

Kurt Weill Newsletter

VOLUME 36

NUMBER 2

FALL 2018



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Walt Whitman and Weill's America

Grants and Initiatives: Union Avenue Opera and University of Maryland

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Published twice a year, the *Kurt Weill Newsletter* features articles and reviews (books, performances, recordings) that center on Kurt Weill but take a broader look at issues of twentieth-century music and theater. With a print run of 4,500 copies, the *Newsletter* is distributed worldwide. Subscriptions are free. The editor welcomes the submission of articles, reviews, and news items for consideration.

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

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Ed Harsh Rejoins Staff

The Foundation is pleased to welcome Ed Harsh as Director of Strategic Initiatives as of 1 November 2018. Harsh began his professional career in 1992 with an eight-year stint as the inaugural Managing Editor of the Kurt Weill Edition. He has since held many other positions within the classical music world, including most recently President and CEO of New Music USA.

He returns with the primary objective of developing and implementing a dynamic strategic framework to advance the performance, visibility, and identity of Weill's and Blitzstein's music. In this newly created position, Harsh will oversee promotion, marketing, and branding, as well as the incubation of special projects and collaborative performance initiatives.

Harsh is concurrently engaged in a personal book project using Kurt Weill's work as a lens through which to examine the topic of artistic responsibility.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Theater aficionados and Weill fans are already buzzing over next spring's performance of *Lady in the Dark* in New York, with Victoria Clark signed to play the lead and contributions lined up from several leading lights of theater and fashion. It's early yet, but we hear from Clark, director Ted Sperling, and adaptor Christopher Hart as they lay out some of their plans for the performance. *Lady* makes its presence felt in the review section as well, where Mark Clague, editor-in-chief of the Gershwin Critical Edition, evaluates the Kurt Weill Edition volume containing the complete score and book published late last year.

Weill's *Four Walt Whitman Songs* move to the forefront this season in celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of Whit-

man's birth in 2019. A number of performances are lined up; we offer substantial historical background to enhance understanding of the song cycle and its many resonances while noting a strong upward trend in performances and recordings in recent years. Reports on two recent Foundation endeavors in collaboration with Union Avenue Opera and the University of Maryland round out our features. As usual, we offer a rich array of reviews and the latest news on the legacies of Weill, Lenya, and Blitzstein as well as updates on the most recent triumphs of past Lotte Lenya Competition prizewinners.

Dave Stein



Lied vom blinden Mädchen Now Available

One year ago, the Fall 2017 *Newsletter* chronicled a stunning find: the manuscript of a long-lost song by Weill, *Lied vom blinden Mädchen* or *Lied vom weißen Käse*

("Probably Buried in Some Basement": The Surprising Discovery of an Unknown Weill Song"). Managing Editor of the Kurt Weill Edition Elmar Juchem, who discovered the manuscript, declared, "The song is a gem. Deceptively simple, yet it displays a dizzying number of facets that sparkle more or less, depending on which of them the performer chooses to hold up to the light."

Now the sheet music has been issued by European American Music (EA 854) in a beautifully edited and engraved bilingual piano-vocal score, with a foreword by Juchem and English lyrics by Michael Feingold. Two recordings of the song, one in German and one in English, are now available for streaming and download. Ute Gfrerer provides the vocals and Shane Schag the piano accompaniment on both versions.

The score can be purchased through Hal Leonard and all major sheet music retailers. The recordings may be found on store.cdbaby.com and all digital platforms, including iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, and YouTube.

Two More World Premieres

Ensemble Modern plans to release its latest Weill CD on its own label early in 2019. The disc will contain two world premiere recordings: *Chansons des quais*, a cycle of songs and instrumental numbers from *Marie galante* conceived by Kim H. Kowalke; and the new critical edition of Weill, Brecht, and Hauptmann's *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Soprano Ute Gfrerer graces both works, while Winnie Böwe and the ensemble *amarcord* also participate in the *Songspiel*. An old favorite, *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, rounds out

the disc. The incomparable HK Gruber conducts, adding his fifty years of unparalleled Weill experience and expertise to the mix.

Bonus track:

Listeners looking to get their hands on three recordings for the price of one are in luck: Ensemble Modern will also offer both the German and English renditions of *Lied vom blinden Mädchen* as bonus digital downloads.

And Another ...

Kleine Zaubernachtsmusik, a chamber work newly derived from Weill's *Zaubernacht* (1922) by John Baxindine, saw its world premiere 21 October 2018 in the NDR Landesfunkhaus in Hannover, Germany by the Arte Ensemble. A radio broadcast of the concert will take place 3 February 2019 on NDR Kultur. The suite, designed as a concert piece, is scored for the same forces (except soprano) as the original stage work, requiring 9–10 players. Arte Ensemble's release of *Zaubernacht* (CPO 777 767-2) in 2012 marked the first recording of the original score.

Die sieben Todsünden—New Version for Chamber Ensemble

A new version of *Die sieben Todsünden* for chamber ensemble will be available for performance as of the 2019–20 season. Newly orchestrated by HK Gruber with Christian Muthspiel, the chamber version pares the instrumental forces to 15 players, making the work more accessible for theaters, dance troupes, chamber ensembles, and companies performing in smaller venues while retaining Weill's distinctive musical language and the story's timeless appeal. The vocal parts remain unchanged. The new orchestration will be available in both the original keys (1933) and the transposed version by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg (1955).

Die sieben Todsünden/The Seven Deadly Sins, version for small orchestra, by HK Gruber with Christian Muthspiel:

Orchestration: fl/picc, 2 cl, bsn; hn, tpt, tbn; pno, gtr/bjo; perc; string quintet

Duration: 35 min.

The new version will be premiered by the Ensemble Modern under Gruber's direction in autumn 2019. Performances will be licensed by Schott Music International.

Lady in the Dark, one of Weill's most revolutionary—and successful—Broadway shows, written with Moss Hart and Ira Gershwin, is enjoying new prominence, buoyed by the critical edition of the complete script and score edited by Bruce D. McClung and Elmar Juchem (Kurt Weill Edition, Series I, Volume 16, published 2017). This volume presents a version of the book never before published that recaptures the show as it opened in 1941 and ran for a total of 777 performances on Broadway and a national tour—with a running time about half an hour less than the published script—as well as an authoritative and complete musical score. The New York choral ensemble MasterVoices will present a semi-staged production based on the critical edition on 25–26 April 2019 at City Center, with Ted Sperling as both stage and musical director, Tony winner Victoria Clark in the lead role of Liza Elliott, the script abridged and adapted by Moss Hart's son, Christopher, and choreography by Doug Varone, and. We've asked Sperling, Clark, and Hart to comment on *Lady in the Dark* and the upcoming performances. Some additional historical and contemporary perspectives shed further light on this milestone in the history of musical theater.

The *Lady* Reappears

Ted Sperling:

I performed in my high school musicals, both on-stage and in the pit, but it was really in college that I became fascinated with Broadway, in large part because my close friend and schoolmate, Victoria Clark, asked me to conduct the shows she was directing. I did my own crash course at the Drama School library, reading encyclopedias of shows cover to cover. *Lady in the Dark* leaped out at



PHOTO: LAURA MARIE DUNGAN

me as a fascinating and little-known property. Twenty years later, I had the chance to direct the show at the Prince Music Theatre in Philadelphia. As part of my research, Bruce McClung, author of the definitive book about *Lady*, suggested I look at the original stage manager's script and Gertrude Lawrence's sides. I learned that the published version did not reflect accurately what happened on-stage, so I incorporated those changes in our working script. My biggest change was to cast the psychiatrist as a woman. The psychiatry scenes can feel like a man telling a woman what's wrong with her, but a conversation between two successful, professional women trying to solve a mystery has a very different tone. The Prince Theatre production was a major milestone for me—by far my largest directing undertaking to that point. Yet I felt if I could get a second crack at this, I'd love to go even further and make the dreams more disturbing and psychologically complex. I've been looking for another opportunity to do it ever since.

It's been eighteen years since then, and the world certainly has changed. I'm very hopeful *Lady* will work wonderfully for MasterVoices. The chorus plays a huge part; in a way, they are the second biggest star after Liza. One of the things I took away from seeing the 1994 *Encores!* production of *Lady* is that this show cries out for movement. If it's static physically, the dreams don't really come to life. I've invited Doug Varone and his dance company to join us, as they did for our production of *Dido and Aeneas*. Doug is a director as well as a choreographer, very musical and inventive, and ours will

be a dance-driven staging of the dreams. Because the show takes place in the world of fashion, we are collaborating with the editorial staff at *Vogue*, led by Hamish Bowles; the clothing for each dream will be designed by a different person from the fashion world. The show won't be fully staged, but there will be scenic elements, and the actors will be "off book."

I'm very excited about working with Vicki on this piece ... we have been collaborating for over thirty years now, and *Lady* has been a dream project all along. It's very important that the person playing Liza be complicated and sympathetic—if she just seems like a neurotic mess, or brusque and cold, you're in trouble. In many ways, Vicki reminds me of Gertrude Lawrence. She's a great comedian, for example, yet she can break your heart. She has an amazing voice. And yes, she's deeply sympathetic. We're going to be digging into this project side by side, and I'm really excited to see what she will unearth that I wouldn't have considered.

There are people who've never heard of *Lady in the Dark*, and there are people who think they know all about it. Some in the latter category will tell you that it's a fascinating experiment in form, but that the attitude towards psychiatry is very simple-minded and Liza's cure is unbelievable. It's easy to dismiss her problem as "Her dad didn't think she was pretty." (That comes up in the last session, when she remembers key moments from her youth.) But that isn't trivial; feeling unattractive has a big influence on your daily life, and both men and women can relate to that. The plot revolves around what man Liza will end up with, but that's not really what she's trying to figure out. She's trying to rethink her life and regain control of her emotions and her work. I don't want a pat ending where she finds the man who will solve everything. Christopher Hart and I are going to work on an adapted script specifically for this presentation. We'll take a hard look at it with an eye to making the evening as streamlined as we can. But at the same time, we'll be honoring the book, not just the music and lyrics. It's fantastic that we can take advantage of the new critical edition as we work. To know that scholars have pored over this, compared sources, and come to informed decisions puts us that much further ahead in the process. I can't wait to start rehearsals!

Victoria Clark:

KWN: When did you discover *Lady in the Dark*? Have you wanted to play Liza for a long time?

VC: The year after I graduated from Yale I was invited to come back to school and play Liza in a student-produced concert of *Lady in the Dark*, and I have been waiting to play Liza ever since. I don't want to say how long that's been. Ted Sperling and I have been looking for the best opportunity to work on the piece together, and this is it!

KWN: What do you find most appealing about the role?

VC: Any woman in transition is immediately interesting to me, and I admire her humanity and her struggles. Also, she is in a leadership position at the magazine where she works. On the one hand she has the career so many women in the 1940s longed for. On the other hand, she is conflicted about her personal life. These themes are completely resonant today and still speak to all women.

KWN: Most daunting?

VC: Well, Gertie [Lawrence, who created the role]. She was the one and only. If I can get even a fraction of her wit and nuance, in what was by all accounts a completely virtuosic performance, I will be satisfied. I'm going to start training seriously when we are months out. Like, now!

KWN: Do you foresee any difficulties in preparing *Lady in the Dark*? If so, how do you expect to surmount them?

VC: One difficulty is that God didn't make a day with more than 24 hours. I am recovering from reconstructive surgery on my left arm following a bicycle accident, so some of my preparation will be physical therapy and rehab and as many dance classes as I can squeeze in. There will be Alexander classes, voice lessons, yoga, time alone with the script, and some significant research on the era, the fashion industry, and psychoanalysis. And Moss Hart. I've always been obsessed with him and wrote a treatment for a musical based on *Act One* [Hart's memoir] when I was twenty. All can be surmounted by approaching the process one day at a time, and with a lot of laughter. There is a real danger in taking oneself too seriously.

KWN: How closely will you be working with Ted Sperling?

VC: Ted and I have been good friends since 1980. We collaborated on several productions in college as director (me) and music director (Ted); we have worked on several professional projects together including *Titanic*, *The Light in the Piazza*, and countless concerts. It's a long and trusting collaboration, and I'm thrilled to be continuing it here. Those years of friendship create a built-in sense of symbiosis. He knows when I'm going to breathe. He



PHOTO: BJOHN BOLLINDER

knows how long to wait for a laugh. I always feel at ease when Ted is in the pit. I'm excited to be exploring this material and working on this magnificent score by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin with Master Voices, Ted Sperling, and Doug Varone.

KWN: Will recent feminist discourse affect your characterization, or the overall conception of the show?

VC: It will have to in some way, even if it's subliminal. At least Liza is the boss. That helps. I love that "dark" is in the title. We must visit that side of ourselves before we can truly come into the light. We are at a turning point in our country and our world where we must find a way to emerge as compassionate and thoughtful citizens. The way we approach fear of others is based on the way we confront the fear in our own beings. If we grow to understand that connection more fully, society will change. The character of Liza sets about examining her own fear, and we need to be more like her. I personally think there are few things as moving as watching someone come into his or her own self-worth and begin to actualize the potential within. This is at the core of *Lady in the Dark* for me.

KWN: What other Weill works are on your radar?

VC: I'm currently leading a class at Duke University with Professor Brad Rogers and we are looking at *Love Life* by Weill and Alan Jay Lerner! That show is also about fear in many ways and the toll of modern life on personal relationships. So this was a theme that clearly interested Weill.

KWN: Why does Weill interest you?

VC: There is something so playful yet haunting about his music. I'm not even sure what I mean by that. There is longing in every phrase. He circles around the turbulence and flow of life in a way that some composers never capture. Weill is a pleasure to sing. Ever surprising. Ever revelatory. And eminently human. In one chord you may hear the chaos, despair, and triumph of life. This is Weill to me.

"The plan of the work is to dramatize the case history of a businesslike but neurotic young woman and to present the scenes of her troubled dreams in terms of musical comedy fantasy. Mr. Hart uses his heroine's subconscious as a springboard for an enlivening and imaginative foray into song and dance, and it is these adventures in the dream world that provide *Lady in the Dark* with its greatest interest. The shifts back and forth between the realism of the drama and the musical gayety of the fantasy are shrewdly handled and are a tribute to both the author and the smoothness of modern stage machinery."

Richard Watts, Jr.
New York *Herald Tribune*, 24 January 1941

Background photo of Gertrude Lawrence as Liza Elliott from Broadway window card, 1943.

Christopher Hart:

KWN: As you adapt the script of *Lady in the Dark*, what will your primary concern be?

CH: The primary concern is to compress the libretto in order to accommodate a 150-voice chorus and to focus on the music presented in the brand new critical edition of *Lady in the Dark*. In very general terms, my mandate has been to prepare a script that is one-third book, two-thirds music.

KWN: Is it necessary to bring the script “up to date” in any way? Have any changes in American society since 1941 made the script seem old-fashioned?

CH: The show was way ahead of its time to begin with. Ira Gershwin's lyrics are so brilliant that we can't update them without rewriting them completely. We are planning changes that will help acknowledge the cultural shifts that have occurred because of the women's movement. We're thinking about a female psychoanalyst—very rare in those days—and perhaps the very minor change of having Liza co-editing her magazine, *Allure*, rather than having her turn over the job to the man she loves. However, most importantly, *Lady in the Dark* is still a vibrant story about a woman struggling with her emotions and her psyche.

KWN: What can you say about the handling of the book in the critical edition?

CH: The critical edition relies on several authoritative sources, including Gertrude Lawrence's script, the stage manager's notes, and the producer's script. Over the years I have looked at several versions of *Lady in the Dark*, most created after the close of the Broadway run, including the film version with Ginger Rogers, and a radio version. These were much less scrupulous about respecting the original Broadway script.

KWN: What excites you the most about the upcoming performance with MasterVoices? What do you hope will come out of the performance?

CH: At last, all of *Lady in the Dark* resides in one place. In the past it resided in pieces, which made revival productions much harder to arrange and pull off. I'm hoping the performance gives theaters and producers the opportunity to stage this innovative and psychologically provocative show.

KWN: What do you consider the significance of *Lady in the Dark* in the development of the Broadway musical?

CH: *Lady in the Dark* broke ground just by bringing up the topic of psychoanalysis in a Broadway musical and then building the plot around it. The entire structure of the show was new and magical; the music advanced the story in a way never before seen. There was no music in any of the book scenes; then the music came bursting through in the lead character's dream sequences. Wow. Still thrilling in its innovative storytelling.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER HART

Lady Yesterday

“Aaron Copland asked me: ‘It’s amazing how quickly Kurt Weill gets from the realistic play scene to the dream. What does he use there?’ I said, ‘Clarinet.’ Copland said, ‘Oh, yeah, clarinet and what?’ I said, ‘Just clarinet.’ He said, ‘Damn it, we slave six months to get a thing like that, and Kurt does it with two notes on the clarinet.’”

**Interview with Maurice Abravanel
8 August 1984**

“Ira’s own favorite lyrics are those for *Lady in the Dark*, which he wrote with Kurt Weill.”

**Oscar Levant
The Memoirs of an Amnesiac (Putnam, 1965), p. 140**

Lady Today

“In *Lady in the Dark*, music occupies a ‘conceptual’ realm representing the heroine’s unconscious. With the dream sequences interrupting and commenting on the play’s central narrative, *Lady in the Dark* might legitimately claim to be the progenitor of the later concept musical.”

**bruce d. mcclung
Introduction to *Lady in the Dark* published in the Kurt Weill Edition (Kurt Weill Foundation and European American Music, 2017), p. 13**

“*Lady in the Dark* is of our time, too: the invasion of personal space, including the psychological probing of repressive family dramas, has continued to be one of the indispensable ingredients of celebrity culture. Such popularization of analytic psychology and the kind of public exposure that haunts Liza’s worst dreams are nowadays even more commonplace than half a century ago. What was new back then survives as a hackneyed part of popular culture. That *Lady in the Dark* might still seem topical, refashioned more as a commentary on than a reflection of the culture of its time, owes much to the way in which it explores the spheres of ‘reality’ and ‘fantasy.’ The psychoanalytic theory that informs its book is itself an object of scrutiny. Mixing psychoanalytic depth and Hollywood glitz, seriousness and humor, *Lady in the Dark* can seem both a celebration and a send-up of contemporaneous trends.”

**Stephen Hinton
Weill’s Musical Theater: Stages of Reform (University of California Press, 2012), p. 296**

“Liza’s problems are still current. It’s still tough to be a female in business, and women still aren’t given enough responsibility. When Moss directed me in a summer-stock production in 1952, he had [co-editor] Charley Johnson push me out of the chair at the end. Today the two characters could and should share the same chair.”

**Kitty Carlisle Hart
quoted in Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), p. 202**

Walt Whitman and Weill's America

Weill's only mature song cycle, and his only extended work for the concert hall composed in the U.S., the *Four Walt Whitman Songs* remain in that sense anomalous. But in another, they could not be more typical of Weill's embrace of his adopted homeland. He began them as the U.S. entered the war against the Axis in December 1941, one of his first attempts to compose music for the war effort, as he would continue to do for the duration. The date of the last Whitman poem he composed, "Come up from the Fields, Father," is significant, too, following on the heels of Weill's return from a trip to Europe and Palestine in May 1947, which far from provoking nostalgia confirmed resoundingly his choice to be an American. Weill's letters and published writings contain few references to Whitman, but the connection was deep. As Kim H. Kowalke noted in 2000, "Fifty years after his death, most people tend to think of Weill as a 'Brecht-composer.' He would surely have preferred to be remembered as a 'Whitman-composer.'"

For several decades, the Whitman songs notched few performances or recordings, either with piano or orchestra, but over the last thirty years, they have attracted a following that now includes such singers as Thomas Hampson, Ian Bostridge, Anna Prohaska, Sir Willard White, and Sir Simon Keenlyside. The songs have seen at least thirty performances in the last ten years. Like *Street Scene* (which itself includes a healthy dose of Whitman's poetry), the *Four Walt Whitman Songs* have gained momentum that is poised to grow, aided by celebrations of Whitman's bicentenary in 2019.

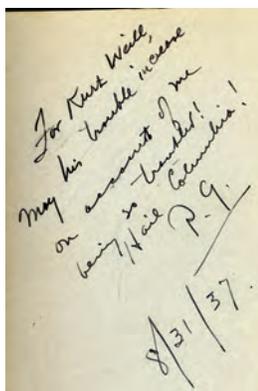
Weill-Whitman Chronology

1919: Whitman's centenary inspires increased interest in his work among German artists.

14 November 1926: Weill's first published reference to Whitman, in *Der deutsche Rundfunk* (see p. 8).

10 September 1935: Weill arrives in the U.S.

31 August 1937: Paul Green, Weill's collaborator on *Johnny Johnson* (1936), presents him with an inscribed volume of Whitman's poetry, just after Weill begins the process of acquiring American citizenship.



December 1941: Weill composes "Oh Captain! My Captain!," a memorial to President Lincoln. He presents a piano-vocal manuscript to Max and Mab Anderson.

January 1942: Weill composes "Beat! Beat! Drums!" and "Dirge for Two Veterans." These three songs were orchestrated later; the precise date has not been ascertained.

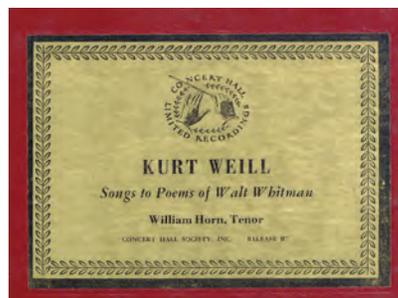
31 March 1942: Helen Hayes records a spoken version of Weill's setting of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" for RCA Victor.

Summer 1942: Three Whitman songs are published in piano-vocal score by Chappell.

August 1945: Elmer Rice agrees to work with Weill on an operatic adaptation of his play *Street Scene*, which contains quotations from Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

3 August 1946: Weill completes his setting of the Whitman passage, in the love duet "Remember that I Care."

June–July 1947: Weill composes "Come up from the Fields, Father." Later that year, tenor William Horne records all four of Weill's Whitman settings with pianist Adam Garner for Concert Hall Society Records in a limited edition. Weill supervises the recording.



William Horne's name was misspelled on the front cover of the Concert Hall Society recording.

2 March 1952: First performance of three Whitman Songs with orchestra at the 92nd Street Y in New York, with Norman Atkins, baritone, and conductor Maurice Levine.

6 September 1954: Baritone Theodor Uppman performs "Beat! Beat! Drums!" live on the radio program, *The Bell Telephone Hour*, with orchestra conducted by Donald Voorhees (Video Arts International VAIA 1181).

19 March 1955: Weill's longtime friend and frequent conductor Maurice Abravanel leads three Whitman songs with the Utah Symphony and soloist Arthur Kent.

1956: Composer Carlos Surinach orchestrates "Come up from the Fields, Father."

11–12 January 1974: Baritone Alan Titus performs all four Whitman songs with the Cincinnati Symphony conducted by Thomas Schippers. (Titus performed all four with orchestra several times during the 1970s.)

1986: European American Music prints a piano score of all four Whitman songs, the first time they are all in print.

24 March 1990: Performance of all four Whitman songs in Düsseldorf during a festival honoring Weill's ninetieth birthday. Probably the first performance of all four in Europe. Released in 1991 as a live recording by baritone Wolfgang Holzmaier and the Robert-Schumann-Kammerorchester, conducted by Marc-Andreas Schlingensiefen (Koch Schwann 314 050).

Winter 1993–94: Baritone Thomas Hampson records “Dirge for Two Veterans” with pianist Craig Rutenberg, released in 1997 on his collection of Whitman settings, *To the Soul* (EMI 7243 5 55028 2 7).

1996: European American Music publishes a revised edition of all four Whitman songs, with the order of the songs changed to reflect the order Weill established in the 1947 recording.

Summer 2001: Thomas Hampson performs all four Whitman songs at the Salzburg Festival with the Radio Symphonie Orchester Wien conducted by Dennis Russell Davies.

7 September 2009: Tenor Ian Bostridge sings the Whitman songs for the first time at the Schubertiade Festival in Schwarzenberg, Austria, with pianist Julius Drake.

14–17 February 2011: Baritone Simon Keenlyside records “Beat! Beat! Drums!” and “Dirge for Two Veterans” with pianist Malcolm Martineau, released later that year on *Songs of War* (Sony 88697944242).

2013: European American Music publishes a new edition of all four Whitman songs in versions for high and low voice; orchestral material for both versions made available for the first time.

February 2014: Soprano Anna Prohaska records “Beat! Beat! Drums!” and “Dirge for Two Veterans” with pianist Eric Schneider; released later that year on *Behind the Lines*, Deutsche Grammophon 479 2472. (Although women singers have performed the Whitman songs in concert, Prohaska is the first to record any of them.)

26–28 February 2018: Ian Bostridge records all four Whitman songs (see p. 10).

Above right: Weill's undated inscription to Paul Robeson on the title page of the first edition of the Whitman songs. All illustrations on pp. 7–9 from the collections of the Weill-Lenya Research Center

Weill on Whitman:

Der deutsche Rundfunk, 1926:

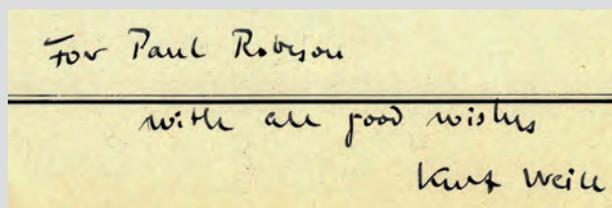
“Walt Whitman was the first truly original talent to grow out of American soil. He was the first who discovered poetic material in the tempo of public life as well as in the landscapes of the New World.”

Weill to Lotte Lenya, 28 January 1942

“I am finishing another Whitman song (“Dirge for Two Veterans”) which I think will be the best ...”

Weill to Lenya, 5 February 1942

“The three Walt Whitman songs will be printed and I will try to get Paul Robeson to sing them first.”



Weill to his parents, 5 February 1942

“As always, I am working a lot. Among other things, I have written some songs to poems by Walt Whitman, the great American poet.”

Letter to Ira Gershwin, May 2, 1942

“I spent some time in Chicago and made an album of records with Helen Hayes for Victor. ... On the fourth side we took one of my Walt Whitman songs (“Beat! Beat! Drums!”) which Helen speaks in rhythm of the music. It is very exciting and probably the most interesting example of combining poetry and music. ... The Whitman songs will also be recorded by John Charles Thomas.”

Weill to Maxwell Anderson, 10 July 1947

“I have written some more Whitman songs lately. They will be recorded by Concert Hall Records.”

Selected Performances in 2018–19

17 October, New York: Baritone Edward Nelson with the American Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leon Botstein. Carnegie Hall.

5 November, Washington, D.C.: Baritone William Sharp with Wan-Chi Su, piano. National Cathedral.

5 December, London: Ian Bostridge with Sir Antonio Pappano, piano. Barbican Centre.

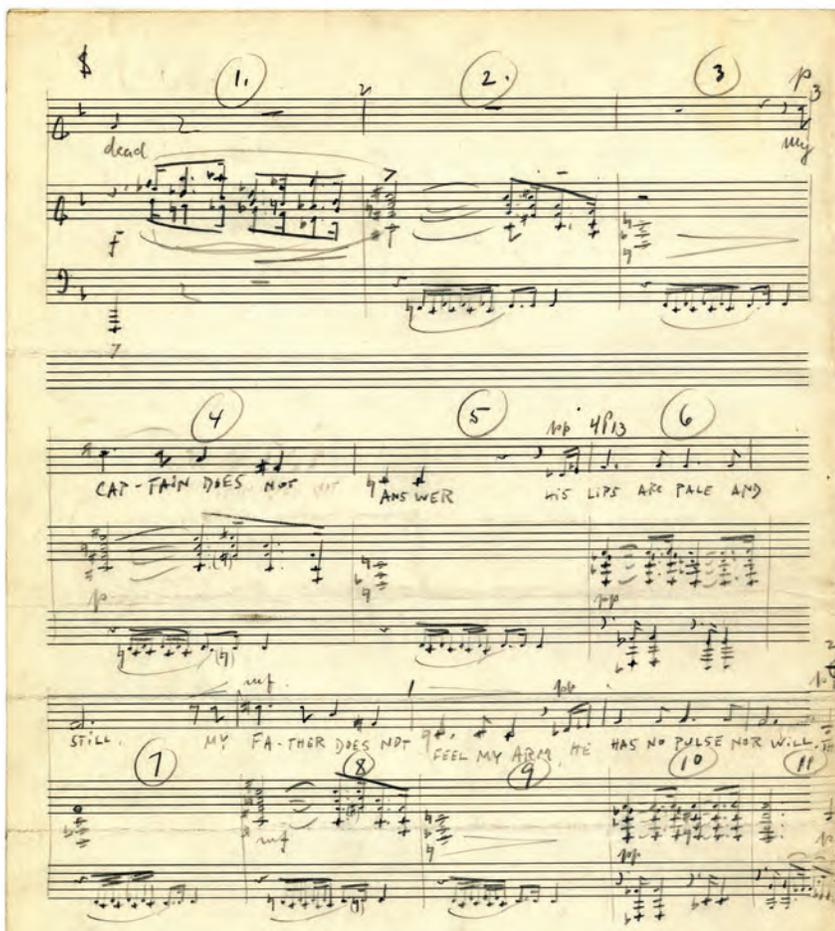
7 January, Cologne: Ian Bostridge with Julius Drake, piano. Philharmonie.

9 March, New York: Baritone Malcolm J. Merriweather with Steven Ryan, piano. Union Theological Seminary.



Two pages from a copyist's vocal score of Weill's setting of "O Captain! My Captain!" The bottom page is in Weill's hand, specifying replacement measures for the crossed-out passage in the copyist's score (the last two measures in Weill's hand replace the beginning of the next page (not shown) of the copyist's manuscript). This score was used to prepare the first edition of Weill's Whitman settings (Chappell, 1942), and Weill's revision is recorded in that edition as in all subsequent ones.

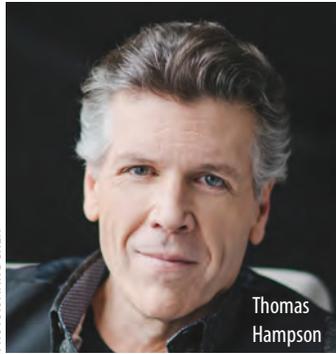
The alterations are substantial, even though the vocal line hardly changes. Weill interpolates three full bars—beginning with a reminiscence of the song's opening—before the singer re-enters with "My Captain does not answer." He also introduces the ominous "drum roll" figure in the left hand, which in the first version does not appear until the final stanza, to bring home the fact that the Captain (i.e., President Lincoln) will not rise again, as the speaker had hoped. The figure persists nearly until the end of the song (aside from measures 6 and 10 in Weill's revised version with their interlocking dotted rhythm.) Note also the increased rhythmic and harmonic complexity throughout the passage. In most cases, the original piano accompaniment had done little more than double the vocal line, but the new dotted (or in effect double-dotted) rhythmic figures in the right hand increase tension; the disquieting exchange between the right and left hands reinforces the speaker's dreadful realization that even though the war is over and Lincoln's goals have been reached, he himself has passed from the scene.



Hampson Sings Weill Singing Whitman

To celebrate Walt Whitman's bicentenary, Thomas Hampson will sing *Four Walt Whitman Songs* with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, conducted by Mariss Jansons, 16–17 May at the Herkulesaal in Munich and 18 May at the Meistersingerhalle in Nuremberg. Hampson's longstanding engagement with Weill's music includes a performance of the Whitman songs at the Salzburg Festival in 2001 with the Radio Symphonieorchester Wien led by Dennis Russell Davies, later broadcast on ORF. He recorded "Dirge for Two Veterans" on his 1997 album of Whitman settings, *To the Soul* (EMI 7243 5 55028 2 7).

PHOTO: JIYANG CHEN



Just released

Tenor Ian Bostridge's latest recording, *Requiem: The City of War*, includes Weill's *Four Walt Whitman Songs* performed with pianist Antonio Pappano (Warner Classics 0190295661564), along with works by Mahler, George Butterworth, and Rudi Stephan. On 12 November, the *Times* of London named it "Album of the Week." Bostridge has performed Weill's settings in concert for years, but this is the first time he has committed them to disc.

Taking the Initiative

Brief reports from two projects this year in which the Foundation has assisted performing organizations: *Lost in the Stars* at Union Avenue Opera, which received a grant and a visit from Kurt Weill Mentor Tazewell Thompson, and a Collaborative Performance Initiative with the University of Maryland resulting in a year-long Weill festival. Scott Schoonover of UAO and Craig Kier of UMD discuss the impact of the Foundation's participation, while Foundation representatives Tazewell Thompson and Ed Harsh add their voices.

Scott Schoonover, Artistic Director, Union Avenue Opera:

Lost in the Stars at Union Avenue Opera was a highlight of our twenty-four seasons of opera here in St. Louis. We'd been contemplating it for several years, because we knew it would be a cathartic production in a city where racial division and injustice remain serious problems.

From the first day the Foundation was a vital resource for a smaller company like ours. Elizabeth Blaufox came to St. Louis and laid out everything we needed to get started: information about past productions, a complete recording of the work, and most importantly an introduction to the grant program. The Foundation told me that a grant has a single purpose—to help present the best performance possible—and the entire process was straightforward and completely production-oriented. Our grant allowed us to improve both in terms of production values and artists.

We asked the Foundation for advice about a director, and they gave us the name of the 2015 SDCF Kurt Weill Fellow, Shaun Patrick Tubbs, who did an incredible job bringing this difficult story to life. As we were preparing for rehearsals, the Foundation reached out again and offered us a Kurt Weill Mentor. Director Tazewell Thompson visited for a full week to work with Tubbs and our entire company—an incredible gift. His depth of knowledge and sheer love of the work had a profound impact on all of us, and he shared that passion with our patrons as well when he

participated in a panel discussion during his visit.

I can't thank the Foundation enough for their careful stewardship and assistance in making authentic, professional productions happen. Working with them enriched our experience in several unexpected ways. UAO is already looking forward to our next collaboration in 2020!

Tazewell Thompson:

Thornton Wilder said, "There is only one way in which an American can feel himself to be in relation to other Americans—when he is united with them in a project, caught up in an idea, and propelled with them toward the future." At the Kurt Weill Foundation, our project, our idea is telling and hearing stories that tell us who we are as human beings through the works of Kurt Weill. No work accomplishes this "telling us who we are as human beings" more than *Lost in the Stars*. The characters are organized around the themes of loss, pain, suffering, divisiveness, courage, tolerance, reconciliation, and ultimately forgiveness. It was my need, my obligation, and my happy honor to share my knowledge and experience of *Lost in the Stars* with the small but outstanding Union Avenue Opera, led by intrepid founder and brilliant conductor Scott Schoonover, along with smart and savvy director Shaun Patrick Tubbs. I hope that my support and expertise encouraged and emboldened Shaun to deliver the very best of his creative self to *Lost in the Stars*.

University of Maryland 2018–19 Weill Festival: program and related events

7 October: *The Road of Promise*; UMD Symphony Orchestra, Maryland Opera Studio, UMD Concert Choir, School of Music alumni

8 November: Weill Songs, Kate Lindsey, mezzo-soprano, and Baptiste Trotignon, piano

Spring semester: Weill graduate seminar taught by Associate Professor of Musicology Olga Haldey

1 March: *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik*, Violin Concerto, *Das Berliner Requiem*, *Vom Tod im Wald*; UMD Wind Ensemble, UMD Wind Orchestra, and UMD Men's Chorus

5, 7, 9, 11 April: *Zaubernacht* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*; School of Music, Maryland Opera Studio, School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies

12–20 April: *Street Scene*; School of Music, Maryland Opera Studio

Also planned: Cabaret performance, song evening, chamber music performances; Ute Gfrerer will serve as Kurt Weill Mentor

Pre-performance talks: Brady Sansone, Zachary James, Ed Harsh, Kim H. Kowalke, Naomi Graber

Craig Kier, Director of Maryland Opera Studio and Associate Professor in the School of Music:

I first worked on a Weill production as Assistant Conductor for *Lost in the Stars* at Glimmerglass (2012). It was one of my most moving theatrical experiences, and I saw firsthand the powerful impact of Weill's writing. In 2016, we programmed *Regina* at the University of Maryland and received a performance grant from the Foundation. That was a huge success. Soon after, Foundation staff contacted me about working together to create a Weill Festival at UMD. We spent nearly two years putting it together, with much of the specific programming coming into focus over the last year. The Foundation was crucial in recommending repertoire based on the strengths of our ensembles.

I wanted to find the best way to create a context in which such a festival could include multiple areas of the School of Music and connect it to our work across campus. That led to conversations with my colleagues throughout the University, particularly the Office of International Affairs and the leadership of the College of Arts and Humanities. During these initial meetings we decided to embark upon a campus-wide "Year of Immigration" that would include all twelve Colleges. This program aims to transform dialogue into impact on urgent issues related to immigration, global migration and refugees; the School of Music's year-long Kurt Weill Festival is a cornerstone of this campus-wide initiative. Within the School of Music, nearly every student, performer or not, will be part of this year-long Festival. The School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies and MFA design students will be highlighted in the spring productions of *Zaubernacht* and *Mahagonny Songspiel* as well as *Street Scene*. My hope is this Festival will introduce Weill—both his music and life—and ever-evolving musical styles to students and audiences who have not yet experienced the breadth and impact of his works.

We began with *The Road of Promise* on 7 October. The Foundation provided information on how solo roles have been performed in the past. This provided a starting point for casting considerations. We drew mainly on the graduate singers within the Maryland Opera Studio and recruited alumni as well. We decided to single-cast many of the biblical characters to highlight each performer's abilities. The vast scope of this work is also its strength; the performance included nearly half the School of Music.

Ed Harsh:

The work complex of *Der Weg der Verheißung* aka *The Eternal Road* aka *The Road of Promise* has engaged me for more than twenty years. The web of meanings is endlessly fascinating on so many levels: musical, cultural, historical, biographical, theological. In looking forward to the performance at the University of Maryland, I was eager to see how the work would play in an educational context.

I was struck by the seriousness and commitment of Craig Kier, his colleagues, and all of the students involved. They gave me two separate opportunities to speak about my experiences with the work, and I encountered a community deeply engaged. The dress rehearsal and performance revealed the degree to which the young performers grasped the work, with sensitivity and understanding. The quality of performance was impressive indeed. I came away with a feeling that *The Road of Promise* offers a rich opportunity to university and conservatory students. I'm grateful to everyone at the University of Maryland for this artistically eloquent demonstration of the work's possibilities.



Stephen Kumalo (Kenneth Overton) and Irina (Krysty Swann) in Union Avenue Opera's *Lost in the Stars*

PHOTO: JOHN LAMB