Kurt Weill: A State of Analysis Report

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This report documents analyses of Kurt Weill's music, without preference to the analytical technique employed. 'Analysis' will be defined as discussions of any musical parameter, whether that discussion is in prose or graphic form, and whether or not it includes musical examples. Included are analyses that form part of larger discussions. Excluded are critiques, reviews, and other writings that do not occupy themselves with the musical material.

I have made no attempt to evaluate each analysis. Instead, a description of the scope and the analytical methods are provided. When I was not able to examine an analysis itself, I referred to abstracts and reviews. It should also be noted that the most current information is provided for works in progress, but they are subject to change.

The Index of Analyses by Composition follows the order of David Drew's Chronological List of Works.1 All composition titles are based upon the same list except when used differently in citations. (For instance, Die Dreigroschenoper only appears as The Threepenny Opera when directly referring to Hinton)

Early Analysis (1951-1978)

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Early Weill studies were carried out in a time when little source material was readily available, Brecht received most of the recognition for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, and Weill was not yet considered a composer that merited the attention of musicologists and analysts. With the exception of David Drew, the only scholar devoting substantial time to Weill, the material from this period consists of scattered articles, liner-notes, and analyses by a handful of authors working independently of each other. Analyses from this time typically contain no musical illustrations, and usually function only as supporting material. For instance, analytical overviews are provided with the published scores of the *String Quartet, op.8* (F.S.:1952) and the two symphonies (Drew:1966, 1968). These are not meant to be comprehensive, but they do provide an introduction to the musical material.

Some analysis did find its way into the studies of Weill's collaborators and contemporaries that dominated "Weill" research through the seventies, such as Stern:1977, which points out Weill's influence on Eisler. Of the many Brecht studies that include Weill, Gottfried Wagner's look at *Verfremdung* devotes equal time to music and text (Wagner:1977).

The most rigorous analyses from this time are Michael David Luxner's master's thesis "The Early Instrumental Style of Kurt Weill" (Luxner:1972) and "Weill's Harmonik" by Ian Kemp (Drew:1975). Kemp was the first to argue that Weill's harmonic language was unique—not merely a borrowing of jazz and popular idioms, and he uncovers some of the technical building blocks that make up the "Weill-style." "Weill's Harmonik" was first published in *Tempo*, and Drew later included it in his anthology (Drew: 1975), remarking, "If there is to be a new approach to Weill, it could not more profitably differ from the old ones than by starting with strictly musical problems, and remaining close to
them." Luxner also investigates Weill's musical style, narrowing his focus to Weill's early instrumental works (Symphony [No.1, in one movement], String Quartet, op.8, Quodlibet, op.9, and Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, op.12.)

Later Analysis: Kim Kowalke and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music
(1979-1986)

The publication of *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Kowalke:1979), which "helped to break down prejudices in universities against serious Weill scholarship" (Edler, 1992), started the second phase of Weill research. Led by Kim Kowalke, this era of research culminated in the publication of *A New Orpheus* (Kowalke, ed.:1986).

Kim Kowalke's research brought him into contact with Weill's widow, Lotte Lenya. In 1980, she entrusted Kowalke with private manuscripts and documents for the establishment of the Weill/Lenya Archive at Yale. When she died in 1981, the materials were donated to Yale. Besides the Weill/Lenya Archive, the Weill-Lenya Research Center was established in New York with funding from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, which was established in 1962 by Lenya. Upon her death all royalties from Weill's works were bequeathed to the Foundation for the perpetuation of Weill's music.

The Foundation soon began to shape the course of Weill studies. It co-sponsored the First International Kurt Weill Conference in November of 1983 at Yale University to celebrate the opening of the Yale archives, began publication of the semi-annual *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, and continues to award performance and research grants. The

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Foundation attracts scholars to the field through grants and publication opportunities, encourages research in new areas (grants are rarely given for study of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, for instance), and most importantly serves as a center of communication for Weill studies and related subjects. So much posthumous attention may seem ironic for a composer that "didn't give a damn about writing for posterity."³

The explosion of activity that centered around the Kurt Weill Foundation led to the 1986 publication of *A New Orpheus* (Kowalke, ed.:1986), which contains seventeen essays stemming mainly from papers given at the 1983 Yale conference. This collection shows how far Kurt Weill research had come since the time in which Kim Kowalke had been writing his dissertation. At that time, only very basic research had been carried out. *A New Orpheus* builds upon those earlier, more general studies, and is able to dive more deeply into a wider variety of subjects. Notice, for instance, Ian Kemp's article in *Über Kurt Weill* about Weill's general harmonic language, which is followed by his article in *A New Orpheus* dealing specifically with *Der Silbersee*. Having established the general traits of Weill's musical language, he is able to analyze the inner-workings of a particular piece. Other articles in *A New Orpheus* show this same trend with analyses of *Der Zar Lässt Sich Photografieren, Der Kuhandel*, and *Down in the Valley*.

The pro-Weillian stance that came with increased activity in the field led some to question the objectivity of the new scholarship. More than one critic noticed strained comparisons in *A New Orpheus* (Weill to Schoenberg, Adorno, and the Orpheus legend itself) and "more than a hint of a defensively partisan attitude,"⁴ especially concerning Weill's relationship to Brecht.

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Current Analysis (1987–)

In recent years, Weill studies have continued in the same direction as in the early eighties, with a number of dissertations and monographs by authors and editors involved with the Kurt Weill Foundation for music.

Francis Anthony Strangis and William Thornhill both take on Street Scene as their subject. Strangis compares it to Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny in the hopes of showing a continuity in ideals between Weill's German era operas and his Broadway musicals. Thornhill concentrates on Street Scene itself, showing how Weill's theories about a Broadway opera manifest themselves in the score. Paul Humphrey's dissertation about Einverständnis in Der Jasager is a discussion of Brecht/Weill theories, which is one of the few papers that refutes previous research; in this case Drew's theory that Weill's music did not reinforce Brecht's concept of Einverständnis.

Kurt Weill: A Handbook contains no analysis, but must be mentioned because its catalogue of works is essential to Weill studies. David Drew also contributed the only analytical article to Stephen Hinton's Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera (Hinton, ed.:1990), uncovering relationships between the motivic material (the "Moritat-motif") and the one of the predominant harmonies (the "Dreigroschenoper chord"), as well as tracing the development and dramatic function of some of the motives. The recent monograph richest in analysis is A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill Studien (Edler, ed.:1992), which may indicate a trend towards addressing Weill's music more

thoroughly from an analytical point of view. It contains a discussions of *Der Jasager*, the symphonies, *Four Walt Whitman Songs*, and Weill's adaptation of popular song forms.

There are also a number of works in progress that should be valuable additions to existing analyses. Among them are those by Gunther Diehl and Andreas Hauff, who have analyzed Weill's music in the past. Hauff will continue his research on the stage works, with a dissertation about *Die Bürgschaft* and *Der Silbersee*. Diehl, who discussed stylistic development in the two symphonies, now looks at stylistic development in Weill's early works. Christine Isley will also be studying stylistic development in her University of Illinois thesis focusing on Weill's early songs.

Three dissertations concern themselves with stage works; Bruce McClung analyzes *Lady in the Dark* and Heinz Geuen discusses Weill's concept of musical theater through analysis of *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Love Life*. J. Bradford Robinson plans to include *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in his study of jazz in the late 1920s European opera repertoire.

As Weill becomes more widely acknowledged as an important composer, Weill research becomes more self-confident. This is reflected in the literature; one encounters less Brecht-bashing and more analysis.

**Conclusions: towards a future phase**

Though recent Weill studies have expanded and matured, there are problems with the way the field has progressed, and gaps that need to be filled.
Without the help of the Kurt Weill Foundation much of the last decade's research would not have been possible. In fact, every entry in the section "Current Analysis" was supported in some way by the Foundation, through dissertation grants, publication assistance, and by making documents available. This has been valuable and necessary for growth within the field, but it creates a situation in which the Foundation is shaping the field rather than the researchers themselves. The Foundation's funding not only attracts scholars to the field, but directs them towards topics by accepting or rejecting grant proposals. Of course, filling lacunae is a legitimate concern for the Foundation, but it does minimize the free enterprise aspect of scholarship typical of most fields of study, and may even taint objectivity.

In defense of the Foundation, there has been a steady reduction of lacunae since it became active in 1983. At that time, it was all too obvious that Weill's European works were favored over the American musicals. A number of recent essays and dissertations are changing that, although works such as Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny and Die Dreigroschenoper continue to dominate scholars time. (See "Index of Analyses by Composition" for a more complete picture of research distribution.)

The most urgent needs at this time are not specific analyses, rather the material necessary for analysis. Many scores have never been printed, or are out of print. Until the collected works are readily available, objective assessment of the music cannot be anticipated. The Kurt Weill Foundation is planning to issue the collected works, but the projected publication dates have not been announced.

Another much needed work with an unknown publication date is David Drew's multi-volume biography and comprehensive study of compositions. If the standard set by his previous work and his keen musical insight (as evidenced in his contribution to Kurt
Weill: The Threepenny Opera) are an indication of what can be expected, they should prove to be as invaluable as, and complimentary to, his own Handbook and Kim Kowalke's Kurt Weill in Europe.

Once these materials are available, a new phase of research can take place that concentrates on the music itself. This can only happen if analysis of Weill's music is taken out of the context of other topics and made a topic itself. Ideally this would mean taking it out of the arena of Weill studies as well. The time has come for Weill's music to stand or fall on its own merit.

   Analyzes the relationship between Die Dreigroschenoper and Kleine Dreigroschenmusik in the hopes of creating a concert suite of Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny.


   In-depth musical analysis containing the following sections: Repetitionsfiguren, Ostinato-Figuren, Besonderheiten der Instrumentierung, Zur harmonischen Anlage, and Die formale Anlage der Sätze. Contains musical examples and charts.


   Discusses jazz idioms in Der Zar lässt sich photographieren, op. 21, as well as the general influence of jazz on European music. Although she doesn't analyze, her musical descriptions and historical comparisons provide a context for the work.


   The two symphonies are used as a springboard for a discussion of Weill's stylistic development. According to Diehl, the Symphony [No.1, in one movement], which was written while Weill was a student of Busoni, is influenced by Schoenberg's I. KammerSinfonie, Op. 9. Weill's collaboration with Bertolt Brecht brought about a new musical style which is characterized by "alienation techniques" and the song as the factor that determines melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and orchestral
parameters. *Symphony [No.2]* does not use traditional symphonic paradigms as the first did, but is more securely in Weill's own style, especially that of his time with Bertolt Brecht -- although the author shows stylistic similarities between the two symphonies.


In this preface to the score, Drew explains the genesis of the symphony as well as providing a short verbal analysis.


The score's preface discusses the origins of the work, the travels of the manuscript, and points out the apparent influences of Schoenberg, Liszt, Strauss, and Mahler. Drew also notes that the piece is built melodically and harmonically on the interval of the fourth.


In this collection of essays by Weill's critics and collaborators, Ian Kemp's article "Weill's Harmonik" stands out as the only analysis. He concentrates on the ways in which Weill avoids tonal expectations through chromatic harmonic shifts, unusual dominant-tonic relationships, and minor/major interchange. The article first appeared in *Tempo* 104 (1973) as "Harmony in Weill- Some Observations."

This collection of essays, which were originally presented at the 1990 International Kurt Weill Symposium in Duisburg, Germany, is scheduled for release in the Fall of 1992. Some of the relevant off-prints which I was able to examine include: "Weill's Composition Lesson" by Ian Kemp, which systematically explores the compositional choices made in Der Jasager, "Musical Language and Formal Design in the Symphonies of Kurt Weill" by Robert Bailey, "I Cannot/Will Not Sing the Old Songs Now: Some Observations on Weill's Adaptation of Popular Song Forms" by Michael Morley who concentrates on the releases (bridges) of Weill's Broadway works, and Werner Grünzweig's "Propaganda der Trauer: Kurt Weill's four Walt Whitman songs". It also will include a bibliography by David Farneth that focuses on the years between 1980 and 1990.


   Contains musical discussion and examples only as it relates to Verfremdung.


   This verbal analysis discusses the ways in which Weill achieves balance in the piece despite the loose, dynamic form. The author claims that this is done by using "quasi symmetrical analogies"--or motivic relationships that are superficial rather than structural.

In-depth analyses of Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Das Berliner Requiem, Vom Tod im Wald, op. 23, Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, op. 12, and Berlin im Licht.


This, the author's first analysis, concentrates on Der Protaganist, op. 15, Royal Palace, op. 17, and Der Zar lässt sich photographieren, op. 21. He also looks at Die Bürgschaft, and Der Silbersee. Contains supplement of musical examples.


Of the fifteen articles contained in this collection, David Drew's "Motifs, Tags and Related Matters" is pertinent to this paper. It is a fascinating look at the motivic procedures of Die Dreigroschenoper starting with the "Moritat-motif" (the three-note motive with which Macheath begins the opera) and its relation to the "Dreigroschenoper chord" (the chord of the added sixth) both of which play such important roles throughout the piece. He also traces the development of the "love motif" from its inception in the "Kanonen-song" to its ironic quotation by Polly upon Macheath's salvation ("Ich bin sehr glücklich"). Although the Finale is tonally inconclusive (which Drew hastily interprets as a sign of agnosticism) he shows how Weill's use of six previous motives affects closure.

The author surveys the essential developments of "epic theater," and discusses relationships between the text and tonal usages of the work. In contrast to David Drew, Humphreys finds that Weill does indeed seek to musically reinforce Brecht's presentation of Einverstándnis. In the course of this discussion he provides musical examples and analyses including a graphic analysis of the piece.


In this Freudian analysis of the Harry Lime theme and Weill's "Moritat", the author concludes that the prolonged sexual tension of both melodies is due to the prominence of the sixth scale degree. The article can also be found in *Music Survey: New Series: 1949-52*, edited by Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (London:Faber Music in association with Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 283-285) and *The Kurt Weill Newsletter* vol. 9, no. 2 (1991): 10-11.


Though over a decade old, this publication of the author's Yale dissertation remains one of the most thorough studies of Weill's life and music. Analysis, however, is limited to defining the "Weill-style" (which Kowalke divides by chapters into Roots, Experimentation, and Synthesis). Even though there are no complete analyses of individual compositions, Kowalke gives stylistic perspective to Weill's European music.


Six of the seventeen essays in this collection delve into the music itself.

Alexander L. Ringer's "Kleinkunst and Küchenlied in the Socio-Musical World of
Kurt Weill" discusses Weill's admiration of Mozart and the ways in which both composers adapted popular and folk songs/styles into their own work. "Der Zar Lässt Sich Photographieren: Weill and Comic Opera" is a precursor of Susan Cook's 1988 UMI publication. The harmonic analysis of Weill's and Schoenberg's transitional years (1925-27 and 1907-09, respectively) provided by Alan Chapman's "Crossing the Cusp: The Schoenberg Connection" is stimulating, even if the connection is strained, being based only on the composers' frequent use of two trichords (3-5 and 3-9 in the Forte system). Ian Kemp provides another detailed look into Kurt Weill's harmonic language (see entry 7), this time focusing on Der Silbersee. Included are an overview of the music/dialogue balance, formal analysis of the finale, reduction of tonal relationships, discussion of tonal symbolism, and a look at some of Weill's idiosyncratic harmonic progressions. "Reflections on the Last Years: Der Kuhandel as a Key Work" is an article in which David Drew weaves analyses, genesis and historical context of Der Kuhandel (and its English incarnation as A Kingdom for a Cow) into narrative form. Though critics of Down in the Valley claim Kurt Weill was simply imitating American folk song styles in order to stake his claim as an American composer and expand his audience, John Graziano claims in "Musical Dialects in Down in the Valley" that though the outer vestiges are that of American folk music, Weill subjects the title tune to melodic and harmonic alterations that represent musical "dialects" which span his entire career.

Despite its small scope, Leinert's analysis of *Die Dreigroschenoper's* third Finale is thorough.


An exemplary work containing in-depth analyses of *Symphony [No. 1, in one movement]*, *String Quartet, op. 8, Quodlibet, op. 9*, and *Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, op. 12*. Harmony, melody, texture, form and motivic development, rhythm and meter, and orchestration are each given a chapter in which the author attempts to define the musical style rather than provide a note-by-note analysis of each piece. The author finds that the difference in style observed in the four pieces is not the result of stylistic change, but rather a shift in compositional emphasis.


A dissertation in Germanic Languages and Literatures, Nadar's objective is not to analyze the music, but to show how the music interacts with Brecht's text. After discussing Brecht's association with each of his collaborators, and Brecht's theories and innovations concerning theater and music, the author discusses individual works from three categories in depth: Opera, Lehrstücke, and Plays with Music. (The Weill works represented in each category are *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Der Jasager*, and *Die Dreigroschenoper*, respectively). Discussion centers around how musical factors such as instrumentation, parody, and quotation work to highlight the text.

The author traces Eisler's development of a simpler style more in line with his socio-political views. Weill's music was a model for him, and Eisler in turn influenced Weill. Stern studies similarities in their musical styles, such as use of the ballad form, aggressive text declamation, jazz band-like ensembles, modifications of modal/minor harmonic models, key changes at the minor third, use of popular rhythms, and the frequent use of the minor third in melodic material. This has many interesting stylistic observations, and also puts Weill's style in historical perspective with one of his peers.


The author seeks to prove that Weill's Broadway works are the realization of ideas begun in his German era -- namely his desire to create an opera for the people. He does this by analyzing musical features of Weill's German opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and his American opera *Street Scene*.


Thornhill, who received a fellowship from the Kurt Weill Foundation for this dissertation, has divided his study of *Street Scene* into three parts. The first traces the creative development of *Street Scene*, the second examines Weill's American writings about Opera and Broadway Opera and shows how *Street Scene* is a culmination of those theories, and the third section examines the music in order to
substantiate claims made in the preceding sections, demonstrating the relationship between Weill's theories on music and the music itself, as well as showing a continuity between his European and American works.


The title of the dissertation from which this comes ("Die musikalische Verfremdung in den Bühnenwerken von Kurt Weill und Bertolt Brecht") explains the main analytical thrust of this book--finding instances of *Verfremdung* in *Mahagonny-Songspiel, Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Die Sieben Todsünden, Die Dreigroschenoper, Happy End, and Der Jasager*.

The first three chapters are devoted to the Weimar Republic, Brecht and Weill's working relationship, and a discussion of Zeittheater. Chapter four discusses general aspects of the works including the concept of *Verfremdung*, musical traits taken from Art and Popular musics, instrumentation, rhythm, and tonality. In each section of chapter five a discussion of the work's text is followed by a description of the musical means with which Weill reinforces the text. Although the musical description is somewhat text-heavy (ie. the music is not analyzed independently) there is some insight into Weill's compositional choices, such as texture, form, and harmony.


Wilson's short entry on "Von Angenehmen Leben" from *Die Dreigroschenoper* concludes that Weill's "Shimmy" is not authentic ragtime, and is indicative of
European composers' attempt to imitate ragtime time styles without being informed of the idiosyncratic details.

Works in Progress


The author intends to shed light on the social factors and artistic ideals that led to the creation of the pieces, and the position the pieces hold between tradition and modernism and in Weill's output. Musical analysis will only serve to illustrate the discussion.


The first section of the dissertation will investigate what European composers of the 1920s understood as Jazz. Section two analyzes Jazz elements in five operas, including *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. 
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30. mcclung, bruce. *Kurt Weill's Lady in the Dark.*

**Four Walt Whitman Songs**

**Street Scene**

**Love Life.**


**Down in the Valley**


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**General**