

²⁷¹ Drew, David. "Eisler und Austrian Music. Notes for the Almeida Festival," in *Tempo, New Series*, No.161/62, ...An Austrian Quodlibet... (June-Sept. 1987), 28.

²⁷² "Eisler konnte bereits auf das Material des sozialkritischen Songs von Kurt Weill, auf dort ausgeprägte harmonische Beziehungen, melodische Wendungen und rhythmische Modelle zurückgreifen...Mit der *Dreigroschenoper*, dem *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, *Happy End* und dem *Berliner Requiem* hatte Weill bereits zwischen 1926 und 1929 einen neuen musikalischen Stil geschaffen, dessen wichtigste Eigentümlichkeit die distanzierte Verarbeitung gesellschaftlich geprägter musikalischer Modelle, die Verbindung von Einprägsamkeit und musikalischer Kritik war." (Stern, Dietrich. "Soziale Bestimmtheit des musikalischen Materials. Eislers Balladen für Gesang und kleines Orchester und ihre Beziehung zur Musik Kurt Weills." in Haug, Wolfgang Fritz, Hrsg. *Angewandte Musik 20er Jahre. Exemplarische Versuche gesellschaftsbezogener musikalischer Arbeit für Theater, Film, Radio, Massenveranstaltung*, Berlin: Argument, 1977, 105).

As both Stern and Drew point out, Eisler in turn influenced Weill: Stern detects "shades of Eisler's Kampflieder" in the "taut march rhythms" of "Kleinen Leutnant des lieben Gottes" in *Happy End*, while

with the Schönberg circle already in 1925, Drew suggests that “Weill was one of the means whereby Eisler temporarily freed himself from Vienna,” citing not just the Brecht collaborations but also *Der Silbersee*.²⁷³ Tobias Faßhauer has explored the kinship of Eisler's *Song von der Ware* to numbers from *Happy End* and the *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, concluding that popular song functions for Weill “as a means of democratic mass communication,” while for Eisler it becomes “at once the embodiment of a musical commodity and the subject of musical criticism.”²⁷⁴

Cradle, Johnny and Die Dreigroschenoper

If Weill distinguished himself from Eisler in that he was not a committed Marxist, his stage works were consistently vehicles for the promise of socio-political change. Asked in a 1936 interview about *Johnny* if there was a political dimension to his “musical philosophy,” Weill answered: “Certainly. I am writing music for the masses--music which they can sing, and music that deals with their problems. That is the only significant form of composition nowadays.”²⁷⁵ In a letter to the playwright Paul Green, he identified the “propaganda of the government (democracy, liberty)” as a central theme in the first act.²⁷⁶

Johnny is a political satire about the government’s decision to enter war in the name of democratic values.²⁷⁷ The play with music in three acts juxtaposes numbers rooted in *Songstil* with cabaret numbers, cowboy songs, southern hymns and more in what the producer Cheryl Crawford called “an American anti-war comedy in almost

Drew mentions numbers in *Der Kuhhandel* and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (“Kurt Weill and his Critics,” in *Times Literary Supplement*, Oct.3, 1975).

²⁷³ Drew, “Brecht versus Opera,” 28.

²⁷⁴ Faßhauer, Tobias. “Abhängigkeit bis zur Selbstpreisgabe? Einflüsse von Kurt Weill in Hans Eislers *Song von der Ware*.” Vortragsmanuskript [www.hanns-eisler.com/index/documents/EislerTage2008Faßhauer.pdf], 2008.

²⁷⁵ Winett, Ralph. “An Interview with Kurt Weill,” in *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 20, 1936).

²⁷⁶ Letter to Paul Green of 19 May 1936 via Carter, Tim forward to the score of *Johnny Johnson: A Play with Music in Three Acts* (Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 2012), 14.

²⁷⁷ In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson declared war against Germany, declaring that “the world must be made safe for democracy.”

revue style.”²⁷⁸ Evoking the episodic structure of revue,²⁷⁹ the stage work jumps in at times surreal fashion from New York harbour to “a road somewhere in France” and back across the harbour to a psychiatrist’s office, where Johnny is diagnosed with “peace monomania.” The title character begins the play as a hopeless romantic, determined to win over Minny Belle’s heart. He fulfills her wishes that he enlist as a soldier in Europe only after reading in the newspaper that World War One will be a “war to end war.” In the final scene, the deranged Johnny is relegated to selling toys on the street, while Minnie Bell has married his rival, Anguish Howington, who is now mayor.

The narrative is interwoven with dream-like vignettes in which Weill’s instrumentation creates a tone at once dire and satirical.²⁸⁰ In the "Song of the Guns," – which, according to Weill, was “the nucleus” of the entire score, – the canons themselves sing a lullaby to sleeping soldiers, with a dotted bass drum motive giving the only indication of the ominous situation.²⁸¹ In the "Song of the Goddess," as Johnny boards a ship for Europe, the Statue of Liberty laments that she, a lifeless "thing of stone," was brought into the world “to send men forth to die” as a trumpet and trombone give intimations of a death march. The trumpet then becomes a voice of nostalgia as it shadows the Goddess in a quote from "Youkali" of Weill’s French-period work *Marie*

²⁷⁸ See Carter, forward to the score of *Johnny Johnson: A Play with Music in Three Acts*, 13 and 26-28.

²⁷⁹ A revue is “a topical, satirical show consisting of a series of scenes and episodes, usually having a central theme but not a dramatic plot.” Revues were most widespread between the world wars (*Grove Music Online* <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.23288>).

Geuen cites the “dissociated elements of revue” as among the elements Weill absorbed already pre-exile from the “American production methods and the Broadway show aesthetic.” (*Von der Zeitoper zur Broadway Oper. Kurt Weill und die Idee des musikalischen Theaters*, 84).

²⁸⁰ Hirsch writes that the instrumentation combining banjo, Hammond and alto sax also had “surprising range and the delight of novelty.” In a clear reference to epic theatre, he also explains “there was really no precedent in American musical theatre” for a structure in which “the music ducked in and out of the action.” (*Kurt Weill on Stage. From Berlin to Broadway*, 143-144).

²⁸¹ Weill wanted the number to be “seducing, almost sweet” and compared the canons to prostitutes: “Their metal could have been used to better purposes, and moreover they do anybody’s bidding, right or wrong. They say to the soldiers: ‘you sleep, we do the work for you’” (Winett, “An Interview with Kurt Weill”).

Galante. It is as if the composer himself were looking across the Atlantic and reflecting on a period of history that he knows has come to an end.

A comparative analysis of *Cradle* with *Johnny* reveals how Blitzstein absorbed Weill's formal principles for a stage work on the cusp of European and American tradition. In an essay about *Cradle* for the *New York Times*, Blitzstein opened with words nearly to identical to those of Weill's in his 1936 lecture: "In America, the musical theatre is either opera or musical comedy. Opera means only the Met; musical comedy is on its last lap."²⁸² He also advanced the notion that he had independently arrived at "new form" for musical theatre.²⁸³ "The singing actor was the obvious solution," wrote Blitzstein, "and the style which puts over a song and which is carried by personality, 'Operatic tone' was to be avoided, theatre tone was the point."²⁸⁴

The "play in music" take places in the fictive Steeltown, U.S.A. on the evening of a steel workers' union drive, unfolding as a series of flashbacks while circling back to a courtroom in the second, seventh and final scenes.²⁸⁵ Taking the non-linear dramatic structure of revue farther than *Johnny*, *Cradle* jumps freely between locations as various as a doctor's office (the allegorical "Dr. Specialist," who is bribed by Mr. Mister to testify that Joe Worker was intoxicated on the job) a Hotel Lobby and a Drugstore.²⁸⁶ The plot, however loose, revolves around the Liberty Committee formed by the wealthy Mr. Mister and the proverbial prostitution of Steeltown's citizens. The musical style, as

²⁸² Compare with Weill's Group Theatre lecture (Chapter 2, 45).

²⁸³ Elisabeth Schwind observes: "Fest steht, daß *The Cradle* ein 'play in music' wurde und daß Blitzstein die Form des Stücks sehr selbstbewußt als eigene Erfindung präsentierte." See "'Weill hasn't changed, I have' Zur Ästhetik des Komponisten Marc Blitzstein," in Nils Grosch, Joachim Lucchesi, and Jürgen Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill-Studien*. (Stuttgart: M & P Verlag, 1996), 191.

Also see Kowalke, "Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America," 48-9: „while perpetually pushing toward a type of popular American opera, he [Weill] wrote for the singing actor as no one else did at the time.”

²⁸⁴ Blitzstein, Marc. "Lines on 'The Cradle,'" in *The New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1938.

²⁸⁵ The name may indicate Steelton, Pennsylvania, where local workers had gone on strike in 1919 (Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 161).

²⁸⁶ In mid-twentieth century America, the drugstore represented democratic values, a "classless gathering place for rich and poor, old and young" (Kowalke, "Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America," 55). It emerges in the "Ice Cream Sextet" of Weill's *Street Scene*, which will be explored in Chapters 3 and 5.

in *Johnny*, is a montage that ranges freely from a parody of popular song ("Croon Spoon") to a number with echoes of a Eisler-inspired *Kampflied* ("Joe Worker") to a Song in the style of Weill's Weimar-period works ("Nickel under the Foot").

The anti-war sentiment of *Johnny* and its theme of government propaganda in the name of democratic values also creep itself into select scenes.²⁸⁷ In the "Facultyroom" scene of Act Two, Mr. Mister is exploiting a university to build a private regiment. Professor Scoot, however, declares that he doesn't like "military training of any kind!" In Act One, Scene Three, after Mrs. Mister convinces Reverend Salvation to take a stance against the Germans, they sing together, "Make the world safe for Democracy!/ Make the world safe for Liberty!." As in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the Reverend is cast a hypocrite who preaches morals while only becoming a mouthpiece for capitalist exploitation. The second act of *Johnny*, meanwhile, includes a scene in which two priests, one American and one German, pray against the backdrop of warfare.

Cradle as a whole can be interpreted as a *tessera* of Weill's first American stage work.²⁸⁸ The "play in music" *Johnny* ends in D-major with Johnny as a character who is roaming the streets, while the "play with music" *Cradle* begins in the same key with Moll on a street corner. Like the prostitute Moll, Johnny champions values that are not condoned by society. His final scene begins with a spoken exchange between Johnny and Minny Belle, who is wrapped in furs, and her twelve-year-old son. Minny apparently doesn't recognize Johnny and tells the boy to give him a nickel (the main topic of Moll's cameo song) because "he looks cold." When Johnny refuses it, he tells him "you must keep the nickel anyway. My daddy's rich."

²⁸⁷ I am grateful to Leonard Lehrman for bringing this to my attention.

²⁸⁸ A "tessera" is when a poet "antithetically 'completes' his precursor...as though the precursor had failed to go far enough" (*Anxiety of influence*, 14).

After an instrumental reprise of “Democracy Advancing,” “Johnny’s Song” enters in full for the first time. Foreshadowing *Lady in the Dark*, in which the main character hums fragments of “My Ship” until recalling full the song in the final number, “Johnny’s Song” is evoked in snippets over the course of the opera.²⁸⁹ As Robinson has documented, the score of *Johnny* as a whole embodies Weill’s efforts to master the formal design and dramaturgical function of a popular song for American theater – a principle that he would take a step further in *Lady*. The repetition and evolution of material from “Johnny’s Song” helped created unity in the heterogeneous score, writes Robinson, but also depict the evolution of the title character from a “quintessential American common man singing a conventional American popular song” to a tragic character performing what Robinson identifies as a “*scena* that almost assumes the proportions of a large-scale rondo with dramatic episodes.”²⁹⁰

“Johnny’s Song” appears three times in instrumental form, with the banjo, an indigenous North American instrument,²⁹¹ representing the title character as he wanders his long and weary way. In the No.5, Act I, Scene I and Interlude, in the key of G-major, the verse melody is tossed from the banjo to the woodwinds and brass.²⁹² The melody resurfaces in F-major with No.16, – starting with the banjo and moving to the strings, – while he bids farewell to the Statue of Liberty and sails off for Europe. Upon his return (No.33, “Johnny’s Homecoming: Reminiscence,” still in F-major), the banjo is accompanied by an upbeat syncopated figure in the Hammond Organ until the violin,

²⁸⁹ Robinson, J. Bradford. "Learning the New Ropes: Kurt Weill and the American Theater Song," in *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, Vol.15, No.2, Fall 1997, 7.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ According to the Oxford Music Dictionary, “the development of the modern banjo began in the second quarter of the 19th century as an increasingly commercial adaptation of an instrument used by enslaved West Africans in the New World, specifically in the Caribbean, as early as the 17th century. The earliest evidence of plucked lutes comes from Mesopotamia around 6000 years ago...”
<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2256043>

²⁹² Scene numbers refer to the critical edition (*Johnny Johnson. A Play with Music in Three Acts*. Series I, Vol.13) as opposed to the version with which Robinson worked in 1997.

now singing “Johnny’s Song,” ushers in a more steady rhythm, augmented by cello and snare drum.

When “Johnny’s Song” emerges as the final number (No.39), musical tension is released as the title character sings his melody for the first time. The song is built almost exclusively on eight-bar units, with two different “bridges” or “releases” between each verse. But Weill manages to fold the conventions of Tin Pan Alley into an operatic framework that culminates in an instrumental postlude while Johnny disappears into the distance selling his toys. The instrumentation plays a key role in escalating the number’s dramatic impact. The final iteration of the verse melody in the clarinet, alto saxophone and trombone (figure G) is ultimately interrupted by a sardonically upbeat dotted-rhythmic figure until the orchestra slides down in typical Weillian fashion by half-steps and arrives at a bittersweet tonal resolution (example 2A).

Johnny is first shadowed by a pianissimo baritone saxophone. At figure B, a pair of trumpets add a dose of irony and bitter detachment as he sings with a gruff cynicism that foreshadows *Cradle*, “The world’s a mighty cruel place,/ with tooth and claw and promise phony,/and old hard guy, he wins the race.” At figure E, the banjo enters as Johnny sings of his “weary way.” When he finishes his song and resumes selling toys, a clarinet and saxophone, then a pair of trumpets, sing an interlude that joins the full ensemble (including trombone, strings, Hammond organ and piano) for a reprise of the song’s main melody in a mood at once playful and tragic.

Wind instruments similarly play a central role in setting the tone for Moll in the opening scene of *Cradle*. Like Johnny, she is first shadowed by the lonely, urban voice of the saxophone (although in this case alto rather than baritone). At figure 3, when she sings “I ain’t in Steeltown long,” a solo clarinet creates a new mood, while a trumpet appears under her line about the “two dollars bills” she’s been given so that she can feed herself. The winds cede to a swanky jazz piano introduction for the Gent (short for

Gentleman), who announces that he will pay Moll only thirty cents, but the clarinet and then the trumpet underscore her when she insists that she increase his fee.

In a similar vein to *Johnny*, fragments of Moll's music become a thread throughout *Cradle* and contribute to the score's formal unity. The melody from the refrain of the Song "Nickel under the Foot" is foreshadowed in the first "Nightcourt" scene of Act One on the words "They won't buy our milk-white bodies,/So we kinda sell out in some other way." And her melody from the "Streetcorner" scene opens the "Nightcourt" scene of Act Two, first carried by the trumpet, then passed to the flute, as she recounts only having enough money to buy herself coffee for lunch. In *Cradle's* final scene, as Larry Foreman confronts Mr. Mister, Moll hums the opening verse of "Nickel" above their exchange (figure 14). The musical montage brings *Cradle* back full circle to Moll's opening scene on the street corner but also creates a distancing effect from the plot's final denouement: Moll occupies a different moral ground as Larry Foreman and Mr. Mister have their showdown (example 2B).

Pirate Jenny and Tangos

Moll may be seen as Blitzstein's answer to the character of Jenny in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. A prostitute is both a victim of capitalist society – where anything, even human affection, can be bought – and a figure who flouts its morals. In "Nickel," the cameo song of *Cradle*, Moll is at first accompanied by only piano and guitar, with the first clarinet and strings entering upon her first iteration of the refrain (figure 5). The full wind ensemble (including double clarinets, double saxophones and double trumpets) enters when she confronts the listener: "I know you've got/That nickel under your foot."

“Nickel” embodies an *askesis*, to use the Bloomian term, or self-purgation of “Seeräuberjenny.”²⁹³ Moll’s Song includes an eight-bar refrain that recurs three times, revealing a loose modelling on the 1920s German ballad form that also provided an “imaginative” basis for Jenny’s number.²⁹⁴ Like Weill, Blitzstein bends the template to his dramatic purposes, opening with spoken dialogue over an instrumental reminiscence of Moll’s first scene and deploying an uneven, irregular number of bars for each verse.

The song opens with motoric accompaniment characteristic of Weill’s *Songstil*, beginning on a double-mode tonic of a-minor and C-major.²⁹⁵ The half-diminished chords that saturate the accompaniment of “Johnny’s Song” enter under key words such as “foot” in the refrain.²⁹⁶ On “doubt” (figure 4), Blitzstein gives emphasis through a g-minor added-sixth chord. This is a signature harmony of Weill, so much so Drew considered the minor mode added-sixth chord the “*Dreigroschenoper* chord.”²⁹⁷ In “Seeräuberjenny,” an a-flat minor chord with sixte ajoutée creates a tone both mysterious and biting as Polly confronts the listener with her alienation from society (“sie wissen nicht, mit wem Sie reden,” examples 3A and 3B).

Upon the refrain, slow, sustained chords enter. While the refrain of “Seeräuberjenny” moves through b-minor and f-sharp minor chords before resolving to F-sharp major, Blitzstein reverses the order, moving from f-sharp minor into a composite of b-minor and d-minor and concluding on a composite of a-minor and D-major. In the A-minor chord stacked by an F#-A-E triadic chord under the word “heel” (five measures after figure 5), the E emerges as a “false” organ point in the soprano line.

²⁹³ I am grateful to Tobias Faßhauer for his insight into the similarities between these two songs.

²⁹⁴ Robinson, “Learning the New Ropes: Kurt Weill and the American Theater Song,” 5.

²⁹⁵ See *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 185 for what Kowalke has coined as “double-mode-tonality.”

²⁹⁶ For more on the role of half-diminished chords see Faßhauer, Tobias. *Ein Aparten im Unaparten* (Saarbrücken. PFAU-Verlag, 2007), 181 and Forte, Allen. *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era 1924-1950*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 12.

²⁹⁷ Drew, “Motifs, tags and related matters” in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 151. Also see Kemp, “Harmony in Weill: Some Observations,” in *Tempo*, no. 104 (1973), 14 for more about the added-sixth chord in Weill.

²⁹⁸ The final eight measures (starting at figure 14) include a progression from a composite or “double-mode” A-major/f-sharp-minor chord to a A-major chord with an added sixth in the penultimate measure.

Dietz concludes that “the significance of the Moll's song undoubtedly lies in its close relation to the ideas and ideals” of Brecht when in fact the song which had so impressed the playwright in 1935 evinces a Weillian aesthetic on a purely musical level. Fava inadvertently supports this view when she writes that “the percussive accompaniment features chromatic harmonies saturated by non-triadic sonorities, with instances of quartal harmony, while the vocal line, contained largely within an octave, lacks sentimentality and has some bluesy qualities.”²⁹⁹

Alongside “Nickel,” Blitzstein considered Scene Six *Cradle*'s most representative number.³⁰⁰ In the Scene Six tango “The Rich,” Blitzstein appropriates another signature trope or “gesture” from Weill's Weimar period: the dance rhythm that appears as an external recording in *Der Zar läßt sich photographieren* and insinuates itself into *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Der Silbersee* and *Happy End*.³⁰¹ Weill's rhythmic figures not only propel the action forward on a musical level but serve to comment, often ironically, on the text. That Weill was aware of this tension in the “Zuhälterballade” of *Die Dreigroschenoper* becomes clear through a letter to his

²⁹⁸ For more on the concept of “false” voice leading, see Faßhauer, *Ein Aparten im Unaparten*, 53 ff.

²⁹⁹ Fava, *Music as Political and Social Statement in the 1930s: Marc Blitzstein and Friends in New York City*, 229.

³⁰⁰ He chose them as representative passages for a recording of the Spoken Arts Corporation in 1956. See Dietz, Robert James. *The Operatic Style of Marc Blitzstein in the American “Agit-prop” Era*. Diss., The University of Iowa (1970), 311.

³⁰¹ “With the simple choice of the tango-rhythm Weill made a powerful comment on the text, the dramatic situation, and the attitudes of the characters while still preserving the absolute independence of musical structure,” writes Kowalke (*Kurt Weill in Europe*, 119). Also see Block, Geoffrey. *Enchanted Evenings. The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim*. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 118.

publisher in which he requests that the “juicy text” be left intact given its relationship to the “gently, pleasantly composed” music.³⁰²

He coined the rhythmic fixing of the text as “gestic” in his essay “Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik,” comparing the formal device to the fugue, sonata or rondo of “classical masters.” While the rhythm remains persistent, the melody “swings above the accompaniment.”³⁰³ Block notes the “shades of Brecht and Weill” in the tango but, like Little, presents the play-in-music’s overall aesthetic as a novel amalgam, citing “*Cradle’s* conflicting allegiances to vernacular song forms and styles and modernistic characteristics and emblems.”³⁰⁴ Pollack suggests that the “ironic use of hymn, waltz, march, tango and ragtime styles” in *Cradle* and *Die Dreigroschenoper* demonstrate “a shared indebtedness to Stravinsky, in particular *The Solider’s Tale*.” He then acknowledges the parallels between Reverend Salvation and Peachum.³⁰⁵

The prominence and persistence of recognizable dance rhythms in Weill and their dramatic function distinguishes his brand of “epic” opera from that of Stravinsky, in which popular rhythm and melody do not shape the form to as large an extent. As a case in point, the Tango in the “Trois Danses” of *L’Histoire du soldat* (which Weill turned to as a model for his concept of *Zwischengattung*) applies the rhythm in a more

³⁰² “Der Reiz des Stückes besteht eben darin, dass ein etwas saftiger Text (der übrigens nicht so anstössig ist wie viele Operentexte) in zarter, angenehmer Weise komponiert ist.” In the same letter, Weill emphasizes: “Der Rhythmus des ersten Taktes muss durch das ganze Stück gehen.” (Grosch, Nils, Ed. *Kurt Weill. Briefwechsel mit der Universal Edition*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2002, 137-8). Hinton draws attention to this letter in “Misunderstanding The Threepenny Opera” in Hinton, Stephen, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 188.

³⁰³ Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 65-6. See Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 118 for more about what Weill meant by “rhythmic fixing.” Hinton points out that “in the voluminous Brecht-Weill literature, Gestus is nothing if not a contested concept.” He concludes that “Gestus has to do with the congruence - or rather, with the possibility of congruence - of form and content” (*Stages of Reform*, 34).

Whether or not Brecht first introduced the term “Gestus” to Weill, it was the latter who put the concept into writing as he documented his attempts to arrive at the “Urform.” (See Morley, Michael. “Suiting the Action to the Word: Some Observations on *Gestus* and *Gestische Musik*” in Kowalke, ed. *A New Orpheus. Essays on Kurt Weill* and Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 146). It is also worth noting that Busoni wrote about the role of the *Geste* in theater music in his sketch for a forward to *Doktor Faustus (Von der Einheit der Musik. Kritische und kommentierte Neuauflage herausgegeben von Martina Weindel*, 105).

³⁰⁴ *Enchanted Evenings*, 118.

³⁰⁵ *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 166.

fragmented fashion between violin and percussion. For Faßhauer, Weill distinguishes himself from Stravinsky and Milhaud by making popular music part of his “montage” rather than subjugating the material to the overall structure.³⁰⁶

The swanky tango of “Zuhälterballade” first enters in the banjo, piano and contrabass while Macheath’s melody, shadowed by an alto saxophone, swings above. The rhythm is suspended only when he stops romantically reminiscing of their undisturbed time together to sing of their raw, realistic circumstances: “the brothel where we had our household.” After Jenny sings the refrain, a snarky foxtrot rhythm enters in the trumpet (example 4A). In “The Rich,” the artists Yasha and Dauber express a combination of disdain and awe for the wealthy members of society on whom their existence depends. The tango sneaks in when Yasha sings about a lady friend (Missus Mister) who is “fabulously wealthy,” only to take on a full-blown gestural function in the refrain, “Oh there's something so damn low about the rich” (example 4B). While Weill’s instrumentation in “Zuhälterballade” creates cheeky contrast with brass instruments, a bandoneon, and Hawaiian guitar, Blitzstein here includes castanets, the percussion instrument mostly clearly associated with the tango.

In another concretization, the vocalists and winds do not swing above but rather join in the tango. After disappearing for thirty-three measures, the rhythm returns in the accompaniment as Yasha sings “she promised me Bar Harbor/With an extra house where I – .” The starving artist cannot help but be seduced. When the refrain returns, at figure 24, Blitzstein replaces the castanets with a tambourine. As in “Nickel,” half-diminished chords such as the C-rooted harmony under the key word “court” create textual emphasis.

³⁰⁶ Faßhauer, Tobias. “Des Songstils Nagelprobe. Anmerkungen zu Kurt-Weill-arrangements von Jerzy Fitelberg,” in Jeßulat, Ariane; Ickstadt, Andreas; and Ullrich, Martin, eds. *Zwischen Komposition und Hermeneutik - Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis musikalischen Denkens Festschrift für Hartmut Fladt* (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 316.

With the entrance of Mrs. Mister (figure 26), Blitzstein quotes the measures preceding the *Allegro con brio* of Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, first in the woodwinds and piano, then in the brass (examples 5A and 5B).³⁰⁷ The material, which returns cyclically at the end of the scene, lampoons the trappings of high art and the reliance of its creators on the wealthy bourgeoisie. Framing the request of Mrs. Mister that Yasha and Dauber join her husband's Liberty Committee, it also expresses the resolution of individuals faced with political oppression (the Count of Egmont was executed for his resistance to the regime of Philip II). The allusion takes on a diegetic function when Mrs. Mister comments, "those horns are perfect," imitating them in a vocalise before breaking out into a mocking "Yoo-hoo" that mimics the strings in Beethoven's overture. After the motive returns at figure 46, this time imitating limousine horns in the trumpet and saxophones, all three characters chant "Yoo hoo!," overlaying the earnestness of Beethoven with an apparent disdain for authority.

Block notes that the allusion not only "goes beyond the conventions of a musical" but "shows that a revered European master can serve Blitzstein's artistic as well as satiric purposes."³⁰⁸ Allusions of a similarly parodist nature, however, occur in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The third "Dreigroschenfinale" is a paradigmatic example. Weill maintained that the finale is "by no means a parody but rather the concept of 'opera' was called upon as a plot-building element ("handlungsbildendes Element") and thus had to be presented in its most pure, original form."³⁰⁹ He mentioned on another occasion that, in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, "irony is to be taken seriously."³¹⁰ Faßhauer,

³⁰⁷ See Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 129. He mistakenly identifies the *Egmont* Overture allusion, however, to "the horn motive."

³⁰⁸ *Enchanted Evenings*, 131.

³⁰⁹ "Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper" in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 56.

³¹⁰ "...die Ironie in der *Dreigroschenoper* ist ernst gemeint. Es ist falsch, wenn die meisten Leute die Dreigroschenoper nur parodistisch, als Ulk aufgefaßt haben. Die modernen Komponisten sind ja überhaupt nicht so parodistisch eingestellt, wie es Publikum und Kritiker zu glauben pflegen." ("Aktuelles

however, corroborates the view that Weill's allusions in the finale are at least tongue-in-cheek, citing the "reitende Bote" as a parodist *Deus ex machina*.³¹¹

When Tiger Brown announces the arrival of the Queen, three sets of chords allude to the opening measures of the overture to *Die Zauberflöte* (Examples 6A and 6B). Unlike in Mozart's parable of the struggle between good and evil, however, the villainous Macheath is not condemned to eternal night but exonerated. The music ironically celebrates the news that he will not be hung when the chordal motto is repeated, this time moving through the pure harmonies of f-minor, D-flat major and A-flat major. Polly introduces bitter irony when, in the key of f-minor, she declares herself "so happy" over his rescue (10 measures after [H]), just as the opera seems to be reaching its *lieto fine*.³¹²

Conclusions

The "revered European master" serving Blitzstein's artistic purposes as he landed upon a "new form" was not the straight-faced Beethoven but the grinning Weill, whose ability to deconstruct operatic convention as he paid homage to its legacy was a central element in his life-long mission to create socially relevant music theater. Borrowings from Weill are – unlike the cheeky allusion to the *Egmont* Overture in Scene Six – inextricable from *Cradle*'s aesthetic identity. The serious but satirical tone of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Johnny Johnson* rematerializes in Blitzstein's first full-length stage work as it freely adopts both classical and popular elements.

Zwiegespräch über die Schulooper zwischen Kurt Weill und Dr. Hans Fischer," in *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, Mainz: Schott Musik International, 2000, 451).

³¹¹ "Offensichtlich fiel es Weill schwer, sich zu Ironie und Parodie rückhaltlos zu bekennen, Kategorien gleichwohl, zu denen er in seinen ästhetischen Einlassungen wie von selbst immer wieder zurückfand" (Faßhauer, *Ein Aparter in Unaparten*, 30).

³¹² For Drew, "Polly may consider herself 'fortunate' (*glücklich*); for her darling Macheath is indeed 'saved.' But the orchestral coda with its quotation from the 'Barbara-Song' belongs, like Macheath, to Jenny as much as to Polly" ("Motifs, tags and related matters," in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 156).

It may seem a paradox that while Weill was grappling with the conventions of Tin Pan Alley in “Johnny’s Song,” Blitzstein’s “Nickel under the Foot” worked with the German ballad form that the European émigré had abandoned. Although Weill was still alive at the time, the number carries undertones of *apophrades*, in which poets “achieve a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned.”³¹³ But it was the formal identity of *Johnny Johnson*, rather than *Die Dreigroschenoper*, that showed Blitzstein the possibility of adapting 1920s modernist elements to a specifically American setting. Always intent upon reaching his audience in the here-and-now, Weill maintained the biting irony and surreal qualities of his Weimar period while learning the ropes of American convention.

The economic instrumentation in *Johnny Johnson* (opening with Hammond organ, clarinet, and gong) and clarity of expression in numbers such as “Song of the Goddess” carry forth an aesthetic ideal that reaches back not only to his pre-exile works but, by extension, the scores of Mozart and Verdi.³¹⁴ He mentioned the composers in one breath in his 1937 essay “The Future of Opera in America.” Echoing Busoni, he identified “a field for the building of a new (or the rebuilding of a classical) form:”

Mozart's *Zauberflöte* was written on commission and in collaboration with a commercial theatre impresario; it is an ideal example of the union of popular music and the highest degree of artistic power. The flowering of Italian opera in the nineteenth century brought forth in Verdi a new peak of popular opera.

While he did not believe that “America can simply take up this music theatre development right where Europe left off” due to different “prerequisites for artistic construction,” he wrote that “a movement has already begun which runs parallel to the European and which will come closer to the goal we set in Europe, even though--or

³¹³ *The Anxiety of influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 141.

³¹⁴ The lamenting brass and subtle percussion in “Song of the Goddess” in particular recall Verdi’s *Requiem*.

because--it develops on a new plane fixed by conditions in this country."³¹⁵ If Weill considered Blitzstein an imitator, *Cradle* was a dynamic part of this tradition that would continue with formal experiments such as *Lady in the Dark* and *Street Scene*, paving the way toward Blitzstein's opera, *Regina*.

³¹⁵ Weill, Kurt. "The Future of Opera in America" in *Modern Music*, vol. 14, no. 4 (May-June 1937), 183-188.

Chapter 3: “Something like Opera”

“It is the miracle of the man’s gift that it all hangs together,” wrote Blitzstein in a 1958 review of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, “becomes natural, even inevitable.”³¹⁶ Blitzstein, according to his own account, first encountered *Aufstieg* through a piano score in 1930. In November of 1936 he met with Weill and Brecht to try to arrange a Broadway performance in New York.³¹⁷ Six years later, Weill wrote to Lenya, “it seems those pansies will never forget that I turned them down with Mahagonny!”³¹⁸ After Weill died, Blitzstein remained on the case, writing but never completing three different drafts of an adaptation called *The Rise and Fall of Magnet City* from 1957 to 1962.³¹⁹

Weill described the score of *Aufstieg* as “a series of 21 closed forms” or “a stringing together of situations” which “yield a dramatic form only in the musically fixed, dynamic sequence.” In adapting the *Songspiel* into a full-scale opera, he maintained the genre of Song as a building block or musical unit while weaving

³¹⁶ “The gorgeously tawdry pop-tunes...are wedded to an astringent dissonant music-pattern that screams and brays,” he continued. “... eill has managed a triumphant solution: one cannot remember what was spoken, what was sung.” Blitzstein, Marc. “On Mahagonny” in *Saturday Review* (May 31, 1958), 40 and 47.

³¹⁷ He had also written to Weill in June 22 of that year requesting a perusal score of “AnnaAnna” [*Die sieben Todsünden*] but never received a response. See Lehrman, *Marc Blitzstein. A Bio-Bibliography*, 581 via Farneth, *Kurt Weill: a life in pictures and documents*, 164 and 342.

The director Arthur Everett Austin Jr., along with the composer-critic Virgil Thomson and the director John Houseman, also hoped to give the U.S. premiere of *Aufstieg* in Hartford, Connecticut, but negotiations fell through (according to Lehrman, Blitzstein was also involved. Via interview with the author of 20 June, 2019).

There is more evidence about Weill’s negotiations with the director Arthur Everett Austin Jr., including a letter of Jan. 15, 1936 in which he proposes a double-bill of the “Paris version” of *Mahagonny* (which expands the *Songspiel* to include select numbers from *Aufstieg*) and *Die sieben Todsünden* rather than “a short version of ‘Mahagonny’.” Weill, however, withdrew from the project, when his wishes were not fulfilled (WLRC Ser.42, box 7, folder 1).

³¹⁸ Kowalke and Symonette, eds. and translators. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love)*, 328-9.

³¹⁹ The Kurt Weill Foundation, which owns the rights to his translation, has not sanctioned completion. According to archivist Dave Stein, Lenya was in discussions with the director Carmen Capalbo (of the 1954 *The Threepenny Opera* at the Theater de Lys) about producing a version by W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman, in March 1960. Capalbo would ultimately preside over a version by Arnold Weinstein in 1970 at the Anderson Theater in New York which was widely considered a flop (see, for example, Goldman, Albert. “At Last And Alas ‘Mahagonny’” in *The New York Times*, May 10, 1970).

numbers into a macro-structure that could “sustain an entire evening.”³²⁰ The resulting form, despite the “astringent dissonance” noted by Blitzstein, holds together eclectic material through classical principles, subverting tradition while renewing it for the future in a Busonian vein.³²¹

With *Street Scene*, Weill further developed this aesthetic principle. If the surreal story about the fictional city of Mahagonny becomes a realist tale at a Manhattan tenement, he cast an even wider net, showing that he could toss off a number in any style and still create a unified whole.³²² Hinton notes that “*Street Scene* is not only an opera *about* the city; like *Mahagonny*, it was conceived *for* the city... .”³²³ Downes, while noting “the extraordinary evolution” of the composer “from the sophistications of the (professed) avant-garde” in the *Mahagonny*-Songspiel to “plain, direct, emotional expression” in his January 1947 review, also pointed to a certain continuity with *Street Scene*, which he called “the most important step toward significantly American opera:” “we are given to wonder whether it is not the very artist coming here from a European social and cultural background who will be quickest to perceive in its full significance an aspect of American life; and feel it as those who always have been in its vicinity might not.”³²⁴

While Stempel argues that the worlds of opera and “Broadway melting-pot episodes” merely “co-exist without shedding much light on the other,” the very lack of

³²⁰ "Anmerkungen zu meiner Oper *Mahagonny*" in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 76.

³²¹ Kowalke identifies the role of repetition, which “not only relates musical units to one another but also directly comments on the dramatic structure,” and “the use of tonal relationships as a constructive mechanism” as key devices in creating *Aufstieg*’s formal unity. He also notes the “careful differentiation of levels of musical expression,” which include “dialogue spoken over orchestral accompaniment, passages of recitative, arioso and *Sprechstimme*, arias, Songs, ensembles, and choral movements” (*Kurt Weill in Europe*, 138-40).

³²² It must be noted that although the city of *Mahagonny* is figuratively located in the U.S., the allegory stands as much for the corrupting forces of capitalism as it does for the decline of morals in the Weimar Republic. The reception of the work as a political provocation upon its premiere further corroborates this reading (see Hirsch, 79-82 and Lenya, *An Oral History Interview*, WLRC Series 60, 19-20).

³²³ *Stages of Reform*, 387.

³²⁴ Downes, “Opera on Broadway. Kurt Weill Takes Forward Step in Setting Idiomatic American to Music” in *New York Times*, Jan.26, 1947.

incongruity is what made the stage work such a bold endeavor and milestone in American tradition. The “integration of diverse idioms and sources within a single distinctive voice and coherent musical structure,” maintains Kowalke, “was virtually unique in the Broadway musical theater of Weill’s time.”³²⁵

It may seem a paradox that the work launched the genre of Broadway Opera despite closing after a short run of 148 performances at New York’s Adelphi Theater.³²⁶ The venture was, within the American theater system, an attempt to commercialize an art form that Oscar Hammerstein called “a way people lost money.” Weill publicly identified *Street Scene* as a “dramatic musical” to “minimize the riskiness” of having it produced on Broadway, writes Stempel, while the published score retained the label of “American Opera (Based on Elmer Rice’s Play).”³²⁷

For Juchem, the composer saw a “historic opportunity” in writing operas for Broadway given the lack of a publicly subsidized theater system comparable to that in Europe.³²⁸ In a 1946 interview, Weill expressed his faith in the American public’s appetite for quality music theater on Broadway. He also identified *Street Scene* as “the culmination” of his efforts as a composer for the theater and hoped that its success would “be sufficient to open new vistas for American composers.”³²⁹ While the work would ultimately find its home in the opera house, Stempel identifies it as “the keystone

³²⁵ *Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 12.

³²⁶ Hinton points that this was a „fairly modest number by Broadway standards but uncommonly high for an opera” (*Stages of Reform*, 364).

³²⁷ Stempel, “Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera” in *A New Orpheus*, 328.

³²⁸ Juchem, “Opera for Broadway, Of Course” Anmerkungen zu Kurt Weills Konzept einer Broadway Opera” in Angerer, Manfred, Ottner, Carmen and Rathgeber, Eike, eds. *Kurt Weill-Symposion. Das musikdramatische Werk. Zum 100. Geburtstag und 50. Todestag*. (Wien: Musikverlag Doblinger, 2004), 72. According to Juchem, Weill first used the term to designate *Firebrand of Florence*.

Also see „Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,” 47 and Grosch, “Oper als Strategie der kompositorischen Selbstinszenierung und Wertbegriff: *Street Scene* (1946) and *West Side Story* (1957)” in Döhl, Frédéric and Herzfeld, Gregor, eds. “In Search of the ‘Great American Opera’” *Tendenzen des amerikanischen Musiktheaters*. (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2016), 106-7.

³²⁹ Weill, Kurt. “Broadway Opera. Our Composers' Hope for the Future” by Kurt Weill as told to Edward J. Smith. *Musical Digest*, vol. 29, no. 4 (December 1946), 16 and 42.

in the conceptual arch which connects such American operas that followed it to Broadway” as *Regina* and *West Side Story*.”³³⁰ Kowalke similarly concludes:

Ushering in a series of operas on Broadway by Blitzstein, Menotti, Bernstein, and others during the next decade, *Street Scene* staked claim to “higher” ground than the terrain of Broadway’s “musical play,” territory in which Richard Rodgers had established priority on the popular front with *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*...³³¹

Weill was as aware of his innovative role as he was bitter about the commercial success of Rodgers and Hammerstein. “So Rodgers ‘is defining a new directive for musical comedy,’” he wrote to Lenya after *Carousel* opened in 1945, a month after his Broadway operetta *The Firebrand of Florence* closed after only 43 performances (*Carousel* would run for 890). “I always thought I’ve been doing that – but I must have been mistaken. Rodgers has certainly won the first round in that race between him and me. But I suppose there will be a second and a third round.”³³² In *Street Scene*’s “Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow” (one of two numbers in Weill did not orchestrate himself), he pours into music his rivalry with, – or perhaps lampoons, – the successful duo as he alludes to *Carousel*.³³³

Kowalke explains that both Rodgers and Weill expanded “the standard 32-bar popular song form into complex musical scenes” and threw into question the “previously specialized roles of lyricist and book-writer” into “the unified contribution of a single collaborator.” And yet while credit went to *Oklahoma!* for establishing the “distinction between the genres of ‘musical comedy’ and ‘musical play’” it was Weill who broke the mould with *Lady in the Dark*.³³⁴ Gisela Schubert concurs that if Weill

³³⁰ Stempel, “Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera” in *A New Orpheus*, 325.

³³¹ “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera,” 284.

³³² See Ibid; Stempel, “Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera” in *A New Orpheus*, 324; and Schubert, “Ein Wettlauf”? Kurt Weill und Richard Rodgers“ in Angerer, Ottner, and Rathgeber, eds. *Kurt Weill-Symposion. Das musikdramatische Werk. Zum 100. Geburtstag und 50. Todestag*, 79.

³³³ See Fig.2 in Kowalke, *Öffentlichkeit als Stil*.

³³⁴ “Theorizing the Golden Age of Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” 137 and 147.

In his taxonomy of genres which are commonly referred to more broadly as “musicals,” Kowalke explains that “a musical comedy score was rarely more than a collection of self-contained songs of varied style and character arranged in a running order along narrative lines and attuned to the latest trends in

and Rodgers were both innovators in American musical theatre of the 1940s, Rodgers did not transcend the boundaries of the genre, while Weill was motivated by formal experimentation.³³⁵

If it is hard to argue with Stempel that “Moon-faced, Starry-eyed” (the other song in *Street Scene* which Weill did not orchestrate) is a “far cry” from the “Alabama-Song” and its green moon,³³⁶ the composer’s commitment to mass communication through popular song and its expansion of the form into a full-scale operatic evening nevertheless remained constant. As he wrote to Olin Downes in 1949,

It seems to me that the American popular song, growing out of the American folk-music, is the basis of an American musical theatre (just as the Italian song was the basis of Italian opera), and that in this early state of the development, and considering the audiences we are writing for, it is quite legitimate to use the form of the popular song and gradually fill it with new musical content.³³⁷

To be sure, Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* had already made African American music of the rural South a central element within the context of a starkly realist tragedy. The “folk opera” emboldened Weill to write serious musical plays for the American stage after attending a rehearsal in October of 1935, one month after he arrived in the U.S.³³⁸ He went on to advise Cheryl Crawford for a posthumous 1942 revival of *Porgy* that replaced most of the recitative with spoken dialogue and would later cite the prominence of dialogue underscored by orchestra as an important feature of *Street Scene* that improved upon *Porgy*.³³⁹

popular music and dance...” while a “musical play was, at least in some of its musical aspects, a reformation of American operetta” (see *Ibid*, 145 and 162).

Also see „Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,“ *A Stranger Here Myself. Kurt Weill-Studien*, 50.

³³⁵ Schubert, “Ein Wettlauf”? Kurt Weill und Richard Rodgers,“ in *Kurt Weill-Symposion. Das musikdramatische Werk. Zum 100. Geburtstag und 50. Todestag*, 86-7.

³³⁶ See Stempel, “Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera” in *A New Orpheus*, 331-2.

³³⁷ Weill, Kurt. Letter to Olin Downes, Nov. 14, 1949. Photocopy from Olin Downes papers, University of Georgia at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York (Series 30, Box 8, Folder 17). The letter concerns *Lost in the Stars*, which Juchem considers a Broadway Opera.

³³⁸ See Chapter 1, 40-1, of this book.

³³⁹ “I will have music for seventy-five percent of my story, but twenty-five percent will be dialogue. Sometimes this dialogue will be underscored by the orchestra as a dramatic moment is about to unfold.” He identified the “tendency to tell everything in music” as *Porgy*’s “one fault.” See Weill, Kurt.

On a broader musical level, however, Weill distinguishes himself from Gershwin by not blending but rather juxtaposing folk and classical elements. Elise K. Kirk makes the distinction through a negative comparison: “Weill appears to shift between operatic and pop techniques rather than assimilate them as Gershwin does so successfully.” She at the same time acknowledges of *Street Scene* that “even within the number-opera framework, solos, scenes, and ensembles flow beautifully – and powerfully – one into the other.” Perhaps most importantly, she notes that “Weill’s use of satiric imagery, spoken theater, and popular musical idioms played a formative role in the theater works of Marc Blitzstein.”³⁴⁰

Regina

In 1950, a year after his opera *Regina* premiered in New Haven, Connecticut, Blitzstein wrote that American musical theatre had advanced since the 1920s to arrive at “a form, this new thing, something like opera (don’t say the naughty word): Actually it is our kind of opera, opera of this place and this time. It involves a theatrical production, an amalgam...” Blitzstein continues with an ostensible criticism of Weill for his faithfulness to convention while alluding to the formal amalgam that served as a catalyst for his own compositions.

In the thirties, as far as musical comedy went, the main development was the works of Kurt Weill, whose music, although often too cautiously and abjectly patterned upon accepted formulas, nevertheless struck out for longer lines and the breaking of the thirty-two bar tune...³⁴¹

He conceived the score from 1946-49, according to Pollack, “largely as a series of discrete musical blocks, usually separated by spoken dialogue.”³⁴² The “Opera (Based on ‘The Little Foxes’ by Lillian Hellman)” tells of a southern aristocrat in Bowden, Alabama who schemes with her brothers to forge an exploitative deal with the Chicago

“Broadway Opera. Our Composers' Hope for the Future,” as told to Edward J. Smith. *Musical Digest*, vol. 29, no. 4 (December 1946), 16 and 42.

³⁴⁰ Kirk, *American Opera*, 262-3.

³⁴¹ Blitzstein, Marc. “Notes on the Musical Theatre,” in *Theatre Arts* (June 1950), 30.

³⁴² Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein*, 327-8.

business man William Marshall.³⁴³ So merciless is the title character Regina Hubbard that she consents to bringing home her husband, Horace Giddens – who has been in the hospital for heart problems – to increase her share from 30 to 40 percent. She also agrees to marry off her daughter, Alexandra, to a cousin in the interest of financial gain. In the final act, after Horace declares that he is changing his will, she taunts him until he goes into cardiac arrest and dies on the stairwell.

Regina had its New York opening at the 46th Street Theater in what Stempel calls an “operatic flop,” closing after seven weeks.³⁴⁴ Crawford, who produced *Johnny Johnson*, *One Touch of Venus*, *Porgy and Bess* and – before her falling out with the creators – *West Side Story*, nevertheless stood by the work: “Gags and sugarstick romance have a place in a public’s entertainment, but I’d like to give them something richer, truer, deeper.”³⁴⁵ Blitzstein made revisions to include “musical tightening and less spoken recitative” for a revival at New York City Opera, which proved to be a more natural home.³⁴⁶

Bernstein championed the stage work in a preview piece for the *New York Times*, identifying a crucial period of growth in theatre history (he would also attempt to convince the administration of Milan’s La Scala to mount *Regina* in 1951):

...in America the musical stage has been growing by leaps and bounds through the masterhands who have been delighting us on Broadway. ...And out of this natural musical theatre – one which is unique in the world, and wholly an outgrowth of our culture – is emerging our opera, intelligible to all, exciting, real and fitting.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ The Hubbards are loosely based on the playwright’s maternal family, which came from Alabama (Ibid, 316).

³⁴⁴ Stempel, *Showtime*, 377.

³⁴⁵ Crawford, Cheryl, *One Naked Individual. My Fifty Years in the Theatre*. (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1977), 173 and Stempel, *Showtime*, 376.

³⁴⁶ Gordon, “Roots of Regina.”

John Mauceri and Tommy Krasker subsequently created a reconstruction for the UK premiere at the Theatre Royal in Glasgow, Scotland on May 17, 1991 (Lehrman, *Marc Blitzstein. A Bio-Bibliography*, 395).

³⁴⁷ Bernstein, Leonard. "Prelude to a Blitzstein Musical Adaptation" in *The New York Times*, Oct.30, 1949. Also see Simeone, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, 330-2.

He considered the drama “a summation of what Blitzstein has been trying to do,” noting the “extent of the formal problem confronting our serious-stage composers.” In an observation that inadvertently illustrates the contradictory relationship between text and music that is a signature of *Aufstieg*, which was built on the competing visions of Weill and Brecht, Bernstein notes the ironic tension between the evil title character and her lyrical music.³⁴⁸

Regina...sings melodies of enormous gentility and suaveness precisely at the moments when she is being most unscrupulous and heartless...I might say that this is the underlying technique of the whole piece: Coating the wormwood with sugar and scenting with magnolia blossoms the cursed house in which these evils transpire.³⁴⁹

Copland called *Regina* the “one work” of Blitzstein’s “that held the boards for any length of time” and “one of the significant 20th-century American operas. ...It has lyrical verve and convincing dramatic impact.”³⁵⁰ Thomson in 1959 judged *Regina* to be a “repertory piece. Its story line is strong; its characters have reality; its music animates and enlarges them all, as good opera music must.” He also acknowledged the precedent of Weill:

Its model, I think, lies somewhere in Italy, as well as in the Weimar Republic. The latter gives it its hatred-of-the-rich tone, its impersonal and class-angled view of villainy. Also, through the Kurt Weill-Bert Brecht operas, its preoccupation with verbal values. Nevertheless, Puccini is around, and Montemezzi and Alfano and Wolf-Ferrari too, as indeed they also are in the Weill-Brecht operas.³⁵¹

Regina in fact became a sore point for Weill when his close friend and collaborator Maurice Abravanel agreed to conduct the premiere after having not been available to preside over his last two stage works. Abravanel (“Bravi” in the letters of Weill and Lenya) had led the Kassel performance of *Aufstieg* in 1930, a few days after the Leipzig premiere on March 9. In Paris, from 1932 to 1933, he conducted the

³⁴⁸ See Chapter 2, 58-60, of this study, and „Anmerkungen zur Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*“ in *Brecht/Weill Mahagonny*, 122-3.

³⁴⁹ Bernstein, "Prelude to a Blitzstein Musical Adaptation" in *The New York Times*, Oct.30, 1949.

³⁵⁰ Copland, Aaron. *The New Music 1900-1960. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1968), 143-4.

³⁵¹ Thomson, Virgil. “From ‘Regina’ to ‘Juno’” in *Saturday Review* (May 16, 1959), 82.

Songspiel on at least four occasions, most notably presiding over a double-bill with *Der Jasager* in a concert sponsored by the Société de la Sérénade, a chamber music society whose artistic board included Poulenc and Milhaud. He also led the premieres of *Die sieben Todsünden* and a selection of three songs from *Der Silbersee*.

In the U.S., he became the youngest conductor to appear at the Metropolitan Opera, in 1936.³⁵² But two years later, Weill had lured him to Broadway.³⁵³ From 1938 to 1947, he was on the podium for the first performances of *Street Scene*, *Lady in the Dark*, *The Firebrand of Florence*, *One Touch of Venus*, and *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Abravanel's duties as music director of the Utah Symphony in 1947 prevented him from conducting *Love Life* and *Lost in the Stars*. When a cut in state funding reduced the 1949 season, however, he conducted *Regina*'s premiere on October 31— one day after the premiere of *Lost in the Stars*.³⁵⁴ This was an incendiary issue: “They [Weill and Lenya] didn't want to hear the name Blitzstein,” Abravanel said in a 1985 interview, “when he wanted me to do *Regina*.”³⁵⁵

The circumstances were exacerbated by an article about developments in New York's music theatre scene in which the critic Howard Taubman dismissed *Lost in the Stars* as a “disappointment” while praising *Regina* as a more effective adaptation of a play (Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*) into a “serious musical work.”³⁵⁶ Weill complained about the article in a letter to Downes and quipped that *Regina* “could have

³⁵² Dickinson, Peter, “Obituary: Maurice Abravanel” in *The Independent*, October 21, 1993.

³⁵³ Kowalke cites Abravanel alongside the directors Max Reinhardt, Lee Strasburg and Elia Kazan as collaborators whom Weill sought out as he broke with Broadway convention. („Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,” 48).

³⁵⁴ Note by Mario Mercado to Abravanel, Maurice. *An Oral History Interview* conducted by Donald Spoto and Lys Symonette. (New York City, 1985 - location and date unconfirmed). Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York (Series 60), 1-3. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved. In 1950, Abravanel won a Tony Award for conducting *Regina*.

³⁵⁵ *An Oral History Interview* conducted by Donald Spoto and Lys Symonette. (New York City, 1985 - location and date unconfirmed). WLRC (Series 60), 5. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

Also see Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage*, 312-320.

³⁵⁶ Taubman, Howard. “Good Opera need not be Grand Opera,” in *New York Times*, Dec.11, 1949. The theater critic Brooks Atkinson meanwhile offered a positive assessment in “Lost in the Stars, the musical version of Alan Paton's ‘Cry the Beloved Country,’” *New York Times*, Oct.31, 1949.

been a better success if Blitzstein's attempt at writing songs would have been more successful" (Downes responded by calling the work a "mishandling" of the original play that was "awfully bad and dramatically false").³⁵⁷ To be sure, Abravanel noted Weill's at times possessive nature a year previously: "he wanted me conduct whenever I was free."³⁵⁸ That Blitzstein created direct competition through the engagement of the conductor nevertheless invites a closer inspection of the ways in which *Regina* derives its formal identity from Weill's operas, specifically *Aufstieg* and *Street Scene*.

Mixed Genre and Montage

Regina struck a tone at once fresh and indigenous while maintaining elements of European tradition. In a 1949 interview, Blitzstein called *Regina* not just "devoid of human kindness" and "utterly selfish" but "the epitome of a whole type in America."³⁵⁹ He assigned the title character music of "a sickly neo-classic, over-sweet perfection," in his own words, while explicitly American idioms such as Ragtime, Jazz and the African American spiritual emerge as vehicles for the promise of social change.³⁶⁰ Drawing upon the formal innovations of Weill, Blitzstein tied together these contrasting musical idioms by means of tonal organization and cyclical repetition.³⁶¹ Yet while contrapuntal motion emerges in *Aufstieg* as a force of virtue or natural order (albeit with a constant dose of irony through chromatic distortion and unconventional orchestration), Old World forms such as recitative and chorale material represent societal corruption.

³⁵⁷ Weill, Kurt. Letter to Olin Downes, Nov. 14, 1949 and response of Dec. 9, 1949 (WLRC, Series 40).

³⁵⁸ Abravanel, *An Oral History Interview*, 43-44. Reprinted with the permission of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York. All rights reserved.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 323-4. According to Pollack, Blitzstein's adaptation of the Hellman play brought the subtext of racism "to the fore, with some new forms of African-American music providing impetus to Alexandra's rebellion and solace to Birdie's suffering."

Mellers also noted the juxtaposition of the African American with the world of *Regina*: "Negro life and music become an ideal representation of the fundamentals of the Good Life, as opposed to the savage lunacy of *Regina*'s obsessions with Things" (*Music in a New Found Land. Themes and Developments in the History of American Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 422).

³⁶¹ For more about the montage of popular music in Weill see Faßhauer, Tobias. "Des Songstils Nagelprobe. Anmerkungen zu Kurt-Weill-Arrangements von Jerzy Fitelberg," in *Zwischen Komposition und Hermeneutik - Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis musikalischen Denkens Festschrift für Hartmut Fladt*, 316.

The “Hurricane Scene” from *Aufstieg* serves as a microcosm of montage within a closed number. The male chorus “Haltet euch aufrecht” becomes a framing device, entering in b-flat minor and ending the number a semi-tone higher, in b-minor.³⁶² The material first cycles in distances of minor thirds, descending from b-flat minor to g-minor and then c-minor to a-minor (see [Table 1](#)). The chorus’ simple, contrapuntal style alludes to the Bach-derived passages in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, specifically, the “Geharnischte Männer” who lead Tamino in the finale ([Examples 1A and 1B](#)). The cross-reference indicates that the storm is a kind of trial – perhaps through wind and water – for the inhabitants of Mahagonny. The neo-classical style is boldly juxtaposed with Song, recitative, a chorus with a cappella dialogue and other free combinations of material ([Table 1](#)). Weill works mainly with four- or eight-bar units, upholding classical principles while integrating an array of “high” and “low” forms into the frame of an operatic evening.³⁶³

In *Street Scene*, Weill juxtaposed operatic with popular idioms to comment both on his characters’ emotional worlds and generic considerations for music theater as a whole. The unfolding of numbers five through 13 provides a case in point (see [Table 2](#)).³⁶⁴ Just as the Bach-derived male chorus alternates with popular song in No. 11 of *Aufstieg*, arias infused with the melodrama of late Romanticism are framed by numbers in a Broadway style. As will be explored further in Chapter 5, respective allusions in the

³⁶² Kowalke has concluded that the juxtaposition of B and Bb lies at the center of *Aufstieg*’s tonal scheme. He notes the “expressive” use of tonality across the entire opera (*Kurt Weill in Europe*, 141-2).

³⁶³ Both the “Alabama Song” and „Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man“ consist of 32 bars, the standard number for American popular song. See von der Linn, Michael about the influence of American popular song on the conception of *Mahagonny*: “‘Johnny,’ ‘Mahagonny,’ and the Songs of Tin Pan Alley in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*, 162.

³⁶⁴ For a full chart of the numbers’ generic identity and their corresponding allusions, see Fig. 2 in *Öffentlichkeit als Stil*. Kowalke has documented that the four protagonists embroiled in tragic love stories inhabit an operatic realm, while smaller characters receive numbers derived from popular song (Ibid, 11-12).

musical idioms of Rose and Sam to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* reveal that the two characters occupy incompatible worlds.³⁶⁵

The alternation of arias and numbers derived from popular music creates an overall sense of classical symmetry, most strikingly in Nos. 9-11, which moves from a Rogers & Hammerstein charm song, to an arioso synthesizing blues with the harmonies of the late nineteenth century, and back to Broadway style (Kowalke has identified No.11 as a "soft-shoe" number alluding to *Porgy*).³⁶⁶ After Easter's proposition to Rose that he make her a star on Broadway, the style of her following "Cavatina" makes clear her distaste for the superficial glamor he is offering. First in a recitative-like opening with arpeggiated accompaniment alluding to *Butterfly*, then to simple fox torch accompaniment,³⁶⁷ she sings that she would rather find true love than be showered with diamonds and fur coats.

The Third Act of *Regina*, and particularly the No.9 Finale, similarly illustrates how contrasting material such as Arioso, dialogue over orchestral accompaniment and an African American spiritual create dramatic structure (Table 3). Not unlike the male chorus in *Aufstieg*, the spiritual returns in cyclical fashion to provide a moral compass.³⁶⁸ Regina's ostensibly virtuous chorale-derived material in the opening number ("Regina's Aria") is exposed in its hypocrisy, while the musical idioms of the

³⁶⁵ Hinton has written about the juxtaposition of allusions to these operas by Puccini and Wagner, concluding that *Butterfly* represents a "certain kind of mainstream opera. The same goes for Wagner, whose musical language, like Puccini's, both draws on and establishes rhetorical conventions." (*Stages of Reform*, 382).

³⁶⁶ See Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 383-4 and *Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, figure 2.

³⁶⁷ *Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, *ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Kirk notes that "the warmth they [the spirituals] produce stands out against the icy materialism of the Hubbards." (*American Opera*, 267). The juxtaposition of virtuous African-Americans and their "cold, white" counterparts surely finds a precedent in *Porgy* (see *Ibid*, 212), but my argument concerns itself with musical structure and the juxtaposition of contrasting idioms within the context of an American opera.

African American community provide her daughter, Alexandra, with the courage to flee.³⁶⁹

Regina's emphatic monologue, marked "Quasi recitativo (*boldly*)," veers between ominous melodrama and a sardonic approach to operatic convention. Just as Begbick does not think twice about sentencing a man to death who has not paid his bar tab, Regina is willing to drive her own husband, Horace, into cardiac arrest in the interest of making herself more wealthy (examples 2A and 2B). Each female character is also the ringleader of two other men: Regina schemes with her brothers, Ben and Oscar Hubbard, while Begbick has at her side the criminals Fatty and Trinity Moses). Regina's neo-classical music is offset by Ben's reflections on greed in a style combining elements of a southern medley with a blues idiom that indicates potential virtue (see Table 3).³⁷⁰ When he re-enters at the end of No.8, flourishes in the woodwinds and the kickoff "good night all" underscore the irony.

In the Rain Quartet, the opera's only truly upright characters (Horace, Alexandra, Birdie and Addie) have a moment of respite from the scheming Hubbards. In the instrumental *Adagietto* that opens the number, an arching melody, melancholy but not overly sentimental, is passed canon-like among the woodwinds. Blitzstein expands the elements of popular song into a scena that assimilates operatic convention while retaining the melodic simplicity of a musical. At figure E, Alexandra initiates the song "Make a quiet day," accompanied by staccato woodwinds and pizzicato strings. The verse, which adheres to a four-bar structure, will cycle back three times before the end of the number (figures K, M and T), juxtaposed with bridges; wordless vocalises; a

³⁶⁹ Pollack writes that African-American music is an "expression of resistance and triumph" (*Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 326).

³⁷⁰ According to *Grove Music Online*, the "blues" does not have a single definition but has origins in the African American slave culture of the rural South: "its use by African-Americans to describe a state of mind has been recorded from the 1860s." <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J048900>

slow-moving interlude for Horace (“Consider the Rain”); and an African American spiritual sung by Jazz and a chorus (“Certainly Lord”).

Horace’s sermon-like passage introduces a new tone of pathos to which Alexandra responds with a virtuosic vocalise rising up to B-flat (figure S). She then breaks off into speech, declaring, “Papa, we’re so solemn,” and reprises the verse melody. The song, however, does not have the power to banish tragedy. This is the last peaceful moment Alexandra will have with her father. Just like the No.6 Quartet of *Street Scene*, when Mrs. Fiorentino, the Jones and Mr. Olsen gossip about Anna Maurant’s affair with the milkman, Sankey, and her husband’s potential reaction, the allusion to an operatic form becomes in itself a statement about the dark fate awaiting the characters (examples 3A and 3B).

Weill’s Quartet includes hints of parody, however, that come into full force with the following “Ice Cream Sextet.” Here, the ice cream cone, a symbol of pleasure for American immigrants during a sweltering New York summer, is evoked with the sensual idiom of Italian opera.³⁷¹ Weill folds his tongue-in-cheek references into deft chromatic transitions, conveying that opera is not just an imported good. The music modulates from A-flat major to G-flat major when Lippo sings the word “America,” the bass line sliding downward to E-flat major in typical Weill fashion by the time the word “cone” is uttered for the first time. The number’s parody, which Hinton rightfully calls “over-the-top,”³⁷² reaches its full apotheosis at the *Andante Cantabile*, set to a barcarolle accompaniment. At the climax, Mrs. Fiorentina sings an ecstatic cadenza (Example 4A).

Birdie’s Aria, which follows the “Rain Quartet,” also includes cadenza-like vocalises as the drunken character reminisces nostalgically for her childhood estate, Lionnet, which Ben and Oscar sold so that they could build cotton mills with the

³⁷¹ Kowalke has identified, specifically, allusions to the *Rigoletto* Quartet and the *Lucia di Lammermoor* Sextet (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 13).

³⁷² *Stages of Reform*, 381.

businessman William Marshall. Foreshadowing Cunegonde's aria "Glitter and be Gay" aria in Bernstein's *Candide* (which will be explored in Chapter 4), but above all looking back to Weill's concept of making opera a "plot-building element" ("handlungsbildendes Element") in the "Ice Cream Sextet," coloratura becomes a vehicle to express bittersweet gratitude for life's circumstances, creating a bridge from the Old World to the New. Birdie's vocalise first emerges as an homage to European elegance (on the words "Paris, France"), then to music itself as she recalls how people would sing together along the river. The second instance is, like the Sextet, in A-flat major, but there is no hint of irony, appropriating an operatic gesture to communicate the character's emotional world and social status (example 4B).³⁷³

Weill conceived *Street Scene* as "a show that flows naturally from dialogue into music and back."³⁷⁴ At the time same time, the orchestra maintains an operatic role, commenting on things of which the characters themselves may not be aware or reducing them to speech. In No.6, the orchestra hints at *Liebestod* while Anna Maurant's lover, Sankey, engages in small talk with her neighbors (example 5A). A full *Tristan* allusion emerges in the final number ("Don't forget the Lilac Bush"), rising chromatically from G to C and continuing to rise upward until the orchestra stammers the first two notes of Sam's E-flat major refrain "We'll go away together" from the No.18 duet (example 5B). Rose urges him in speech to be patient for a better future while the orchestra quotes the hopeful "sprig with its flower" that they sing about in their No.14 duet.³⁷⁵ She then transitions into song, while Sam remains silent.

³⁷³ For Pollack, the "aristocratic Birdie represents an agrarian world in decline, the rapacious Hubbard siblings, a capitalist one on the rise" (*Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 318).

³⁷⁴ Philadelphia tryout notes, 12/21/1946 via Stempel, "Street Scene and the Enigma of Broadway Opera" in *A New Orpheus*, 322. Stempel notes that, by contrast, music interrupts the plot in epic opera.

³⁷⁵ The sprig of the lilac bush is a symbol of American dream (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 18).

In *Regina*, the alternation of song and speech also serves a specific dramaturgical purpose.³⁷⁶ In No.4, Horace sings to inform Regina of his knowledge that Leo stole \$80,000 in bonds, at which point she can only respond in speech. When she drives him into cardiac arrest, in the following number, it is she who sings with the full backing of the orchestra. That “Regina’s Aria” reprises the first eight bars of the overture, a c-minor chorale figure, reveals the extent to which she is in control. In a moment that evokes Bernstein’s statement about “coating the wormwood with sugar,” the music modulates from c minor to C major when she confronts Horace. The instrumentation also holds a certain irony: In addition to assigning sweeping winds to the malicious title character, individual instruments such as the trumpet on “haven’t been very good together” and first horn on “I have only contempt for you” shadow Regina’s melodies.

Horace, meanwhile, can only respond in the spoken word. Just before Regina drives him to his death, she sings a short, unaccompanied cadenza about her “lucky” nature before the horn enters to accompany her. It is not until Horace falls on the landing that she breaks out from lyrical melody into speech, crying out for the servant Addie as the music races to eighth-note motoric rhythms in the woodwinds, percussion, strings and piano. It is Addie, however, who reveals true integrity when she opens the number in a thoroughly mourning vein, her a-cappella, low-range sighing set to faint, processional percussion.

Shortly thereafter, rising strings usher in Alexandra, who challenges her mother and uncle Ben in c-minor. When Regina tells her in dialogue to “try to control yourself,” rising C-major arpeggios make clear that she cannot as she sings the words, “I’m trying.” Alexandra then reprises Horace’s interlude from the “Rain Quartet,”

³⁷⁶ Kirk credits the structure to Blitzstein, writing that he invented “his own special kind of dialogue that skillfully moves from speech to recitative to song in smooth, expressive transitions. Sometimes one character speaks an answer to a sung question, or a musical phrase may be interrupted in the middle for a conversational interpolation.” (*American Opera*, 265).

replacing his line “Consider the rain” with “Oh, all in one day,” the passage transposed from B-flat major to F-major (see Table 3, No.9). Like the hurricane in *Aufstieg*, rain represents the restoration of order or the power of the natural world, as opposed to the greedy ways of human society (examples 6A and 6B). As Alexandra reflects on her father’s words and resolves to flee, Regina is so absorbed by her own machinations that she doesn’t understand the significance.

Alexandra is at first accompanied by only strings, with a slow, rising chorale figure that is passed to the brass and woodwinds. The bass line nearly resolves to F-major but is interrupted by entrance of a march in “Rag tempo,” set to Jazz’s backstage band of clarinet, trumpet, trombone banjo and traps.³⁷⁷ Alexandra is at this point reduced to speech. After 11 measures, Jazz and the chorus introduce the African American spiritual, underscoring Alexandra’s resolve in the face of oppression. Like Begbick’s victim, Jim, or his consort, Jenny, Alexandra finds lyrical relief from her circumstances. As the chorus continues chanting, she confronts her mother in song and turns the tables by reducing Regina to speech. She repeats Horace’s “Rain Quartet” melody and declares in F-major, “I’m going away.”

The off-stage spiritual then takes over as a sign of her purpose. Blitzstein cuts off Jazz’s band, however, with a neo-classical gesture: As the curtain closes, the full orchestra suddenly joins on the last refrain and cedes to a rising F-major arpeggio landing on four repetitions of the tonic. The prominence of the brass section within a neo-classical context recalls the overture of *Die Dreigroschenoper*.³⁷⁸ But if Weill’s jazzed-up orchestration lends a sense of “seriously intended irony,” the gesture here

³⁷⁷ Jazz, the older brother of the character, Chinkypin, has returned from New Orleans and formed his own band with “fellow field hands.” Pollack notes the Dixieland, or New Orleans, jazz style that Blitzstein captured in the offstage band through careful study of the genre (*Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 323-4).

³⁷⁸ The orchestra is scored for strings, piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horns, trumpet, trombone, percussion and piano. The brass dominate, however, in the New York City Opera Company recording under Samuel Krachmalnick (Columbia 03S 202, LP; Sony Masterworks Broadway 72912, CD).

takes on a gung-ho American spirit, as if Blitzstein were openly flouting the dictates of classical tradition while at the same time turning to its conventions to cast the score as a full-fledged opera. This effect is underscored by the postlude's construction in seven rather than eight measures, undermining a sense of classical symmetry (Example 7).³⁷⁹

More importantly, the moment recalls the final bars of *Aufstieg*'s Act One, when Weill tricks the listener into thinking that Jim will close with popular song material (“Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man”) and instead frames No.11 with the male chorus (see Table 1). Jim's sweeping lyricism contradicts the bitter pessimism of Brecht's text (roughly, that one has to lie in the bed one makes for oneself), emphasized by jazzy instrumentation including saxophone, banjo, tom-tom and piano. The accompaniment suddenly drops out, however, and cedes to teeming, chromatic strings that re-introduce the male chorus (which now consists only of basses), singing from the distance in the sober key of b minor.

While the African American spiritual that has returned cyclically allows *Regina* to end with the promise of renewal, *Aufstieg* ends on an unequivocally cynical note. Although Fatty, Toby and Bill sing in No. 20 that God came to Mahagonny on “a grey morning in the middle of Whisky,” one doesn't have the feeling the He can make it. The tone is especially biting when their chant is set to a sardonic Waltz accompaniment. Meanwhile, Begbick sits “silent under a price board.” Jenny steers the music in a new direction at figure 85, ending the number in speech as she declares, “Ansahen Gott die Männer von Mahagonny!” But a kind of funeral procession for the now defunct city subsequently enters to a triola figure in the strings and tomtom. The accompaniment persists as fragments of Song return.

³⁷⁹ The passage evokes Josef Straus' concept of an “anxiety of style.” See Chp.1,18-19.

With the entrance of Bill and a train of men carrying Jim's coffin, Jenny's melody is intercepted, and the mood suddenly becomes violent. Bandoneon and timpani enter, deepening the sense of a full-blown *Trauermarsch* (example 8). The opera closes unflinchingly with the proclamation that the innocent cannot be saved. As Blitzstein wrote, "we hear, in a steady death-beat that seems to engulf text, music stage and audience, the hair-raising choral chant; no one can help a dead man; no one can help you or us or anyone. The City of Traps has fallen of its own corruption and waste and gaiety."³⁸⁰ Weill gives the orchestra the last word for a mere two measures after the curtain falls, resolving to b minor, a half-step higher than the b-flat minor which represents the order of the natural world.

Conclusions

Weill's structural montage served as a blueprint for Blitzstein as he bridged the impasse between popular theater and opera ("the naughty word"). *Regina* absorbed the lessons of *Aufstieg* to make a biting commentary about capitalist values that erode not only society but, in this case, the nuclear family. The adage "Können einem toten Mann nicht helfen" easily holds true in Regina's Alabama home.³⁸¹ *Street Scene* further provided the model of a mixed genre that made New and Old World tradition equally important elements within the wider frame of classical structure, embodying both Weill's continued commitment to maintaining the social relevance opera as an art form and his whole-hearted embrace of an American identity.³⁸²

³⁸⁰ Blitzstein, "On Mahagonny," 47.

³⁸¹ The location of Alabama, "an American locale made famous through popular song," abstractly connects *Aufstieg* and *Regina*. For more see Von der Linn, "'Johnny,' Mahagonny, ' and the Songs of Tin Pan Alley," in Danuser, Hermann and Gottschewski, Hermann, eds. *Amerkanismus/Americanism/Weill*. (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003), 168-9.

³⁸² For more see Kowalke, "I'm an American!" Whitman, Weill and Cultural Identity" in Kramer, Lawrence, ed. *Walt Whitman and Modern Music. War, Desire and the Trials of Nationhood*. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), in particular 124.

If Broadway-style numbers in *Street Scene* assimilate a brand of saccharine optimism that never would have made its way into the Brecht works, the stage work makes a candid statement about the struggle of immigrants in mid-20th-century America, where cultural tensions are not always mitigated by the promise of the American dream. Carrying on this tradition, *Regina* strikes the fresh, direct tone of musical theater while achieving a tragic weight. As such, Bernstein, Copland and Thomson were correct to assess its importance as a 20th-century American opera. Starting with the imaginary city of Mahagonny, and continuing on the concrete streets of New York, Weill charted the territory on which *Regina* came to life.

Chapter 4: “Make our Garden Grow”

“If I can write one, real moving American opera that any American can understand (and one that is, notwithstanding, a serious musical work),” wrote Bernstein in January of 1948, “I shall be a happy man.”³⁸³ With *Candide* and *West Side Story*, he was closer to his goal. His most successful and best-known stage works, they opened within a year of each other and were conceived in a similar creative spirit.³⁸⁴ The composer had an internal struggle about how to find the right formula. In a fictive conversation between his “irrepressible demon” (Id) and his ego (“L.B.”), published a month before the premiere of *Candide*, he exposes an unconscious battle about introducing European convention to the Broadway stage.: “...Does this F sharp sound as though it belongs in a Broadway musical?/Id: (sneering) Broadway musical! I can but smile.” In the end, Bernstein reassures himself that that he is setting a “specific precedent” in the history of American theatre by creating a “particular mixture of styles and elements:”

Of course it’s a kind of operetta, or some version of musical theatre that is basically European but which Americans have long ago accepted and come to love. ...The particular mixture of styles and elements that goes into this work makes it perhaps a new kind of show. Maybe it will turn out to be some sort of new form: I don’t know. There seems to be no really specific precedent for it in our theatre, so time must tell.³⁸⁵

A month previously, in a talk on national television, he had more confidently declared American “musical comedy” as a form that occupies a “middle ground between variety show and opera.” He cited Rogers and Hammerstein as precedents for

³⁸³ “Me, Composer - You Jane,” in Bernstein, *Findings*, 129.

³⁸⁴ Stempel calls them “not just his greatest scores for Broadway, but the works that would become of all his compositions perhaps the most admired, durable and popular.” (“Broadway’s Mozartean Moment, or An Amadeus in Amber” in Ledbetter, Steven, ed. *Sennets & Tuckets. A Bernstein Celebration*. Boston: The Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1988, 40).

Shawn writes that *Candide* and *West Side Story* were “written at the peak of his [Bernstein’s] fecundity and compositional brilliance” (*Leonard Bernstein. An American Musician*, 135).

³⁸⁵ “Colloquy in Boston” in *The New York Times* (Nov.18, 1956).

having blended “the best elements of opera, operetta, revue, vaudeville, and all the rest” into “something quite original.” Bernstein concluded that although operetta played a role in educating audiences about musical complexity, – paving the road to the “more ambitious musical comedies we have today” – the eclectic product that is American musical theater, “borrowing this from opera, that from revue, the other from operetta, something else from vaudeville,” had managed to create a new, indigenous form: “opera but *in our own way*.”³⁸⁶

Bernstein drew a parallel to the *Singspiel* tradition, and in particular Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, to invoke a specific moment in history in which a “new form” has emerged:

In 1750, the big attraction was what they called the Singspiel... This popular form took the leap to a work of art through the genius of Mozart. After all, the *Magic Flute* is a Singspiel; only it’s by Mozart. We are in the same position; all we need is for our Mozart to come along. If and when he does, we surely won’t get any *Magic Flute*; what we’ll get will be a new form, and perhaps ‘opera’ will be the wrong word for it...³⁸⁷

While there are clear parallels between *Singspiel* and the American musical play, in which spoken dialogue and closed numbers alternate to create a hybrid form that at once furthers the evolution of operatic tradition and caters to an audience in the here-and-now, the Mozart comparison tacitly serves to enshrine Bernstein as the pivotal figure in the new movement of serious musicals.³⁸⁸ If he mentioned Weill in his discussion of serious composers who “invaded” Broadway, he reversed a logical chronology by mentioning his name after that of Blitzstein and not mentioning the precedent of *Die Dreigroschenoper*:

³⁸⁶ “American Musical Comedy” in Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1960), 152-179.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ “Bernstein’s parallel between the flowering of German opera and the state of the Broadway musical circa 1950 had an air of pretension about it. ...it was not so much Broadway’s musical ‘moment in history’ as his own.” (Stempel, “Broadway’s Mozartean Moment, or An Amadeus in Amber,” 41). Also see Kowalke, *Theorizing the Golden Age of Musical*, 180.

One serious composer, Marc Blitzstein, had even invaded Broadway with his odd, original opera, *The Cradle Will Rock*. Then Kurt Weill had brought his whole German training to Broadway in works such as *Lady in the Dark*. George Gershwin himself, who had been diligently studying counterpoint and fugue, had invaded the opera house with *Porgy and Bess*...³⁸⁹

Bernstein's historical narrative skirts around the role of Weill's stage works in shaping American tradition. *Candide*, meanwhile, is an adaptation of an 18th-century text whose spirit of social satire stands finds a precedent *Die Dreigroschenoper*.³⁹⁰ In his update of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, Brecht exposed the moral hypocrisy of capitalist society by depicting the bourgeoisie as villains and vice versa.³⁹¹ Neither true love, religious beliefs nor family values have a chance in this ruthless, urban world. In turn, the "comic operetta" *Candide* – whose lyrics emerged through a collaboration with the poet Richard Wilbur – repurposed Voltaire's eponymous novella into a satire about the hunt for communists in mid-twentieth-century America.³⁹² The book writer Lillian Hellman, who approached Bernstein with the topic, was herself blacklisted by the House of Un-American Activities in 1948.³⁹³ The text originally included an Inquisition scene that was edited out before the show opened in Boston 1956 and restored only once for a Los Angeles production in 1966.³⁹⁴

Although Voltaire's *Candide* is a criticism of the philosophical optimism championed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (personified by Pangloss), both stage works

³⁸⁹ "American Musical Comedy," in Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 152-179.

³⁹⁰ I am indebted to Kim Kowalke for his insight into this matter.

³⁹¹ „Die Straßenräuber zeigten, auch in der Musik, daß ihre Empfindungen, Gefühle und Vorurteile dieselbe waren wie die des durchschnittlichen Bürgers und Theaterbesuchers. ... Das menschliche Verhalten wird als veränderlich gezeigt, der Mensch als unabhängig von gewissen ökonomischen-politischen Verhältnissen und zugleich als fähig, sie zu verändern.“ See Bertolt Brecht, „Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater,“ in Hennenberg, Fritz and Knopf, Jan, eds. *Brecht/Weill Mahagonny* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), 137.

³⁹² Wilbur provided lyrics for the second act of *Candide* and revised those of the first, according to Burton making "startling improvements" (see *Leonard Bernstein*, 257). He also notes that Lenny would often attempt to re-write lyrics, pushing Wilbur to the point of exasperation (Ibid, 263). This is an interesting dimension to the show that is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

³⁹³ Brecht, Copland, Robbins were among the many other writers and artists to be given a congressional hearing for their alleged sympathy to the communist cause, while Bernstein was required to provide testimony to the State Department. See Simeone, Nigel, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 267 and 299-301.

³⁹⁴ The director of the L.A. production, Gordon Davidson, compared *Candide* to *The Beggars' Opera* (Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 260).

show the possibility of a better world in which people are not judged by their social status, religious background or political affiliations. Much as Macheath is liberated from his execution by a *Deus ex Machina*, *Candide* is able to settle down in peace although he murdered and stole along the way.³⁹⁵ Cunegonde, like Jenny, in a sense prostitutes herself by becoming the courtesan to two different men in Paris – both whom she will subsequently murder before fleeing with *Candide* – but is not portrayed as either morally superior or inferior.

In *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Weill sought to renew operatic tradition by returning to a “prototype” or “original form” (“*Urform*”) of opera.³⁹⁶ Rather than a straight parody of opera, the genre is treated as a “subject of the evening” and “called upon as a plot-building element (“*handlungsbildendes Element*”).”³⁹⁷ The return to pre-Romantic values necessitated a simplification and clarity of musical language. In opposition to the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which the audience abandons itself to the “narcotic” interplay of visual, musical and theatrical elements, text and music operate on different levels (Brecht’s “*Trennung der Elemente*”) in service of a specific social message.³⁹⁸ There are also moments of deliberate tension between text and music.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ Interestingly, Robert Rounseville, who sang the title role at *Candide*’s premiere, had played Captain Macheath in a film version of *The Beggar’s Opera* (Ibid, 358).

³⁹⁶ “Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 55.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 56.

³⁹⁸ Weill writes: “Denn ‘Romantik’ als Kunst schaltet den Denken aus, sie arbeitet mit narkotischen Mitteln, sie zeigt den Menschen nur im Ausnahmezustand, und in ihrer Blütezeit (bei Wagner) verzichtet sie überhaupt auf eine Darstellung des Menschen.“ („Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik,“ in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 64).

Weill believed *Die Dreigroschenoper* could be seen as “the most consistent reaction to Wagner” (1929 interview, via “Misunderstanding the Threepenny Opera“ in Hinton, Stephen, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 187). Brecht’s *Anmerkungen zur Oper “Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny”* (in Hennenberg, Fritz and Knopf, Jan, eds. *Brecht/Weill Mahagonny*, 123-33), written a year later, is also useful here to understand the function of text and music in *Die Dreigroschenoper* although he wrote the essay in part to undermine Weill.

³⁹⁹ „Wie ist Musik, wie ist vor allem Gesang im Theater überhaupt möglich? Diese Frage wurde einmal auf die primitivste Art gelöst. Ich hatte eine realistische Handlung, musste also die Musik dagegensetzen, da ich ihr jede Möglichkeit einer realistischen Wirkung abspreche.“ („Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper“ in *Kurt Weill Musik und musikalisches Theater, Gesammelte Schriften*, 55.)

Much as Brecht's text skewers bourgeois values, Weill's musical form and content comment with biting irony on an originally aristocratic form of entertainment. In addition to instrumentation including banjo, Hawaiian guitar and two saxophones, Weill explicitly did not write for trained opera singers but singing actors and actresses (Lenya played the part of Jenny in the original 1928 production). Alongside creating a sense of natural or everyday expression that stands in contrast to standard opera,⁴⁰⁰ the vocal style creates a lack of hierarchy among the characters. While Lucy introduces ironic shades of coloratura and sings higher than Polly in the "Eifersuchtsduett," it is not clear who has the upper hand: It is Polly, not Lucy, who responds to Macheath's release in the final scene.

As Hinton has observed, searing ambiguity penetrates *Die Dreigroschenoper* on many levels.⁴⁰¹ Weill's mock-classical form, distorted harmonies and contradictory responses to Brecht's text renew opera for a politically unstable age while poking fun at the genre's conventions. The third "Dreigroschenfinale," as explored in Chapter 2, remains a rich example of irony in a "seriously intended" vein and opera as a plot-building element ("handlungsbildendes Element"). When Tiger Brown announces the arrival of the Queen, three sets of chords allude to the opening measures of the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*.⁴⁰² The "Ice Cream Sextet" in *Street Scene* offers a further illustration, with ecstatic, Tristan-like climaxes such as when Lippo exclaims, "I can't eat alone" (see [example 7A](#)).

This spirit of parody reemerges in *Candide* but from a different vantage point.

Both composers adapt classical form to the purpose of social satire but have an inverse

⁴⁰⁰ "The stiff, unnatural movements of singers, the old-fashioned scenery, the meaningless interruptions by ballets, these are the tragic signs of an age in which opera lost contact with the theatre and led the existence of a museum piece, toilsomely preserved by its devotees." (Weill, Kurt. "The Future of Opera in America" in *Modern Music*, 183-188).

⁴⁰¹ See „Misunderstanding the Threepenny Opera“ in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 181-192.

⁴⁰² See Chapter 2, 72.

relationship to European tradition: While Weill sets out to undermine the bourgeois milieu of opera with urban modernity, Bernstein turns to Old World idioms to elevate popular American theater from its isolated canon. A few months after Hellman approached Bernstein with the idea of collaborating on *Candide*, in the fall of 1953, Bernstein conducted Cherubini's *Medea* at La Scala with Maria Callas in the title role and entered what biographer Humphrey Burton describes as an "intoxicating new relationship" with the Italian house that "left Bernstein in something of a frenzy, torn between composing and conducting opera" and increasingly attracted to "the idea of living in Europe."⁴⁰³ This tension manifests itself in a score that comments on the genre of opera with touches of humor while maintaining a wide-eyed fascination with Old World culture.⁴⁰⁴

In his "Valentine Card to European music,"⁴⁰⁵ Bernstein pays homage to the likes of Gounod and Bellini while expressing himself in the carefree spirit of American music theater. In this process, he neutralizes certain aspects of Weill's reform.⁴⁰⁶ Although *Candide* can be interpreted, like *Die Dreigroschenoper*, as a critique of capitalist values, chromatic movement is at times coated over with tonality, a jazzed-up orchestra toned down to conventional instruments, fragmented themes developed without irony into classical forms. Dance rhythms are crucial to both works, but while Weill snuck in the foxtrot, Bernstein turned to noble waltzes, a gavotte and – in the Scottish Opera version – a barcarolle.

⁴⁰³ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 260.

⁴⁰⁴ Lafave similarly notes that "while Bernstein pokes fun at operatic traditions and forms – the extended ending of "You were Dead you know," the over-the-top virtuosity of "Glitter and be Gay," and so on – he also salutes them, and that means emulating their musical beauty. Imitation is here the sincerest form of flattery." (Lafave, Kenneth. *Experiencing Leonard Bernstein. A Listener's Companion*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 110).

⁴⁰⁵ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 234-5.

⁴⁰⁶ Josef Straus coined the "revisionary ratio" neutralization, a process by which "musical elements are stripped of their customary function, particularly of their progressional impulse. Forward progress is blocked." (*Remaking the Past. Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, 17).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Bernstein encountered *Die Dreigroschenoper* as a college student in 1937 through the Lotte Lenya recording which he later recalled made him “instantly” fall in love with the “ganze Ehepaar.”⁴⁰⁷ He conducted the Marc Blitzstein version, *The Threepenny Opera*, at Brandeis University in 1952 with Lenya singing the role of Jenny. The following year, when the Blitzstein translation became the the longest-running musical in the history of American theatre, with 2,611 performances, *Threepenny* fever swept through New York.⁴⁰⁸ Rathert maintains that the ballad opera became the “Urtypus” for operetta and musicals on the North American continent through its “lasting success and legendary status.”⁴⁰⁹ The staged production also kindled a kind of renaissance for Weill’s German-period works as a whole, which mcclung traces back to the Brandeis performance.⁴¹⁰ Most importantly for the purposes of this study, he notes that although Bernstein’s “conducting career was firmly established, the period following the *Threepenny Opera* concert was devoted to the stage.”⁴¹¹

Candide premiered at New York’s Martin Beck Theater in 1956, following a troubled, protracted genesis that prevented Bernstein from devoting himself entirely to *West Side Story* when that work began to take shape in 1955.⁴¹² *Candide* went through five different versions until Bernstein signed off the Scottish Opera version, engraved by Boosey and Hawkes as based on his 1989 Deutsche Grammophon recording.⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁷ Bernstein, “A Gift from Heaven” in Marx, Henry, ed. *Weill-Lenya*.

⁴⁰⁸ Kowalke, “The Threepenny Opera in America,” in Hinton, Stephen, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 111.

⁴⁰⁹ “Die beste aller musikalischen Welten” Leonard Bernsteins *Candide* und die Idee des ‘Crossover’ in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts,” 267.

⁴¹⁰ mcclung and Laird, “Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein,” in Everett, William A. and Laird, Paul, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 167.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² Simeone, Nigel, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, 341.

⁴¹³ The Boosey and Hawkes version indicates that “this score incorporates the composer’s final intentions.” John Mauceri provided additional orchestrations to the music, which Bernstein co-orchestrated with Hershy Kay.

Today, the score's place remains in the opera house.⁴¹⁴ But already in the original version, its range and sophistication place it outside the Broadway tradition, including an overture in sonata form, a bel-canto pastiche (“Glitter and be Gay”), a tango (“I am Easily Assimilated”), chorales and more.⁴¹⁵

Analyses of Bernstein's music have largely focused on motivic construction. But while Jaensch concludes that a personal approach to harmony is less easy to define than his melodic style,⁴¹⁶ *Candide* and *West Side Story* deploy motivic cells to Leitmotivic purpose both melodically and harmonically. In *Candide*, it is the “optimism” motive of a seventh and octave (1-7-8) that permeates the score.⁴¹⁷ The motive's permutations to some extent echo the “Moritat-motif,” a diatonic rise through a third and fourth (1-3-4) which David Drew has coined “the *Dreigroschenoper* chord” given its prominence in songs by Mackie Messer, Peachum and Jenny.⁴¹⁸

Moritat-motif



Optimism motive



The Moritat-motif surfaces in the stage work's first and perhaps most famous song, the “Moritat vom Mackie Messer,” first melodically, then harmonically as an

⁴¹⁴ Recent productions for Bernstein's centennial, which spanned 2017-2019, took place at the Florence Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, Los Angeles Opera and more.

⁴¹⁵ See Smith, 138 and McClung/Laird, “Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein,” 178.

⁴¹⁶ See Jaensch, 175. „Weniger deutliche Hinweise auf einen typischen Personalstil Leonard Bernsteins finden sich im harmonischen Bereich.“

⁴¹⁷ See Smith, 114 and Gottlieb, 24.

⁴¹⁸ Drew, “Motifs, tags and related matters,” in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 151.

added-sixth chord. The motif will later appear in the compound-chord of A-minor and F-minor when Jenny sings “Und Sie wissen nicht, mit wem sie reden” in „Seeräuberjenny.” David Drew also detects a rhythmic repurposing of the motto in the “Zuhälterballade.” By means of the motif, the composer achieves an organic unity that challenges but renews operatic form in a thoroughly Busonian spirit. The “Moritat-motif” is so subtly embedded into the score, however, that it would be impossible to speak of a Leitmotif technique. Bernstein, by contrast, exploits the optimism motive to create a thread through his eclectic range of musical idioms and, perhaps most importantly, to achieve sophisticated harmonic transitions and tonal ambiguity.

Candide thrives on moments of ironic tension between book and score. Not unlike the tango “Zuhälterballade,” in which the romantic reminiscing of Jenny and Macheath about life at a brothel are juxtaposed with swanky, non-sentimental music, the duet “You were dead, you know” of Candide and Cunegonde sets a morbid topic to lyrical nostalgia. The optimism motive is reversed to 1-8-7 as Candide tells her “You were dead,” resolving to a D-major seventh chord that lingers while the melody continues to pursue C-major. An A-minor chord with added sixth (F-sharp) emerges under the word “bayonnetted” before Cunegonde brings the music blissfully back to C-major.

The Paris Waltz Reprise of scene seven is rife with chromatic harmonies that distort the a-minor key at hand and, in the original Broadway version, opens the number on a Brechtian note when the Old Lady announces, “Only married women can afford to look like whores.” The moral hierarchy established by society is turned on its head. The bass line descending chromatically from B-flat to G (measures 15-18) deploys a typical Weill device (see measures 23-24 of the “Eifersuchtsduett,” [example 6A](#)). The use of double-tonality and minor mode meanwhile communicates the futility of Pangloss’ optimism in the face of religious persecution (the Inquisition) and natural disaster (the

1755 Lisbon earthquake). During his number “The Best of all Possible Worlds,” the chorus undermines him not in words but music. C-major is implied but thwarted by added notes in the accompaniment to the words “a happy celebration,” about the marriage of Candide and Cunegonde. When the chorus repeats Pangloss’ mantra (“All’s for the best in this best of all possible worlds”), the key of f-sharp minor contradicts his optimism. Open intervals lend the music a distinctly American flavor, and yet the social message implied by tonal ambiguity invites comparison with Weill.

The Pilgrim’s Procession emerges as a sharp critique of American politics, with a chromatically spiced instrumental march that cedes to a purely diatonic, sermon-like passage for the Pilgrim Father (“Come, pilgrims, to America!”). A Bachian idiom emerges as he sings “Where innocence shall be restored,” and the typical Weill construction of tonic and subdominant (F-major and Bb-major)⁴¹⁹ offsets what would otherwise be a triumphant “Alleluia” of the chorus. Such observations may seem reductionist, for anyone who has experienced *Candide* is aware that it is more than the sum of its parts. However, its reverential parody of operatic convention within the context of a social satire and the range of idioms which it so skilfully integrates into a unified score that has both popular appeal and academic value creates a direct lineage back to *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

Classical Overtures and Lutheran Chorales

In the overture to *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Weill creates a parody of classical form while preserving certain conventions. A motto of three pounding chords announces the key of c-minor, yet a false bass sets the music off course, ceding to warped harmonies (example 1A). The instrumentation includes no strings but rather jazz-inspired brass, timpani, banjo and harmonium. The overture nevertheless works

⁴¹⁹ Kemp calls “bitonality involving both tonic and subdominant” a “typical instance” in Weill’s harmonic environment, citing as examples its occurrence in *The Threepenny Opera*, *Der Jasager* and *Die Sieben Todsünden* but noting that “numerous examples of the minor subtonic relationship could be cited.” (“Harmony in Weill: Some Observations,” in *Tempo*, no. 104, 1973, 14).

more or less with eight- or 16-bar sections, juxtaposing classical symmetry with subversive instrumentation and tonality. As in the overture to *Die Zauberflöte*, the B-section is a Bachian fugue that revolves roughly around the key of e-flat minor (as opposed to Mozart's E-flat major). In the final section (E), Weill returns to the three-chord motto, this time in f-minor, and modulates through a chromatically descending bass-line to a pure C-major chord in the final measure – an unexpected affirmation of the tonality he has distorted like an expressionist portrait throughout the course of his overture.

Bernstein's *Candide* Overture is four times as long as that of Weill (287 measures, in the Scottish Opera version, as opposed to 67 measures), beginning and ending in the key of E-flat major. Bernstein uses a truncated sonata form and, in typical operatic fashion, foreshadows the melodies of coming scenes.⁴²⁰ Bernstein's exuberant tone more easily calls to mind American music theatre than the stead world of opera, however, as he introduces his themes in a controlled structure that moves through an exposition, development, recapitulation and coda, immediately announcing *Candide's* mixed identity.⁴²¹ Unlike in Weill, however, there is no sense of ironic distance from the classical form that is being revisited in order to elevate American musical theater to a new level of sophistication. Meanwhile, the instrumentation is a standard combination of full strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion and harp.

If Bernstein's style is far removed from the acrid *Dreigroschenoper* overture, he works with a harmonic complexity that at times offsets the purely optimistic nature of his melodies. The march-like battle music that emerges at figure 47 in B-flat major (foreshadowing the instrumental 5f. of the Scottish Opera version) also bears a striking similarity to the chordal motto of Weill's overture (example 1B). In Bernstein, the

⁴²⁰ See Lafave, *Experiencing Leonard Bernstein. A Listener's Companion*, 116 and Shawn, 139. It became the most frequently performed concert overture ever written by an American.

⁴²¹ See Smith, 133.

heavy chords cede to a motive of flitting woodwinds, underscored by xylophone, harp and pizzicato strings, the D-major bass offsetting the high-lying melody that gravitates toward E-flat until the passage resolves to g-minor.

Both works end with major-mode chorales yet to different emotional effect.

Weill alludes to a Lutheran chorale without moralizing, expressing a sense of faith that Drew has described as „agnostic rather than atheistic.“⁴²² The tonal center is approximately F-major, but the bass line often offsets expectations. The harmonium carrying the inner chorale accompaniment implies a religious setting but is ironically doubled by saxophones (example 2A). In the finale “Make our Garden Grow,” Bernstein deploys the same triplet chorale figures but, unlike in Weill, implies a certain moral virtue. While the chorus declares, “we’re neither pure nor wise nor good,” the tonal progression resolving to E-flat major indicates otherwise (see measure six of example 2B).⁴²³ The chorus will repeat the words unaccompanied, lending even more purity of expression.

In a further musical manifestation of the happiness the characters have achieved by cultivating their garden, the optimism motive rises to the ninth degree, modulating from E-major to A-flat major through a rising B-flat/C/D and lingering on these three notes as a harmony in the final passage (starting at measure 64) before ending on a pure C-major chord (example 3A). The passage recalls Weill’s technique of moving through passages of ambiguous harmonies before affirming the tonal order with the purest of major keys (see the final measures of the overture to *Die Dreigroschenoper* in example 3B or the epilogue to *Die sieben Todsünden*). The biting irony, however, has been softened.

⁴²² “The loss of its tonal centre corresponds to the loss of the absolute faith implicit in its traditional models, the very choice of model still conveys some sense of continuity“ (“Motifs, tags and related matters,” in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 157).

⁴²³ Burton calls the music “a stirring a positive hymn of hope for a better world” (*Leonard Bernstein*, 259)

Old World Tango

As has already been explored, the tango is a signature of Weill's German-period works.⁴²⁴ In the Old Lady's tango of *Candide*, the rhythm not only takes on a gestic function but becomes the vehicle of cultural assimilation. Rathert has noted that the Eastern European émigré may not only be a personification of the Old World but an autobiographical sketch of Bernstein himself given mention of the Ukrainian town (Rovno Gubernya) where his father was born.⁴²⁵ That the composer wrote his own lyrics for the song, together with his wife, the Chilean-born Felicia, only makes this argument more plausible. As the number was originally titled "Old Lady's Jewish Tango," the character indicates the Inquisition as not only an allegory for the Communist witch hunt in the McCarthy era but for the persecution of the Jewish people.

Like "Die Zuhälterballade" of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the number delivers a serious but humorous message through the ironic tension between music and text. In "Die Zuhälterballade," the swanky tango rhythm is suspended only when Macheath and Jenny break from their illusion to sing of their raw, realistic circumstances: "the brothel where we made our home." When their words end, a foxtrot rhythm enters in the trumpet (example 4A). Weill uses the same device against the stark final chorus of the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* and the tango "Was zahlen Sie für einen Rat" of *Der Silbersee*). In *Candide*, the tango rhythm germinates from a primitive, eighth-note pattern into a sweeping dotted figure when the Old Lady sings, "It's easy,/ it's ever so easy!/I'm Spanish, I'm suddenly Spanish!" G-major chords underscore her outburst, wielding pure tonality, like Weill, as an ironic device (example 4B).

The tango rhythm becomes even more seductive and the orchestration enriched with winds to further heighten the sensuous atmosphere with the entrance of a male

⁴²⁴ See Chapter 2, 69-70.

⁴²⁵ "'Die beste aller musikalischen Welten' Leonard Bernsteins *Candide* und die Idee des 'Crossover' in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts," 276.

chorus that praises her “ruby lips” in Spanish („Tus labios rubí“).⁴²⁶ In a moment that is at once pure comedy and the expression of an apparent longing to transcend national identity, she responds in a combination of German, English, and French. The number’s opening with raw bass clarinet, bassoon, English horn and percussion sets a similarly serious yet humorous tone for the topic of the Old Lady’s immigration from Eastern Europe to Buenos Aires.

Percussive, open chords on a compound chord of g-minor and d-minor create suspense and ironic tension. The specific combination of g-minor and d-minor surfaces in measure seven of the Tango in *Der Silbersee* (“Was zahlen Sie für einen Rat”), while “Die Zuhälterballade” revolves around the double-tonality of e-minor and B-major. As mentioned, the g-minor of the double-tonic combination in Bernstein’s tango briefly resolves into G-major when the Old Lady celebrates the embracement of her new adopted culture in the refrain, but the music’s non-ambiguity does not last long, juxtaposing B-natural and B-flat on her second iteration of the word “easy” (example 4B).

Like “Die Zuhälterballade,” “I am Easily Assimilated” cedes to purely instrumental music (the Scottish Opera version further includes a reprise of full chorus). While Weill introduces a new swanky melody (in the Hawaiian guitar) and a fox trot (in the trumpet), abandoning the tango rhythm and quoting the refrain only in the final measures, Bernstein weaves together previous melodies from the song with conventional orchestration. More importantly, the tango rhythm persists until all but the last eight measures, when the percussive g-minor and d-minor chords return, their serious tone offset by an ironically celebratory “Hey!” from the chorus.

⁴²⁶ The original Broadway version indicates „Senores“ (Spanish for “men”), while the Scottish Opera version includes sopranos, altos and the possible inclusion of Cunegonde.

Bernstein, like Weill, makes a social-political statement without providing answers to the moral questions he raises.⁴²⁷ The Old Lady is easily assimilated and never loses faith but, as the minor-mode compound chord indicates, must bear her share of strife. In the Act Two trio “Quiet,” she is ushered in by dodecaphonic music that emerges as much in a manner of parody as to link the Old Lady to an era of political torment and expressionist alienation.⁴²⁸ As she flees with Candide, Cunegonde and the Governor, she explains: “I’ve been burned for a witch,/ And I’m missing the half of my backside.” Bernstein never loses his sense of humor, however, resolving from a highly chromatic progression to a D-major chord on the word “backside.”

Glitter and be Gay

In this aria, Bernstein pokes fun at Old World high society as he celebrates it. Cunegonde mourns, then revels in her life in Paris, where, as a courtesan, she is “forced to glitter, forced to be gay.” The music, divided into a slow cavatina and fast cabaletta, is a clear outlet for Bernstein’s experience conducting *bel canto*.⁴²⁹ On the surface, the music is a parody of the “Jewel Aria” in Gounod’s *Romeo et Juliette*, an aria that begins with unaccompanied trilling in the soprano voice (Bernstein’s sketches originally used the title “Cunegonde’s Jewel Song”).⁴³⁰ Here, trills in the woodwinds immediately set an ironic tone. A d-natural in the bass under her first utterance of “gay” undermines the forlorn c-minor harmony and will serve as an added sixth to an f-minor chord when she laments, “That’s the part I play” (example 5A). It is worth recalling that Kemp notes

⁴²⁷ As Drew wrote of Weill, “the music declares itself to be the enemy of most orthodoxies and all systems. Hence it prefers to leave unanswered the social and moral questions which it has raised unless the answers happen to suggest themselves in terms of the simplest and least partial appeals to humanity and justice.” (*The Times Literary Supplement*, Oct.3,1975).

⁴²⁸ Rathert has traced the twelve-tone row not just back to Schönberg but Bach’s Organ Fugue in E-minor BWV 548 (“Die beste aller musikalischen Welten,” 278).

⁴²⁹ In February of 1955, while still suffering through the birth of *Candide*, Bernstein returned to Milan to conduct Callas in *La Sonnambula*.

⁴³⁰ See <https://www.loc.gov/resource/musbernstein.100000005.0/?sp=1> for images of the manuscript and Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 260.

calls the minor added-sixth chord with its root in the bass the "Weill chord par excellence"⁴³¹).

Cunegonde's music contains some of the most chromatic material in the score, with a recurrence of the 1-7-8 motto creating Dorian mode under "Born to higher things" and moving through d-minor, f-sharp minor, b-flat minor, b-minor and a G-major seventh chord in just five measures before the C-major cabaletta, set to bouncy, bel canto-like accompaniment (example 5B). The "ha ha!" that develops into a full-fledged coloratura figure at measure 62 may be considered a *tessera*, or antithetical completion, of Lucy's "Ha ha" in the "Eifersuchtsduett," in which she challenges Macheath's new bride, Polly.⁴³² Cunegonde, like Lucy, is unlawfully attached to a man (in this case, two men) and translates her emotions into a haughty, musical laugh that will rise up to a high E-flat. While Weill explicitly did not write for opera singers, Bernstein has no qualms about spinning the "ha ha" figure into scalar movement, arpeggios and wide chromatic leaps which only an operatically trained singer could execute properly.⁴³³ And while Lucy's figure is accompanied by rising and descending chromatic lines that defy any tonal center, Bernstein's "ha ha" refrain (starting at measure 64) revolves around the unadulterated tonic and dominant chords of A-flat and E-flat major (compare examples 6A and 6B).

Both in its bel canto parody and its tonal scheme, the refrain also alludes to the "Ice Cream Sextet" of *Street Scene*: Cunegonde's passage of rising and falling sixteenth notes that resolves to A-flat major (example 6A) bears a striking similarity Mrs. Fiorentino's brief A-flat major cadenza at the climax of the Sextet (example 7B). In both numbers, bel canto virtuosity becomes a vehicle for bittersweet gratitude. But

⁴³¹ "Harmony in Weill: Some Observations," 14.

⁴³² Hirsch also notes that the "Eifersuchtsduett" included "parody of grand-opera coloratura," which is in turn "an echo of the rivalry between two contemporary divas that had been one of Gay's satiric targets" (*Kurt Weill on Stage. From Berlin to Broadway*, 50).

⁴³³ June Anderson, who sings on the 1989 DG recording, combines the technical precision and expressive power which the music demands.

while the “Ice Cream Sextet” lingers on the idiom for only two measures, alluding tongue-in-cheek to *Lucia di Lammermoor* before returning to chromatic accompaniment and straightforward parody (“Ah vanilla! A tortoni!”), “Glitter and be Gay” indulges in not one but two refrains.

Conclusions

In *Candide*, Bernstein gave expression to his passion for Old World opera while creating a biting satire of American politics. The reverential but humorous tone evokes a Weillian brand of irony that is “meant seriously.”⁴³⁴ His exploitation of the optimism motive to create ambiguous harmonies and renewal of classical form also look back to *Die Dreigroschenoper*. But while Weill was breaking from the shackles of European convention as the continent descended into self-annihilation, Bernstein was writing an homage to a tradition that had been uprooted. To use the metaphor used by both Reynolds and Kropfnger,⁴³⁵ *Die Dreigroschenoper* planted a seed that germinated with *Candide* into a hybrid form allowing for organic dialogue between American musical theater and operatic convention. If raw cynicism has given way to bittersweet optimism, *Candide*’s final chorale conveys, as with *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the possibility of a world in which people are not judged by their social status, religious background or political affiliations.

⁴³⁴ See “Aktuelles Zwiegespräch über die Schulooper zwischen Kurt Weill und Dr. Hans Fischer,” in *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 451.

⁴³⁵ See Chapter 1, 25-6, of this study; Reynolds, *Wagner, Schumann and the Lessons of Beethoven's Ninth*, 164-6; and Kropfnger, “Komponieren nach Beethoven,” 80 and 195.

Chapter 5: “This isn’t worth *drei Groschen!*”

While *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Candide* are parodies of 18th-century works that draw inspiration from the lightness and transparency of classical form, *Street Scene* and *West Side Story* take a cue from the brooding world of late Romanticism.

Combining the emotional depth of opera and the immediacy of American musical theater, both works explore thwarted love stories amid social tensions in mid-twentieth-century New York City. The similarity in wording that introduces the librettos cannot be a coincidence. In Weill’s “American Opera” (which was billed as a “Dramatic Musical”) “the action takes place on a sidewalk in New York City,” with Act I set on an evening in June and Act II the following day. In the book to Bernstein’s score, “the action takes place on the West Side of New York City during the last days of summer.”⁴³⁶

Weill’s male protagonist, Sam, is a Jewish-American hopelessly in love with Rose, a young woman of Irish-Catholic heritage who also dreams of running away with Sam. The tragedy that takes the foreground, however, is the troubled relationship between Rose’s parents: Mrs. Maurant is murdered by her own husband for having an affair.⁴³⁷ *West Side Story* tells of a romance amid warring Puerto Rican and Caucasian-American factions (the Sharks and the Jets) but was originally conceived as *East Side Story*, “a modern version of Romeo and Juliet” in which Juliet would be of Jewish

⁴³⁶ Simeone notes that “the portrayal of humanity in Weill’s show (and the Elmer Rice play on which it is closely based) includes poverty, abuse and murder, as *West Side Story* was to do, and the action of both takes place in the city within a time-span of 24 hours.” (*Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 75).

Weill chose unity of time, place and action “to avoid the conventional musical comedy technique and to work it out as a kind of popular Broadway opera,” as he wrote to Rouben Mamoulian, his first choice of director, who had presided over *Porgy and Bess*, *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* (Mamoulian turned down the offer in favor of more lucrative projects in Hollywood but would go on to direct Weill’s *Lost in the Stars*, starring Todd Duncan of the original *Porgy* production). See Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage. From Berlin to Broadway*, 259 and Kowalke, “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera,” 291.

⁴³⁷ Despite Weill’s conviction as an American citizen, given his tolerance for Lenya’s extramarital relations, the work casts a critical glance at his adopted society.

origin and Romeo an Italian-American from Greenwich Village.⁴³⁸ This indicates the work, in the Bloomian sense, as a *tessera* in which Bernstein completes the fragmented love story laid out in *Street Scene*. The unfulfilled longing between Rose and Sam becomes a full-blown tragedy of Shakespearean proportions in the romance of Maria and Tony, who is killed by the Jet, Chino.

As Kowalke has noted, the four protagonists embroiled in the double-love stories of *Street Scene* are the only ones to receive overtly operatic numbers.⁴³⁹ In a similar vein, the slow, confessional numbers of Tony and Maria in *West Side Story* evoke operatic romanticism, in contrast with the catchy “I feel pretty” or “America.”⁴⁴⁰ The work, like *Street Scene*, thrives on generic tension, which arose as much through Bernstein’s aspirations to transcend the bounds of musical theater and the conflicting visions of his collaborators.⁴⁴¹ For the purpose of exploring the inter-textual relations between these two Broadway Operas, however, my analysis will largely focus on the numbers of Tony, Maria, Sam and Rose.

Tragedy and Formal Implications

With *West Side Story*, Bernstein wished to tell “a tragic story in musical-comedy terms, using only musical-comedy techniques, never falling into the ‘operatic trap.’” “Can it succeed?” he asked rhetorically in January of 1949. “It hasn’t yet in our country. I’m excited. If it can work – it’s the first.” In March of 1956, he reiterates: “Chief problem: to tread the fine line between opera and Broadway, between realism and

⁴³⁸ Bernstein, *Findings*, 144 and Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 274.

⁴³⁹ Kowalke further notes that the minor mode reserved almost exclusively for their use (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 11-12).

⁴⁴⁰ The irony of this latter number, in combination with its biting socio-political message, nevertheless shares a kinship with Weill. Sondheim writes that both numbers “served to remind the audience that this was entertainment, not a sociological treatise.” See Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 25.

Also worth noting is that “Gee, Officer Krupke” was originally intended for *Candide* and invites comparison to *Die Dreigroschenoper* through its sympathy for street villains (see Simeone, 102; Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 269; and Jaensch, 86).

⁴⁴¹ Sondheim mentions that he and Lenny “had two approaches to the same goal.” While Bernstein favored the “poetic,” Sondheim found “simplicity of language” more convincing for a work about gangsters (*Finishing the Hat*, 28). This dynamic, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

poetry, ballet and 'just dancing,' abstract and representational.”⁴⁴² On the one hand, *West Side Story* did break new ground on a formal level or dodge the “operatic trap” by allowing dance to tell the story.⁴⁴³ On the other hand, the form is deceitful, its operatic DNA at times disappearing beneath the work’s slick surface.⁴⁴⁴ Bernstein himself packaged the work as an opera in his 1984 recording for Deutsche Grammophon, enlisting Kiri Te Kanawa and José Carreras to sing the roles of Maria and Tony while his children, Nina and Alexander, delivered spoken dialogue.⁴⁴⁵

Unlike Weill, who set out to reform European tradition for the Broadway stage, Bernstein managed to achieve a distance from his European predecessors that more easily allowed the show to be palatable as a kind of “American opera.”⁴⁴⁶ Recent studies have acknowledged the operatic elements of *West Side Story* while concluding that it transcends generic confines.⁴⁴⁷ The collaborative process through which the show emerged would speak in favor of designating it as a musical.⁴⁴⁸ And yet sophisticated symphonic numbers and the central role of the orchestra in telling the story remain stumbling blocks to placing *West Side Story* exclusively within that tradition. Jaensch

⁴⁴² “Excerpts from a *West Side Story* Log” in *Findings*, 144.

⁴⁴³ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 264.

⁴⁴⁴ In a similar observation, the critic Kenneth Tynan called the score “as smooth and savage as a cobra; it sounds as if Puccini and Stravinsky had gone on a roller-coaster ride into the precincts of modern jazz.” (in Simeone, *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 129)

⁴⁴⁵ Grosch considers the recording an attempt to retrospectively cast the work as a national opera („Oper als Strategie der kompositorischen Selbstinszenierung und Wertbegriff...” in Döhl and Herzfeld., eds. “*In Search of the ‘Great American Opera’*” *Tendenzen des amerikanischen Musiktheaters*, 107).

⁴⁴⁶ As Downes proclaimed in his review of Bernstein’s musical *Wonderful Town*, four years before the premiere of *West Side Story*, “...we are coming to believe that when the American opera created by a composer of the stature of the Wagners and Verdis of yore does materialize, it will owe much more to the robust spirit and the raciness of our popular theatre than to the efforts of our prideful emulators, in the upper esthetic brackets, of the tonal art of Bartók, Hindemith and Stravinsky” (“Wonderful Time. Bernstein’s Musical is Brilliant Achievement” in *New York Times*, May 10, 1953).

⁴⁴⁷ See Wells, *West Side Story. Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical*, 58 and 220. Also see Smith, 168; Simeone, *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 84; Swain, 217; and Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 275.

⁴⁴⁸ Shawn argues that despite “vocal sections of operatic complexity and substance, most notably the ‘Tonight’ ensemble,” *West Side Story* remains a musical both because of its balance between spoken text and music and because of the process of creation” (*Leonard Bernstein. An American Musician*, 151). Also see Grosch, “West Side Story” in Eichhorn, Andreas, ed. *Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*. (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2017), 315 and Grosch, „Oper als Strategie der kompositorischen Selbstinszenierung und Wertbegriff...” in Döhl and Herzfeld., eds. “*In Search of the ‘Great American Opera’*” *Tendenzen des amerikanischen Musiktheaters*, 107.

credits Bernstein for landing upon his “own new style in that he combined the arias, duets and ensemble technique of traditional opera with the form schema of popular song.”⁴⁴⁹ While the work is more often considered a culmination of the integrated musical, Grosch argues that *West Side Story* embodies a Brechtian separation of the elements (“Trennung der Elemente”).⁴⁵⁰ Wells has similarly placed *West Side Story* in a tradition of “intentionally antiorganicist works” that have their lineage in *Die Dreigroschenoper*.⁴⁵¹

As with *Candide*, it is useful to understand *West Side Story*'s identity through the notion of mixed genre (*Zwischengattung*). Weill, it is worth recalling, was the first to use term the “Broadway Opera.”⁴⁵² As Kowalke has noted, the concept is in itself an oxymoron, an attempt to reconcile the lofty ideals of a bygone tradition with the realities of commercial theater.⁴⁵³ Weill did not consider opera an obsolete art form but one in need of renewal or reform for the current time and place. *Street Scene* tells a “tragic story in musical-comedy terms” but leaves the fissures between opera and American musical theater bare, an “unresolved tension” which Hinton considers a form of dramaturgical counterpoint.⁴⁵⁴

While *West Side Story* manages to smooth over and to some extent neutralize operatic content, it still thrives on this formal tension between tragic content and

⁴⁴⁹ Jaensch, 167.

⁴⁵⁰ Compare, for example Martin Charmin's liner notes to the Original Broadway Cast Recording, 10 (Sony Music. 01-060724-10) with Grosch, “West Side Story” in Eichhorn, Andreas, ed. *Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*, 296.

⁴⁵¹ The connection to Weill is mentioned in a footnote as she argues: “it is not the organicism of *West Side Story* that places it among the important musicals of the era, but those aspects of it that diverge from a homogeneous, organic, and singular artwork” (*West Side Story. Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical*, 59 and 93).

⁴⁵² Stempel, *Showtime*, 372.

⁴⁵³ “Oscar Hammerstein defined opera as ‘that form of theater that loses money.’ In that light the term Broadway Opera might considered something of an oxymoron, a juxtaposition of a profit-driven commercialized form of musical theater with one almost certain to lose its investors’ money” (Lecture, “Opera on Broadway,” June 21, 2018, St. Louis, Missouri. Reprinted with the consent of the author).

⁴⁵⁴ *Stages of Reform*, 371-87.

entertainment.⁴⁵⁵ Bernstein achieved a structural unity unprecedented in his stage works.⁴⁵⁶ He cited the “Maria” motive (a rising tritone from D to G-sharp that resolves to an A) as the “kernel” of the entire score⁴⁵⁷ or “sort of a leitmotif.”⁴⁵⁸ That the score creates organic unity through the use of motives, both melodic and rhythmic, has invited comparisons with the scores of Beethoven and Wagner, to whom Bernstein may directly allude. Wells has further identified intertextual references to Berlioz, Stravinsky, Chopin, Gershwin and Diamond, going as far as to call *West Side Story* the “first postmodern musical.”⁴⁵⁹

The most famous allusion, however, is to Blitzstein’s *Regina*, a work which Bernstein actively championed, pushing for performances at La Scala in 1955.⁴⁶⁰ He had written a preview piece for the *New York Times* upon its 1949 premiere, proclaiming an operatic tradition that had emerged from a “natural musical theatre – one which is unique in the world, and wholly an outgrowth of our culture.”⁴⁶¹ That Bernstein did not acknowledge Weill’s contribution to what he calls “the Broadway equivalent of what was once known as opera” may stem from his theory of a “wholly” American tradition to which Weill, as a foreign-born émigré, only partly belonged. Meanwhile,

⁴⁵⁵ „Aus der Spannung zwischen tragischem Inhalt auf der einen und der durch das theatralische Unterhaltungsgenre geprägten Form auf der anderen Seite erwächst das Experimentelle und Neuartige der Show, die Etabliertes nicht verwirft, sondern in neue Zusammenhänge stellt, ihm neuartige Funktionen zuweist, es in andere Erzählstrukturen einbaut.“ (Grosch, “West Side Story,” in Eichhorn, ed. *Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*, 297).

⁴⁵⁶ Smith writes that Bernstein “... connected numbers together symphonically through the manipulation of the tritone-fifth motive. In an expansion of the technique since *Candide*, and with increased economy of means, this motif, representing the animosity of the two gangs, permeates the score to such a degree that it was only absent from three songs – numbers that relate to hopeful moments away from the violence.” (*There’s a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein*, 168)

⁴⁵⁷ “...the three notes of ‘Maria’ pervade the whole piece – inverted, done backward. I didn’t do this on purpose. It seemed to come out in ‘Cool’ and as the gang whistle. The same three notes.” (Simeone, *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 81, via an interview of Bernstein with Mel Gussow.)

⁴⁵⁸ See Jaensch, *Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 95. Grosch calls the compositional technique a “hidden critique” of the genre of the musical. (*Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*, 312).

⁴⁵⁹ Wells, *West Side Story. Cultural Perspectives on an American Musical*, Chapter 3. Also see Shawn, *Leonard Bernstein. An American Musician*, 150-1; Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 261-66; and Simeone, *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 83 and 102.

⁴⁶⁰ Simeone, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, 330-2.

⁴⁶¹ “Prelude to a Blitzstein Musical Adaptation” in *The New York Times*, Oct.30, 1949. Also see Chapter 3, 82.

Bernstein was heard backstage by Weill's trusted assistant and piano coach, Lys Symonette, muttering "This isn't worth *drei Groschen!*" after a performance of *Street Scene* in 1947.⁴⁶² The conductor John Mauceri also reports that, following a matinee performance which he himself led in 1977, Bernstein said over dinner, "I am not convinced."⁴⁶³

It makes sense that Bernstein, having scoffed at the work, did not pay homage to Weill by quoting any of its melodies. Such a gesture would make apparent the stage work's debt to Weill's formal innovations. An intertextual analysis of *West Side Story* with *Street Scene* evinces, however, structural, harmonic and motivic parallels in the music for Tony and Maria. While Bernstein has been credited with creating a musical structure that allowed for tragedy on the Broadway stage,⁴⁶⁴ Weill had already explored a similar formula. There was no such precedent on Broadway in his time. "The nature of my experiment," as Weill wrote to the critic Olin Downes approximately two weeks after the premiere of *Lost in the Stars*, was

to do a 'musical tragedy' for the American theater...and the real success of the piece to me is the fact that the audience did accept it without hesitation, that they accepted a lot of very serious, tragic, quite un-Broadway-ish music of operatic dimensions, together with some songs written in a more familiar style. Personally I don't feel that this represents a compromise.⁴⁶⁵

On Dec.9, Downes responded: "This work, and the 'Street Scene,' will be among the most significant steps which have so far been taken both to modernize and to popularise the operatic principle, and say something worthwhile in the artistic sense"⁴⁶⁶ (two years

⁴⁶² Symonette in interview with Kowalke, 3 April 1991, in "The Threepenny Opera: The Score Adapted," in *Die Dreigroschenoper. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score*. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1996), 12.

The remark echoes Berg, who in 1928 admitted that "the likes of us cannot make up our minds in favor of a 'Threepenny Opera' or a 'Ten-Thousand-Dollar Symphony'" (*Stages of Reform*, 472).

⁴⁶³ Interview with the author of 30 January, 2020.

⁴⁶⁴ Swain calls tragedy "the most elusive dramatic expression for the Broadway tradition" (*The Broadway Musical. A Critical and Musical Survey*, 205 and 218). Also see Smith, 145.

⁴⁶⁵ Weill, Kurt. Letter to Olin Downes, Nov.14, 1949. Photocopy from Olin Downes papers, University of Georgia at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.

⁴⁶⁶ Photocopy from Olin Downes papers, University of Georgia at Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York.

previously, he had announced *Street Scene* as “the most important step toward significantly American opera” that he had “yet encountered”).⁴⁶⁷

The score weaves together European operatic convention and musical theater style while remaining thematically unified on more than one level: through its double-harmonic language bridging the gap between classical modernism and American popular idioms; through allusions to passages both within and outside the work; through recurring motifs evoking the scores of Wagner, Verdi and Bizet.⁴⁶⁸ The irony of earlier works more often than not cedes to an earnest endeavour, that of creating an American tragedy for the Broadway stage, and Weill’s pursuit becomes a meta-dramatic thread in the score.⁴⁶⁹ Sam, in particular, with his musical idiom evoking late Romanticism, emerges as a possible personification of the composer: lonely and excluded from the tradition of which he is rightfully a part.⁴⁷⁰

Street Scenes

The instrumental introductions to *Street Scene* and *West Side Story* meld a highly chromatic harmonic language with distinctly jazzy or bluesy material. If the role of the tritone in setting the mood in Bernstein’s Prologue and establishing harmonic tensions that will permeate the entire work has been given consideration attention by Gottlieb, Simeone, Swain and others,⁴⁷¹ the same interval takes on a prominent role in

⁴⁶⁷ Downes, “Opera on Broadway. Kurt Weill Takes Forward Step in Setting Idiomatic American to Music” in *New York Times*, Jan.26, 1947.

⁴⁶⁸ Kowalke has drawn attention to the central role of both inter- and intra-textual allusions in the formal design which “invite associations with specific works, musical idioms or stylistic conventions external to *Street Scene* and thereby force the audience to pull back from the proscenium into a larger world” (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 13).

For more on the use of leitmotifs in the score, see Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 366-7.

⁴⁶⁹ *Stages of Reform*, 379-381.

⁴⁷⁰ Kowalke notes the “palpable autobiographical resonance” of “Sam, the shy Jewish intellectual” for both Rice and Weill. Quoting Adorno’s *Philosophie der Musik*, he also draws a parallel between Sam’s loneliness and the “expressionist” who “reveals loneliness as universal.” (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 11).

⁴⁷¹ “...by beginning with the tritone so brazenly, Bernstein’s careful motivic development is pre-empted...the Prologue establishes not only the significant melodic and rhythmic elements for the play, but also significant harmonic procedures and pitches, C, A and F-sharp, which will unify the musical numbers in a way that no other Broadway composer has attempted” (Swain, 370 and 217). Simeone states that the tritone was “a crucial unifying feature of the musical language of *West Side Story*” and “came to represent irresolvable conflict” (*Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 80). Block notes that only the

the Introduction and Opening Ensemble to *Street Scene*. A double-set of tritones in the first bar foreshadow the impending tragedy, right on the streets of New York (example 1A). Clashes of semi-tone intervals go on to conjure the unstable, frenetic urban setting, with a falling appoggiatura figure in the violins (B-sharp and C-sharp, in measure 11) that is passed on to the second clarinet and oboe.

Bernstein's music opens with C-major and A-major chords⁴⁷² that are offset by semi-tone clashes in the electric guitar. By the eighth measure, an A-flat in the bass creates a tritone with D-natural while the semi-tones persist (example 1B). With the entrance of a solo vibraphone, marked "with a jazz feel," the melody descends from A to D-sharp. When a Shark trips a Jet, the drama escalates with an upward sliding tritone in the electric guitar, from B-flat to E-natural, doubled by the bassoon and flute. In contrast to Weill, who exploits continuous chromatic movement, Bernstein guides the listener through the Prologue in almost Leitmotivic fashion through recurring tritone and semitone intervals, and the overlaying thereof, which persists into the "Jet Song."

The thirds motive that enters for the clarinets at Figure 21 in Bernstein's Prologue brings a dramatic change of mood not unlike the violins evoking a purely musical theater setting while semi-tone clashes persist in the piano at Figure A of Weill's Introduction and Opening Ensemble for *Street Scene*. Purely tonal material is a vehicle for irony in Weill: When Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Fiorentino first sing in swinging thirds ("Ain't it awful the heat, ain't it awful"), in a possible parody of "Summertime" in *Porgy and Bess*,⁴⁷³ Weill thins out the chromaticism. The parody does not last long, however. Tritones and semitones – and the combination thereof – continue to create tension in the bass line at key moments such as when Mrs. Olsen describes her teething

characters who represent the triumph of love over hate, Tony and Maria, "can unambiguously and convincingly resolve the tritone tension embodied in the gang's signature motive" (*Enchanted Evenings*, 269). Also see Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 274; Gottlieb, 26; Shawn, 152; and Smith, 151,162 and 168.

⁴⁷² Wells traces this "double-tonic complex" back to Wagner's *Tristan* prelude, 73-5.

⁴⁷³ Hirsch, 28.

baby or exclaims that she is “a sweatin’ through and through.” The dissonances subtly alert the listener that although this is a casual exchange between neighbors outside their apartment building, the sweltering summer harbors existential danger.

In *West Side Story*, the tritone is also a sign of impending violence, an indication that the love story will not end happily ever after. The juxtaposition of C and F-sharp is a key interval, first entering in the piano and low strings when the Jets snap their fingers in the Prologue and undercutting what would otherwise be a rosy C-major final chord in the Finale (Examples 2A and 2B). The same tritone emerges at significant moments in *Street Scene*, permeating the “Ice Cream Sextet” as motors of darkly ironic emphasis (Examples 3A and 3B) and creating non-ironic emphasis to the tragedy of Sam and Rose in their final encounter, as will be analysed below. The two notes also crop up in the bass in the final three measures of the syrupy “Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow,” with F-sharp creating an enharmonic hinge into Sam’s E-flat major Arioso, “Lonely House.”

Solo Romance

In both *Street Scene* and *West Side Story*, the male protagonist is assigned the most prominent solo number, in a style that neatly bridges opera and musical theater. Weill considered “Lonely House” a kind of theme song of the opera.⁴⁷⁴ In a stage work in which alienation from the urban environment is a constant undercurrent, he gives clear expression to this sentiment (“Funny you can be so lonely with all these folks around”).

Over a bluesy, ostinato bass in the strings, uneasy semitones in the clarinet, celeste and harp alternate with a wistful violin figure. Sam enters in a restrained, recitative-like style before breaking out into a sweeping melody (“Lonely house, lonely

⁴⁷⁴ Weill wrote to Langston Hughes that the song is about the building (“the house”) where Sam feels trapped, “the house being a prison for the spirit etc. It could almost become a theme song for the show. It should be passionate and very moving, but as personal as we can make it, that means: not abstract!” (via Hirsch, 269).

me!”). Hinton has drawn attention to the climax of the Arioso, when Sam declares that the night “is not romantic” in a cadenza-like style marked “free.”⁴⁷⁵ As his melody rises up to A-flat, the wistful figure from the opening measures re-emerges in the woodwinds, the worlds of opera and musical theater chafing against each other self-consciously. Perhaps like Weill himself, Sam tries to but cannot distance himself from the world of late nineteenth-century opera.

In a setting which rubbed the choreographer Jerome Robbins the wrong way,⁴⁷⁶ “Maria” features the protagonist Tony standing alone onstage. He is, however, more extroverted than Weill’s protagonist.⁴⁷⁷ Consolation lies only in possessing Maria, and he wants the whole world to know how he feels. While Sam’s Arioso is labeled “Moderato assai,” Bernstein turns up the heat with “Moderato con anima.” Tony is not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve: He repeats the name “Maria” over twenty times. Triplet figures, first ascending, then descending, underscore the urgency of his emotion (see Table 1).

Despite an effusiveness that places the number in the tradition of American popular song, it maintains a proximity to operatic convention.⁴⁷⁸ After a recitative passage in B-major marked “slowly and freely,”⁴⁷⁹ the main aria enters in E-flat major, with an ostinato, rumba-style bass that persists for all but the last seven bars of the number. The rising sixth in the melody at climatic utterances of “Maria” creates a

⁴⁷⁵ Hinton calls the number “at once song and aria, a soulful blues that crosses over into the sound world of late-nineteenth century opera.” He also notes the irony that this is one of the opera’s “most romantic moments” as Sam pities himself (*Stages of Reform*, 383-4).

⁴⁷⁶ Sondheim recalls that Robbins had a negative reaction to a “static song with no one else in the scene” (*Finishing the Hat*, 29).

⁴⁷⁷ In a slight contrast, Grosch notes an evolution within the number from an introverted atmosphere into an erotically charged *Habanera* (in Eichhorn, *Leonard Bernstein und seine Zeit*, 308-9).

⁴⁷⁸ “Auch wenn die Nummer sich formal stark an den Popular Song anlehnt, fallen doch auch arienhafte Züge auf: so vor allem der extreme Umfang der Melodiestimme und die über dem Orchesterpart stehende ‘Kadenz’”(Jaensch, 81 and 83).

⁴⁷⁹ This recalls the cadenza marked “free” in “Lonely House.” Someone calls it “one of the very few moments of recitative-like music in the show” (*Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 98).

possible assimilative allusion⁴⁸⁰ to Tamino's aria, "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön," also in E-flat major, in which he swoons over Pamina's portrait. The rise from B-flat to G at figure 34 reveals that, like Tamino, Tony is consumed by a sentiment of eternal love (Examples 4A and 4B). The figure may, by extension, draw a line from *West Side Story* to *Die Zauberflöte*, which Bernstein invoked as model in 1956 ("After all, the *Magic Flute* is a Singspiel; only it's by Mozart. We are in the same position; all we need is for our Mozart to come along").⁴⁸¹

To be sure, tritones also occupy a conspicuous place in the melodic line, for example with a rise from E-flat to A-natural on Maria's name.⁴⁸² Unlike in Sam's solo number, there is no dark irony or tinges of alienation that might link him to late Romanticism. His melody, in place of bluesy ambivalence, follows a predominantly whole-tone scheme, although the alternation between A-natural and A-flat starting in measure nine creates a tension between major and minor modes. And while the orchestra in "Lonely House" contradicts Sam toward the end of the Arioso with a wistful violin figure and bluesy semitones, here the orchestra can only be swept up in Tony's world, echoing the second two notes of the original "Maria" motive (A-natural to B-flat) before ending on an E-flat chord with added sixth, recalling the final measure of "Lonely House" but in a spirit of pure optimism (Examples 5A and 5B. "Lonely House" ends on an E-flat chord with an added second and added sixth. The No.18 Duet of Rose and Sam also ends on an E-flat chord with an added sixth).

That Bernstein alludes directly to Blitzstein's *Regina* in the melody of "Maria" may be a distraction from the essential impulses he received from Weill. The words

⁴⁸⁰ See Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion. Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music*, 16 or p.20 of this study.

⁴⁸¹ "American Musical Comedy," in Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 152-179.

⁴⁸² Simeone notes that "the melody is full of sharpened fourths and tritone intervals, but instead of suggesting conflict and violence, as they have up to now, these have become an expression of yearning, an ardent outpouring of a love between members of conflicting groups" (*Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 98).

“And suddenly that name” directly quote measures four to six from the introduction to the dinner party scene in the first act of *Regina*, a passage which is also in E-flat major.⁴⁸³ By placing a fragment of Blitzstein’s melody in the foreground, Bernstein openly acknowledges Blitzstein’s impact and establishes *West Side Story* as another American tragedy by an American composer (Examples 6A and 6B). But he also distracts from *West Side*’s kinship to *Street Scene* and, by extension, the European operatic tradition which Weill had transparently integrated into his Broadway score. Michael L. Klein has called this phenomenon “a *tessera* of a *tessera* .”⁴⁸⁴

Duets

Weill’s *Street Scene*, meanwhile, deploys intertextual allusion to specific dramaturgical effect. Kowalke has demonstrated that cross-references to Puccini create a subtext for understanding the romance of Sam and Rose: Like Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, the two characters occupy potentially incompatible worlds. The duet “Remember that I care” specifically alludes to the moment when the title character fills the house with flowers in anticipation of Pinkerton’s arrival from America, thereby informing the listener that the attraction of Sam and Rose is hopeless.⁴⁸⁵ On another level of musical commentary, her idiom – particularly in the solo number “What good would the moon be” – is less operatic than that of Sam despite allusions to *Butterfly* that repeatedly enter in the accompaniment.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Shawn writes that “the continuation of the melody after the initial three-note cell comes so close to the orchestral introduction to the dinner party scene in Blitzstein’s *Regina*, completed in 1948, that one can assume it is directly influenced by it” (*Leonard Bernstein. An American Musician*, 144). Also see Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 251-2.

⁴⁸⁴ In his analysis of Lutoslawski’s Study No.1 for piano, he concludes that as the composer breaks from a patent allusion to a Chopin Etude to introduce a melody that “has the unmistakable imprint of Bartók. . .we are meant to notice the reference to Chopin so that we might miss the allusion to Bartók” (*Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 5-7).

⁴⁸⁵ “The cultural chasm between first-generation Russian-Jewish and Irish-Catholic immigrants living within the same apartment building seems even more forbidding than that separating Puccini’s couple: the allusion tells us that Sam and Rose’s relationship is doomed, before it has a chance to blossom” (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 17-18).

⁴⁸⁶ In the original production, the role of Rose was the only to be cast with a soprano who did not have an operatic background, while the tenor playing Sam had been heard at the Metropolitan Opera in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Hirsch, 262).

Sam's idiom in "Remember that I care" is meanwhile distinguished by sobbing two-note figures in the accompaniment, rising triplets in the vocal line and Wagnerian chromatic harmonies.⁴⁸⁷ Toward the end of the opera, in a desperate plea to keep Rose from fleeing, the orchestra introduces a full-blown *Tristan* allusion (example 9A). The association of Rose with *Madama Butterfly* and Sam with the Wagnerian tale of star-crossed lovers makes clear the characters' respective stances: While she has a hunch that their backgrounds will stand in the way of their dreams (and is warned to that effect by Sam's sister, Shirley, in Act Two), he believes that they should consummate their affection for one another, even if it means losing touch with reality and alienating their families.

That they are ultimately destined to go separate ways is further revealed in the tonal scheme of their duets. In "Remember that I care" Rose's flowery, pentatonic-colored C-major idiom interrupts Sam after he has reflected on the pain of human existence in the key of E-flat major. When they dream of fleeing their New York tenement in No.18 Duet and Scene "We'll go away together," Rose's music gravitates toward the minor mode, even when her words are optimistic, while that of Sam repeatedly pulls the music toward A-flat (the home key) or E-flat major (the key of romance).

Sam's tessitura is higher than that of Rose, and only he is capable of sustaining idealist feelings. After Rose opens the number in a-flat minor, the accompaniment modulates to B-flat major for Sam's entrance about two people who "grow wings and say...Come away, love, come away!" He rises up to an F that is sustained for over three measures, at which point the chirping woodwind figures symbolizing birds "who spread their wings and fly" are passed to the strings for the first time.

⁴⁸⁷ Kowalke writes that Sam's entrance "wrenches the musical idiom out of melodrama and onto a highly charted operatic plane, accompanied by full orchestra and characterized by the greatest density of chromaticism, dissonance, and asymmetries in Act 1" (*Öffentlichkeit als Stil*, 16).

It is he who introduces the refrain “with warm and tender expression” in the home key. Rose joins optimistically, but a chromatically descending bass line from D to B-flat under the words “we’ll leave behind our yesterdays” pulls the music away from Sam’s goal, leaving him no choice but to reflect philosophically in c-minor, the parallel minor of the key of romance (“Life is a sky-tall mountain/Where clouds play hide and seek,” [example 7](#)). Following an ardent cadenza that again lands on a sustained F, underscored by a chromatic figure in the trumpet, he finds his way back to the home key. Rose again brings the music back to c-minor when they join for one line (“We’ll go away together”), but this does not prevent Sam from breaking out into sweeping lyricism with a cadenza-like passage that climaxes in E-flat major and ushers in an orchestral statement of the full refrain. Rose, however, is unable to join, breaking out into dialogue over the orchestra as the clarinet quotes Sam’s words “We’ll build a house to shelter us beneath a happier sky.”

When she does sing again, the music has modulated back to c-minor. Sam manages to end the number with a refrain in the key of romance that begins with a rising sixth from E-flat to C (“When we go”). The orchestra ends the number on a jazzy, brassy E-flat chord with added second and sixth, but the strings will join and continue to gently sing the refrain in A-flat major as Sam and Rose continue in spoken dialogue. After Rose’s aggressive suitor Easter enters, however, tritones underlie the orchestra’s melody (A and E-flat, then F-sharp and C). And when Rose introduces the two men, the first violins stop singing “We’ll go away together,” instead ceding to a mourning solo violin that foreshadows her crucial words “Loving and belonging/they’re not the same” in her final exchange with Sam, “Don’t forget the Lilac Bush.”

This finale begins with Sam exclaiming Rose’s name on C and then F-sharp as the chirping bird figures from the No.18 duet return briefly in the woodwinds ([example 8](#)). He addresses her in a chromatic recitative line that foreshadows an impending

allusion to Wagner's *Tristan*, landing hopefully on A-flat while an A-natural in the double-bass, harp and bassoon offsets his ardor. Rose's music proceeds to sink chromatically into f-minor. When she does succumb to Sam's upward sweeping lyricism ("I never dreamed/it would be this way"), lingering on F for a full measure, a b minor chord with an added sixth in the bass ushers in climbing *Butterfly* chords.

Sam's desperation is indicated by a highly chromatic idiom, his insistence on the home key again offset by A natural in the bass when he declares, "I'll go where you go." His full avowal of love takes place in Rose's forlorn key of f minor, with the trumpet figure of "We'll go away together" returning to underscore his alienation. Rose can only join briefly in his sobbing idiom ("Oh if it could be!"), landing on an e-flat minor chord with an added second and sixth. C creates a tritone with G-flat (in the cello, second violin and trombones) before ushering in foreboding, chromatic chords across the orchestra.

A new courageous idiom enters for Rose with percussive chords that alternate between C-major (the key of dreams) undercut by B-natural and F-sharp and e minor overlaid with D-flat major. Tellingly, her first utterance of "alone" is set to harmonic accompaniment including the tritone of C and F-sharp. When she sings the word a second time, the music races back to Sam's desperate idiom: "No!" he exclaims on the high F that once represented the exaltation of love. "Not alone!" On the second syllable of the word "together," a full *Tristan* allusion emerges, rising chromatically from G to C and then continuing to rise upward until the orchestra stammers the first two notes of Sam's E-flat major refrain "We'll go away together" from the No.18 duet (example 9A).

Sam, however, can no longer join in his own song. As the full melody emerges in the solo violin, he admonishes Rose in counterpoint, "there's no hope for us unless we love each other." Rose admits that love is all she wants in the world but seems to

know that a romance with Sam would be doomed. “Loving and belonging,” she sings. “They’re not the same.” The word “belonging,” features an F-sharp that offsets the double-tonic chord of C major and the parallel a minor. With the full backing of orchestra, she then adopts the Grand Opera idiom of her parents and reminds Sam of love’s dangers: “Look at my father,/my poor mother,/If she had belonged to herself....”⁴⁸⁸ After Sam responds briefly in his chromatic idiom, she breaks out into dialogue over the orchestra’s nostalgic reminiscences of the C-major refrain from “Remember that I care” (example 9B).

When Rose returns to song, she reminds Sam that hope is still on the horizon for both of them (“don’t forget the lilac bush”) while the orchestra’s pentatonic arpeggiated *Butterfly* chords indicate the harsh reality. Sam again cannot join the refrain when Rose sings, “Remember that I care,” her final F landing in the parallel minor of the home key, an f-minor chord with an added sixth in the bass. After she packs her suitcase, she turns back and kisses Sam briefly while the bass clarinet quotes, transposed down a third, his line about “staying here,/in this slum never seeing you.” A tritone of C and G-flat in the bass indicates the gravity of the situation. The full orchestra will sing Sam’s lines after he breaks away and runs into the house, ending on a half-diminished chord that juxtaposes the same tritone, C and F-sharp.

Maria and Tony also join for three duets in *West Side Story*. They do not occupy separate musical worlds to the same extent as Rose and Sam, although dance rhythms indicate their respective cultural backgrounds. Like Rose, Maria also is prone to push the music away from the home key or break out into dialogue. In the “Balcony Scene,” she is the first to sing, yet a chromatically descending bass line in the cellos from D to

⁴⁸⁸ Edward D. Latham considers the music of Sam and Rose to represent “the best example of the stylistic synthesis Weill sought to achieve in *Street Scene*,” while Mr. and Mrs. Maurrant reside in the idiom of “pure grand opera” (*Tonality as Drama. Closure and Interruption in Four Twentieth-Century American Operas*. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2008, 148).

B-natural brings instability to what would otherwise be an effusively optimistic expression of love on the line, “In my eyes, in my words, in everything I do” (example 10A). The moment alludes to the Duet and Scene “We’ll go away together” when Rose sings “we’ll leave behind our yesterdays” over a chromatically descending bass line from D to B-flat, pulling the music away from Sam’s goal (see example 7). Here, A-flat major is also the home key, and it is Tony who keeps pushing the music in this direction (see Table 2).

He first sings in c minor but will bring the music into E-flat major, the key of romance, in which Tony had swooned over Maria’s name. At this point, in the film score, they kiss (example 10B). Tonal stability does not last long, however. The music modulates to c minor, tonic chords overlaid with d minor so that the music can move back to Maria’s initial key of B-flat major for the refrain, “Tonight.” At this point, the accompaniment shifts between a tonic chord with an added second and g-minor with added sixth. The foxtrot rhythm may indicate Tony’s power over her (by contrast, as Smith has observed, the rumba in “Maria” indicates that he is consumed by her world).⁴⁸⁹

They sing in unison in the bright key of A major until a composite chord of the tonic and the parallel f-sharp minor brings the music back to the home key. But the stability is short-lived: Tony sings one verse of the refrain, and the music turns to a-flat minor. While the orchestra continues to sing the “Tonight” refrain, in A-flat major, Maria is reduced to spoken dialogue: “I cannot stay. Go quickly.” Like Rose, she cannot indefinitely join in her the male protagonist’s optimism.

When Maria and Tony do sing again together, A-flat major is offset by composites joining it with B-flat and D-flat major until the home key eventually wins out. The text indicates, however, that only in their dreams can they be together (“Sleep

⁴⁸⁹ See Smith, 153-160, for more insight into the implications of the rhythms in *West Side Story*.

well and when you dream,/dream of me/tonight"). The number ends with two intratextual references, in which the bassoon sings "There's a place for us" and provides then the answer, "Somewhere," together with oboe and clarinet: The place where Tony and Maria can be together is not on earth.

They continue to dream unto the end, however. In the quintet "Tonight," the aggressive, double-tonic chords indicating the stand-off of the Sharks and Jets cede, if only briefly, to A-major and C-major (the double-tonic complex, as Wells has noted, of the *Tristan* prelude) for Maria and Tony. The duet "One Hand, One Heart," originally conceived as a love duet for *Candide*,⁴⁹⁰ modulates from D-major to C-major (the key of dreams) for their mock wedding but reaches E-flat major when Tony declares "till death do us part." Tony and Maria mostly sing in unison, beginning in G-flat major and ending in the home key of A-flat major. The refrain features a chorale-like figure in the accompaniment recalling the mock-Lutheran passages in *Die Sieben Todsünden* or the final chorale of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, but is completely free of irony, taking on an earnest, prayerful tone (example 11).

Like Weill in the final exchange of Rose and Sam, Bernstein piles on intratextual allusions in the Finale of *West Side Story*. When Tony dies, the woodwinds sing "Somewhere" while the cellos simultaneously quote "There's a Place for Us." Maria is reduced to dialogue, uttering "Te adoro, Anton" as the orchestra reminisces on the line "I Have a Love." When the orchestra sings "Somewhere" for the last time, the mood hovers between hope and despair: An F-sharp undercuts a C-major chord (example 2B). The film score excises the dissonance in the final measure, although as Block has noted, Bernstein brings a quick fade to the F-sharp in his own 1985 recording of the original score, allowing "a hopeful glimmer of C-major to sound."⁴⁹¹ Although

⁴⁹⁰ Jaensch, 86.

⁴⁹¹ See *Enchanted Evenings*, 270-272.

West Side Story ends tragically, the orchestra implies that there is a place for the lovers, perhaps only in death, perhaps in another lifetime.⁴⁹²

Conclusions

The intertextual relations between *Street Scene* and *West Side Story* reveal that Weill's formal experimentation on Broadway tilled the soil for the "one, real moving American opera that any American can understand."⁴⁹³ Bernstein exploited double-tonalities that are unconventional for the Broadway stage and allowed the orchestra to have the last word. Yet he achieved a streamlining of syntax that makes the music accessible to a wide audience. A Bloomian analysis would reveal this semantic approach as a neutralization or antithetical completion of Weill's ambitions. As Botstein observed, Bernstein "simplified rhythmic and harmonic techniques from the serious music of the mid-century to make them readily appealing." He noted in particular that "*West Side Story*, despite its popularity, is all about shortcuts to melodramatic sentiment."⁴⁹⁴

Street Scene, meanwhile, had set a precedent by introducing realist tragedy from the streets of New York onto the Broadway stage. The juxtaposition of harsh, one might say modernist, dissonance with breezy, popular vernacular is a key part of its formal identity. Within his pursuit to establish a viable tradition of Broadway Opera, Weill also dared to self-consciously maintain continuity with European tradition through the dramaturgically strategic placement of intertextual allusions. Building upon on this unique blend of elements, Bernstein reached the "moment in history" he had predicted in which a "new form" would emerge.⁴⁹⁵ Both opera and musical, serious and popular, *West Side Story* achieved what Weill's Broadway Operas did not: a place not only in the

⁴⁹² This reading is reified by the fact that the C/ f-sharp tritone complex derives from the C-major/A-major double-tonality of the *Tristan* Prelude, as explored by Wells.

⁴⁹³ "Me, Composer - You Jane," in Bernstein, *Findings*, 129.

⁴⁹⁴ "The Tragedy of Leonard Bernstein" in *Harper's*, 40.

⁴⁹⁵ "American Musical Comedy" in Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 179.

American canon but in mainstream culture.⁴⁹⁶ That the stage work may also represent the genre's last success⁴⁹⁷ meanwhile reifies an analysis that Bernstein's formula blocked the road for "forward progress."⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ With 732 performances, *West Side Story* ranks number 18 on the top thirty longest running musicals on Broadway (Block, "The Broadway Canon from *Show Boat* to *West Side Story* and the European Operatic Ideal," 531). It was the 1961 film version that made the score "a household name" in the U.S., however, and brought songs into the "international mainstream"(liner notes to the Original Broadway Cast Recording, Sony Music. 01-060724-10, 9). The soundtrack became the number-one selling album in America for fifty-four weeks (Lafave, 135).

⁴⁹⁷ "Historically, *West Side Story* was the end of the line: the last critically acclaimed and commercially successful example of an extraordinary but marginal development in the tradition of *Porgy and Bess*" (Stempel, *Showtime*, 406).

⁴⁹⁸ According to Straus' "revisionary ratio" neutralization, "musical elements are stripped of their customary function, particularly of their progressional impulse. Forward progress is blocked." (*Remaking the Past. Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, 17).

Chapter 6: *A Pray by Blecht*

Following *West Side Story*, Bernstein would join forces with Sondheim and Robbins for an experimental work that deepens the connection of his music theater aesthetic to Weill. It was Robbins who had the idea of reinventing one of Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, or didactic plays, for performance on Broadway after directing and co-producing (to financial loss) *Mother Courage and Her Children* together with Cheryl Crawford in 1963 (he also nearly saw through a production of *Die Massnahme* [*The Measures Taken*] at the Spoleto Festival in 1967).⁴⁹⁹ He landed upon *The Exception and the Rule* [*Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, as translated by Eric Bentley], a work with an unusual performance history. The play was first performed in the Hebrew language at a Kibbutz in 1938 with music by Nissim Nissimov and subsequently set to music by Paul Dessau a decade later. A 1965 off-Broadway production featured incidental music by Stefan Wolpe.⁵⁰⁰

Sondheim had declined the opportunity to write the book, music and lyrics for *The Measures Taken* on the basis of what he later recalled as “Brechtophobia” but saw more potential in *Exception*. After writing two songs, however, he decided that his “heart wasn’t in them” and suggested Bernstein as a collaborator for both music and lyrics.⁵⁰¹ When Bernstein declined, Robbins invited the lyricist Jerry Leiber.⁵⁰² But he would be replaced by the playwright John Guare, enticing Sondheim to rejoin after he learned of his plans to set the play within a television studio: “The Brecht play would be

⁴⁹⁹ Housez, Lara E. “Becoming Stephen Sondheim: “*Anyone Can Whistle, A Pray by Blecht, Company, and Sunday in the Park with George*” (Diss., University of Rochester, New York, 2013), 123-4. According to Housez, “disputes between Robbins and Eric Bentley over aspects of Bentley’s English translation stopped the production [*Die Massnahme*] from coming to fruition.” Robbins had included Bernstein in his plans as a musical coach to preside over Eisler’s score.

⁵⁰⁰ Housez, 125 and Krabiel, Klaus-Dieter. *Brechts Lehrstücke. Entstehung und Entwicklung eines Spieltyps*. (Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1993), 252.

⁵⁰¹ Sondheim, Stephen. *Look, I Made a Hat. Collected Lyrics (1981-2011), with attendant Comments, Amplicaitons, Dogmas, Harangues, Digressions, Anecdotes and Miscellany*. (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011), 310-11.

⁵⁰² Housez, 134.

chopped up into scenes that would be interrupted by the conflicts among the cast in the studio and thus not be so relentlessly Brechtian,” explains Sondheim.⁵⁰³

The original *Exception* explores the erosion of human values in a capitalist rat race. The oil merchant Karl Langmann hires a Guide and a Coolie, or porter, to help him cross an uninhabited desert and reach the fictional city of Urga. After firing the Guide, he and the Coolie lose their way. When the Coolie offers Langmann (the Merchant) a sip of water, he believes he is about to strike him and fatally shoots him. Langmann claims in trial that he acted in preemptive defense and is acquitted by the court. As the Guide admonishes in the final scene, “Try to do a generous deed/You’ll be the loser./Fear for the man who shows/A friendly nature!”⁵⁰⁴

Robbins re-invented the story as a commentary on tensions between Caucasians and African-Americans, casting the Merchant as not just a ruthless businessman who is above the law but a racist.⁵⁰⁵ Bernstein convinced his collaborators to name the play *A Prayer by Brecht* (“None of us could talk him out of it,” writes Sondheim, “but I assure you we had no intention of keeping it”).⁵⁰⁶ As Robbins described it, the plot would run “on two levels”:

The center of the evening is a musical adaptation of a short Brecht play entitled *The Exception and the Rule*. ...The troupe will be headed by a major white star and a major Negro star who have both donated their services. There is a basic goodness to everyone’s intentions. The second level of the evening takes place in the theatre in New York City ... When you come into the theatre, you will see it transformed by CBS into a television theatre because tonight’s proceedings, this special benefit, will be taped by CBS and shown in all the major cities of the country the night before the actual performance...⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰³ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 310-11.

⁵⁰⁴ Brecht, Bertolt. Manheim, Ralph, translator. “The exception and the rule” in *Measures taken and other Lehrstücke* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). <https://www-1.dramaonlinelibrary-1.com-1008de6xf0301.erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/plays/the-exception-and-the-rule-iid-133287/do-9781408163160-div-20000033>

This translation was previously issued in print (London: Methuen, 1977).

⁵⁰⁵ “Robbins transformed Brecht’s parable of the rich abusing the poor into a story of Whites exploiting Blacks at a time when racial tensions had reached a boiling point in the United States” (Housez, 131).

⁵⁰⁶ *Look, I Made a Hat*, 318.

⁵⁰⁷ NYPL-JRC 94/1 via Housez, 144.

Framed as a show within a television show, *A Pray by Blecht* would in effect have been a *Lehrstück* within a *Lehrstück*: On the first level, adapting Brecht's play becomes a meta-dramatic subject. On the second, thematizing the filming of the play is a commentary on the attempt to reach a mass audience.

Not insignificantly, Weill's American *Lehrstück*, *Down in the Valley*, became the first American television opera – or at least one of the first music theater works to be produced for television – when it was broadcast nationally by NBC [National Broadcasting Company] on January 4, 1950 from the University of Michigan.⁵⁰⁸ There had already been 250 more productions and a second full recording upon Weill's death in April of that year, making the school opera more prominent than any of his Broadway shows during his lifetime.⁵⁰⁹ A collaboration with the playwright Arnold Sungaard, the work was originally planned for radio as a “weekly dramatization of a specific [American] folksong” but subsequently adapted into “musico-dramatic form” for its first performance at Indiana University in 1948.⁵¹⁰

Weill was recognized as a pioneer in the medium of radio through his German-period work.⁵¹¹ *Der Lindberghflug* received its American premiere under Leopold Stokowski in 1930 on NBC and would be mentioned by the composer Davidson Taylor at a conference of the American Musicological Society six years later.⁵¹² Weill had early on recognized the potential of radio to both expand the palette of composers and

⁵⁰⁸ Downes, Olin. “Kurt Weill, Despite Formidable Training, Sought to Reach Wide Audience” in *New York Times*, April 9, 1950 and Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage*, 292. Compare with: <https://www.kwf.org/pages/kw-detailed-chronology-1945-1950.html>

⁵⁰⁹ Kowalke, “Kurt Weill and the Quest for American Opera,” 299 and e-mail with the author of Oct. 29, 2019.

⁵¹⁰ Weill, Kurt. “More Light on ‘Valley’ Kurt Weill Makes ‘Correcting Remarks’ about His Opera's Inception” in *New York Times*, From the Mail Pouch (June 5, 1949).

⁵¹¹ “Seine Rundfunkkompositionen in der Weimarer Republik hatten ihn schließlich zu einem Vorreiter dieses Genres werden lassen, eine Rolle, die auch in den USA nicht im Verborgenen blieb.” (Juchem, Elmar. „Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA“ in Grosch, Nils; Lucchesi, Joachim; Schebera, Jürgen, eds. *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Band 2. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998, 61-2).

⁵¹² Ibid.

reach listeners beyond the “elite” concert hall.⁵¹³ His eloquent essays in the 1920s express an interest in harnessing the medium to reach all levels of society but also exploit it as a “site of instruction.”⁵¹⁴ He believed that radio compositions could constitute a genre in its own right (“ebenbürtige Kunstgattung”) and believed in the possibility of “absolute art for the radio,”⁵¹⁵ a utopic vision that he was able to only partially realize.⁵¹⁶

Grosch considers Weill’s radio compositions, developed parallel to his music theater works, closely connected with the development of his overall “personal style,” particularly with regard to the “aesthetic of mass communication” that he cultivated in the 1920s.⁵¹⁷ His work for the medium in the U.S. meanwhile reveals Weill’s desire to adapt his vision to the demands of American society and find new ways of exploiting “native art” in new formal structures.⁵¹⁸ In 1940, Weill had been commissioned by CBS [Columbia Broadcasting Studios] to write a trilogy, together with his collaborator Maxwell Anderson, for the patriotic series *Pursuit of Happiness*.⁵¹⁹ *The Ballad of Magna Carta*, a parable about the insurgency against King John in 13th-century England that was broadcast live, instills a sense of national pride by celebrating America’s

⁵¹³ See “Der Rundfunk und die Umschichtung des Musiklebens“ in Hinton and Schebera, eds., *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 314. Weill began working as a critic for *Der deutsche Rundfunk* in 1925.

⁵¹⁴ “Unendlich viel ist schon erreicht durch die Möglichkeit, die Kunst die Masse zu tragen, das Vorhandene sich auf breiteste Ebene auswirken zu lassen, dem kleinen Mann wie dem besitzenden nicht nur die großen Schöpfungen der Musik, des Theaters, sondern auch deren meisterlichste Darstellungskräfte ins Haus zu senden“ (“Möglichkeiten absoluter Radiokunst“ in *Ibid*, 267).

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵¹⁶ Grosch, *Die Musik der Neuen Sachlichkeit*, 227. In 1929, he wrote to Universal Edition announcing plans for a performance of the *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, *Berliner Requiem* and *Lindberghflug* “in a new form [lying] between concert and theater...for which I will put together a troupe in Berlin” (Letter to Hans Curjel of 04. June 1929 via *Ibid*, 256).

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, 226. Alongside Weill, Grosch cites the composer Max Butting, the conductor Hermann Scherchen and the radio intendant Hans Flesch as “pioneers” in the genre of original music for radio (*Ibid*, 182).

⁵¹⁸ Weill, Kurt. “More Light on ‘Valley’ Kurt Weill Makes ‘Correcting Remarks’ about His Opera’s Inception” in *New York Times*, From the Mail Pouch (June 5, 1949).

⁵¹⁹ CBS was the network to create the most significant collaboration with the League of Composers on commissioning compositions for radio during 1933-45, which Juchem calls formative years on America’s radio landscape („Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA“ in *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Band 2, 55 and 61).

establishment of independence from British rule and teaches a more general lesson about the virtues of resisting tyranny.⁵²⁰

The musical fixing of a main motive or *Grundgestus* in the opening number, as well as the isolation of different layers of speech, song and instrumental music,⁵²¹ establish *The Ballad of Magna Carta* as a kind of American counterpart to *Der Lindberghflug*.⁵²² The second installment, *Your Navy*, was broadcast on the series *This is War!* in 1942. For reasons that are not entirely known, the full trilogy was not realized.⁵²³ A series entitled *Your Songs America*, as well as three other projects for radio, also never came to fruition.⁵²⁴ Juchem concludes, however, that Weill would have been unlikely to resign himself from radio altogether had he lived beyond 1950 given “the possibility of the medium to reach a large and wide-ranging audience.”⁵²⁵

Weill also harbored ambitions for film which he never realized within his lifetime, predicting the rise of a mixed genre which he called “film-opera”: “it is quite possible that the much-talked-about ‘American opera’ will come out of the most popular American form of entertainment – the motion picture,” he wrote in a 1946 essay.⁵²⁶ Hinton maintains that Weill would have been more likely to find opportunities with another screen musical along the lines of *Where Do We Go from Here?*, – for

⁵²⁰ Juchem considers the King, who according to Anderson’s text had “the practice of pulling a tooth a day to extort money from the wealthy Jews,” a symbol for Hitler (Ibid, 66).

⁵²¹ In his “Notiz zum Berliner Requiem,” Weill mentioned the “musical fixing of a main gesture” (musikalische Festlegung eines Grundgestus) as central to his compositions for radio (“Notiz zum Berliner Requiem” in Hinton and Schebera, eds., *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 409). See Grosch, *Die Musik der Neuen Sachlichkeit*, 234 and Juchem „Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA“ in *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Band 2, 68.

⁵²² The kinship between the two works is noted in liner notes by Josef Heinzelmann (“Kurt Weills Kompositionen fürs Radio) to the CD recording of *Der Lindberghflug/ The Ballad of Magna Carta* (Capriccio 60 012-1, 14) and by Juchem („Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA“ in *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Band 2, 68)

⁵²³ Blitzstein’s *The Killers*, to a text by Ernest Hemingway, was also never realized (Juchem, „Kurt Weill und die Radiokunst in den USA“ in *Emigrierte Komponisten in der Medienlandschaft des Exils 1933-1945*, Band 2, 68).

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 71

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 72.

⁵²⁶ Weill, Kurt, “Music in the Movies” in *Harper’s Bazaar*, vol. 80, no. 9 (September 1946), 257, 398, 400.

which he wrote the score in 1944 as part of the war effort, – rather than a “fully executed American opera.”⁵²⁷ Rather, it was Gian Carlo Menotti who can be seen as following in Weill’s footsteps: His 1951 opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* – commissioned, like *Down in the Valley*, by NBC – became an annual television installment on Christmas eve for over a decade.⁵²⁸

It is against this backdrop that the creators of *A Pray by Blecht* introduced mass media to their *Lehrstück* adaptation. The show would break the meta-dramatic frame through disruptions in the television studio, for example the collapsing of a camera stand.⁵²⁹ Such effects must have been intended as comedy but also a means of making the serious subject matter accessible to a broad audience. Housez considers the dramatic device a Brechtian distancing effect (“Verfremdungseffekt”) but also points to the precedent of the “episodic structure” in Weill’s *Love Life*, followed by Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret*.⁵³⁰

The many levels of distancing in *A Pray by Blecht* may have exceeded the bounds of the work. While the combination of the serious and didactic with the light and entertaining was not contrary to Brecht’s intentions for the genre of *Lehrstück*,⁵³¹ the attempt to augment the humor in *Exception*⁵³² while adding the heated topic of racism may have been one reason for the work’s downfall. The production was originally slated

⁵²⁷ *Stages of Reform*, 358.

⁵²⁸ Archibald, Bruce, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in Grove Music Online (<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900107>), published in print December 1, 1992; published online 2002.

Also see Kirk, 236. She mentions Weill once in her chapter “The Impact of Mass Media” and places *Down in the Valley* in the “college and community opera movement” (Ibid, 245).

⁵²⁹ Housez, 150-1.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ “The enormous importance of theatre in the education of children is based on the insight that the stage provides a space that fuses reality and play or, as Brecht put it, a place where learning and entertainment are not separated” (Mueller, Roswitha, “Learning for a new society: the *Lehrstück*” in Sacks, Glendyr and Thomson, Peter, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, 2nd rev. edn. (Cambridge University Press. Print publication year: 2006; online publication date: March 2007). Online ISBN: 9781139001229, 109).

⁵³² In interview, Robbins called *Exception* the first Brecht work he that the found “very funny”: “I saw it as possessing the potential for a great comedy...a kind of antic vaudeville, that has great pertinence for our time and for this country” (Funke, Lewis. “‘West Side Story’ Collaborators Plan Musical of Brecht Play,” in *New York Times*, April 8, 1968).

to be performed in January of 1969, with sponsorship from the Broadway producer Stuart Ostrow.⁵³³ The *New York Times* later announced performances at the Broadhurst Theater starting on February 18, starring Zero Mostel as the Merchant in an otherwise mostly African-American cast.⁵³⁴

Bernstein planned to complete the score in November and December of 1968 but was delayed by conducting activities with the New York Philharmonic and a trip to Rome to discuss a potential collaboration with Franco Zeffirelli on a musical film about St. Francis of Assisi.⁵³⁵ Sondheim, after writing the lyrics for eight songs, quit the project when it became “tedious and time-consuming and no fun at all.”⁵³⁶ Ostrow then announced, via the *New York Times*, that the show would not be mounted until the fall of 1969. In an attempt to salvage the production, Robbins invited Arthur Laurents (who wrote the book of *West Side Story*) to rework the script, but Laurents concluded that the show would carry an anti-Semitic message through the casting of the “markedly Jewish comic” Mostel and conceded to having no affinity for the original Brecht play.⁵³⁷ Robbins then abandoned Guare and Bernstein in the midst of auditions at the Shubert Theater, and the project was laid to rest.

In 1986, however, Robbins convinced Guare and Bernstein (although not Sondheim) to revisit the material.⁵³⁸ The show was given open rehearsals at the Mitzi Newhouse Theater of Lincoln Center as *The Rage to Urga* in May of 1987, integrating songs from another unfinished Brecht project, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, for which Bernstein wrote 12 songs upon the proposal of Israeli actor Chaim Topol in November of 1969 to transform the play into a musical.⁵³⁹ But the project was once again

⁵³³ Funke, Lewis. “‘West Side Story’ Collaborators Plan Musical of Brecht Play” and Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 318.

⁵³⁴ Zolotow, Sam, “Robbins Musical Engages Mostel,” *New York Times* (Aug.21, 1968).

⁵³⁵ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 379 and Housez, 140.

⁵³⁶ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 318.

⁵³⁷ NYPL-JRC 97/16 (emphasis his) via Housez, 141.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid*, 219.

⁵³⁹ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 387.

abandoned; neither Bernstein nor Robbins may have believed in its viability.⁵⁴⁰ A final initiative came in 1991 from the producer Gregory Mosher, who envisioned a production starring Nathan Lane. According to Housez, Robbins was on board, while “Bernstein was no longer alive to finish the score, and Guare was busy with other work.”⁵⁴¹

A Pray by Blecht instead survives in unfinished manuscripts and unpublished recordings as an artifact of the attempt to keep *Gebrauchsmusik* alive in postwar America.⁵⁴² If Robbins claimed that Brecht was a “fashionable playwright” in the 1960s, not least thanks to Blitzstein’s adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht may have not been incorrect when he said in a 1941 interview that the “revolutionary innovations” of his plays “arose in the soil of a tradition that simply does not exist” in the U.S. Attempts to adapt his plays to Broadway on his own terms failed during exile, either because of translation or dramaturgical issues.⁵⁴³ A collaboration with Weill on the American-period *Schweyk in the Second World War* was in the making in 1943 but foundered because of opposing ambitions: The composer envisioned a potential Broadway success by making the play a musical comedy, while Brecht saw it necessary to emphasize political content.⁵⁴⁴

As if to repeat history, the collaborators on *A Pray by Blecht* had irreconcilable visions for the project. While *West Side Story* thrived off the tension between elements

⁵⁴⁰ Burton writes that Bernstein whispered during the 1987 rehearsals, “It’s not going to work,” while Housez maintains that it was Robbins who dropped out a second time (*Leonard Bernstein*, 490 and “Becoming Stephen Sondheim,” 220).

⁵⁴¹ “Becoming Stephen Sondheim: “*Anyone Can Whistle, A Pray by Blecht, Company, and Sunday in the Park with George*,” 220.

⁵⁴² Bernstein, Leonard, Papers, Boxes 1053-1056. Library of Congress, Music Division, Washington, D.C. and Robbins, Jerome, Papers, Boxes 99-100, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, New York.

⁵⁴³ Lyon, James L. *Bertolt Brecht in America*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 99-201.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 113-18. Eisler would become Brecht’s collaborator, and he and the actress Ruth Berlau would approach Mostel for the title role. Weill also entered discussions about setting Brecht’s *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [*The Good Woman of Setzuan*], with Lenya playing the lede (*Ibid*, 121).

of opera, dance and commercial theater,⁵⁴⁵ *Exception* “mushroomed way out of shape,” in Robbins’s words, and “collapsed under its own weight.”⁵⁴⁶ As Housez documents, Bernstein and Robbins were committed to reinventing Brecht for a contemporary American audience, while Guare and Sondheim were more oriented toward a traditional musical.⁵⁴⁷ The genre of *Lehrstück*, with its didactic aims and inherently political nature,⁵⁴⁸ may have been the least amenable to Broadway’s entertainment- and commercial-based culture.⁵⁴⁹ The show nevertheless carried forward the genre’s tradition as they experimented with dramatic possibilities that served to benefit, even more than its audience, the creators and performers.⁵⁵⁰

Training for the next Generation

Weill considered his “school opera” *Der Jasager* a kind of “training for the composer or a generation of composers” (“Schulung für den Komponisten oder für eine Komponisten-Generation”)⁵⁵¹ but also a milestone in his output: Like *Dreigroschenoper*, the work represented his mission to re-establish an *Urform*, or prototype, for the genre of opera.⁵⁵² He declared *Der Jasager* his most important work shortly after arriving the

⁵⁴⁵ “Why did Lenny have to write an opera, Arthur a play, me a ballet? Why couldn’t we, in aspiration, try to bring our deepest talent together to the commercial theatre in this work? That was the true gesture of the show” (Robbins via Simeone, *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*, 78-9).

⁵⁴⁶ Housez, 142.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 140-1. While she writes that “Bernstein endeavored to compose a ‘serious Broadway musical,’” there is no evidence that Bernstein ever used this words. Rather, Burton writes that “Robbins had persuaded Bernstein” to consider *Exception* “as the basis for a new serious Broadway musical” (*Leonard Bernstein*, 374).

⁵⁴⁸ Hinton, “Lehrstück: an aesthetics of performance” in Gilliam, Bryan, ed. *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 68. Even Weill called *Der Jasager* political (“Durch diese Tendenz des ‘Einverständnisses‘ wirkt das Lehrstück in einem höheren Sinne politisch, selbstverständlich nicht parteipolitisch“ (§Aktuelles Zwiegespräch über die Schuloper zwischen Kurt Weill und Dr. Hans Fischer,“ in *Kurt Weill, Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 451).

⁵⁴⁹ Housez observes that “musicals and *Lehrstücke* occupy opposite ends of a continuum for audience expectation” (“Becoming Stephen Sondheim,” 130).

⁵⁵⁰ Ian Kemp points to Brecht’s indication that “his *Lehrstücke* need no audience” while adding that “performers obviously like to perform and accordingly the *Lehrstücke* in fact need an audience” (“Der Jasager: Weill’s Composition Lesson” in Edler and Kowalke, eds. *A Stranger Here Myself. Kurt Weill-Studien*, 143).

⁵⁵¹ Kemp points to the significance of Weill’s statement in Ibid, 143-157.

⁵⁵² „Gerade in dieser Zeit, wo es sich darum handelt, die Gattung ‘Oper’ auf neue Grundlagen zu stellen und die Grenzen dieser Gattung neu zu bezeichnen, ist es eine wichtige Aufgabe, Urformen dieser

U.S. and would adapt its principles to *Down in the Valley*, which he considered an “American school opera.”⁵⁵³ The 1948 work about a boy (Brack) who is sentenced to the death penalty after shooting his girlfriend’s ruthless suitor integrates native folk songs with sweeping, operatic lyricism while maintaining the ominous ostinato rhythms of Weill’s Weimar years as a dramatic device⁵⁵⁴ (most strikingly, in the first scene, the drums, piano and strings imitate a train chugging along the tracks as the action moves in a filmic cut from the Leader and Chorus, who frame the action, to Brack’s prison cell).

It is telling that Bernstein, in his musical sketches, oriented himself less toward Weill’s American- than his German-period school opera.⁵⁵⁵ In *Der Jasager*, about a sick boy who is thrown into a valley by his schoolmates according to the dictates of “ancient custom,” Brecht and Weill intended to convey the deadly consequences of a community’s blind submission to proscribed rules.⁵⁵⁶ The opera was written as National Socialism broke out but sometimes understood as an affirmation of the need for consent (“*Einverständnis*”) when faced with the will of the group rather than a condemnation of fascism.⁵⁵⁷ Brecht made revisions to *Der Jasager* and, in 1931, wrote the complementary play *Der Neinsager*, in which the boy refuses to comply and instead is carried home. Weill, however, was not interested in supplying music for the sequel (for Drew, he “must have recognized that if *Der Jasager* is studied and performed with true

Gattung herzustellen...” („Über meine Schulooper *Der Jasager*,” in Kurt Weill, *Musik und musikalisches Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 119).

⁵⁵³ Interview in *New York World Telegram* of Dec.21, 1935 via *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 79.

⁵⁵⁴ See *Stages of Reform*, 397-402.

⁵⁵⁵ There is no evidence indicating whether or not Bernstein ever experienced *Der Jasager*, which was first presented stateside in April 1933 at the Grand Street Playhouse in New York.

⁵⁵⁶ Brecht adapted text from the Japanese Noh play *Taniko*, which Elisabeth Hauptmann translated into German (Drew, *Kurt Weill. A Handbook*, 226).

⁵⁵⁷ Brecht’s *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* and *Die Maßnahme* also explored the “*Einverständnis* theme” or “total submission of the individual will to the governing needs of the socialist community.” *Jasager*, however, “was condemned by some Communist intellectuals and applauded by some Roman Catholic organizations,” explains Daniel Albright in *Untwisting the Serpent. Modernism in Music, Literature and Other Arts*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 171. Also see Drew, David. “Weill’s School Opera,” in *The Musical Times* 106, 1965, Nr. 1474. and Humphreys, Paul W. “Expressions of *Einverständnis*: Musical Structure and Affective Content in Kurt Weill’s Score for *Der Jasager*” (Diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1988), 2-3. *Jasager* was outlawed in Germany after Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933.

understanding, the original text requires no ‘corrections’ beyond those which the music itself so eloquently supplies”).⁵⁵⁸

The music’s distance from the text contributes to the sense of ambiguity that is indeed one of the score’s greatest strengths. “Weill has chosen not to sit in judgment of the text or the characters that it portrays,” writes Paul W. Humphreys, “he takes rather a more compassionate stance that has allowed him (and his audience) to perceive both the tragedy and the inevitability of its outcome.”⁵⁵⁹ While the lightly ironic neo-baroque idiom of *Der Jasager*’s No.1 may seem to counteract the seriousness of the topic, Weill’s music serves to lay bare the complexity of the issues. Not only is there much more to learn than *Einverständnis*, but abiding by the rules of the community is a two-pronged virtue: The solidarity that the students show is the glue of both a well-functioning society and a fascist system in which it is sanctioned for the majority to prey upon those who are deemed unworthy. The relationship of text and music creates a dialectic that is entirely in keeping with Brecht’s conception of the *Lehrstück*: “To be in agreement also means: *not* to be in agreement.”⁵⁶⁰ The opera achieves its didactic aims by presenting at times contradictory material which the listener or performer must process and interpret.

Even more so than *Der Jasager*, the moral message of *A Pray by Blecht* can be misconstrued due to an incongruous mix of politics and comedy. The title alone, reversing the “r” and “l” which an Asian native would have difficulty pronouncing, has racist implications despite the creators’ intentions of drawing attention to Coolie’s victimization. In Scene 3, “Coolie’s Dilemma,” whose lyrics are attributed to Leiber,

⁵⁵⁸ Drew, *Kurt Weill. A Handbook*, 229.

Kemp points out that Weill did in fact “write some music for the first two revisions of the text (the one he published with the unchanged title of *Der Jasager* in December 1930).” See “Der Jasager: Weill’s Composition Lesson,” 143.

⁵⁵⁹ Humphreys, Paul W. “Expressions of *Einverständnis*: Musical Structure and Affective Content in Kurt Weill’s Score for *Der Jasager*,” 23.

⁵⁶⁰ “einverstanden sein heißt auch: *nicht* einverstanden sein.“ Steinweg, Reiner, hrsg. *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke. Zeugnisse, Diskussion, Erfahrungen*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976), 62.

these phonetics are exploited further: “Coolie in velly hot water,” declares the porter over ostinato rhythms in the bass.⁵⁶¹

The scene includes the most extensive instrumentation in the score, with electric violin, amplified double bass, xylophone, cymbals, temple blocks, triangle, wood blocks, bass drum, and gong forming what which Bernstein indicates as a “percussion ensemble.”⁵⁶² In a gesture creating empathy with the plight of Coolie but also calling attention to the work’s strange humor, the gong and triangle underscore him on the final syllable of “Master lose race/Coolie lose face/Coolie disgrace!” The score meanwhile musically identifies the Merchant as being of white Anglo-Saxon protestant descent: In the fifth scene of the 1987 version, Bernstein indicates the 2/4 tempo as “Waspish” as the character sings “Selfish! Selfish!”⁵⁶³

Bernstein wrote music for six scenes well as drafts and sketches of dance numbers including a Greek Dance and “Victory Polkas.” In a 1968 interview, he claimed that the music “could prove to be somewhat different from anything I’ve ever done.”⁵⁶⁴ The “Prologue” is a jaunty march that introduces the evening as an adaptation of Brecht’s *Lehrstück* (“A play by Brecht! And you know just what to expect: a drama dealing with the intellect!”). Chromatically descending and ascending fourth intervals create what one could identify as a *Grundgestus* of acrid harmonies.

The pattern recalls the accompaniment of the third tableau (“Drittens”) in *Der Lindberghflug*, while the chorus’ melody follows an upbeat, tonal scheme (examples 1A and 1B). Housez points out that “dissonances, static harmonies, disjunct lines, and

⁵⁶¹ Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress, 1053/5.

Housez explains that these “errors, misspellings, and references paint a picture of the Coolie as a racial minority, which, by today’s standards, would be considered offensive and politically incorrect. In the late 1960s, however, theatergoers ... may have found the markers comical and delighted in recognizing the Coolie’s resemblance to Asian characters in B movies of the 1930s and 1940s. ...” (“Becoming Stephen Sondheim,” 193).

⁵⁶² NYPL-JRC, Box 99. Housez observes that the “unusual” instrumentation “would have established the Coolie’s Eastern origins and evoked an exotic setting” (*Becoming Stephen Sondheim*, 197).

⁵⁶³ NYPL-JRC, Box 99.

⁵⁶⁴ Funke, Lewis, “‘West Side Story’ Collaborators Plan Musical of Brecht Play,” in *New York Times* (April 8, 1968).

repeated notes” were unusual for audiences at the time.”⁵⁶⁵ She attributes the lyrics to Guare after stating that “limited surviving materials for the ‘Prologue’ make it difficult to pinpoint the author of these clumsy, repetitive rhymes.”⁵⁶⁶ Meanwhile, a sheet of notebook paper in the folder for the “Prologue” in Bernstein papers includes lyrics reading: “No disrespect/But that's the way with Brecht/He calls it *Verfremdungseffekt*/Which means appealing to the intellect!”⁵⁶⁷

As such, it remains inconclusive as to who wrote these lyrics.⁵⁶⁸ Bernstein was a Brecht admirer, however, so much so that Sondheim had suggested he contribute both music and lyrics to *Exception* after originally declining to join the creative team.⁵⁶⁹ The text in Bernstein’s sketches include a touch of sarcasm but also reveal a nostalgic attempt to revive a genre that has its roots in pre-war Germany. The folder for the “Prologue” includes drafts in which he set German words such as “die Geschichte” and “Findet das” to a rhythmic motto of half note followed by dotted eighth note. On a 1986 manuscript of the “The Old Story” from *The Race to Urga* – repurposing lyrics from the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, which Bernstein himself translated – he places his own name alongside that of Brecht, overturning “the tyranny of time” as per Bloom’s notion of *apophrades*.⁵⁷⁰

The translation includes expletives to convey but also heighten or modernize the revolutionary content of the text: “When the house of the big man goes down in the dirt,/ A lot of the little people get hurt./ A lot of little people who never shared the big man's luck,/ But sure as shit they'll share it when the big man's fucked.”⁵⁷¹ Bernstein’s

⁵⁶⁵ Housez, 194.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 160.

⁵⁶⁷ Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress, 1054/6.

⁵⁶⁸ We have tried to resolve this issue as fairly as possible based on the available evidence. Guare stated via his agent Patrick Herold that “the words in question are ‘all the Maestro’s’” in an e-mail to the author of Feb.1, 2021. Sondheim has published the lyrics he contributed to *A Prayer by Blecht* in *Look, I Made a Hat*, 312-317.

⁵⁶⁹ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat*, 311.

⁵⁷⁰ *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, 141.

⁵⁷¹ Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress, 1054/5.

melody for the number exploits the interval of the fourth while a triplet motto in the bass creates an ostinato rhythm until slowing down to accented whole notes on a “lot of the little people get hurt.”

In a version of the introduction dating to Jan.6 1987, entitled “Circus Opening,” the German language serves as a distancing effect. “Wir berichten euch sogleich die Geschichte eine Reise,” reads the text with slightly imperfect grammar. „Which means here is a story all about a trip.“⁵⁷² The accompaniment dominated by eighth notes (which Bernstein designates in the top left-hand corner of the second page as a march) cedes to a syncopated rhythm upon the mention of “Lord and Master” while dropping out entirely to emphasize the word “subhuman” at the end of the passage. After 12 measures of marching instrumental accompaniment, a full chorus enters and sings in 6/8 time, “Stop, look, listen and watch ev’ry action/No matter how small or dumb it may be/Watch how one man is treating the other...” Creating another level of distancing, the characters introduce themselves in the first person over an energetic accompaniment of alternating eighth- and sixteenth-notes.

In what seems a didactic warning against the dangers of racism, the Merchant is caught shouting racist slurs (“slant-eyed creeps” and “get off those yellow butts”) before he breaks the frame and addresses the audience “engagingly.”⁵⁷³ As he introduces himself, there is an ironic tension between the accompaniment’s climbing, carefree eight-note motive and the character’s vicious ambition (the same motive returns later in the scene when the Merchant decides to beat the Coolie). The chorus responds with irony: “Go Charlie Langman, you Number One bus’ness man!/Execute your mighty Plan!”

⁵⁷² NYPL-JRC, Box 100.

⁵⁷³ Ibid. This passage is from the scene entitled “Race III,” in a version of the score dating to Jan.12, 1986.

The simple, repetitive musical setting serves to underscore the text in what, on the surface, is a pure homage to Brecht. As with Blitzstein in *The Cradle Will Rock*, however, the music bears the imprint of Weill. The connection is most explicit in sections entitled “Bach Instrumental.” The opening number of *Der Jasager* – which recurs as an interlude between Acts One and Two and to conclude the score after No.10 – exploits a neo-baroque idiom that lay at the heart of Weill’s opera reform.⁵⁷⁴ The Bach vein that comes into full expression with a fugue and chorus in the typhoon and hurricane scenes of *Aufstieg* is simplified in *Der Jasager* as part of the work’s didactic aims. No.1 thrives on parallel motion, while the pentatonic scale adds an “Eastern” flavor⁵⁷⁵ (example 2A). The instrumental opening cedes to a chorus, which sings in canon-like fashion, the male and female voices respectively separated by a fourth interval.

The “Bach instrumental” in Bernstein’s sketches for *Exception* includes a Prelude-like passage, featuring chromatic counterpoint in two voices, that similarly cedes to a chorus (example 2B). He cites the tone as “impassive/unsentimental/neutral,” indicating the desire to create an (emotionally) distanced delivery of the lyrics. The rhythmic figure of eighth notes and sixteenth notes that emerges in the second measure meanwhile recalls the fifth tableau of *Der Lindberghflug* (example 2C).⁵⁷⁶ While Weill alludes here to the c-minor fugue of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, transforming that work’s *Grundgestus* with unpredictable chromaticism, Bernstein adopts free tonality in the soprano line and a dodecaphonic system in the bass.

⁵⁷⁴ The *Urform* embodied a return to classical values in which the “simplification of musical language” was a central virtue. As per the teachings of Busoni, he turned foremost to the models of Bach and Mozart (see *Korrespondenz über Dreigroschenoper* in *Kurt Weill Musik und musikalisches Theater in Gesammelte Schriften*, 73).

⁵⁷⁵ See Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 191 and Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage*, 83.

⁵⁷⁶ Weill also exploited a Bach idiom in the ninth and 14th tableaux. This analysis pertains to the second version of *Der Lindberghflug*, with music entirely by Weill, that premiered in December of 1929.

Conclusions

As a natural pedagogue, Bernstein must have been attracted to the *Lehrstück* as a vehicle for advancing a particular set of socio-political values. And yet allusions to *Der Jasager* and *Der Lindberghflug* reveal that he was not able to purge the precursor of Weill as he sat down to work within the genre. Bernstein's recourse to a neo-classical "Bach" idiom can be seen as a regression from the formal blend he and his collaborators established in *West Side Story*. But if *A Prayer by Blecht* proved overambitious and, in some instances, embarrassingly disjointed, his manuscripts belie an intuitive understanding of the genre's aims. Indications such as "Andante religioso," "sermony" and "Piously" in the number "Weak Men Die," for example, reflect the *Lehrstück's* roots in theological tradition.⁵⁷⁷

While *A Prayer by Blecht* did not prove viable on the American theater scene, Bernstein's grappling with the ideas of Brecht and Weill helped pave the way to one of his most personal works: *The Mass*, which he began in 1969.⁵⁷⁸ The marches of the "Prologue" would be absorbed into the "First Introit" (example 3. Compare with example 1A). Bernstein's ultimate statement about the crisis of faith in the 20th century can be considered a form of *Lehrstück* taking the religious roots of the genre even further.⁵⁷⁹ As such, Weill's vision of "training for composers" was indirectly fulfilled.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ For Hinton, the genre "represents a remarkable example of the secularization of religious thought." See *Stages of Reform, 180-195* and Hinton, "Lehrstück: an aesthetics of performance" in Gilliam, Bryan, ed. *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, 59-73.

⁵⁷⁸ See Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 385-6.

⁵⁷⁹ See Shawn, 220-5 and Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 403-9.

⁵⁸⁰ Housez notes that Bernstein also drew upon *A Prayer by Blecht* in *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, "which shares not only the frame of a play-within-a-play and actors stepping outside of their historical roles to portray themselves as actors in rehearsal, but also biting social commentary on race relations" ("Becoming Stephen Sondheim," 221).

Chapter 7: “The Saga of Lenny”

“Saw *Lady in the Dark* tonight, & loved it...,” Bernstein wrote to Copland in December of 1940. “It is, as you say, slick – over-slick – but I’m no critic, being an analysand(!).”⁵⁸¹ Weill’s “musical play in two acts” adopted an experimental form that was novel for Broadway at the time.⁵⁸² *Lady in the Dark* was also the first musical drama based on psychoanalysis, influencing not just a range of Broadway shows about psychotherapy but, through the Paramount film version, American cinema.⁵⁸³ The score absorbs elements from *Zeitoper*, operetta and musical comedy,⁵⁸⁴ veering with at times filmic cuts between dream sequences and the everyday life of the female protagonist, the magazine editor Liza Elliott, as she struggles to reconcile her professional and private personas in therapy sessions with Dr. Brooks.

Liza’s three dreams are structured by dance rhythms (rhumba for the “Glamour Dream,” bolero for the “Wedding Dream” and march for the “Circus Dream”) that create formal cohesiveness while also commenting ironically on the drama.⁵⁸⁵ In what Bernstein may have perceived as “slick,” Weill also manages to create transitions

⁵⁸¹ Simeone, ed. *The Leonard Bernstein Letters*, 114.

⁵⁸² mcclung writes that *Lady in the Dark* “did not fit any of Broadway’s norms in 1940: musical comedy, operetta and revue were the expected generic labels” (mcclung, bruce D. “Introduction” in mcclung, bruce d. and Juchem, Elmar, eds. Weill, Kurt. *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*. Series I, Vol.6. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc./European American Music Corporation, 2017, 20).

Also see Kowalke, Kim. “Theorizing the Golden Age of Musical: Genre, Structure, Syntax,” 147 and his article “Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,” 50.

⁵⁸³ See Hinton, Stephen, *Stages of Reform*, 295-6 and mcclung, “Introduction” in *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*, 26-7. Examples range from Elmer Rice’s play *Dream Girls* to Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*, according to mcclung, who writes that *Lady in the Dark* “ushered in a period of therapeutically astute movie psychiatrists with the ability to effect a cathartic cure after the resurrection of repressed trauma from childhood.”

Gisela Schubert takes a slightly different view when she notes the precedent of Rodgers’ *Peggy Ann*, which includes dream fantasies, and other American shows in which psychiatry is a theme. New, for her, was the “seriousness with which Moss Hart treated the topic.” Schubert, “Ein Wettlauf”? Kurt Weill und Richard Rodgers“ in Angerer, Manfred, Ottner, Carmen and Rathgeber, Eike, eds. *Kurt Weill-Symposion. Das musikdramatische Werk. Zum 100. Geburtstag und 50. Todestag*, 84-5.

⁵⁸⁴ Hinton calls *Lady in the Dark* “a prime example of the kind of mixed genre that Weill cultivated throughout his life,” citing the mix of “psychoanalytic depth and Hollywood glitz, gravity and humor” in “*Lady in the Dark* as Musical Talking Cure”, *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.31, Nos.1-2 (Oxford University Press: Winter-Spring 2015), 135 and 143.

⁵⁸⁵ mcclung, “Introduction” in *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*, 18.

through the most sparse of instrumentation. Both Copland and Bruno Walter were reportedly astonished at the shifts from realistic scenes to dreams upon discovering that a single clarinet underscores Liza when she hums the tune from the song “My Ship” at the opening of the “Glamour Dream.”⁵⁸⁶

Over the course of therapy, Liza hums fragments until recalling the number in its entirety. As McClung writes, song itself becomes a meta-dramatic thread: “when Liza is finally able to remember a childhood song and the traumatic events tied to it, her psychosis comes to light, and her complicated love life straightens itself out.”⁵⁸⁷ The recovered memory coincides with a path to emotional stability and her realization that she does not want to marry the magazine publisher Kendall Nesbitt, with whom she has been having an affair, or the movie star Randy Curtis but rather the advertising manager Charley Johnson.⁵⁸⁸

Weill labored to adapt his style to the idiom of Broadway.⁵⁸⁹ With “My Ship” providing a germ for the entire score, McClung considers *Lady in the Dark* the first work in which the composer “made popular American song form his primary vehicle for vocal composition.”⁵⁹⁰ The number evolved from a highly chromatic “valse lente” to a rocking duple-meter rhythm, going through five different drafts until Weill was satisfied.⁵⁹¹ The work paid off, providing him with his first commercial success in the U.S.⁵⁹² The score nevertheless maintains vestiges of the idiosyncratic blend of classical European and popular American idioms that characterizes his pre-exile works. In the

⁵⁸⁶ *American dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Kurt Weill's "Lady in the Dark,"* Diss., University of Rochester, NY, 1995, 444-5.

⁵⁸⁷ McClung, in “Introduction” in *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*, 13.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 and 20.

⁵⁸⁹ Drew notes that the period of 1937-9 marks an exception to the nature of Weill’s sketches which, rather than a “rapid flow of ideas,” betray that the composer was “learning the language Broadway” (*Kurt Weill. A Handbook*, 83).

⁵⁹⁰ *American dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Kurt Weill's "Lady in the Dark,"* 326. Weill had worked with this principle to some extent in *Johnny Johnson*, however, as explored in Chapter 2 of this book.

⁵⁹¹ *American dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Kurt Weill's "Lady in the Dark,"* 372-420.

⁵⁹² The show also provided a breakthrough for lyricist Ira Gershwin, book writer Moss Art and actors Danny Kaye and Macdonald Carey (McClung, “Introduction” in *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*, 25).

final four bars of “My Ship,” Weill moves through a reconciliatory, chorale figure recalling Mendelssohn, to bluesy, syncopated rhythms before landing on a hopeful but ambiguous F-major chord with added sixth (example 4B).

Trouble in Tahiti

The influence of the musical play on Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti* has been documented in passing yet not explored through detailed analysis. Jaensch writes that the opera in seven scenes evokes the 1920s tradition of one-act *Zeitoper*, for which Weill was a chief representative, but most of all takes a cue from Weill’s Broadway works and, in particular, *Lady in the Dark*. He also notes the “central role” of Weill’s *Songstil*.⁵⁹³ Rischar cites both the topic of psychotherapy and the critique of suburbia in *One Touch of Venus* as evidence of “Weill’s theatrical influence on Bernstein.”⁵⁹⁴ Smith, on other hand, concludes that both *Trouble in Tahiti* and *The Cradle Will Rock* “combine the influence of *Die Dreigroschenoper* with the structure of Broadway shows.”⁵⁹⁵

Such a conclusion would ostensibly be supported by the fact that *Trouble in Tahiti* was dedicated to Blitzstein and premiered two days after his *The Threepenny Opera* at Brandeis University’s Festival of Creative Arts, an event which Bernstein hoped would “seek a key to the future,” in June 1952.⁵⁹⁶ While Bernstein described the stage work in the *Herald Tribune* as a “light-weight piece” that was “popular song inspired,”⁵⁹⁷ the score veers freely between heavy and light idioms in search of the

⁵⁹³ “...die zentrale Rolle des Song-Stils in den Werken Weills findet sich bis zu einem gewissen Maße in Bernsteins Einakter wieder.... Bernsteins Einakter lehnt sich allerdings aufgrund seiner Bestrebungen, eine amerikanische Oper zu schaffen und den damit verbundenen Wurzeln in der ‘Musical Comedy’ und dem ‘American Popular Song’, starker an Weills für den Broadway geschriebenen Musiktheaterwerken – wie beispielsweise ‚Lady in the Dark‘ – an, als an die deutsche Zeitoper der 1920er Jahre.“ (*Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 209).

⁵⁹⁴ Rischar, Richard. “Dashed Utopian Suburban Dreams in Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*” in Schebera, Jürgen and Weiss, Stefan, eds. *Street Scene. Der urbane Raum im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts*. (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2006), 112.

⁵⁹⁵ *There’s a Place for Us*, 47.

⁵⁹⁶ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 220.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 222.

formula for an authentic American opera. He wrote the libretto and sketched the music at great speed in Cuernavaca, Mexico in May 1951 but would grow frustrated later that year, writing to his brother, Burton, “maybe you can tell me how to finish my fucking little opera.”⁵⁹⁸ Bernstein brought the task to an end just in time for the festival, composing from the same cabin outside Saratoga, New York where Blitzstein had been working on his musical drama *Reuben Reuben*.

In fashioning his own libretto and setting out to create an unflinchingly honest portrayal of American domestic life in operatic terms, Bernstein clearly had Blitzstein and, in particular, *Regina* in mind as a precedent. Blitzstein in turn admitted to friends while “lively musically,” *Trouble in Tahiti* suffered from a “dreary” story and “somewhat inept lyrics.”⁵⁹⁹ Bernstein himself called the work “half-baked”⁶⁰⁰ (he re-wrote the final scene for subsequent performances and would be so haunted by his problem child that he created the sequel, *A Quiet Place*, three decades later). *Trouble in Tahiti* is above all valuable as an experimental work that created a stepping stone in Bernstein’s path toward creating his own brand of serious but accessible music theater, as represented by *Candide* and *West Side Story*. Even more so than by Blitzstein, that path was paved by the formal innovations of Weill.

Like Liza in *Lady in the Dark*, the female protagonist of *Trouble in Tahiti*, Dinah, is in the midst of a personal crisis. Scenes of a loveless marriage in suburbia are surreally juxtaposed with her world of fantasy, first as recounted to an invisible psychiatrist (Scene III), then following her visit to the movies (Scene VI). Both stage works explore the respective character’s inner conflict to define herself vis-à-vis the man (or men) in her life and society at large. While Liza must reconcile her professional ambitions with the prospect of settling down, Dinah struggles to maintain a fulfilled

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 220.

⁵⁹⁹ Pollack, Howard. *Marc Blitzstein. His Life, His Work, His World*, 186.

⁶⁰⁰ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 220.

personal life while playing the role of housewife to her husband, Sam. Both works create an unflinching portrayal of the social realities faced by women in mid-century America. The conventions of marriage for both sexes are also placed under scrutiny, particularly in *Trouble in Tahiti*.⁶⁰¹

But while Liza is to some extent liberated through psychoanalysis, Dinah is not able to pursue a path toward self-discovery. As Rischar writes, tragedy

lies in the ways that Dinah, for reasons both psychic and social, both her own particular history and that of suburban marriage generally, is unable to disrupt her self-inflicting processes. Psychoanalysis fails her, popular culture fails her, motherhood fails her, social activities fails her, and of course her husband fails her.⁶⁰²

To be sure, Liza only finds a solution by assuming a subservient position when she decides to share editorial duties with her future husband, Charley Johnson.⁶⁰³ But her evolution from a neurotic who is not willing to make time for a therapy session to a woman seeking inner harmony reveals the virtues of psychoanalysis and the potential for self-renewal. Dinah, on the other hand, remains psychologically repressed, her only refuge a world of Hollywood glamour which she in fact loathes.

Both *Lady in the Dark* and *Trouble in Tahiti* reveal how societal demands are thwarting the protagonist's quest for emotional stability and peace. Within the setting that blurs dream and reality, filmic ideals and mundane truths, the dichotomy between the inner life of the female protagonist and the external allure of cinema creates a dramaturgical thread.⁶⁰⁴ *Trouble in Tahiti* also to some extent makes song a meta-dramatic topic, as will be explored in the below analysis. But while *Lady in the Dark*

⁶⁰¹ *Trouble in Tahiti*, sketched before Bernstein finally married Felicia, clearly reveals his own apprehension about married life. See Jaensch, *Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 183; Smith, *There's a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein*. 49; and Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 209-16.

⁶⁰² Rischar, "Dashed Utopian Suburban Dreams in Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*" in Schebera, Jürgen and Weiss, Stefan, eds. *Street Scene. Der urbane Raum im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 115.

⁶⁰³ See mcclung "Psicosi per musica: Re-examining *Lady in the Dark*" in Edler, and Kowalke, eds. *A Stranger Here Myself. Kurt Weill-Studien*, 242.

⁶⁰⁴ *Lady in the Dark* originally included a "Hollywood Dream" in which Liza imagines married life with Randy Curtis (mcclung, "Introduction" in *Lady in the Dark. A Musical Play in Two Acts*, 17).

juxtaposes Liza's musical unconscious with extended passages of spoken dialogue, Bernstein exploits disparate musical idioms to lay bare the dichotomy between the unhappiness of both Sam and Dinah and external expectations set by society. Their exchanges in chromatic recitative are framed by an ironically saccharine vocal trio mixing jazz and swing elements that comments in the manner of a Greek chorus.⁶⁰⁵ To achieve organic unity within the eclectic score, Bernstein turns to leitmotivic techniques, a formal solution recalling the exploitation of fragments from the "My Ship" melody to create smooth transitions between scenes in *Lady in the Dark*.

Paradise lost

In the number "I was standing in a Garden," Dinah recounts a dream to her psychiatrist. Over the course of Scene III, the music of her unconscious journey is contrasted with the harsh world of the everyday and, specifically, Sam's professional life.⁶⁰⁶ "I was standing in a Garden" begins and ends with simultaneous fade-outs to and from the respective offices of the invisible Psychiatrist and Sam. The juxtaposition is already set up in Scene II, where Dinah lies on the couch stage-right, unlit, while Sam's sits "in depression" stage-left at "a desk with papers, a telephone, and a small speaker communicating to his secretary."

The accompaniment dominated by strings creates a dreamy feel for Dinah's song, while the doubling of her melody by the first violin lends a sense of empathy with her emotional world. Although the score indicates "simply" and the tessitura lies mid-range, the 1958 recording featuring Beverly Wolff, recently included in DG's *Bernstein Complete Works*, creates a sense of operatic melodrama.⁶⁰⁷ In the dream, Dinah hears the voice of her father, then that of a singer, who lures her into a "shining garden." The

⁶⁰⁵ See Jaensch, 184.

⁶⁰⁶ Smith writes that the "haunting dream" is "probably the consequence of the tension and hostility at home" (*There's a Place For Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein*, 50).

⁶⁰⁷ Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Berlin, 2018. 482 8228.

Jaensch has noted that the number is a mix of AABA song form and aria (*Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 191).

music begins in g-minor and lands in G-major for the refrain, at figure 3.⁶⁰⁸ The whole-tone clash of C and D that permeates Dinah's number alludes to the opening notes of the "My Ship" melody, particularly when it surfaces in the "Wedding Dream" after Randy Curtis has disappeared (Examples 1A and 1B).

As McClung writes, "the concluding d of the melody creates an ironic major-second dissonance with the chorus' c pedal and reifies the conflict between Liza's indecision over her groom and the sentiments of the well wishers at the wedding."⁶⁰⁹ In Dinah's song, the repeated clash of C and D similarly creates a sense of emotional ambivalence. The C also allows for harmonic ambiguity, leading to a compound chord of g-minor and c-minor, the tonic-subdominant combination that is typical of Weill,⁶¹⁰ on the first instance of the word "garden." The tension between G and C also underscores Liza at the start of the B section of "My Ship," although in this case as the basis for C-major and B-flat major with added sixth (Examples 2A and 2B).

But while Liza is cured by recalling the childhood song in its entirety, Dinah's recollection of the dream is interrupted by a fade-out to Sam's office. Her delicate sound world of strings, harp and flute cedes to the restless woodwind motive that first surfaces in Scene II when Sam answers the telephone.⁶¹¹ The cut back to reality recalls scenes in *Lady* such as the transition from "The Princess of Pure Delight" to the Allure office, at which point a new idiom of accented pentatonic chords enters (measure 385 in the critical edition), although in this case Liza's office is still part of the "Wedding Dream."

⁶⁰⁸ That the tonal scheme parallels that of the Old Lady in "I am easily assimilated" might indicate the extent to which Bernstein identifies with Dinah as she struggles with marital convention, but such questions are beyond the scope of this study.

⁶⁰⁹ McClung, "Psicosi per musica: Re-examining *Lady in the Dark*" in Edler, Horst and Kowalke, Kim H, eds. *A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill-Studien*, 260.

⁶¹⁰ Ian Kemp calls 'bitonality involving both tonic and subdominant' a "typical instance" in Weill's harmonic environment, citing as examples its occurrence in *The Threepenny Opera*, *Der Jasager* and *Die Sieben Todsünden* but noting that "numerous examples of the minor subtonic relationship could be cited" ("Harmony in Weill: Some Observations," in *Tempo*, no. 104, 1973, 14).

⁶¹¹ Jaensch calls it the "frustration" motive but it could just as easily be designated the "office" motive (*Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater. Auf dem Weg zu einer Amerikanischen Oper*, 189-90).

In *Tahiti*, after Sam tries to clear the air with his secretary, with whom he has apparently flirted, the scene returns to the Psychiatrist's office. Dinah is recalling the desire she felt for this stranger ("so handsome, so serene") in her dream. Like Liza, she is confronted with three different men: her husband, with whom she is caught in a loveless marriage; her father, the incarnation of authority; and a young attractive stranger who in the end "vanished like smoke."

As Dinah weeps, the full orchestra reiterates the main melody of "Standing in a Garden." Not unlike Liza, who breaks out into violent tears while at the office, she collects herself and reassures herself through song, returning to the refrain in unison with the flute and first violin.

With the entrance of scene four, in which Dinah and Sam run into each other on the street, the melody from her dream is carried in the oboe and set to a three-quarter time *Tempo di "Gymnopédie"* of rocking chords in the clarinets, bassoon and harp (example 3A). The indication of "Gymnopédie" creates a foreground allusion to Satie, whose iconic three piano works *Gymnopédies* are based on the same staggered, lilting chord patterns in three-quarter time. By placing the title in quotes, Bernstein seems to acknowledge his borrowing from the composer. The technique, meanwhile, creates a lineage back to Weill: The change of mood through a new rhythmic, or gestic, fixing of the melody is key to the formal structure of *Lady in Dark*.⁶¹² Examples include the Rhumba setting of "Girl of the Moment" in the "Glamour Dream," which will be analyzed later in this chapter, and the *Tempo I (Bolero)* at Figure F of the "Wedding Dream," in which the chorus sings a variation on its original chorale melody (example

⁶¹² In his essay "Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik," Weill explains that it is in the "rhythmic fixing of the text" that the "gestic means of the music" expresses itself most clearly, while the melody is "swings" above the accompaniment (*Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 65-6). See Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 118 for a further analysis of what Weill meant by "rhythmic fixing."

3B). The reference to Satie camouflages the imprint of Weill in what Klein has identified as “a *tessera* of a *tessera*.”⁶¹³

Bernstein brings more of an operatic touch than the precursor, however, as Sam and Dinah sing recitative-like lines in counterpoint to the “Garden” melody. Dinah expresses hope of finding peace when her melody falls into synchrony with the oboe on the line “see you tonight,” in C-major (measures 501-2 in the critical edition). Sam repeats the line but without the support of the orchestra, and the “Garden” melody that continues in the flute and oboe is soon overtaken by stormy, minor harmonies as Sam, and then Dinah, ask themselves, “Why did I have to lie?” The “Garden” melody will continue to underscore them in fragmented variations before bringing the scene to a close with a full iteration in the strings and winds after Sam and Dinah ask, “can’t we find the way back to the garden where we began?” But the promise of a new start is subsequently undermined by an interlude of the vocal trio that sarcastically sings, “Lovely life: Happily married.”

The trio’s commentary creates a parallel with choral interludes in the “Wedding Dream.” The “Mapleton High Choral” parodies societal conventions in which the American dream is blindly pursued and true happiness subjugated to the semblance of success: “for our school we’ll do or die/And reach the goal of victory.” When the topic of marriage comes up, a Bolero rhythm enters, on a chord of c-minor with added sixth (see example 3B). Trumpets, trombone and tuba underscore the orchestra’s mocking quality. Swinging thirds enter in the clarinets upon the mention of Kendall Nesbitt, the magazine publisher who has finally decided to divorce his wife for Liza, when in fact she realizes that she does not want to settle down with him. “They should be very happy,” comments the chorus sarcastically.

⁶¹³ *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 5-7. Also see Chapter 5, 124 of this book.

The Bolero rhythm comes full stop with a b-minor added-sixth chord dominated by open trumpets and trombone when a man announces, “and now they are buying the ring.” When the rhythm re-enters with the appearance of the jeweler, it is the vehicle for an ironic funeral procession, thumping in the tomtom, piano and Hammond organ beneath sardonic brass and woodwinds. “Shall it be with emeralds? Or shall it be with diamonds?” taunts the chorus as the clarinets and trumpets slide upwards and downwards on a chromatic melody. The bolero rhythm disappears upon the entrance of the movie star Randy Curtis (at figure H), who provides Liza with the false promise of becoming a glamour girl.

In the “Glamour Dream,” dance rhythms serve to both escalate her fantasy and mock the situation. The song “Girl of the Moment” first emerges as a foxtrot and, – after a marine sits down to paint Liza’s portrait at the request of the President of the United States, – as a chorale-like *Larghetto religioso*. She has been whisked away to a nightclub, where patrons sing in praise of her beauty. Once the portrait is revealed to be unflattering, however, the crowd begins to taunt her (“What is Liza is really like?”), and the chorus returns as a rhumba *molto agitato* replete with rhumba drums and jeering saxophones. As mcclung has documented, the rhythm not only takes on a mocking function but “the first violins’ and piccolo’s ascending runs and trills create a distorted hilarity, as if the orchestra itself is giddy and laughing at Liza.”⁶¹⁴

Island Magic

In *Trouble of Tahiti*, single instruments within the transparent scoring similarly create ironic counterpoint to the drama. In the sixth scene, as Dinah complains about the quality of a superficial Hollywood film to an imaginary milliner at a hat shop, the woodwinds, strings and xylophone shadow her declamatory recitative. A new fast-paced dance enters at figure 4 as she sings of the protagonist, a princess from the South

⁶¹⁴ mcclung, “American dreams: Analyzing Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Kurt Weill’s ‘Lady in the Dark,’” 352.

Pacific, meeting “the handsome American.”⁶¹⁵ Sarcastic piccolo flourishes and the xylophone glissando at figure 8 have a taunting quality. At figure 11, she struggles to remember the melody from the scene in question, “a ballad of South Sea romance”: “I wish I could think of it: Da da dee da...Oh, a beautiful song!” Just as she remembers “ISLAND MAGIC,” at figure 13, a new swanky, tango-like rhythm enters. As with Liza, the recollection of a song becomes an affirmation of Dinah’s sense of independence and sexuality.

Commentary on American politics is also a steady undercurrent in this scene, reflecting the protagonist’s frustration. At figure 18, a sarcastic march enters as Dinah sings of the U.S. Navy, with a racing xylophone that ironically contradicts the text at figure 19 when she sings “Everything now is cleared up and wonderful.” The instrument only stops when she sings “Island Magic of course,” the orchestra providing an ironically false sense of resolution. Soon thereafter, at figure 21, begins the Beguine (a form of rhumba), signaling Dinah’s complete immersion in fantasy. Rischar has already noted this “parallel or source of influence” in *Lady in the Dark* through “the ‘covering’ of a ‘hit single’ as a faster, more rhythmic rhumba.”⁶¹⁶ The added sixth harmonies that are prominent in “The Saga of Jenny” and “My Ship” now fill the music.⁶¹⁷ The F-major added-sixth chord under “palm trees” could even allude to the chord that ends “My Ship” (Examples 4A and 4B).

Like Liza in the “Glamour Dream,” Dinah has entered a realm where she can experience an idealized romance which is denied her in everyday life.⁶¹⁸ The vocal trio

⁶¹⁵ Jaensch notes that the song is structured by “three different levels of reality,” evolving from recitative, to description of the plot, to “incidental music” including the rhumba song (*Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater*, 198).

⁶¹⁶ Rischar, “Dashed Utopian Suburban Dreams in Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*” in Schebera and Weiss, eds. *Street Scene. Der urbane Raum im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 115.

⁶¹⁷ Weill insisted that the added-sixth chords were a result of voice leading despite their prevalence in popular music. See Hirsch, Foster, *Kurt Weill on Stage. From Berlin to Broadway* (Random House Publishing, 2000), 306-7.

⁶¹⁸ Jaensch writes that Dinah identifies with the South Sea beauty and dreams of love in paradise (*Leonard Bernsteins Musiktheater*, 199).

sings in unison with her as she sings of “ISLAND MAGIC,” and the percussion underscores her when she exclaims “And I simply cannot believe/It really is mine!” Her fantasy about becoming the beautiful female character in the film might even invite comparison to Liza’s dream of making love to Randy Curtis. But while Liza has a date with the movie star in real life, Dinah’s escape is nothing more than a chimera. The song does not belong to her, and going to the movies has ultimately not been therapeutic. She and the trio cannot finish the word “magic” when Dinah “comes to her senses” and the *Tempo primo* returns, at figure 25. She comes full circle and laments the movie in recitative. The final chord overlaying d-minor and c-minor reveals that she is still trapped in ambivalence.

In the final scene, she and Sam sit by the fire in what the libretto tells us “looks like domestic bliss, but feels awful.” Not unlike the taunting bolero of the “Wedding Dream” in *Lady in the Dark*, percussion and brass comment on the situation. The percussion underscoring the vocal trio evolves from cymbal and bass drum to thumping timpani at figure 2 on the words “evening pleasures,” creating the undercurrent of a Mahlerian funeral march. A rising motive of trumpet doubled by clarinet and flute remarks with ironic distance, transforming the upbeat jazz instrument into a symbol of both leisure and mourning. When the couple is reduced to dialogue for the first time, at figure 8, it is as if the soundtrack of the now forlorn vocal trio has been unplugged.

The music returns only when they have decided to go to the movies. Dinah hides the fact that she has already seen the film in question, repressing her unhappiness and bending to Sam’s will in an effort to salvage their marriage. A bittersweet solo violin picks up the melody from Sam’s exchange with Dinah at figure 17, again commenting on the situation as the couple acknowledges that instead of real love, they are settling for “bought-and-paid-for magic...on a Super Silver Screen.” Rather than take the path

to self-discovery, as Liza does with the help of her psychiatrist, Dinah avoids confronting her marital problems and settles for Hollywood escapism.

Conclusions

Much as Dinah does not meet with personal fulfillment, *Trouble in Tahiti* only hints at the promise of a future for American opera that reflects on harsh social realities while synthesizing popular idioms and modernist rigor. The score is not “slick” like *Lady in the Dark* but rather creates a montage that ultimately lampoons American culture’s indulgence in valueless entertainment. The juxtaposition of operatic tableaux with the saccharine vocal trio alludes alongside *Lady in the Dark* to *Street Scene*, in which native opera emerges as a meta-dramatic topic. If it is hard to argue with Bernstein that *Trouble in Tahiti* is “half-baked,” particularly on the level of the libretto, the work remains a valuable formal experiment in the Weillian tradition of mixed genre that paved the way to *Candide* and *West Side Story*.

In an interesting historic twist, Sondheim rewrote “The Saga of Jenny” as “The Saga of Lenny” upon Bernstein’s 70th birthday, teasing him about the inability to make up his mind as a talented composer, conductor, performer and educator: “Poor Lenny/Ten gifts too many/the curse of being versatile/To show how bad the curse is/We’ll need a lot of verses/and take a little Weill.”⁶¹⁹ As the final line of this refrain indicates, the composer provided important creative impulses for Bernstein as he navigated a career straddling opera houses, Broadway theaters, television studios and more.

⁶¹⁹ See Hinton, *Stages of Reform*, 470-2, for a discussion of the song’s significance. The lyrics are printed in Fluegel, Jane, ed. *Bernstein Remembered: A Life in Pictures* (New York: Caroll & Graf, 1991), 134. I am grateful to Elmar Juchem for directing me to the video recording, which captures the song in its entirety, as performed by Lauren Bacall with Paul Ford on piano: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRB-HP9rPGQ> (see in particular 0:56-1:14).

Trouble in Tahiti, like *Lady in the Dark*, explores the psychological portrait of woman caught between her unconscious desires and the expectations of a male-dominated society. Popular song, however, is not a vehicle for change. ISLAND MAGIC bears no cure, and the score leans heavily toward melodrama. The 1983 sequel *A Quiet Place*, which begins with Dinah's funeral, would become a full-blown tragedy, pushing the music toward violent dissonance while creating organic unity with *Trouble in Tahiti* by quoting themes in Leitmotivic fashion (a revised 1984 version incorporates the first opera into the second act as a flashback). While Weill smoothed over the painful gap between his European past and his American future with the "slick" *Lady in the Dark*, Bernstein was not afraid to cultivate a contradictory musical idiom in which a multitude of voices had their influence.

Epilogue

“There is a general bubbling and rejoicing and brotherliness among composers that would have been unthinkable ten years ago,” declared Bernstein in his 1976 Norton Lectures. “It’s like the beginning of a new period of fresh air and fun, such as we discerned earlier in the century.” He pointed to Berio’s *Sinfonia for 8 Voices and Orchestra*, – whose third movement is a palimpsest overwriting the *Scherzo* of Mahler’s Second Symphony with snippets of everyone from Beethoven to Boulez, – as an example of “neo-neo-classicism.” Also citing works by Reich, Stockhausen, Britten, Shostakovich and more, he asked rhetorically, “why not, since these recent pieces are so often full of quotes and allusions?”

In what may have been a self-serving gesture, Bernstein’s historical narrative did not include an Oedipal struggle. Rather, he celebrated “brotherliness” or dialogue among composers as a healthy means of moving forward: “We are in a position where one style can feed the other, where one technique enriches the other, thus enriching all of music.”⁶²⁰ He had taken this principle to the extreme in his 1971 *Mass*, juxtaposing rock music with dodecaphony, Catholic liturgy with a modern libretto. If the *New York Times* music critic Harold Schonberg compared the “theatre piece for singers, players, and dancers” to a “recipe for steak fried in peanut butter and marshmallow sauce,” the work made an important statement about overcoming the ideological divide between modernism and the popular sphere.⁶²¹

Tracing the impact of Weill’s aesthetic on Bernstein’s musical philosophy does not end with this study. Both *Mass* and Weill’s *Der Weg der Verheißung* (first performed in English adaptation as *The Eternal Road*) are quasi-religious, didactic pageants deploying large choruses and a mix of sung and spoken roles. Weill’s “biblical

⁶²⁰ Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question. Six Talks at Harvard*, 422-3.

⁶²¹ *New York Times*, Sept.12, 1971, via Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 407.

drama” is an oratorio about the fate of the Jewish people but also stands as a more universal allegory about human cruelty, veering from allusions to Bach Passions to stage music of an unabashedly popular style.⁶²² Bernstein – who may well have experienced *The Eternal Road* given his close friendship with Mendy Wager, son of the impresario who presided over the premiere performances at the Manhattan Opera House in 1937 – took this principle a step further in *Mass*, creating a collective ritual in which music leads the way to a sense of personal faith.⁶²³

As discussed in the introduction, this study would logically continue with a comparative analysis of *Love Life* with Bernstein’s *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* and concept musicals of the 1960s and 70s. The works of Sondheim, in particular, who has acknowledged *Love Life* as a “useful influence,” would be the next chapter. Kowalke considers him the only composer who “consistently produced a variety of theater works equaling the musical sophistication, dramatic invention, and stylistic variety of Weill’s final four: *Street Scene*, *Down in the Valley*, *Love Life* and *Lost in the Stars*.”⁶²⁴

But perhaps even more consequential for the scope of Weill reception would be to trace how his stage works have provided a precedent for contemporary classical composers. Berio emphasized the need “to stay in dialogue” with his works “just as we do with the musical theater of other times, from Monteverdi to Verdi, Wagner or Berg.”⁶²⁵ The American composer John Adams looks to Weill as “a composer with a very talented foot in each world,” acknowledging that “works like *Mahagonny* and

⁶²² Alexander Ringer maintains: “Weill had begun to think of the Jewish historical experience, it would seem, primarily as a universal lesson, ‘never to forget’ the enormity of humankind’s mindless capacity for cruelty, to be sure, but also a remarkable resilience that enables survivors of good will to follow the dictates of their God given creative potential.” Kowalke, Kim; Schebera, Jurgen; Kuhnt, Christian; Ringer, Alexander L. in discussion. “The Eternal Road and Kurt Weill’s German, Jewish, and American Identity” in *Theater*, Volume 30, Number 3, Fall 2000, 92-5.

⁶²³ The film and television actor Michael “Mendy” Wager was the son of Meyer Weisgal (via interview with John Mauceri, Jan.30, 2020). Also see *Stages of Reform*, 237-40.

⁶²⁴ “Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America,” 49. Also see Kowalke, “Sweeney’s Identity Crisis and the Dynamic Potential of Generic Hybridity” in Sheppard, Anthony W., ed. *Sondheim in Our Time and His* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁶²⁵ “Liebeslied for Weill,” Foreword to Farneth, David; Juchem, Elmar; and Stein, David. *Kurt Weill: A life in pictures and documents*. (New York: Overlook Press, 1999).

Threepenny Opera gave me a certain permission to find a tone ... that hovers between irony and deep compassion.”⁶²⁶ His most recent opera, *Girls of the Golden West*, adapts gold rush songs into “quote, unquote arias” that he predicted “will come out sounding very much like Kurt Weill”: “I took the melodies out, because they were usually borrowed melodies like ‘Pop goes the Weasel,’ and set them to my own music. But in so doing I still honor the strophic quality of these very simple songs.”⁶²⁷

The Austrian native HK Gruber has carried on a Weill tradition both in practice, as a chansonnier and conductor, and in his compositions. His *Gloria von Jaxtberg* is at once a parody and a didactic opera that consciously assimilates influences from the Brecht-Weill works, while the tragic *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* is set to a text for which the playwright Ödön von Horváth hoped Weill would provide music.⁶²⁸ Gruber has acknowledged the importance of Weill in developing a personal style that would resist what he perceived as the controlling, even fascist, principles of the Darmstadt School in the early 1960s. “What most impressed me about Weill’s writing was that he stayed tonal but nevertheless developed an incredible sophistication,” he said in 2013. “It is not a step back toward Mozart, but a very concentrated, refined way of composing. He developed a musical personality that could assert itself against the currents of the time.”⁶²⁹

The enduring hold of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, in particular, on musicians across different genres could also be the subject of further study. As Kowalke has written, “to trace the influence of *The Threepenny Opera* on the form, performance practice, subject matter and style of the American musical theatre after 1954 would require a lengthy

⁶²⁶ “Weill from Time to Time,” producer/director Deborah May. A Kinoki Production for the Royal Festival Hall (South Bank Centre, 1999).

⁶²⁷ Interview with the author, September 2016. The title of Adams’ opera is of course a patently cheeky allusion to Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West*.

⁶²⁸ Program note of Komische Oper Berlin, *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* (German premiere: May 22, 2016), 21.

⁶²⁹ Interview with the author, April 2013.

essay of its own.”⁶³⁰ Thanks to Blitzstein’s translation, the work entered the U.S. mainstream and has remained there. Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Bobby Darin sang their own jazzed-up versions of “Mack the Knife”; more recently, Robbie Williams joined the fray.⁶³¹ The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in 2015 allowed the Salzburg Festival to present, in what was declared a one-time experiment, a new version of the full score with *Mackie Messer: Eine Salzburger Dreigroschenoper*, by the British composer Martin Lowe (of the musical *Mamma Mia*).

The most significant realm for exploring aesthetic influence, however, is not when a composer has acknowledged the precursor as a model. Rather, the anxiety of influence expresses itself when the poet (or composer) is inclined to repress his fixation. As Blitzstein and Bernstein defied the norms of both Broadway and the opera stage, entering what they perceived as a new era in serious American music theater, they labored in Weill’s shadow. *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Regina*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Candide* and *West Side Story*, part of a short-lived movement that came to a close in the late 1950s, adopted structural elements from Weill’s opera reform while also misreading his intentions. *A Prayer by Blecht* reveals the extent to which Bernstein, – eager to embrace both the experimental spirit of the early twentieth century and the entertainment industry of post-war America, – may have overstepped himself.

Was Adorno correct in his assessment upon Weill’s death that the model could not be repeated?⁶³² Certainly Bernstein, a born polymath, proved that he could have the best of both worlds, reaching the mainstream with *West Side Story* while remaining one of the twentieth century’s most influential figures in the classical concert hall. If it may be overstated at this point in history to speak of a “Weill Paradigm” comparable to the

⁶³⁰ “‘The Threepenny Opera’ in America,” in Hinton, ed. *Kurt Weill. The Threepenny Opera*, 117.

⁶³¹ Williams, “Sing when you’re swinging” (CD: Chrysalis, 2001)

⁶³² „Kurt Weill“ in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (May, 15, 1950).

legacy of Beethoven,⁶³³ American music theater in the post-war era would have taken a different course without the challenge he posed. The “mixed genre” (*Zwischengattung*) which Weill coined in 1926 – citing Stravinsky's *L'Histoire* as a precedent – would, in many ways, prove “future-proof.”⁶³⁴ As a composer who has won admiration from Hans Werner Henze and Bob Dylan alike, Weill retains a unique place in history.⁶³⁵ And contrary to Adorno’s view, it was not his “ephemeral” melodies but rather formal innovations resolving the dialectic between modernism and popular theater that paved the way for Blitzstein, Bernstein and composers today.

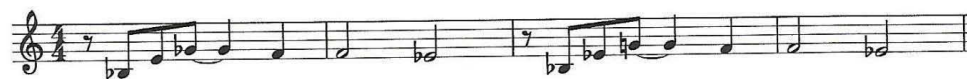
⁶³³ See Chapter 1, 23-26, of this study.

⁶³⁴ “Die neue Oper” in Hinton and Schebera, eds. *Kurt Weill. Musik und Theater. Gesammelte Schriften*, 29-30.

⁶³⁵ Henze acknowledged the “Weill-Eisler-Dessau Tradition” in his song cycle *Voices*. See Dümling, Albrecht. “Massenlieder, Kollektivkunst und Gebrauchsmusik,” in Traber, Hababuk und Weingarten, Elmar, eds. *Verdrängte Musik. Berliner Komponisten im Exil* (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1987), 217. His idea of *musica impura*, which aims for music to be “understood like language” rather than create an abstract emotional space, also can be traced back to the tradition of *Gebrauchsmusik*. Hinton documents Weill’s inspiration for Dylan, Tom Waits and the Doors in *Stages of Reform*, 471-2.

Figure 1: Weill, Kurt. *Die Dreigroschenoper*. A Facsimile of the Holograph Full Score. Series I, V Vol. 1. Harsh, Edward, ed. (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 1996), 51.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for Kurt Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper*. At the top, there is a title in red ink: "11. Pacht Jenny." and a circled "A". Below this, there are several staves of music. The instruments listed on the left include: 1. Flauto (Flute), 2. Flauto (Flute), Tr. (Trombe) (Trumpets), Pos. (Posoni) (Horns), Banjo, Perc. (Percussion), Polka (Polka), and Klavier (Piano). The tempo is marked "Allegretto" and the time signature is 3/4. There are handwritten annotations in red ink, including "3x Mamma" in a circle and circled letters "A" and "B". The lyrics are written in German: "1. Mein Kim hat sich für mich", "2. Mein Kari hat sich für mich", "sich Kari hat sich für mich", "sich Kari hat sich für mich". The score is on aged, yellowed paper with some stains and a large 'X' mark on the right side. At the bottom, it says "K.U.V. Beethoven Papier Nr. 389 (18 Linien)".

1A “Johnny’s Song”**1B “Few Little English”**

2A Johnny Johnson, No.39 Johnny's Song

69

Cl in Bb

ASax in Eb

Tpt 1 in Bb 2

Tbn

Vn

Vc

Bjo

Cym SnDr

HmdOrg

Pno

ff

(Crash)

End

Kurt Weill JOHNNY JOHNSON Musical play in three acts
Book and lyrics by Paul Green
Copyright © 1940 Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.
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2B *The Cradle Will Rock*, Scene Seven, Nickel under the Foot

- 7 - Nightcourt
"Reprise: Nickel Under The Foot" [14] *A tempo* (♩=132)
MOLL

MOLL
Vocalise
Hum

LARRY
[rhythmic notation ED. al fine.]

Let me un - der - stand you... You'd like my serv - ic - es in swing - ing

pizz. Str., Pno. *R.H. Pno. Solo*
pesante poco ritenuto *mf*

82

[MOLL] *Hum* [15] *Hum*

[LARRY]

your way all the peo - ple I've signed up - All the peo - ple who a -

sempre stacc. 3 3 3 3

86

[MOLL] *Hum* *Hum*

[LARRY]

gree with the un - ion. You want me to change their mind, is

89 (h)

3A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.6 Seeräuberjenny

Po.

wis-sen nicht, mit wem Sie re - den, und sie wis-sen nicht, mit wem Sie re - den.
 'wis-sen im - mernoch nicht, wer ich bin, und sie wis-sen im - mernoch nicht, wer ich bin.

pp *sfz*

3B The Cradle Will Rock, Scene Seven, Nickel under the Foot

[3] Allegretto (♩=76) "Nickel Under The Foot"
 [MOLL]

foot. May - be you won - der what it is, — Makes peo - ple

mf *molto dimin.* *p sempre stacc.*

23 +Ba. pizz. [4]

good or bad; Why some guy, an ace with - out a doubt, Turns out to be a

28

4A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.13 Zuhälterballade

M. (J.)

C (1. mal)

gu - tes hal - bes Jahr in dem Bor - dell, wo un - ser Haus - halt
 die - sem hal - ben Jahr in dem Bor - dell, wo un - ser Haus - halt

37
87 **H** (2. mal)

M. (J.)

war.
war.
2. mal (Trp.)

pp

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The first system shows the vocal line (M. (J.)) with lyrics in German. The piano accompaniment is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time. The second system continues the vocal line with a second ending marked 'H' (2. mal) and includes a trumpet part (Trp.) marked '2. mal'. The piano accompaniment continues with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

4B The Cradle Will Rock, Scene Six, The Rich

[11] Tango moderato ($\text{♩} = 88$) (Doppio movimento) - 3 - Hotelobby 97
 [YASHA & DAUBER]

some - thing so damned low a - bout the rich! They're fan - tas - tic, they're far -

Cl. I, Vna.
Vn. Va. Vc. (4)

Ride. Pno. Str. *mf* + Trp. 2
Castanets

65

[12]

fetched, they're just fun - ny. They've no im - pluse, no fine feel - ing, no great

69

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a tango piece. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics. The piano accompaniment includes parts for Clarinet I, Violin, Viola, and Violoncello. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score includes performance instructions such as 'mf' and 'Doppio movimento'.

5A Egmont Overture, Op.84

The image displays a page of a musical score for the Egmont Overture, Op. 84, page 173. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flauto piccolo, strings, and woodwinds. The music is in 3/4 time and features dynamic markings such as *ff*, *ppp*, and *p*. The score is arranged in a system of staves, with the Flauto piccolo part at the top, followed by the strings, and the woodwinds at the bottom. The page number 173 is located in the top right corner.

5B *The Cradle Will Rock*, Scene Six, Rumba

12 - Hotelobby

[30] *L'istesso tempo*
(Quasi *Egmont* Overture)
MRS. MISTER

[spoken in bar 185] **MRS. MISTER:** Dauber, I had an argument with Hallie Vacuum at lunch whether Picasso has curly hair ... now don't tell me, I couldn't bear it if he was bald! The weekend ... you're both coming to me for the weekend!
(to music bar 186)

Ta, ta, ta - ta - ta, ta - ta - ta, yoo hoo! **[31]** [Dialogue]

Tpt., Sxs. *f* A.Sx.

181 185

DAUBER & YASHA
(Elaborately.) **[32]** *Grazioso* [rumba] ($\text{♩} = 84$) *mf espress.*

Oh, yes! Ask us a - gain and a -

divisi Vns.

mf *Pro., Maracas*

Vc., Bs. *Pro., Bs. pizz.*

186

6A Die Zauberflöte, Overture

Ouverture

Adagio

Flauto I, II
Oboe I, II
Clarinetto I, II
Fagotto I, II
Corno I, II
Clarino I, II
Trombone I-III
Timpani
Archi

sf Tutti

Viol. I *p*

Archi *sfp* *p*

Fag. *p*

6B Die Dreigroschenoper, No.21 III. Dreigroschenfinale

57

CHOR

Bo - - - te kommt!

Des Kö - nigs rei - ten - der Bo - te kommt!

ff **Largo**

ff **Largo**

f

RECITATIV

Brown

63

An - läßlich ih - rer Krönung befiehlt die Kö - ni - gin, daß der

1A Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, No.11

(Im Hintergrund sieht man nur noch eine geographische Zeichnung mit einem langsam auf Mahagonny zulaufenden Pfeil, der den Weg des Hurrikans anzeigt.)

182 155

Männerchor (Bässe) *p* (aus der Ferne)

Hal -

tet euch auf - - - recht,

1B Die Zauberflöte, Achtundzwanzigster Auftritt, No.21

206

1. GEHARNISCHTER MANN

1. geh. M. Der, wel-cher wandert die-se Stra-ße voll Be-schwer-den,

2. GEHARNISCHTER MANN

2. geh. M. Der, wel-cher wandert die-se Stra-ße voll Be-schwer-den,

Fl. I., Ob. I., Fag., Trbn. sempre con Tenore e Basso (Geharnischte Männer)

2A Regina, Act III, No.8

I Quasi recitativo (*boldly*)
(Regina: *mf*)

To-mor-row I shall go straight to court. I shall

tell them the whole dirty story. You could-n't find a

2B Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, No.18

f Begbick 54

f Begbick 54

Du, Jim-my Ma-ho-ney, wirst ver-ur-teilt:

(Auf dem Hintergrund erscheint als Projektion der Steckbrief vom Anfang) Begbick *f*

mf Moses Zu zwei Ta-gen

We-gen in-di-rek-tem Mord an ei-nem Freund...

3A *Regina*, Act III, No.1 Rain Quartet

Musical score for "3A *Regina*, Act III, No.1 Rain Quartet". The score is in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. It features four vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "That is - n't it. That is - n't it." and "That is - n't it. — That is - n't it. That is - n't it. —". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*, and rehearsal marks labeled [H].

3B *Street Scene*, No.6 Scene and Quartet

Musical score for "3B *Street Scene*, No.6 Scene and Quartet". The score is in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. It features four vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Wait till he finds out! I'd hate to be in" and "Wait till he finds out! I'd hate to be in". The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *mf*, and performance instructions like "pizz.", "W. W.", "Trp. col canto", and "Trb.". The piano part includes markings for "Vc B. Cl." and "Fg.".

4A *Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet*

84

Mrs. F.

f

cream is the Queen! Ah

cream is the Queen!

cream is the Queen!

cream is the Queen!

cream is the Queen!

mf

VI

4B *Regina, Act III, No.2 Birdie's Aria*

sang. ————— How we sang. ————— *a piacere* La, la, la, (Vocalise) ————— *rit.* —————

rit. —————

5A Street Scene, No.6 Scene and Quartet

(Sankey enters at right)

Sostenuto

Str. sord. *p*

Cor. Trb. *pp*

Sankey: Good evening, folks! Is it hot enough for you?
 The Others: Good evening.
 Mrs. M: Good evening, Mr. Sankey!

Sankey: I don't know when we've had a day like this. It was up to 94 at 3 P. M.

(Maurrant appears at window)

Fl. *r.h.*

Jones: Six dead in Chicago. An' no relief in sight.
 Sankey: Well, it's good for the milk business.
 Mrs. J: Yeah, I'm just after pourin' half a bottle down the sink.
 Mrs. F: You shouldn't throw it away. You should make ... what do you call it ... schmierkas.

1. Cor. *r.h.*

5B Street Scene, No.18 Duet and Scene

Agitato

Sam:

No! Not a - lone! We need each oth - er, we must be to - geth -

rit.

rit. *a tempo*

Trp. Trb. Cor. Trb.

molto rit.

- er!

ff molto espr. *pp*

6A Regina, Act III, No.1 Rain Quartet

— moves on a - gain. — Con-si-der the rain. — Some peo - ple

eat all the earth. Some stand a-round and watch while they

cresc.

cresc.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a Rain Quartet. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "— moves on a - gain. — Con-si-der the rain. — Some peo - ple eat all the earth. Some stand a-round and watch while they". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of two flats. The music includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.* (crescendo) and *p* (piano). The score is presented on two systems of staves.

6B Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, No.11

Larghetto (♩ = 69)

150 Männerchor (außerhalb)

Ten. *p*

Baß *p*

Hal - tet euch auf - recht fürch - tet euch nicht,

150

Larghetto (♩ = 69)

p

non legato

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a men's chorus. It is marked "Larghetto (♩ = 69)". The score is for measures 150 and includes the instruction "Männerchor (außerhalb)". The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Hal - tet euch auf - recht fürch - tet euch nicht,". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of two flats. The music includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *non legato*. The score is presented on two systems of staves.

7 Regina, Act III, No.9 Finale

ff *CURTAIN* *L* *Allegro molto*

Cer-tain-ly, Lord.

ff *Allegro molto*

ff *8va* *R.H.* *Allegro molto*

8va *Fine*

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the finale of Act III, No. 9, from the opera '7 Regina'. The score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a vocal line in treble clef, marked *ff* and *Allegro molto*, with the lyrics 'Cer-tain-ly, Lord.' The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, also marked *ff* and *Allegro molto*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *8va*, and *R.H.* (Right Hand). The piece concludes with the word *Fine*.

8 Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, No.11

98

Jen. mam - - - ma and must have Dol-lars oh you know

98 mam - - - ma and must have Dol-lars oh you know

vi-

(Bill erscheint an der Spitze eines Zuges von Männern, der den Sarg Jim's trägt. Bill trägt eine Tafel: FÜR DIE JUSTIZ.)

Jen. why.

why.

why.

Bill *f*

Kön - nen ihm Es - sig ho - len, kön - nen sein Ge -

Table 1: *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, Oper in drei Akten, No. 11 (“Die Nacht des Hurrikans”)

“Haltet euch aufrecht” (Männerchor)	b-flat minor
“O moon of Alabama” (Jenny, in counterpoint with Jack)	G major
“Haltet euch aufrecht” (Männerchor)	g minor
Recitative* (Begbick, Jim)	
“Haltet euch aufrecht” (Männerchor) + dialogue (Jack, Joe, Bill)	c minor
Recitative (Jim) Melody/refrain (“Wir brauchen keinen Hurrikan”)	b-flat minor
“Haltet euch aufrecht” (Männerchor) + recitative (Begbick)	a minor
Recitative (Begbick, Jim)	
“Wir brauchen keinen Hurrikan” (Joe, in counterpoint with Jim)	c-sharp minor
Recitative (Jenny, Jim)	
Declamatory recitative/Scena (Jim) + four-bar orchestral postlude/transition	culminates in g minor
Chorus + a-cappella dialogue	d minor/D major

Refrain „So tuet mir, was euch beliebt,“ reprising “Wir brauchen keinen Hurrikan” melody (Begbick)	G minor→F-sharp Major
Variation of „keinen Hurrikan” melody, „So, wie wenn’s einen Hurrikan gibt“ + transition „Jeden Tag“ (Quartet)	F-sharp Major→b minor b minor→e minor
Arioso (Fatty, Moses)	e minor
Arioso (Begbick, „triumphierend ausbrechend“)	e minor→a minor
Declamatory recitative (Jim)	e minor→b minor
Stand-off of male chorus („Seid ruhig“) + Septet („Also singt mit uns!“)	b minor/A major→A major
„Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man“ (Jim) „Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man“ (Septett)	D major
“Haltet euch aufrecht” (Männerchor)	b minor

Table 2: *Street Scene* “American Opera (Based on Elmer Rice’s Play),”
Nos. 5-13

<p>No.5, Scene and Aria</p> <p>Dialogue over orchestra, recitative (Mrs.J, Mrs. F, Mrs. M, F. Maurant → “Somehow I never could believe” (A. Maurant)</p>	f minor
<p>No.6, Scene and Quartet</p> <p>Dialogue over orchestra (Sankey, Mrs.M, Mrs.J, Jones) → “Get a load of that” (Mrs.F, Mrs.J, Jones, Olsen) → Dialogue over orchestra</p>	f minor
<p>No.7, Ice-Cream Sextet</p> <p>Sextet (Lippo, Mrs.J, Mrs.F, Jones, Olsen, Henry) → Dialogue</p>	A-flat major
<p>No.8, Aria</p> <p>“Let things be like they always was” (F. Maurant)</p>	d minor
<p>No.9, Scene and Ensemble</p> <p>Children’s Chorus, dialogue (Mrs.M, Mrs.J, Olsen et al.) → “Wrapped in a Ribbon” (Jenny + Sextet et al.)</p>	B-flat major
<p>No.10, Arioso</p> <p>“Lonely House” (Sam)</p>	E-flat major (with hints of minor)
<p>No.11, Scene and Song</p> <p>“Wouldn’t You Like to be on Broadway?” (Easter)</p>	G major
<p>No.12, Cavatina and Scene</p> <p>Recitative → “What Good Would the Moon Be?” (Rose) → Dialogue over orchestra (Rose, Easter, F. Maurant) → Cavatina reprise</p>	E-flat major

No.13, Song, Scene and Dance “Moon-faced, starry-eyed?” (Dick) → Dialogue over orchestra (Dick, Mae) → Song reprise → Dance and Blues	B-flat major → G major
--	------------------------

Table 3: *Regina* “Opera (Based on ‘The Little Foxes’ by Lillian Hellman),” Act III

<p>No.1, Rain Quartet</p> <p>Quartet Scena (Addie, Alexandra, Birdie, Horace) → Jazz and Chorus with spiritual → Quartet reprise</p>	<p>B-flat major/e minor</p>
<p>No.2, Birdie’s Aria</p> <p>Recitative</p> <p>Aria</p>	<p>B-flat major (roughly)</p> <p>D-flat major</p>
<p>No.3, Dialogue</p> <p>(Horace, Addie)</p>	
<p>No.4, Horace’s Last</p> <p>Dialogue over orchestra</p> <p>Medley/Lament (figure E)</p>	<p>g minor</p> <p>D major→G Major</p>
<p>No.5, Regina’s Aria</p> <p>Arioso (Regina) + Dialogue (Ben, Regina)→orchestral <i>Furioso</i> + dialogue (Regina)</p>	<p>c minor→C major</p>
<p>No.6, Melodrama</p> <p>Dialogue over orchestra (Ben, Regina, Oscar, Leo)</p>	<p>E-flat major</p>
<p>No.7, Greedy Girl</p> <p>Blues medley (Ben)</p>	<p>F major</p>
<p>No.8, Horace’s Death; Ben’s Last</p> <p>Dialogue (Regina, Ben) over reprise of</p>	

<p>fragments from “Greedy Girl” → Vocalise (Addie) + dialogue (Ben) → Instrumental transition → Arioso (Alexandra) + dialogue (Regina, Ben) → Recitative (Regina) → Dialogue (Oscar, Ben, Regina) + reprise/variation of “Greedy Girl” (Ben)</p>	<p>F major → C major</p>
<p>No.9, Finale</p> <p>Reprise of “Rain Quartet” (Alexandra) → ragtime march + dialogue → Spiritual (Jazz and chorus) → Recitative (Alexandra confronts Regina), superimposed over spiritual → Jazz and chorus + spoken dialogue (Alexandra and Regina) → orchestral postlude</p>	<p>F major</p>

1A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.1 Overture

Piano

Maestoso (♩ = 84)

f

mf

1B Candide, No.1 Overture

pesante

ff acuto

2A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.21, III. Dreigroschenfinale

132

Alto (mf)
Sax.
Tch. (mf)

Tr. (mf)

Chor
denkt das Dun - kel und die gro - ße Käl - - - te in

Harp.

Arm. (mf)

Cb. (mf)

2B Candide, No.18 Finale: Make our Garden Grow

cresc.
loaf of dai - ly bread... We're nei - ther pure nor wise - nor good; We'll
CANDIDE
We're nei - ther pure nor wise - nor good; We'll
p sub.

cresc.
do the best we know; We'll build our house, and chop our wood, And
cresc.
do the best we know; We'll build our house, and chop our wood, And
mf

p
cresc.

4A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.13 Zuhälterballade

32
82

M.
(J.)

G (1. mal)

gu - tes hal - bes Jahr in dem Bor - dell, wo un - ser Haus - halt
die - sem hal - ben Jahr in dem Bor - dell, wo un - ser Haus - halt

p

37
87

M.
(J.)

H (2. mal)

war.
war.
2. mal (Trp.)

ppp

4B *Candide*, No.11 I am easily assimilated

115

I am so eas-i-ly as-sim-mi-la-ted.
I am so eas-i-ly as-sim-mi-la-ted.

mf

f sub. *f sub.* *mp*

warmly, legato *cresc.*

eas-y,— it's ev-er so eas-y! — I'm Span-ish,— I'm

sub. *cresc.*

p

sud-den-ly Span-ish! — And you must be Span-ish,too.

cresc. *pp sub.*

Do like the na-tives do. These days you have to be In the ma-

(mp sempre)

5A *Candide*, No.7 Glitter and be gay

CUNEGONDE
p rubato

Glit-ter and be gay, That's the part I play.

5B *Candide*, No.7 Glitter and be gay

cresc.

Born to high-er things, Here I droop my wings, Ah!

pp sub. rall. fort.

fpp rall.

6A Die Dreigroschenoper, No.15 Eifersuchtsduett

22 55

L. *cresc.*
Ja, das werden wir schon sehn! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

Po. *f*
Ne, las werde-n wir schon sehn!

6B Candide, No.7 Glitter and be gay

f (in tempo)

Ha ha ha ha ha! Ha!

f *fp*

7A Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet

Musical score for 7A Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet. The score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "I can not leave eet a". The piano accompaniment includes markings for "Fl", "l.h.", and "p Cl."

7B Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet

Musical score for 7B Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet. The score consists of a vocal line for Mrs. F. and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "cream is the Queen! Ah". The piano accompaniment includes markings for "VI" and "mf".

1A Street Scene, No.1 Introduction and Opening Ensemble

Music by
Kurt Weill

Largo (♩ = 70)

Piano

ff

Molto agitato (♩ = 120)

mf Bss. pizz.
Harp Piano

2 Trb. Hr.

Dr. etc.

Str. Bcl. Fg.

mp

Vl. Cl.

Va. Vc.

mf

1B *West Side Story*, No.1 Prologue

Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 125$

Piano

(Curtain) *mf marc. (deliberately)*

2A *West Side Story*, No.1 Prologue

(finger snaps)

mp

2B *West Side Story*, No.17 Finale

Ancora meno mosso

ppp

long

long

long

long

Curtain

3A Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet

Mrs. F.

Mrs. O. Hats off _____ to the ice-cream

Henry

Jones Hats off _____ to the ice-cream

Olsen Hats off _____ to the ice-cream

Trp.² (l.h.)

ff *p* *ff* *p*

3B Street Scene, No.7 Ice-Cream Sextet

Ice-cream! Ice-cream! I dream ice-

dream ice-cream! I scream ice-cream!

Ice-cream! Ice-cream! I dream ice-

Ice-cream! Ice-cream! I dream

VI Cl VI l.h.

Cor.
B.Cl.

4A *West Side Story*, No.5 "Maria"

- a, Ma - ri - a, Ma - ri - a
cresc.
p
cresc.

4B *Die Zauberflöte*, No.3 Aria „Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön“

Viertes Auftritt
 TAMINO, PAPAGENO.
 No 3 Aria
 Larghetto

TAMINO
 Dies Bild - nis ist be - zaubernd schön, wie noch kein Au - ge je ge -

Viol.
 Clarinetto I, II
 Fagotto I, II
 Corno I, II
 Archi
 Va.
 Tutti
 Archi
 Va. Fiati.
 Vc. e B.

*) = lustige Handlung, Spiel.
 **) „Fein nicht“ in der Bedeutung von „Ja nicht“.

5A Street Scene, No. 10 Arioso "Lonely House"

down. I'm lone - ly in this lone - ly house. . .

In this lone - ly town. . .

Sam goes into the house. A girl appears at the left, glancing apprehensively over her shoulder at a man who is walking down the street behind her. They cross the stage and exit at right. Mrs. Fiorentino reappears at her window. Rose and Easter enter from the left.

5B West Side Story, No.5 "Maria"

meno mosso *ppp a piacere*

The most beau - ti - ful sound I

pp meno mosso *ppp*

Adagio

ev - er heard. Ma - ri - a.

ppp

44415

6A *West Side Story*, No.5 "Maria"

Moderato con anima

mf (warmly) *mp* *dolce*

ri - a! I've just met a girl named Ma - ri - a, And

sud - den - ly that name Will nev - er be the same To me. Ma -

6B *Regina*, Act I: No.1&2. Introduction and Birdie

Allegro comodo (poco pomposo)

mp *r.h.*

A

7 Street Scene, No. 18 Duet and Scene "We'll go away together"

light, we'll leave be-hind our yes-ter-days and make to mor-row

bright. Life is a sky-tall moun-tain Where clouds play hide and

seek, But love will blaze a trail for us up

mf Sam:

p Vl.

p Fl. (col canto)

p marc. Vc.

Ob.

W.W.

8 Street Scene, No. 22 Finale "Don't forget the lilac bush"

Moderato

Sam: *p*

Rose! Rose!

Fl. Cl.

f *l.h.*

mf

Rose: Yes, Sam?

Sam: *p*

What are you going to do, Rose?

Vl. Vla. Vc.

p dolce espr.

Cl. Cor.

9A Street Scene, No. 22 Finale "Don't forget the lilac bush"

— You have to face some things a - lone.

stringendo

mf *cresc.*

Agitato
Sam:

No! Not a - lone! We need each oth - er, we must be to - geth -

f *rit.* *a tempo*

Trp. Trb. Cor. Trb.

Detailed description: This musical score is for the finale of 'Street Scene, No. 22'. It features a vocal line for Sam and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins with the lyrics '— You have to face some things a - lone.' The piano accompaniment includes a *stringendo* marking and dynamic markings of *mf* and *cresc.*. A section marked **Agitato** follows, with Sam singing 'No! Not a - lone! We need each oth - er, we must be to - geth -'. This section includes dynamic markings of *f*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. Instrumental parts for Trp., Trb., and Cor. are also indicated.

9B Street Scene, No. 22 Finale "Don't forget the lilac bush"

Rose:
Please, listen to me, Sam. If we say goodbye now, it
world.

pp *mf dolce* *p*

Fl. *mf dolce* *p*

Trp. sord. *p espr.* Str. Hrp.

Vc. pizz.

Detailed description: This musical score is for the finale of 'Street Scene, No. 22', featuring Rose's vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. Rose's vocal line includes the lyrics 'Please, listen to me, Sam. If we say goodbye now, it world.' The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings of *pp*, *mf dolce*, and *p*. Instrumental parts for Fl., Trp. sord., Str., Hrp., and Vc. pizz. are also indicated.

10A *West Side Story*, No.6 “Balcony Scene”

MARIA *pp* (*freely*) *poco a poco accel.* (*very gradually*)

On - ly you, you're the on - ly thing I'll see for - ev - er. In my

gently pulsing

poco a poco accel.

eyes, in my words and in ev - 'ry - thing I do, Noth - ing else but you,

10B *West Side Story*, No.6 “Balcony Scene”

(*They kiss.*) *Molto allegro*

Molto allegro

ff marc.

MARIA *mf* (*warmly*)

To - night, to - night, It all be - gan to -

mf *p* *sim.*

11 *West Side Story*, No.9A "One Hand, One Heart"

MARIA *p dolce*

On - ly death will part us now. Make of our

lives one life, Day af - ter day, one

Table 1

West Side Story	Street Scene
<p>No.5 “Maria” <i>Moderato con anima</i></p> <p>Hybrid of popular song and operatic aria („Auch wenn die Nummer sich formal stark an den Popular Song anlehnt, fallen doch auch arienhafte Züge auf,“ Jaensch)</p> <p>Central key of E-flat major (key of romance)</p> <p>Protagonist (Tony) standing alone onstage (Robbins complains to Sondheim: a “static song with no one else in the scene”)</p> <p>Opens with recitative (B-major), <i>slowly and freely</i>; rises to A-flat on final utterance of “Maria”</p> <p>Ends on an E-flat major chord with added sixth</p>	<p>No.10 Arioso “Lonely House” <i>Moderato assai</i></p> <p>“At once song and aria, a soulful blues that crosses over into the sound world of late-nineteenth century opera” (Hinton)</p> <p>Central key of E-flat major (one of the opera’s “most romantic moments,” Hinton)</p> <p>Protagonist (Sam) standing alone onstage</p> <p>Opens with recitative (E-flat major with flourishes of bluesy augmented second); climaxes in a cadenza-like passage marked <i>free</i>, rising to A-flat</p> <p>Ends on an E-flat major chord with an added sixth, and overlapping F-major arpeggios</p>

Table 2**West Side Story****Street Scene**

No. 6 Balcony Scene	No. 18 Duet and Scene
Orchestra quotes “Maria” melody in a-flat minor modulates to B-flat major	Orchestral opening/Rose singing in a-flat minor modulates to B-flat major for Sam
Maria pulls music toward C major with chromatically descending bass line from D to B-natural (“In my eyes, in my words...”)	Rose pulls music toward c minor with chromatically descending bass line from D to B-flat (“we’ll leave behind our yesterdays”)
Tony responds in c minor (“And there’s nothing for me but Maria”)	Sam reflects in c minor (“Life is a sky-tall mountain/Where clouds play hide and seek”)
Modulates to E-flat major their kiss	Sung refrain “When we go away” lands in E-flat major with added sixth
Modulates to B-flat major for “Tonight”; home key wins out with final cadence in A-flat major	After Rose has pulled orchestra to c-minor, Sam sings in B-flat major in double-tonic complex over A-flat major; final chord overlays key of romance (E-flat major) with key of dreams (C-major) and the high F of Sam’s exaltation
Segues to spoken dialogue over orchestral accompaniment	Segues to spoken dialogue over orchestral accompaniment

1A The Exception and the Rule, Prologue

Alto Piccolo Rehearsal (1958) Prologue (Marches) [5]

Cym 3-D B.D.

Cyl 3-B P.D.

Clarinet

Clarinet

You all know

I, A play by Bruch!

(Some melody)

Dim. *mf, legg.*

I, A play by Bruch! And you know just what to expect: A dia-no die-ing with the

Clarinet

dim.

SCHIRMER'S ROYAL GRAND No. 81-28 Boston

Leonard Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress, Box 1054, Folder 6

1B Der Lindberghflug, Drittens

Lindbergh

$\text{♩} = 68$

Ich ha - be bei mir: zwei e - lek - tri - sche

L. Lam - pen, ei - ne Rol - le Seil, ei - ne Rol - le Bind - fa - den, ein Jagd - mes - ser, vier ro - te

The image shows a musical score for a piano and voice. It consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a tempo marking of quarter note = 68. The lyrics are 'Ich ha - be bei mir: zwei e - lek - tri - sche'. The piano accompaniment has a treble and bass clef, a common time signature, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The second system also has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are 'L. Lam - pen, ei - ne Rol - le Seil, ei - ne Rol - le Bind - fa - den, ein Jagd - mes - ser, vier ro - te'. The piano accompaniment has a treble and bass clef and a common time signature.

2A Der Jasager, No.1

$\text{♩} = 132$

No. 1

f

The image shows a musical score for a piano. It consists of two systems. The first system has a treble and bass clef, a 3/4 time signature, and a tempo marking of quarter note = 132. The dynamic marking is *f*. The second system also has a treble and bass clef and a 3/4 time signature.

2B *The Exception and the Rule*, "Bach" instrumental, pp.1-2

Adagio (♩=56)
Soprano Piano & Organ

"Bach" instrumental

THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE, A Musical by
Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein
Stephen Sondheim, John Guare (1968)

Handwritten musical score for the instrumental piece "Bach" from the musical "The Exception and the Rule". The score is written on ten staves. The tempo is marked "Adagio" with a metronome marking of ♩=56. The instrumentation is "Soprano Piano & Organ". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A red stamp is visible on the right side of the page.

NO. 17-16 STAVE
Symphony Size

Made in U.S.A.

-2-

(37
41)

Chorus Unison

pp
Go, etc.

Handwritten musical score for the instrumental piece "Bach" from the musical "The Exception and the Rule". The score is written on ten staves. The tempo is marked "Adagio" with a metronome marking of ♩=56. The instrumentation is "Soprano Piano & Organ". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A red stamp is visible on the right side of the page.

Leonard Bernstein Papers, Library of Congress, Box 1053, Folder 6

2C Der Lindberghflug, Fünftens

♩ = 84 Chor Tenöre *p*

Ich bin der Ne-bel, mit mir muß rech-nen, der auf das

Was-ser hin-aus - fährt. Tau - send Jah-re hatmankei-nenge - se-hen, der in der

The image shows a musical score for a tenor chorus and piano accompaniment. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system features a tenor vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Ich bin der Ne-bel, mit mir muß rech-nen, der auf das". The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment with the lyrics: "Was-ser hin-aus - fährt. Tau - send Jah-re hatmankei-nenge - se-hen, der in der". The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84. The piano part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

1A *Trouble in Tahiti, Scene III*

⑥ *Andante, a little faster than the first time*
mp

Then I ran to find the sing-er; I longed to see his face.

p

poco rit. *a tempo*

He could free me from this place. Ev-'ry step I took was ter-ror; The

poco rit. *a tempo*

The musical score for '1A Trouble in Tahiti, Scene III' consists of two systems of vocal and piano accompaniment. The first system features a vocal line in G major with a 2/4 time signature, marked 'Andante, a little faster than the first time' and 'mp'. The lyrics are 'Then I ran to find the sing-er; I longed to see his face.' The piano accompaniment is in the same key and time signature, marked 'p'. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics 'He could free me from this place. Ev-'ry step I took was ter-ror; The'. The tempo markings 'poco rit.' and 'a tempo' are used to indicate changes in the music's pace. The piano accompaniment also follows these markings.

1B *Lady in the Dark, II. Wedding Dream, "This Is New"*

74 *Lento* (♩ = ♩)
(Randy Curtis disappears)

new. LIZA
 Ah (free)

Soprano *pp*

Alto *p* *Hm* *pp*

Tenor *p* *Hm* *pp*

Bass *p* *Hm* *pp*

p *dim.* *pp*

The musical score for '1B Lady in the Dark, II. Wedding Dream, "This Is New"' is a vocal ensemble piece. It begins with a tempo marking of 'Lento' and a note value of '♩ = ♩'. A stage direction '(Randy Curtis disappears)' is present. The score includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, along with a piano accompaniment. The Soprano part has a 'new.' marking and a 'LIZA' vocal line with the lyrics 'Ah (free)'. The piano accompaniment features dynamics such as 'p', 'dim.', and 'pp'. The score is written in a key with two flats and a common time signature.

2A *Trouble in Tahiti*, Scene III

① Andante mosso ♩ = 69
 Dinah *(simply)*
mp

I was stand - ing in a gar - den, A gar - den gone 'o seed,

2B *Lady in the Dark*, IV. Childhood Dream, "My Ship"

in. I can wait the years Till it ap-pears One fine day one spring, But the

3A Trouble in Tahiti, Scene IV

(Dinah is in the street, stage-right. She looks up and sees that it is raining; she opens her umbrella and proceeds slowly across the stage. Sam enters, stage-left, also with umbrella. They meet slightly right of center.)

Tempo di "Gymnopédie" $\text{♩} = 84$ (Sam enters.)

espr.
pp
p

① Dinah *mp*
I'm on my way to lunch with Su-sie.

(They look up, embarrassed.)
Sam *mp*
Well, of all peo-ple.

① *p*

3B Lady in the Dark, II. Wedding Dream, "Mapleton High Choral"

Tempo I (Bolero) $\text{♩} = 60$ ALL

ALL
p

land. And now a Ma-ple-ton High girl is to be

mar-ried. Li-za Ell-iott is mar-ry-ing Ken-dall

4A *Trouble in Tahiti*, Scene VI

21 *Beguine (a bit broader than before)*
sempre ff

Trio MAG-IC!! Where the palm-trees whis-per to - geth-er, And it's

(off-stage, on mike) *sva ad lib.* *f* *p*

Girl Ah, Ah,

Boy 1 *f* *p* Ah, Ah,

Boy 2 *f* *p* Ah, Ah,

Beguine (a bit broader than before)
 21 *f* *mp*

4B *Lady in the Dark*, IV. Childhood Dream, "My Ship"

(slow)

al - so bring my own true love to me.

dim. *p* *pp*

200 *

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