FOUND IN TRANSLATION: KURT WEILL ON BROADWAY AND IN HOLLYWOOD, 1935–1939

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ABSTRACT

NAOMI GRABER: Found in Translation: Kurt Weill on Broadway and in Hollywood, 1935–1939
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This dissertation reexamines composer Kurt Weill's position as an "assimilated" émigré by investigating his musical plays and film scores of the late 1930s, his first years in the United States. Previously unconsidered archival evidence, including correspondence, scripts, screenplays, and music, reflect both Weill's keen awareness of the Depression-era culture and his continued commitment to innovation on the musical stage. He worked within experimental and political circles like the Group Theatre and the Federal Theatre Project to comment on pressing issues of the Depression, including pacifism (*Johnny Johnson*, 1936) and homelessness (the unfinished *One Man from Tennessee*, 1937). In Hollywood, Weill worked with fellow émigrés Fritz Lang and William Dieterle on films by two of the most prominent Left-wing directors, the anti-Fascist epic *The River is Blue* (released as *Blockade* 1938, although Weill's score was not used) and the "social problem" film *You and Me*, 1938. Weill also composed scores for the more commercial Playwrights' Producing Company. His best-known show from this period, *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938), is often seen as simply a satire on President Roosevelt's New Deal, but it also depicts European immigrants throwing off an Old World tyrant and embracing democracy at a time when suspicion of German émigrés prevented many of Weill's European associates from securing visas to escape Nazi Germany. Weill also tried to comment on contemporary race relations in the unfinished *Ulysses Africanus* (1939). This show

is filled with hidden analogies to Weill's own experiences as a German-Jewish exile, and represents an attempt, albeit a clumsy and patronizing one, to reach across the U.S. color line. All of these works show that Weill did not simply "go commercial" upon arrival in the United States, as much current scholarship suggests, but, rather, carefully constructed an identity as a politically forward-thinking cultural figure. Weill's experiences also reveal that, rather than the 1930s being a backward interregnum between early modernism of the early twentieth century and the high modernism of the 1950s, this was a decade of artistic and cultural innovation.

For my parents.

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ABBREVIATIONS

LOC/FTP	Federal Theatre Project Collection. Library of Congress, Music Division, Washington DC.
FLP	Fritz Lang Papers. Special Collections #40, Louis B. Mayer Library, American Film Institute, Los Angeles, CA.
FTP	Federal Theatre Project.
GS2	Weill, Kurt. *Musik und Musikalisches Theater: Gesammelte Schriften. Mit einer Auswahl von Gespächen und Interviews*. Expanded and revised edition. Edited by Stephen Hinton and Jürgen Schebera. Mainz: Schott, 2000.
MAC	Maxwell Anderson Collection. Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.
MHL/CC	Core Collection. Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA.
NARA/FTP	Federal Theatre Project Collection. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 69, College Park, MD.
NYPL	New York Public Library, Schwartzman Building, Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street, New York, NY.
PPC	Playwrights' Producing Company.
PPS	Paramount Pictures Scripts. Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Beverly Hills, CA.
WLA	Weill–Lenya Archive, MSS 30, The Papers of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
WLRC	Weill–Lenya Research Center, New York, NY.
W-Fam	Weill, Kurt. *Briefe an die Familie, 1914–1950*. Edited by Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem. Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2000.
W-LL(e)	Weill, Kurt and Lotte Lenya. *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*. Edited and translated by Kim H. Kowalke and Lys Symonette. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.
WPA	Works Progress Administration, renamed Works Projects Administration in 1939.
WPD(e)	Farneth, David, with Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein. *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents.* Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

The learning and blundering people will live on.
  They will be tricked and sold and again sold
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
  The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,
  You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.

Carl Sandburg, *The People, Yes* (1936)

When Kurt Weill arrived in the United States on September 10, 1935, the nation had only barely begun to claw its way out of the Great Depression. The market crash on October 29, 1929 shocked the country, and shook the people's faith in the very foundations of their way of life. The deep-rooted trust in the free market that had driven business and culture from Reconstruction through the boom of the Jazz Age had collapsed. The economic turbulence caused the United States to rethink the role of government in their lives. After Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office in 1933, the first hundred days of his presidency saw dramatic changes in economic policy, including the suspension of the gold standard, and the creation of many new government programs aimed at putting citizens back to work such as the Civilian Conservation Corps. By 1935, Roosevelt pushed through Congress both the Emergency Relief Appropriation Bill, the largest peacetime appropriation in the history of the nation to date, and the newly established Social Security system.[1]

[1] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 249, 270.

Still, despite the tumultuous times, Weill managed to find a modicum of success during the second half of the decade, supported by both the Left-wing experimental community and more mainstream circles. Between 1935 and 1939, he was remarkably productive, writing two Broadway shows (*Johnny Johnson* in 1936, for the Group Theatre; and *Knickerbocker Holiday*, 1938, for the Playwrights' Producing Company), two pageants (*The Eternal Road*, 1937; and *Railroads on Parade*, 1939 and 1940), and a film score (*You and Me*, Paramount, 1938). He also completed a piano-vocal score for another musical, *One Man From Tennessee* (1937, sometimes called *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*), for the Federal Theatre Project, and sketched yet another, *Ulysses Africanus* (1939). As for the other film score (which did not make it into production), Weill spent much of the early part of 1937 writing music for the film that was released as *Blockade* (Wanger Studios, 1938), although when the composer was involved with the project, it was titled *Castles in Spain*, and then *The River is Blue*. Weill also worked with some of the most prominent theatrical minds and organizations of the era, including Franz Werfel, Max Reinhardt, the Group Theatre, Fritz Lang, Burgess Meredith, the Federal Theatre Project, and Maxwell Anderson.

Although many of these works, and others, remained unfinished, unused, or abandoned, they still reveal crucial aspects of both Weill's creative development, the course of American art during the Great Depression, and the paths that were open to the anti-Fascist émigrés that fled Hitler's regime in Europe. Weill's theatrical experiments of the middle and late 1930s helped him develop the theatrical techniques that he would use in some of his better-known works later in in his career. These experiments were conducted in collaboration with other like-minded individuals who similarly strove to find new ways to use music theatre to reflect, engage with,

and even correct the troubling political and social times.[2] Weill also forged his own path through the thorny life of an émigré; while many of his colleagues went into academia or found work in the Hollywood studios, he made a career for himself on Broadway, although he did, for a brief period in 1937, considering taking the Hollywood route.

This dissertation takes Weill's Broadway and Hollywood works as a starting point to explore his various creative and professional strategies to continue the project he began in Europe: developing a new, simplified, and modern musical theatre that would speak to a contemporary audience. Weill found allies within the same sorts of communities that supported his work in Europe, politically-aware communities like the Group Theatre, the Federal Theatre Project, and the Hollywood Left. In these organizations, he rubbed shoulders with some of the most important figures of what historian Michael Denning has termed the Popular Front, an historical bloc made up of "young plebian artists and intellectuals," allied with "the older generation of American Modernists," and "anti-fascist émigrés" that made up the vanguard of progressive politics and art in the 1930s.[3] He participated in contemporary artistic movements

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[2] Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "music theatre" after W. Anthony Sheppard, who notes that as the twentieth century progressed, composers (and other artists) began to experiment with theatrical works that did not fit into the traditional categories of "opera," "ballet," or "play." However, he writes that "It may be wrong even to think of music theater as a genre, since so much twentieth-century art has been concerned with genre-blurring," and that the term encompasses a wide-range of subgenres, including "dance-drama, polytechnic drama, melodrama, monodrama, dramatic oratorio, opera-oratorio, school opera, chamber opera, mini-opera, rock opera, TV opera, radio play, musical play, puppet play, pantomime, dance-pantomime, burlesque, didactic piece, theater piece, and music-theatre." He concludes that "The label 'music theater,' then, indicates not so much a set of traits signaling a specific new genre as it does a fundamental aspiration toward discovering some novel form of theatrical-musical performance." W. Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Musical Theatre* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 4. Weill's American works are similarly varied in genre designation (play with music, musical tragedy, musical vaudeville, Broadway opera, circus opera), indicating that he also found it difficult to compose within the standard generic boundaries, rendering Sheppard's term "music theatre" appropriate for his *oeuvre*. Weill used the term similarly throughout his writings as well.

[3] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), xv–xvi. Other musicologists who have drawn on Denning's work include Sally Bick, "Composers on the Cultural Front: Aaron Copland and Hanns Eisler in Hollywood" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001), and Elizabeth Crist, *Music for the Common Man: Aaron Copland in Depression and War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

that combined a documentary aesthetic with modernist formal experimentation, finding new ways to communicate with an audience confused and scared by domestic and international politics.

In examining these works, I not only illuminate a crucial period in Weill's creative and professional development, but also reframe the 1930s as a decade of artistic progress and innovation. As Denning has noted, the 1930s are seen as "an interregnum between modernism and postmodernism, the last hurrah of a lost nineteenth century realism."[4] Broadly speaking, too many historiographies of musical Modernism run from the 1890s through the 1920s, and then resumes around 1945, or from Debussy and Richard Strauss through Weimar, the neo-classical Stravinsky, and the serial Schoenberg, then resuming with Darmstadt and its various discontents. This vision of Modernism focuses primarily on abstraction, complexity, and (with the exception of Weimar) withdrawal from the world, with the assumption that all Modernist music is written for an "expert" listener in the Adornian sense of someone who "Spontaneously following the course of music, even complicated music … hears the sequence, hears past, present, and future moments together so that they crystallize into a meaningful context."[5] This narrative includes

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[4] Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 120.

[5] Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1976), 4. Rose Rosengard Subotnik described this sort of Modernism in "The Cultural Message of Music Semiology: Some Thoughts on Music, Language, and Criticism since the Enlightenment," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1978): 741–68. She argues that twentieth-century music extended the nineteenth-century aesthetics of "opacity (nonreferentiality), autonomy, sound, and internal coherence, along with a tendency toward self-destruction." As a result, "the increased precision of the metalanguages … has assured their incomprehensibility on a social scale precisely because their precision is not referential but merely (imperfectly) self-consistent. … [E]pistemological language in the twentieth century has more or less dissociated itself from the communicative functions of language" (at pp. 750–51). Similarly, Daniel Albright, following Carl Dahlhaus, perceives the three major characteristics of Modernist music as "comprehensiveness and depth" (exemplified by Mahler's symphonies), "semantic specificity and density" (as in the case of Charles Ives's *Central Park in the Dark*), and "extensions and destructions of tonality" (represented by Schoenberg and his school); *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6–7. Arved Ashby asserts that "autonomy from the everyday world was the founding rationale for post-Enlightenment modernism," even if he believes listeners do not necessarily have to abide by that idea, in "Intention and Meaning in Modernist Music," in the introduction to *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. Arved Ashby (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 23–45, at p. 24. More recently, Sheppard has observes that "Modernism places a high premium on the generation of new genres

only a handful of composers—mostly Americans like Copland and Marc Blitzstein—from the eras of the Great Depression and World War II, and only then because of their activities in the 1920s.[6] Yet as Björn Heile has observed, this is an incomplete history of the movement: "there is no simple historical continuity or 'grand narrative' linking they 'heroic' modernism of the early twentieth century with the post-war avant-gardes, as well as their putative successors in the early twenty-first century."[7] There may or may not be a need for a "grand narrative," but there is an urgent need for a recognition of the multiplicity of broader definition of Modernisms that takes into account how other groups of artists envisioned the movement, such as those active in the United States in the Great Depression. Weill's film and Broadway scores from this period present a unique opportunity to study how an anti-Fascist émigré participated in these new developments.

Modernist Thought in the Great Depression

Recent scholarly work in film and literary studies has offered new ways of looking at the notion of "Modernism" which broaden the base of the movements associated with the term, particularly within the United States. During the 1920s, as Carol J. Oja observed, "the variety of musics classified as 'modernist' grew ever more varied, and by [the decade's] end, a new generation of

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of artistic production, on the exploration of the extremes of expression, and on abstraction and formalization"; Sheppard, *Revealing Masks*, 8.

[6] The standard narrative of American Modernisms has composers simplifying their style during the Depression and World War II in order to reach a broader public and to promote an autochthonous American culture. For example, Carol J. Oja writes that "The musical language of Copland's *Appalachian Spring* [1944], for example, is not so far removed from that of the *Piano Variations* [1930]. Rather the meaning and the overall accessibility of the work were changed"; *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 363.

[7] Björn Heile, introduction to *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music*, ed. Björn Heile (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 1–10, at p. 4.

American composers and critics had come into its own."[8] Kim Kowalke notes that the modernist world Weill encountered was "overheated by the friction among various factions of composers disputing the identity appropriate for American art music."[9] While Kowalke focuses on schools defined by their withdrawal from public tastes (at least in their compositional lives), such as those populated by figures like Henry Cowell, Carl Ruggles, and Rogers Sessions, another branch of modernists in the 1930s considered mass and popular culture part of their national tradition, and drew on its genres, forms, sounds, and sights. As literary scholar Paula Rabinowitz puts it:

> Modernism in America links a demotic urge to represent the plebeian, the everyday, the regular Joe, through experiments with diverse forms—realist, naturalist, cubist, lyric—in various media—prose, poetry, photography, film. … The American modernist afterthought, freed from the need to be original, could be redundant; it could be vernacular; it could be pulpy, embracing Whitman's ecstatic catalogues and Dickinson's wacky prosody as it accommodated Main Street, Fordism, Hollywood, and the New Deal.[10]

Film scholar Miriam Hansen has termed this movement "vernacular modernism," that is, the "mass-produced and mass-consumed phenomena of fashion, design, advertising, architecture and urban environment, of photography, radio, and cinema" that "combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability."[11] The U.S. Modernists of the Great Depression focused on experimenting with the forms and genres of mass culture in order to effect social

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[8] Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 361.

[9] Kim H. Kowalke, "Formerly German: Kurt Weill in America," in *A Stranger Here Myself: Kurt Weill Studien*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke and Horst Edler, (Hildensheim and Zurich: Georg Olms, 1993), 35–57, at p. 40.

[10] Paula Rabinowitz, "Social Representations within American Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*, ed. Walter Kalaidjian, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261–83, at p. 266.

[11] Miriam Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 6 (1999): 59–77, at p. 60.

change. This was particularly true in the case of the documentary. Jeff Allred argues that the 1930s fascination with the history and culture of the United States is a Modernist impulse. He writes of the Depression-era documentary book that it "represents social others in ways that arrest or interrupt, rather than confirm, dominant ideologies … they disrupt the identities of reading selves and represented others and refigure the orderly teleology of historical progress as a contingent and unpredictable process."[12]

Such "vernacular modernists" of the era conceived of the movement more in terms of experimenting with historical and popular forms and speaking to a society mired in modernity, than with producing abstract, complex, and autonomous works of art. The challenges of modernity in the form of economic depression, the rise of new technologies, and political radicalism provoked artists to respond in varying ways; as some withdrew, others consciously engaged by testing the boundaries of traditional media. These included experiments composing or writing at the boundaries of elite and mass culture, particularly in newspapers. James Agee's Modernist classic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) began as an article for *New York Magazine* but eventually grew too long to publish. Agee explicitly urged readers to think outside the generic box:

> The text was written with reading aloud in mind. That cannot be recommended; but it is suggested that the reader attend with his ear to what he takes off the page: for variations of tone, pace, shape, and dynamics are here particularly unavailable to the eye alone, and with their loss, a good deal of meaning escapes. It was intended also that the text be read continuously, as music is listened to or a film watched.[13]

For *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), often considered the quintessential novel of the era, John Steinbeck drew on a series of articles he wrote for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which may have

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[12] Jeff Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

[13] James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), xi.

influenced *One Man from Tennessee*, as I discuss in Chapter 1. In the musical realm, Ruth Crawford took up the proletarian cause by setting a poem by H.T. Tsaing published in *The Daily Worker*, "Chinaman, Laundryman," as the second song in her *Two Ricercari* (1932). For many Left-wing artists, mass culture provided the raw material for Modernist expression.

Weill made a concerted effort to both learn and shape the tastes of U.S. audiences. On June 4, 1936, he wrote to his publisher Heugel, "Right now, I am trying to create a place for myself in American theatrical life. That will be very difficult, and I will need all of my patience and all of my energy. Once I have found my place here, I will be able to return to the kind of work which corresponds to my talents and ambitions, and that would be the time to offer you operatic works of international caliber."[14] However, for Weill, finding his place meant looking for a way to continue the work he had done in Europe, rather than conforming to contemporary U.S. notions of musical theatre. In his notes for a lecture to the Group Theatre that same summer, Weill laid out his vision for American musical theatre, working towards a new form: "Situation of musical theatre in this country: Metropolitan, worst example of old fashioned opera (museum) on the one side, musical comedy, which tried to be sophisticated and low brow at the same time on the other side. Nothing in between. Enormous field for musical theatre. Collaboration of playwright and composer.—Composer as dramatist (Mozart, Verdi, Wagner)."[15] This position between museum opera and musical comedy approaches a space similar to the Modernisms described above, which seek to draw on popular resources to create new forms of art that would transform the entire field of artistic and political play, just as Mozart did with the *Singspiel* and as Verdi's politically charged operas captured the public's attention during the Risorgimento.

[14] WPD(e), 164.

[15] WPD(e), 165.

Weill explicitly tied this to his work in Germany, writing that he had to "leave the opera house" and "go to the theater" when he wrote *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928). In trying to convey his sense of the way music and drama should interact to the music theatre novices at the Group, he explained in his "Notes for a Lecture for the Group Theatre":

> Most important element of musical theater: *the song*. Not only lyrical, not only expression of sentiments, but: clarification of the *idea of the drama.* A song is the shortest, clearest, most intense expression of an idea, the quickest, most direct and most affectful [*sic*] way to the meaning of a scene. The action of the play comes to a point where a song can express the philosophie [*sic*], the general aspect of the scene.[16]

These echo the sentiments Weill expressed in Germany, and attest to the fact that, as much as he was trying to find his place in American musical theatre, he was still trying to make his own way without sacrificing the work he had done Europe to the popular conception of Broadway. Moreover, Stephen Hinton has noted that in this essay, Weill maintains "his basic commitment to an ideal of absolute music, conceived in a Busonian (not Hanslickian) terms."[17] Weill's fundamental stance has not changed, observes Hinton, but, rather, its presentation; Weill's American writings do not contain the same strongly anti-Wagnerian rhetoric (although it is often hidden in the subtext, as I discuss below) as his European writings, focusing on a prescriptive recipe for how the United States might cultivate a more modern form of musical theatre.

A year later, he felt secure enough in his knowledge of U.S. culture to clarify these ideas in a public forum. In the May-June 1937 issue of *Modern Music*, he laid out his plans in a piece entitled "The Future of Opera in America."[18] In this essay, he called the European opera world

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[16] Kurt Weill, "Notes for a Lecture for the Group Theatre," WPD(e), 65.

[17] Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 269.

[18] Kurt Weill, "The Future of Opera in America," trans. Joel Lifflander, *Modern Music* 14 (1937):183–88, available online at http://kwf.org/grants-a-prizes/33-foundation/kwp/331-the-future-of-opera-in-america, accessed January 25, 2013.

"stagnant," and praised the United States for not being "burdened with an opera tradition." The first part of the essay decries the state of opera in Germany and France, because

> the contents of the librettos drew farther away from the realities of life, from the simple natural relations between people, and lost themselves in artificial, false emotions, in a meaningless world of kings, knights and princesses, or in pure symbolism. Coincidentally, the means of musical expression became increasingly complicated. Melody, always the most expressive element of the music theatre, was threatened by over-emphasis on harmony and by orchestral effects. In an almost diseased passion for musical originality, the central problem of the music theatre—to bring words and tones together in equilibrium—was lost to sight. In the process of extending its musical structure, making it more fine-spun, opera presentation was so neglected as to become almost ridiculous. 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.

The reference to balletic interruptions is the only jab at French opera, as Weill reserves the majority of criticisms for the figure that lurks behind most of Weill's writings on music theatre: Wagner. The charges of "pure symbolism," "over-emphasis on harmony, on orchestral effects," "extending musical structure" to the point of "ridiculousness," and the "stiff, old-fashioned movements of the singers" are all familiar complaints from Weill, who in his German writings often advocated against Wagner's influence.[19] Weill's accusation of "an almost diseased passion for musical originality" is particularly telling. Rhetoric of "disease" plagued Nazi propaganda against figures like Weill and Schoenberg, who were accused of unwholesome contributions to German culture. Turning the same charge back on Wagner is a not-so-subtle jab at the culture that had evicted him. Instead, Weill considers Verdi the pinnacle of the European operatic canon:

> The flowering of Italian opera in the nineteenth century brought forth in Verdi a new peak of popular opera. The melodic invention of its music and the technical mastery of the means of expression rank it with the great masterpieces. At the same time its public reception was such that it could stand on its own feet. The circumstances under which

[19] See particularly his essays "Der Neue Oper" and "Busoni's *Faust* und die Eneurerung der Opernform" (both 1926), translated as "New Opera" and "Busoni's *Faust* and the Renewal of Operatic Form," in Kim H. Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1979), 464–72.

> Verdi wrote his operas provided the healthiest condition of the theatre. There was a group of impresarios who were commissioning operas. Each had several prominent singers under contract, and from Verdi's letters to his librettists we know that with each work there was a consultation about which singers had to be provided with roles. … The influence of the Verdi revival on post-war composers was accompanied by a realization that opera must again find a union with the theatre, and return to a simplified, clear and direct musical language.

Weill's description of the world in which Verdi operated resembles the contemporary U.S. studio system in Hollywood, with stars contracted to a handful of powerful producers, and also, perhaps, what he had hoped to find with the Group Theatre. Even more tellingly, Weill advocates a "clear" and "simplified" musical language, which his echoes observation that "theatre was originally a folk-art, it needed music, always the most natural, most 'popular' form of artistic expression."

Weill's narrative of the history of opera (and music in general) directly contradicts standard narratives of musical Modernism, which generally begin with Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* and proceed toward increasing intricacy and distance from the everyday. Weill instead advocates for something resembling Hansen's "vernacular Modernism," based in popular styles and topicality. Most of all, he disdains "empty play with form," implying that (Wagnerian) innovation is not enough: it must make a point relevant to a contemporary audience. The second part of the essay extends this idea by speculating on what the future of opera (or music theatre) could become in the United States. He predicts that the nation will become home to an American Johann Strauss, Offenbach, or Gilbert and Sullivan, who prove that it is possible to make "a musical theatre culture of high merit can arise from the field of light music." None of the figures Weill praises—from Verdi to Gilbert and Sullivan—is part of the standard Modernist canon, but they are key figures for the way Weill conceives of "modern" music, that is, music that engages with the problems of modernity.

During Weill's first years in the United States, he continued similar vernacular modernist experiments with form, genre, and mass culture. *One Man from Tennessee* draws on the aesthetics of the Federal Theatre Project, particularly the documentary Living Newspapers. He also employed some of the techniques of the "epic"-style theatre he developed with Brecht in the 1920s. Weill's two film scores play with the boundaries between the mass medium of film and the high-art genre of opera. *Knickerbocker Holiday*, which is a frank homage to Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, blurs the meta-dramatic line between frame and inset, and the multiple shows-within-shows in *Ulysses Africanus* not only make an argument for racial equality, but also play with the notion that art imitates life, as the character Ulysses, who has left his wife Penny, puts on a minstrel show of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Weill also participated in the contemporary movement to create a uniquely American art form. In 1918, Van Wyck Brooks chastised professors of American literature for "severing the warm artery that ought to lead from the present back to the past," calling on the academy not to search for masterpieces in American literature, but, rather, to examine the cultural and social circumstances that influenced authors to write in a certain way, all in an effort to give aspiring writers a "usable past" on which to build.[20] The search for a "usable past" was part of a larger American project that began in the 1920s, but whose heyday was in the 1930s to develop a unique, autochthonous artistic culture, distinct from European influence. As U.S. artists searched for way to break creative and cultural ties with Europe, Van Wyck's "usable past" proved a helpful starting point; artists in the United States began to look to their own historical figures and native culture for inspiration. The movement gained momentum during the 1930s: art historian

[20] Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past" (1918), in *American Literature, American Culture*, ed. Gordon Hutner (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213–16, at p. 216.

Victoria Grieve has observed that "as the Depression deepened and Americans searched for some validation of their culture and community in their 'way of life,' the notion of a shared experience rooted in a common past proved especially reassuring."[21]

As the reforms of the Progressive Era (1890–1929) such as new regulations on business, child-labor reform, and the expansion of the public school system began to yield results, the Great Depression saw the rise of an educated working class with a new consciousness of their nation and national culture. The Popular Front provided an outlet for this new fascination with history and the desire for "a usable past." The Federal Writers Project set out to document stories from all over the nation as part of its effort to produce guidebooks for every state in the union, highlighting each state's unique history. Epic novels like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1934) and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) detailed the failing grandeur of the American South before, during, and after the Civil War. On Broadway, Stephen Vincent Benét, Douglas Moore, and Fritz Reiner teamed up to produce an operatic version of *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (1939), while Jacques Wolfe and Roarck Bradford's *John Henry* (1940) took up the challenge of integrating American folk music into drama. The Metropolitan Opera Company mounted pieces by American composers on American subjects, such as Louis Gruenberg's operatic adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1933) and Howard Hansen's *Merry Mount* (1934), the latter concerning a conflict between Native Americans and English settlers in 1630s Massachusetts. Europeans other than Weill also found inspiration in Americana, such as Benjamin Britten and W.H. Auden's operetta *Paul Bunyan* (1941), which was written for the Columbia University Morningside Players (the same institution that staged H.R. Hays's *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* in 1936, the play that eventually became *One Man*

[21] Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 51.

from Tennessee). By the 1930s, the cultural gaze had also turned to statesmen of days gone by, and the market flooded with biographies that tended to emphasize the nobility inherent in these figure's lives, intended for an audience that craved historical validation. Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson became symbols of the lessons of the past. Consequently, they functioned as emblems of the entire nation, and particularly the common folk because of their humble pasts, or as historian Alfred Haworth Jones has put it:

> Each … had emerged, in his own characteristic rough-and-tumble fashion, during the romantic, exuberant, antebellum years. Each had about him that homespun coarseness of texture, that pungent tang of the soil which marked him as distinctly, indomitably American. Each had been cut of the "native grain." From their humble origins [they] retained, albeit not without misgivings, warm humanitarian sympathies, a real but studied uncouthness, a tendency to defy polite convention, an earthy sense of humor … and withal a self-consciousness about their public images.[22]

Lincoln, in particular, became a major cultural icon during the Great Depression. Plays such as E.P. Conkle's *Prologue to Glory* (1938) and Robert Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1938) bear witness to the fact that the nation was searching for answers to the issues dividing the country from the one figure who had dealt with anything close to that scale of dissent. Weill participated in this movement. The Lincoln presidency and his assassination form the centerpiece of the second version of *Railroads on Parade*, and Andrew Jackson appears as a major character in *One Man from Tennessee*.

This turn inward and to the past was more than just a nationalist effort, but a political one as well. Literary scholar Simon Edwards notes that "the historical novelist, suspended between the ideologies of revolutionary enlightenment and romantic reaction, strives to achieve a quality

[22] Alfred Haworth Jones, "The Search for a Usable American Past in the New Deal Era," *American Quarterly* 23 (1971): 710–24, at p. 722.

of epic impersonality in giving an adequate account of the forces that drive modernity."[23] Similarly, Jerome de Groot writes that historical fiction opens up space for authors to employ marginalized voices from the past in a way that destabilizes common conceptions of the past.[24] Many writers, musicians, and artists during the Great Depression used the past as a parable for problems of their present, showing the origins of contemporary problems, and demonstrating past solutions. William Dieterle, for example, released a series of biopics of historical anti-Fascists between 1936–39. Others offered a new version of the past, one in which marginalized voices could speak, such as the epilogue of Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), with abused slave Nancy.

After *Johnny Johnson* and *The Eternal Road* (each discussed further, below), Weill turned toward projects that focused on America's past. *One Man from Tennessee* told the legend of the American hero Davy Crocket; *Knickerbocker Holiday* depicted early New Yorkers under the governorship of Pietr Stuyvesant, who by the twentieth century had become a secular "patron saint" of New York City. *Ulysses Africanus* went back to the Reconstruction-era South to tell the story of a freed slave trying to make his way in the world. It is also telling that although Weill considered writing many projects that had nothing to do with U.S. history, including the *Liliom* project (described below), an adaptation of S.N. Behrman's *The Pirate* (discussed in Chapter 3), and the "Opera from Mannheim" (Chapter 1), the only ones that came to fruition—at least on Broadway—were historically minded. The one exception in terms of unfinished projects is *The*

[23] Simon Edwards, "The Geography of Violence: The Historical Novel and the National Question," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 34 (2001): 293–308, at p. 304.

[24] Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 140.

Common Glory, a historical pageant about the Revolutionary War that the FTP commissioned from Weill and Paul Green for sesquicentenary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1937.[25]

In his compositions from 1935–39, Weill presents new accounts of well-known stories events that highlight the plight of the marginalized in an attempt to present historical analogues to contemporary problems. The mixture of opera, liturgical music, and jazz in *The Eternal Road* presents biblical history as something living, immanent, and relevant. The simultaneous depiction of biblical suffering with the plight of the Jews hiding from the pogrom highlights the "eternal" troubles of the Jewish people, placing the rise of the Nazis and of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union in the context of the events such as subjugation of the Israelites in Egypt and the sacking of Jerusalem.[26] For *The Common Glory*, Green wanted to write about the 1929 and 1934 textile strikes in Gastonia and Burlington, NC, but Weill steered Green toward a grander historical overview by advocating an all-encompassing pageant in the vein of *The Eternal Road*. Green eventually settled on a fictional episode in the American Revolution, with the everyman-style patriot Jonathan Smith (whom Weill wanted modeled on his and Green's other everyman hero, Johnny Johnson)[27] wooing the daughter of an English Loyalist as the story of Sam Adams and Paul Revere plays out in parallel, before they abandoned the project in early 1938.[28] *One Man from Tennessee* re-envisions Davy Crockett not as a military hero, but as a Frank Capra-esque congressional legislator who fights for the little people. *Knickerbocker Holiday* revisits the

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[25] On *The Common Glory*, see Tim Carter, "Celebrating the Nation: Kurt Weill, Paul Green, and the Federal Theatre Project (1937)," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5 (2011): 297–334.

[26] Norbert Abels, "Von den Mühen eines Bibelspiels. Franz Werfel und Kurt Weill: *Der Weg der Verheißung*," in *Kurt Weill: Auf dem Weg zum* Weg der Verheissung," ed. Helmut Loos and Guy Stern (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2000), 133–56, at p. 136.

[27] Letter from Weill to Paul Green, October 13, 1937, WLA, Box, 47, Folder 6.

[28] Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 313–17.

origins of the nation not on Plymouth Rock, but in an immigrant New Amsterdam, with another American everyman, Brom Broeck, taking on Pietr Stuyvesant and his corrupt council of Dutchmen. Finally, *Ulysses Africanus* tells the story of the Reconstruction from the point of view of a former slave.

The similarity of Weill's Davy Crockett to Capra's Jefferson Smith further suggests how deeply Weill and his librettists were enmeshed in U.S. culture, particularly toward the end of the decade.[29] The ordinary-man-turned-hero who fights for his own rights and those of the little man was a prominent cultural trope in during the Great Depression, with Capra's Jefferson Smith and George Bailey sharing screen time with Steinbeck's Tom Joad. Historical figures, as well, were often portrayed as down-to-earth and relatively ordinary before they were called to greatness. These everyman heroes stood out as the best of "The People," one of the great cultural watchwords of the Great Depression.[30] Like the narrator of John La Touche and Earle Robinson's WPA (Works Progress Administration, renamed the Works Projects Administration in 1939) radio cantata *Ballad for Americans* (1939), they represented the "everybody who's nobody" and the "nobody who's everybody."[31] Because they were ostensibly "nobodies," they could be anybody, and they embodied the power of the ordinary masses against the ingrained structures of government. These heroes succeed because they harness the power of the People they represent (literally in Davy Crockett's case). They fail because they try to act alone.

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[29] Crockett and Smith are both outdoorsmen who spend their congressional careers fighting for land rights. Some of the similarities are so striking one might think the former was modeled on the latter but for the fact that Weill wrote *One Man from Tennessee* during late 1937, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was not released until 1939.

[30] Denning, *The Popular Front*, 124. As Denning observes, "The People" was not a monolithic slogan of the era, but rather a concept that many different political and artistic movements—Left and Right—coopted for their own ends. However, for an immigrant, the lines between these various factions may not have been terribly clear.

[31] John La Touche, lyrics of "Ballad for Americans," performed by the New York City Labor Chorus, available online at http://www.cpsr.cs.uchicago.edu/robeson/links/NYlabor.ballad.lyrics.html, accessed January 24, 2013.

While Weill's choice of subjects and time periods appears quite varied on the surface, most of his works from this period engage with the problems of rootlessness and immigration. Weill took the American penchant for politically engaged historical fiction and used it to advocate for the rights of displaced peoples. In *One Man From Tennessee*, a representative from the bank scars the young Crockett for life as he re-possesses his parents' farm, forcing his family to become wandering tenant farmers. Crockett then resolves to run for Congress in order to prevent banks from buying up more than had already been settled by homesteaders. The Dutchmen in *Knickerbocker Holiday* struggle to figure out what constitutes correct American behavior, in the end proving that they can be loyal citizens of the country. The initial journey of the title character of *Ulysses Africanus* echoes aspects of Weill's flight from Germany. Weill extended this advocacy into his non-historical films as well. One of the taglines for *You and Me* was "A tabloid story of America's men and women without a country!" The trailer for *You and Me* also begins with a mock newsreel describing "these American men and women without a country. To all appearances, they lead the lives of average Americans. They seek employment, they look for a place to live. But though they are Americans, they may not vote, they have no civil rights." While these turn out to be parolees, the contradiction of "American men and women without a country" could just as easily be describing immigrants (or African Americans, an issue which I address in Chapter 4). In *The River is Blue*, the migrant Norma (the romantic lead) struggles to find work in France, only to be turned away time and again because she lacks a French passport. Weill's works from the late 1930s advocate for the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed in a uniquely vernacular modernist language.

Early Lessons: The Eternal Road *and* Johnny Johnson

Weill originally came to the United States to put the finishing touches on *The Eternal Road*, a massive biblical pageant that recounted parts of the Hebrew Bible. The project began in the mind of Meyer Weisgal, a Zionist and aspiring producer who experienced his first success with *The Romance of a People*, a pageant depicting the history of the Jewish people from Creation to the present performed mostly by amateurs, written for the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. After learning that the director Max Reinhardt, famous for spectacles such as *The Miracle* (1924), had been forced out of Germany, Weisgal resolved to "put together a Reinhardt-directed spectacle on a theme resembling *The Romance*, as a sort of answer to Hitler; but unlike *The Romance* it was to be the project of some of the greatest artists of our time."[32] Reinhardt contacted Weill sometime in the winter of 1933. On December 16, he wrote to Lenya, "I almost went to America with Reinhardt for a huge Jewish theatre work. But the date they wanted for it was too soon. Perhaps we'll do it in the fall."[33] By the following February (1934), after meeting with Reinhardt in France, he was reassured that all was in order, and he officially agreed to compose the score. Weisgal, Weill, Werfel, and Reinhardt met at the director's lavish castle, the Leopoldskronschloss, in Salzburg in August 1934 to sign the contract. Werfel had already completed the first draft of the libretto called *Der Weg der Verheissung*, and staged a successful reading at the meeting. One month later, Reinhardt, Weill, and Werfel met in Venice.[34] After the meeting, everyone went their separate ways to work on their own individual aspects of the

[32] Meyer Weisgal, *Meyer Weisgal… So Far: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1971), 116.

[33] W-LL(e), 107.

[34] Guy Stern, "The Road to *The Eternal Road*," in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim Kowalke (New Haven and London: New Haven University Press, 1986), 269–95, at p. 273.

production: Weill on the music, Werfel on the libretto, Reinhardt on the staging, and Weisgal on the financing.

It was not until almost a year later that the four collaborators convened again (although Weill and Reinhardt did meet in Venice in July 1935 without the other two), this time in the United States, ostensibly to oversee production, now called *The Road of Promise* (a literal translation from the German; it was changed in mid-November to *The Eternal Road*), with a translated libretto by Ludwig Lewisohn. Although he never intended it to be a permanent trip, Weill would not return to Europe for another twelve years after he arrived in the United States.[35] After settling in to the St. Moritz Hotel in Manhattan (a fairly upscale establishment) on a semi-permanent basis, he set to work, preparing for a late December opening.[36] However, during the previous year, Reinhardt had hired set designer Norman Bel Geddes to design the production after his usual collaborator Oscar Strnad fell ill. Their grandiose conception required extensive renovations to the dilapidated Manhattan Opera House, including ripping out several rows of the orchestra section, the most expensive seats in the house, which later hurt the revenues. The overhaul required more money than Weisgal had budgeted for the project, so by January 29, 1936, all support had dried up, and Equity ordered rehearsals stopped because the chorus and actors had not been paid. After Weisgal failed to raise the necessary $200,000 within the ten-day

[35] Weill arrived with Weisgal in the United States slightly earlier than Reinhardt, who docked on October 3, and Werfel, who arrived in November. See "News of the Stage," *The New York Times*, September 5, 1935, p. 24; "Reinhardt is Here to Produce Play," *New York Times*, October 4, 1935, p. 25; "Book Notes," *New York Times*, October 29, 1935, p. 19. Weill visited Europe during 1947, but, as he wrote to Maxwell Anderson on May 30, 1947, by then he felt more at home in the United States than anywhere else; MAC, Series Misc., Folder "Weill, Kurt, TLS, 2 ALS to Anderson, Maxwell and Anders, [Gertrude (Maynard)], 1939 June 5, 1947 May 30, 1947 June 22." Reinhardt had spent the previous few years traveling back and forth between Europe and the United States.

[36] As reported in "On the Air Today," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1935, p. 28. Before the premiere, a short radio performance of highlights from the work, still called "The Road of Promise" at his point, was broadcast that evening by Frank Black and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The proposed date of the opening given in the press varies from December 20 through the 23, revealing further confusion among the production team.

grace period, the project went dark.[37] Undeterred, Weisgal raised another $125,000 even as Werfel retreated back to Europe, Reinhardt moved on to his production of *Jedermann* at the Hollywood Bowl, and Weill began work with the Group Theatre on *Johnny Johnson*. In late 1936, production began again, and *The Eternal Road* finally opened on January 7, 1937, a few weeks before Weill left for Los Angeles to pursue a film opportunity with members of the Group Theatre. Despite a rough opening night, critical reviews were generally favorable, particularly towards Weill's music. Brooks Atkinson wrote that "when the portals of heaven open, disclosing a sacred choir of angels, the glory that floods the theatre is the voice of an inspired composer."[38] Ira Wolfert of the *Los Angeles Times* declared that "*The Eternal Road* is fabulous and it is Mr. Reinhardt and Mr. Weill and $465,000 that have made it so."[39] However, despite some good notices, the production turned out to be too long and difficult for audiences. Attendance was not good, and continued attempts to shorten the show only made for squabbles between Werfel, Weill, and the rest of the production team, who by that point were geographically disparate. *The Eternal Road* closed on May 17, 1937 without turning a profit. It was not quite the end of Weill's relations with Reinhardt: he then tried to get Paul Green (the librettist of *Johnny Johnson*, who also knew the director) interested in Reinhardt's proposed English language revival of Hofmannsthal's *Das Salzburger große Welttheater* with the FTP in Los Angeles in April 1937, but Green remained lukewarm and funding for the FTP was in short supply, and the idea never took hold.[40]

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[37] "Equity Edict Ends Show Rehearsals," *New York Times*, January 29, 1936, p.14. The *Times* reported that Weisgal had already spent an unprecedented $259,519 before Equity got involved.

[38] Brooks Atkinson, "The Play: *The Eternal Road*," *New York Times*, January 8, 1937, p. 14.

[39] Ira Wolfert, "Current Film and Play Productions: Three Great Dramas in New York," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1937, p. D4.

[40] Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 305.

The Eternal Road taught Weill a hard lesson about the business aspect of American "show business." After the first month, he was under the impression that it was going to be a hit. However, a telegram from Louis Nizer (Weisgal's lawyer) on February 6, 1937 shattered that view. Although the telegram does not survive, Weill wrote a letter from Los Angeles on the same day to Motty Eitingon, one of the show's backers, asking for help:

> [*The Eternal Road*] was, as you know, a fantastic success in the history of the theatre. The critics were unanimously enthusiastic, as I have never seen them before. The audience is giving it a reception which one rarely finds in the cases of such works. The performance is now at a height that no other theatrical event in America has achieved. The revenues are now rising steadily and for two weeks have been over the weekly average. And yet today I received a telegram from Nizer, in which he says that everything must come apart in a short time if no immediate help is found. From here I cannot see the reasons for this terrible situation, but for you there it would be an easy thing to ascertain the financial situation, and if it is necessary, to make possible changes to the management. There is no doubt about it: if someone helps this show out of its present difficulties, it will have a long run and bring in a lot of money.[41]

Weill's letter to Eitingon is somewhat disingenuous given that he had written to his brother, Hans, on January 15 that "the box office so far is not we had expected after those reviews."[42] As I discuss below, Weill was prone to exaggeration when he was trying to manipulate someone, a strategy he quickly found did not work. He likely never saw any of his royalties, and he found that he had little ability to enforce his contract. On February 7, 1937, in response to the telegram,

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[41] "Es war, wie Sie wissen, einer fantastischen Erfolge in der Geschichte des Theaters. Die Kritiken waren von einer einmütigen Begeisterung, wie ich sie noch nie gesehen habe. Das Publikum bereitet dem Werk eine Aufnahme, wie sie selten ein Werk gefunden hat. Die Aufführung ist jetzt auf einer Höhe wie kein anderes Theaters-Ereignis in Amerika. Die Einnahmen steigen ständig und sind bereits seit zwei Wochen über dem Wochentat [*sic*]. Und doch bekam ich heute von Nizer ein Telegramm, in dem er sagt, dass die ganze Sache in kurzer Zeit zusammenbrechen muss, wenn nicht sofortige Hilfe geschaffen wird. Ich kann von hier aus nicht überblicken, wo die Gründe für diese furchtbare Situation liegen, aber es wird für Sie dort ein leichtes sein, die finanzielle Situation festzustellen und, falls es nötig ist, eventuelle Aenderungen im Management durchzuführen. Es besteht kein Zweifel darüber, dass diese Show, wenn man ihr über die momentanen Schwierigkeitend hinweghilft, einen langen run haben wird und viel Geld bringen wird"; WLA, Box 47, Folder 12. Eitingon was also an émigré who had escaped the Bolsheviks, but maintained business ties to the Soviet Union and patronized many radical artists, writers and musicians, including Marc Blitzstein; see Howard Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein: His Life, His Work, His World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 156.

[42] WPD(e), 175.

he sent a letter to Nizer demanding that he be paid his share of the royalties, and that advertising for the show be increased.[43] Nizer responded on February 10 that the show had opened $70,000 dollars in debt and that the weekly operating expenses were presenting an even further strain on the budget, such that no one had been paid royalties and there was no money left for marketing. He explained that if they could not reduce the weekly operating budget to $20,000 (the show was currently running at about $30,000, but only taking in about $22,500), the show would collapse, and he requested that Weill take a lower percentage of royalties (a two-sevenths reduction, according to a letter of February 26). Weill side-stepped the question of royalties in a letter of February 18, saying that it was up to his "publisher" (it is unclear whom he means, but it suggests that he was thinking on the European model, where publishers often acted as agents for their clients, negotiating royalties and contracts), although he was probably more in control of that part of his contract than he was letting on given that he had already asked his lawyer John C. Pinto whether or not he should accept the cut. Pinto advised Weill not to accept any reduction in royalties, but cautioned that any action might be a futile effort given that he had yet to see a cent.[44] Weill and Nizer continued to exchange letters until April along the same lines, with Weill demanding his royalties and refusing to take a pay cut, Nizer pleading financial difficulties and telling Weill that he was the only person who had not agreed to less money. Finally, on April 8, Weill threatened legal action (likely a bluff, given his communications with Pinto):

> I don't think that ever in the history of the american [*sic*] theatre an author has been treated the way you treat me. … You cannot imagine how this whole affair looks from the point of view of a man who has spent two years of his life, who has risked his whole existence, who has used all his talent, his strength, his personal influence, his friends, to bring about this show, and who does not get anything out of it.

[43] These letters are in WLA, Box 47, Folder 12. Nizer's replies are in WLA, Box 49, Folder 36.

[44] Letter from John C. Pinto to Weill, March 17, 1937, WLA, Box 49, Folder 57.

Nizer replied on April 20, trying to convince Weill that the show might yet be a success if they could take it on tour (everyone hoped to repeat the achievement of *The Miracle*), but all communication after that appears to have ceased. *The Eternal Road* probably earned Weill no money, when all was said and done. The results of this experience may have contributed to the reasons Weill went to Los Angeles during the run of *The Eternal Road*; he was guaranteed $10,000 for his services on *The River is Blue* whether or not his score made the final cut, and as he wrote to his brother on January 15, 1937, "I can finally start to improve my sadly deranged finances a little bit. That's why I've accepted an offer to do a movie."[45]

It became clear as early as the winter of 1935–36 that *The Eternal Road* was not likely to earn Weill any money or recognition, at least in the short run, so he moved out of the St. Moritz and into the cheaper Park Crescent Hotel. Weill turned to the types of communities that had supported him in Europe: the Leftist avant-garde. Originally, he approached the internationalist League of Composers for support. On December 17, 1935 the League put on a concert of Weill's music sung by Lenya at the Cosmopolitan club, which Weill hoped would turn into his American break, but the concert was not well received, and Weill was forced to move on. René Blum offered him a commission for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, but the idea came to nothing. Similarly, Eugene Meyer, the publisher of the *Washington Post* offered to finance a ballet on the subject of Weill's choice, and the composer got so far as choosing Franz Wedekind's pantomime *The Empress of Newfoundland* before the idea collapsed.[46] On January 31, 1936, he wrote to Heugel that he was in talks to do something with Ben Hecht and Charles Macarthur, and that both Paramount and MGM had expressed some interest, but the only project he mentioned in that

[45] WPD(e), 175.

[46] On the Blum and Meyer commissions, see David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1987), 397.

letter that ever came to fruition was something with the Group Theatre, which Weill called "the youngest and most modern theatre in New York."[47]

Sometime that same winter, Weill had met Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford of the Group Theatre, a Leftist theatrical collective they had founded in 1931 with Lee Strasberg, dedicated to the Stanislawski method of acting and mounting socially and politically conscious productions.[48] Soon after, they began discussing a collaboration between Weill and Paul Green, a liberal Southern poet and playwright whose *In Abraham's Bosom* had received a Pulitzer Prize in 1927 (the Group had opened with Green's *The House of Connelly* in 1931). Green was taken with the theories of the Russian director Alexei Granowski, who advocated a form of "symphonic drama," and was eager to experiment with new forms of music theatre. After Clurman and Crawford visited Green at his home in Chapel Hill, NC, in early April, they decided on an anti-war drama inspired in part by a combination of the protagonists of Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* and Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*. Green's adaptation of the story followed Johnny Johnson, an idealist tombstone maker who goes to fight in World War I to protect democracy and impress Minnie Belle, the girl he loves. He is wounded in battle and becomes disillusioned. He takes his message of peace to the generals and commanders, but he is declared insane after he tries to trick the generals with laughing gas into ending the war. He is forcibly returned to the United States and kept in a lunatic asylum, diagnosed with "peace monomania," and ends the show as a peddler, having seen the girl he loves marry his rival.

[47] WPD(e), 163.

[48] Unless otherwise noted, my account of *Johnny Johnson* is drawn from the Introduction to Paul Green and Kurt Weill *Johnny Johnson: A Play With Music in Three Acts*, ed. Tim Carter, Kurt Weill Edition, Series I, Volume 13 (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music/European American Music Corporation, 2012).

In early May, Crawford and Weill came down to Chapel Hill for a week to smooth out the details, and Weill began to write the music. His score emphasizes the satirical nature of the play by parodying numerous standard American song-types of the era. Weill's strange (and estranging) score contributes to the satire by twisting song styles and genres out of their normal positions. The strange harmonization of the *Marseillaise* in "The Allied High Command," with its parallel fifths, turns the familiar, heroic tune into something strange and sinister. Weill also uses "incorrect" orchestration; in Private Howard's "Cowboy Song," ostensibly a folk song, begins with just guitar and percussion, but by the time Valentine reaches the chorus at m. 11, Weill adds an alto saxophone doubling the vocal part (possibly to help the singer), a decidedly un-folk-like instrument. Violins and piano also enter at the same time, but only in an accompanimental fashion, which was standard Broadway practice in any case. "Oh Heart of Love," a sentimental ballad about lost love, takes the place of a torch song, but it is out of place. Torch songs usually occur towards the end of musical comedies, but "Oh Heart of Love" appears in Act I, scene 2. Green also undercuts the sincerity of the moment by having Johnny exclaim "you sing it—almost like—you mean it," which betrays the artifice of the entire set-up. Weill also uses many of the techniques he developed in Germany to keep the audience off their guard, such as having Grandpa Joe rhythmically speak, rather than sing, in parts of "Up Chickamauga Hill," and introducing Captain Valentine with a tango to emphasize his effeteness (in his first appearance, he is "reading a lurid magazine which carries the picture of a male movie star on its cover" with Sergeant Jackson).

Other elements of the production appear to have a more serious bent, such as the haunting "Song of the Goddess" and "Song of the Guns," and particularly "Johnny's Song," which appears in various instrumental forms throughout the play, and is sung completely at the end,

reinforcing the pacifist message of the work. Michael Morley notes that "Johnny's Song" is one of Weill's earliest attempts at adapting the American 32-bar song form (although "Oh Heart of Love" is a better example), and believes that the "primitive series of chord progressions" of the second release (what I call the C section, below) betray Weill's uncertainty writing in the genre.[49] Morley's analysis of "Johnny's Song" neglects the fact that Weill adapted forms to suit the dramatic needs of the moment. The 32-bar song can exist in slightly different forms, ranging from AABA, to AABC and ABAC. In "Johnny's Song," Weill combined several different versions, resulting in an AABACA format. The fact that he audience has already heard AABA by the time the C section comes in makes that moment somewhat surprising, and it is that moment that Johnny conveys the lesson of the drama:

> And we'll never lose our faith and hope
> And trust in all mankind
> We'll work and strive
> While we're alive
> That better way to find.

The surprise of the extra release invites the audience to pay more attention to these words, emphasizing the importance of the message. Moreover, the accompaniment of piano, Hammond organ, and percussion (with trombone doubling the voice) draws the audience's attention to the lyrics, even further emphasizing the message. As in all of Weill's music, form and content are not parallel, but rather play off of one another to make a point. The form also resembles a rag, which may be Weill's attempt to combine two standard American song forms.

In June, Weill, Green, and the entire company went on retreat in Connecticut, where Weill and Green continued to write while the Group rehearsed. While the actors generally liked the music, some found it too difficult (they were, after all, actors rather than singers). To make

[49] Michael Morley, "'I Cannot/Will Not Sing the Old Songs Now': Some Observations on Weill's Adaptation of Popular Song Forms," in *A Stranger Here Myself*, ed. Kowalke and Edler, 219–34, at p. 222.

matters worse, the three directors of the Group were locked in a power struggle, and *Johnny Johnson* got caught in the crossfire.[50] While Crawford championed the project, Clurman and Strasberg were less enthusiastic. The actors, for lack of direction in rehearsals, were confused and worried about the future of the company, and soon demanded changes to the administration of the Group. Although Clurman was originally slated to direct *Johnny Johnson*, by the time the Group returned to New York City in mid-September 1936, he foisted the responsibility on Strasberg, claiming that administrative duties kept him too busy. The infighting also meant that the crucial aspect of sets and costumes went relatively unnoticed during the summer, and when the designs were revealed when dress rehearsals began, the company was surprised and somewhat dismayed; Donald Oenslager's enormous sets at the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre dwarfed the characters, who had trouble producing enough sound to fill such a space hall anyway (they had rehearsed in a much smaller theatre). They had pictured something small and picturesque, and instead received a monumental set, which required adjustments to blocking late in the process.[51] Like *The Eternal Road*, on paper *Johnny Johnson* was far too long for Broadway audiences, and required many cuts to both the libretto and the music.[52] It also faced financial difficulties similar to *The Eternal Road*. Clurman borrowed money from playwright Lewis Milestone, who brought his friend Jock Whitney into the fold. Bess Eitingon (the wife of Motty) invested $40,000. Clurman asked for money from Clifford Odets, the playwright who had given the Group their first hit with *Waiting For Lefty* (1935), but Odets initially refused, so

[50] For a summary of the difficulties facing the Group Theatre during the summer of 1936, see Wendy Smith, *Real Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931–1940* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 265–82.

[51] Smith, *Real Life Drama*, 282.

[52] The song's "Farewell, Goodbye," "Aggie's Song," "Song of the Wounded Frenchmen," "Song of the Goddess," were all cut for various reasons, including dramatic problems and the fact that some simply could not be heard in the large theatre.

Clurman played to his guilt, recalling that "I simply insisted that, right or wrong, the Group company by their devotion had helped him as a playwright, and now that they needed his help he was duty-bound to give it. Odets sent the money."[53]

After several disastrous, under-rehearsed previews, when the show opened on November 19, reviews were surprisingly supportive of the Group's intentions to create a new fusion of music, drama, and politics, but mostly had to admit that *Johnny Johnson* did not quite come together (although the notices were better outside New York and in Jewish and Leftist papers). Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* wrote that *Johnny Johnson* was "part good and part bad since new forms cannot be created overnight. There are many interludes in Mr. Green's work when both the satire and the idealism wither away to restless emptiness. Although Mr. Green is an honest and exultant poet, he is not a virtuoso theatre man."[54] Similarly, Stirling Bowen of the *Wall Street Journal* noted the novelty of the project, writing that "A play like this, unique in quality, does not lend itself readily to smooth and fully rounded performance. It makes no virtuoso demands on the cast but it is of a type which in production improves with acquaintance and familiarity."[55] Weill's music largely went over well when reviewers mentioned it at all. The production closed on January 16, 1937.

The project was then given new life by Hallie Flanagan and the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). Created in 1935 as a branch of the WPA, the FTP promoted American theatrical culture by putting theatre professionals back to work. The organization was given the difficult task of putting on culturally significant theatrical productions involving as many actors as possible

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[53] Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Story of the Group Theatre and the Thirties* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 176.

[54] Brooks Atkinson, "The Play: *Johnny Johnson* Opens a New Season for the Group Theatre," *New York Times*, November 20, 1936, p. 26.

[55] Stirling Bowen, "The Theatre: Simpleton Paradoxically Wise," *Wall Street Journal*, November 23, 1936, p.13.

without interfering with the commercial market. When Flanagan, the head of the FTP, saw *Johnny Johnson* soon after it opened, she immediately saw possibilities, likely due to the show's anti-war theme (in line with Roosevelt's recent pronouncements), experimental form (musical plays were rare on Broadway at the time), and large number of speaking roles.[56] On December 18, she wrote to Green, who had long been a supporter of the FTP and whose plays were in its repertory, inquiring about the possibilities of an FTP production. After writing to Weill, Green responded enthusiastically, and as soon as the Group's production closed, he suggested moving the show to a Federal stage. Eventually, the FTP mounted two productions, one in Boston that ran for twenty performances (May 25 through June 19) and another in Los Angeles, which ran for thirty-three (May 28 through July 4). The Los Angeles production restored much of the material cut by the Group, bringing it much closer to Green and Weill's original vision of the show, in part because Green had sent the FTP a relatively complete script, but also, perhaps, due to the fact that Weill was in Hollywood from January 1937 through the following June, and oversaw some aspects of the production. Both productions featured sets and costumes more appropriate to the scale of the story, and both were relatively well-received, particularly the Los

[56] Roosevelt spent a good deal of late 1936 and early 1937 urging both the citizens of the United States and the rest of the world to avoid another world war. In an address to the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace in Buenos Aires, he reminded the world that "Events elsewhere have served only to strengthen our horror of war and all that war means. The men, women, and children of the Americas know that warfare in this day and age means more than the mere clash of armies: they see the destruction of cities and of farms; they foresee that children and grandchildren, if they survive, will stagger for long years not only under the burden of poverty but also amid the threat of broken society and the destruction of constitutional government … even though the Americas become involved in no war, we must suffer too. The madness of a great war in other parts of the world would affect us and threaten our good in a hundred ways. And the economic collapse of any Nation or Nations must of necessity harm our own prosperity." Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address before the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace, Buenos Aires, Argentina," December 1, 1936, available online at Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15238, accessed January 21, 2013.

Angeles one. The *Los Angeles Times* noted that the premiere was "warmly acclaimed" and later called Weill's music "a highlight."[57]

During these months in Los Angeles, Weill realized that the Group Theatre was falling apart and that other Leftist communities were facing similar financial difficulties and divisive internal politics. He pursued a number of other projects both in New York and Hollywood during the first half of 1937, none of which came to fruition. Early that year, he began negotiations with Theresea Helburn of the Theatre Guild (the organization that had given birth to the Group) to write a musical version of Ferenc Molnár's *Liliom* (and in 1939 on Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* and S.N. Behrman's *The Pirate*), but Weill proved a poor negotiator.[58] The composer originally suggested the German director Erik Charell for the project, but Helburn rebuffed the idea. However, when Molnár initially refused the rights, Weill enlisted Charell's help in convincing the playwright to relent without Helburn's approval, and then told her that Charell had tried to push his way onto the project. This put Helburn in an awkward position of having to work with the unreliable Charell (whom she did not like), a touchy playwright, and an ambitious composer who thought he knew best. By May, the playwright refused to grant the rights a final time, and the project fizzled. Weill also pursued a number of projects in Hollywood such as *Wuthering Heights* with Anatole Litvak, *The Great Garrick* with Mervin Leroy, and *52nd Street* with Walter Wanger (the producer of *Blockade*).[59] The summer of 1937 was marginally more productive. Initially, Weill thought the FTP might be a reasonable means of support, and he started at least two projects with them: *The Common Glory* in the summer of 1937 and *One Man*

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[57] "Historical Drama Next at Playhouse," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1937, p. C4, and "Historical Play Staged by Federals," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1937, p. C4.

[58] For a full account of Weill's involvement with the *Liliom* project, see David Mark D'Andre, "The Theatre Guild, *Carousel*, and the Cultural Field of American Musical Theatre" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2000), 4–20.

[59] W-LL(e), 197, 216–19.

From Tennessee in the winter. But it became clear, particularly after the fiasco of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* in June 1937, that the Project was losing both funds and political support. In many ways, *Cradle* proved a turning point both for Weill and for Left-wing American art. After the FTP cut the show loose, it later became an independent commercial success, but Weill resented Blitzstein for profiting from the style of political theatre that he had invented in Berlin with Brecht.[60] At the same time, the various pressures, financial and otherwise, that *Cradle* exposed within the FTP made the Project seem weaker, and contributed to its undoing, and meant that Weill had no way to mount an work of his own with them. He also pursued a series of radio operas based on famous literature and bible stories with Howard Dietz, even going so far as to sketch some ideas for the story of Jephta.[61] Even so, it was not until early 1938 that he abandoned the more progressive circles in Hollywood and New York and formed a more productive working relationship with Maxwell Anderson and the Playwrights' Producing Company (henceforth PPC).

During the tumultuous and confusing process that brought *Johnny Johnson* to the stage, Weill realized something important about Broadway: success almost always depended on at least one song become popular outside of the show. Weill hoped that "Johnny's Song" would become that number. He went so far as to commission (or had his publisher commission) a new set of lyrics from Edward Heyman entitled "To Love You And To Lose You," which he tried to insert into the show, and Green eventually was forced to accept a combination of his lyrics and Heyman's. He urged his publisher, in tones similar to his letters to Motty Eitingon and Nizer, to push the song, writing to Max Dreyfus at Chappell on December 20, 1936:

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[60] Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein*, 157.

[61] Christian Kuhnt, *Kurt Weill und das Judentum* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2001), 7. Weill's list appears in WPD(e), 182.

> Here is a musical play running in its fifth week, with growing success, after an excellent, partly sensational reception. The music was better received by critics and audiences than any music on Broadway in this season, The audience simply love the show. There are between 8 and 12 curtains every night, and people are humming the music in leaving the theater (which is, I think, internationally the best test for the success of a music [*sic*]).
>
> And yet it seems not possible to have these songs sung over the radio, played in dance orchesters [*sic*], in nightclubs, on records etc. I admit that we had difficulties in the beginning because we did not have the right material. But now Edward Heyman has written very good commercial lyrics for the most popular tune of the show, and Paul Green has, after a long fight, agreed to have this lyric sung in the show—and yet there is not the least sign of a real activity on the part of Chappell. There are numbers of important dance bands in town who did not get the orchestration of "To love you and to lose you". Musicians, singers, radio-stations, record firms don't even know the existence of this song. We (i.e. The Group Theatre and myself) got interested the WNEW sender, we also got a few band leaders to see the who and they are very enthusiastic about the music. That's how Leo Reisman and Benny Goodman are going to play the music. But a young band leader, whom I know, called up Chappell on Friday and asked for Johnny Johnson-music. He got the answer: "We are not pushing the show, but we have a couple of other hits, why don't you play those?"—Frankly, things of this kind never happened to me before.[62]

The ploy did not work, and the song does not seem to have caught the public's attention. But the lesson stuck, and in several of his later projects Weill made sure to include songs he believed might become break-away hits. For the film *You and Me*, he composed "The Right Guy," a torch song that Lenya incorporated into her night-club act (as she did "Mon Ami, My Friend" from *Johnny Johnson*). Weill insisted that the in-house publishing firm at Paramount printed sheet music for the song, but it was similarly unsuccessful. He had better luck with "September Song," from *Knickerbocker Holiday*, which has remained in the repertory of jazz standards to this day.

One of the early lessons from these two experiences involved the nature of collaboration on Broadway. As many scholars, including Guy Stern, Norbert Abels, and Atay Citron have observed, Weisgal, Reinhardt, Weill, and Werfel all had fundamentally different visions of *The Eternal Road*. Weisgal imagined a Zionist "answer to Hitler," that would raise awareness of the

[62] WLA, Box 47, Folder 3.

plight of the Jews in Europe, but as early as the contract signing in Salzburg, he realized that Reinhardt had assembled a less-than-ideal team to accomplish that goal. He later recalled:

> It was a strange document drawn up in a strange and ominous setting: three of the best known un-Jewish Jewish artists gathered in the former residence of the Archbishop of Salzburg, in actual physical view of Berchtesgarden, Hitler's mountain chalet across the border in Bavaria, pledged themselves to give high dramatic expression to the significance of a people they had forgotten about until Hitler came to power.[63]

Reinhardt wanted a lavish spectacle, as evidenced by his choice of Bel Geddes for the designer. Bel Geddes was a known anti-Semite, and set about trying to eliminate much of the Jewish aspects of the show, including the scenes in the synagogue.[64] Werfel, too, was hesitant to imbue the story with a Jewish message. Although born Jewish, he had always been attracted to Catholicism, and he was preparing to convert officially, only stopping the process because of Hitler's ascension. His wife Alma Mahler-Werfel claimed that her husband had always conceived of *The Eternal Road* as a Christian undertaking, although her anti-Semitism may have clouded her judgement, and she may have been trying to protect him from historical inquiry she thought would damage his reputation.[65] Weisgal had long conversations in Salzburg trying to convey the essential Jewishness of the project to Werfel in broken German, but in many ways the message never quite got across.[66] Weill had yet another idea: an oratorio. He originally imagined that the project would be staged in London's Royal Albert Hall, rather than a Broadway stage or opera house. The concept of a sung-through drama without staging or costumes directly

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[63] Weisgal, *Meyer Weisgal… So Far*, 121.

[64] Abels, "Von den Mühen eines Bibelspiels,"140.

[65] Atay Citron, "Art and Propaganda in the Original Production of *The Eternal Road*," in *Kurt Weill: Auf dem Weg zum "Weg der Verheissung"*, ed. Helmut and Loos, pp. 204–18, at p. 211. One particularly Christian element is the presence of the Angel of the End Times in the finale of the drama. On Werfel and Catholicism, see Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 172–96.

[66] Weisgal, *Meyer Weisgal… So Far*, 120.

conflicted with Reinhardt and Bel Geddes's spectacle-driven vision, although at least in theory it could have worked with Werfel's and Weisgal's ideas (Alma Mahler-Werfel said that her husband had modeled parts of the piece on Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*). The result was a work that had the look of the most expensive of Broadway musicals, but the length—and more importantly, the pacing—of an oratorio, with interludes of dancing and spoken drama. Similar issues dogged *Johnny Johnson*. During rehearsels, Clurman appeared more interested in trying to produce an Aaron Copland–Clifford Odets collaboration on *The Silent Partner* (an Odets play that never materialized). Green thought he was writing an anti-war fantasy, while Weill, without necessarily disagreeing, wanted more comedy. The rest of the creative team had further difficulties. As Group actor (and later Weill director) Elia Kazan observed, the whimsical, fantastical elements of the play presented a problem for Strasberg, who was steeped in the realistic Stanislavski school of acting and directing such that he "directed with a psychological straightjacket," which confused the actors during the production, and Oenslager's overlarge settings did not fit in with either Weill's, Green's, or Strasberg's vision of the show.[67]

These early bouts with the haphazard Group Theatre and the amateur Weisgal also may have been what ultimately attracted Weill to the FTP, with its apparent strict hierarchical control, and government funding. On October 27, 1936, the FTP had simultaneously opened twenty-one separate versions Sinclair Lewis and John C. Moffit's *It Can't Happen Here*. This impressive feat of organization may have been particularly appealing to Weill, and he planned a similar set of multiple openings for the aborted *The Common Glory*. Similarly, the lucrative world of film-composing within the tightly organized studio structure and seemingly unending flow of money would have been appealing after the disorganization he had experienced on his previous projects.

[67] Quoted in Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 279.

However, *It Can't Happen Here* turned out to be the pinnacle of the FTP's success, and like many of the Left-wing theatre collectives that formed in the early and middle 1930s, the Project began to fall apart soon after, while Left-wing Hollywood's relationship with the studio system turned out to be less congenial than Weill expected. It was then that Weill turned to more the more conventional theatrical world of Maxwell Anderson and the PPC (after having made similar overtures to organizations such as the Theatre Guild, discussed above). When they incorporated, the PPC included in their charter a clear delineation of how matters of authorial rights, creative control, and production finance were to be handled for each production.

Weill also learned that aggressive tactics did not get him very far with Broadway publishers and producers. As the letters to Eitingon, Nizer, Dreyfus,. and even Helburn make clear, Weill somewhat over-played his professional hand when he first arrived in America, making demands and refusing normal concessions in attempts to both push his music and keep himself financially afloat. He was also prone to exaggeration; telling Chappell that *Johnny Johnson* had received "an excellent, partly sensational reception," was stretching the truth, at least so far as the reviews in the mainstream press. Both strategies likely backfired. Weill's tone is both confrontational and defensive, which likely turned off his publishers and producers, and the exaggerations were easily identifiable, making him seem even more like a stuck-up European. In his later business dealings (with the exception of his contacts with his Hollywood agent, Arthur Lyons, as I discuss in Chapter 2), he learned to take a step back and address issues more tactfully.

Sources

For this project, I have drawn on the wealth of primary sources available that pertain to Weill's career from 1935 to 1939, including playscripts, screenplays, musical scores, sketches, correspondence, and the internal business papers of several of the organizations that worked with Weill in the United States. Some of these sources have been available for some time, such as the scores, sketches, and librettos of *One Man from Tennessee* and *Ulysses Africanus* and some of Weill's personal correspondence, but they have not been seriously examined since David Drew's landmark *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, a catalogue of the composer's works published in 1987. Other sources, such as those relating to *Knickerbocker Holiday*, have received more attention, particularly in German-language scholarship from the likes of Elmar Juchem.[68] However, this dissertation also draws on newly released and discovered documents, particularly as they pertain to *One Man from Tennessee*, to Weill's Hollywood career, and to his relationships with Fritz Lang and with the FTP.

As with any work on music theatre or film, approaching the sources requires acknowledging the inherently collaborative and fluid nature of these genres. Ascribing ideas about structure, plot, placement of musical numbers, characterization, etc. to one collaborator or another is problematic at best. Contemporary correspondence can illuminate some aspects of such issues (particularly for Weill's works with the PPC given that the members sent scripts to the rest of the collective for critique), but often scholars are forced to rely on a general sense of Weill's intentions and aspirations to pick apart his ideas from the others. Theatrical and cinematic works are also constantly in a state of flux. Film presents less of a challenge than musical theatre in this regard because once a film is released the score is frozen, but since

[68] See particularly Elmar Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson: Neue Weg zu einen amerikanischen Musiktheater 1938–1950* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1999).

Broadway productions go through many stages, even after opening night, precisely pinning down the "work" is a fruitless task.[69] The *Johnny Johnson* that played in New York was different from the one in Los Angeles; and *Knickerbocker Holiday* went through several different versions between the premier and closing night, and was further altered for the tour, not to mention tryouts and previews, which were also slightly different. The sources at best provide snapshots of various versions of the show, and do not necessarily combine to form a complete picture of the process. Although it is easier to pin down the "final" version of a film score, the medium presents its own challenges, particularly for Weill. Since much of the surviving music for his films does not survive in his hand beyond the sketch phase, it is impossible to know how much of a role studio orchestrators played in the final version, particularly in the case of *You and Me*. Figuring out who made what cut is also problematic, since a good chunk of Weill's score was left out or drastically altered in *You and Me*, although as I discuss in Chapter 2, not as much as previously thought. For the most part, musical examples (which appear at the end of each chapter) have been edited for clarity and for consistency. Articulation markings, cautionary accidentals, and other similar marks have been silently added where they are implied, and Weill's shorthand (such as measure repeat signs, or slashes through stems) have been silently realized. In cases where notes are obviously wrong, those have also been silently corrected. In the case of *Ulysses Africanus*, where only sketch material survives, the examples have been

[69] The Kurt Weill Edition has proven just how great a challenge musical theatre can poses for those trying to make critical editions. The guidelines for the Kurt Weill Edition readily acknowledge this, and advise editors to take into account the "positive textual development through production and performance." Still, the Edition purports to produce "Texts," that is, something that "transmits a representation of the work transcending any specific realization in performance"; Edward Harsh, Jürgen Selk, and the Editorial Board, "Guide for Volume Editors of the Kurt Weill Edition," 4th ed., available online at http://kwf.org/media/edguide.pdf, accessed January 25, 2013, pp. 1, 3. The Forward to the Edition similarly states that "Editors draw on all available sources relating to the period between the start of the production process and the end of the composer's involvement. As a synthesis of the sources from which it is derived, the version of the work in the Edition may never have existed (either as a text or in performance) exactly in the form in which it is presented"; available online at http://kwf.org/foreword-to-the-kurt-weill-edition, accessed January 25, 2013. The essentially syncretic nature of the Edition's products allows for significant scholarly debate regarding issues of intentionality, authority, and performance practice.

reconstructed, mostly in terms of the accompaniment, which Weill often noted at the beginning of a piece, then left blank until the chord changed. The incidental music for *Madam Will You Walk* exists only in parts, which I have combined into a full score.

Chapter 1 lays out Weill's dealings with the FTP as they relate to the failed production of *One Man From Tennessee*. While Weill's piano-vocal score and sketches and H. R. Hays's libretto have been available for some time in the WLA, new documents uncovered at the National Archives and the Library of Congress shed further light on how Weill's involvement changed the project, and exactly what sort of relationship Weill hoped to have with the FTP before it was disbanded in 1939 under political pressure. There are two scripts in the WLA for a play about Davy Crockett, one titled *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* and the other *One Man from Tennessee*, but only one relates to the show that Weill hoped to mount; the former is the script for Hays's play that the FTP presented May 21–30, 1936, while Weill was working on *Johnny Johnson*, and also resides in the Library of Congress as part of its FTP collection.[70] A comparison of these two scripts, along with a summary of an intervening stage that also survives in the WLA shows how Weill shaped the project to his own ends, combining elements of epic theatre with the documentary aesthetic that the FTP pioneered with its Living Newspaper productions. Furthermore, newly discovered correspondence in the National Archives reveals that Weill hoped to be part of a unit of the FTP similar to Orson Welles's Project 891, the branch that put on *The Cradle Will Rock*. The internal institutional correspondence of the FTP suggests some reasons why that never happened, although as a government agency, all of their internal

[70] Jürgen Schebera mistakenly believes that the script titled *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* was the one that Weill worked on (his description of "a libretto with seven scenes" with "two singers who comment on the action in a folk style" resembles Hays's original, not the script Weill set). The mistake is understandable given that there is quite a bit of music in Hays's play, but none of it is original; there are only folk songs interspersed between scenes. Jürgen Schebera, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 260.

memos were subject to public record, and so Flanagan and her colleagues did not have the freedom to express their opinions regarding certain political pressures facing the FTP. What is left out of some of the letters is as telling as what is said.

Chapter 2 outlines Weill's dealings in Hollywood, focusing on the two film scores he completed: *The River is Blue* and *You and Me*. Weill's relationship with Hollywood and the Los Angeles émigré community has remained largely unexplored, possibly because until now the only surviving documents were thought to be a score for a movie that was never made; a series of songs, only some of which made it into *You and Me*; and Weill's letters to Lenya and his Hollywood agent Arthur Lyons detailing his dissatisfaction with Hollywood society and his prospects for the future. However, I have uncovered the script Weill used as the basis for composing his score for the *River is Blue* in the papers of Walter Wanger, the film's producer. The shot numbers in Clifford Odets's screenplay, titled *Castles in Spain*, match the numbers that are scattered throughout Weill's score. Similarly, several more drafts of *You and Me*, as well as a wealth of production material relating to the film survive in the Louis B. Mayer Library of the American Film Institute and the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, all of have which have remained unknown to musicologists until now.

The extant music for *The River is Blue* and *You and Me* is somewhat problematic. Aside from sketches, very little remains in Weill's hand, most of it remains in copies made by the studio. Conductor's scores for all of the recorded songs for *You and Me* survive, but no orchestrations, and Weill's copy of the music for *The River is Blue* exists only in a piano score that Weill had copied by the studio when he went to his official "audition" for the job, and he left no evidence of his intended orchestration besides a few notes within that document. Furthermore, by the time Weill wrote the music for *The River is Blue*, he thought that the movie

would not be made, and was almost certain his score would not be used (he was wrong on the first, but right on the second). With these documents, we have the beginning of the Weill's conception of a film score in *The River is Blue* and the end result of the studio's cuts and alterations with the materials that is extant for *You and Me*, with little evidence revealing the intervening process. Still these sources reveal that Weill wanted to continue the project he began in Germany with *Royal Palace* (1925) of synthesizing stage and film musical techniques.[71] However, he fought against the Wagnerian influence in Hollywood by showing another way to use leitmotifs in *The River is Blue*, and in the case of *You and Me*, by trying to adapt anti-operatic genre of the *Lehrstück* to the screen.

Chapters 3 and 4 chronicle what happened after Weill abandoned the Leftist collectives in Hollywood and New York, and turned to the more commercial (though still not conventional) theatrical collective in the PPC and to Maxwell Anderson. Elmar Juchem has already uncovered the majority of sources related to *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Ulysses Africanus*, and only one new libretto for the former, from the collection of Henry Lea, has emerged since his dissertation was published in 1999. Still, I consider some sources that survive in Maxwell Anderson's collection that Juchem does not examine in any depth, particularly in regard to *Ulysses Africanus* and some of Weill's other projects with the PPC, including the minutes of business meetings of the PPC and a handwritten libretto of *Ulysses Africanus* that both survive in the Maxwell Anderson Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, and the incidental music for Sidney Howard's *Madam, Will You Walk?* (1939).

Chapter 3 presents an alternative reading of *Knickerbocker Holiday* as more than just a New Deal satire criticizing Roosevelt, but also as a drama depicting Germanic immigrants

[71] On *Royal Palace* and film music techniques, see Alexandra Sherman Monchick, "Silent Opera: The Manifestation of Silent Film Techniques in Opera During the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2010), 125–46.

learning to become Americans. During most of 1938, attention was riveted on the trial of a Nazi spy ring that had allegedly infiltrated parts of the military, which caused a spike in anti-German sentiment in the United States. My examination of six versions of the libretto and the unused songs reveals that Anderson's original conception criticized Roosevelt far more than the final version, but that he toned down those aspects of the plot, and played up the story of Brom Broeck discovering his inner American as the versions progressed. As Anderson re-envisioned Brom's character, Weill revised his music, replaced Gilbert and Sullivan-esque patter songs with jazzier numbers, further demonstrating his American qualities.

In Chapter 4, I read *Ulysses Africanus* in the context of the complex relationship between Blacks and Jews in the Great Depression. Although only two versions of the libretto survive, and they are quite similar to each other, the minor revisions evident in the handwritten copy expose several interesting facets of Weill and Anderson's working process, as well as subtle shadings of the protagonist, a freed slave lost in the Old South who is forced to go into show business, that bring his story closer to that of the Jewish émigrés who fled Europe in the 1930s. Weill was far from the only one, Black or Jew, to connect the two cultures, but Weill's uniquely German prejudices inflect many aspects of the plot, however well-meaning, in ways that would have offended Black audiences had the project ever made it to the stage.

When Weill came to the United States, he entered a theatrical culture that had its own set of unspoken rules and codes that he did not necessarily understand at the outset. Far from the chameleon-like composer that he sometimes appears to be, it took Weill at least two full years to feel comfortable in the U.S. theatrical world, and another three to produce a real success in January 1941, with *Lady in the Dark*. What follows is the story of one immigrant's struggles, misunderstandings, misapprehensions, and mistakes as he fumbled his way through an alien

network filled with backstabbers, devious producers, incompetent management, and political intrigue, along with the idealists, theatrical innovators, and collaborators, all in the name of creating a better, simpler, and more modern form of music theatre.

CHAPTER ONE
BALLAD OPERA: THE FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT AND *ONE MAN FROM TENNESSEE*

Every generation rewrites the past. In easy times history is more or less of an ornamental art, but in times of danger we are driven to the written record by a pressing need to solve the riddles of today. We need to know what kind of firm ground other men, belonging to generations before us, have found to stand on.

John Dos Passos, *The Ground We Stand On*: *Some Examples from the History of a Political Creed* (1941)

As from another world, she remembered a conversation with her father about the land and wondered how she could have been so young, so ignorant, as to not understand what he meant when he said that the land was the one thing in the world worth fighting for.

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* (1936)

During the Great Depression, the United States began to develop an interest in the tired, poor, and huddled masses who struggled to make ends meet in contemporary life. New cultural heroes emerged; as Horatio Alger's entrepreneurial protagonists fell out of favor, Jack Kirkland's stage adaption of Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, a story of poverty and lust in backwater Georgia, ran for eight years on Broadway. In 1940, *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's gritty narrative of a wandering dust-bowl family struggling to stay together as they journey from Oklahoma to California, won the Pulitzer Prize, the culmination of the Depression-era concern with the contemporary poor. This fascination with the downtrodden masses in the country led to a flowering of documentary culture, and photographic books like Walter Evans and James Agee's exposé of poor sharecroppers in the South, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, became best

sellers.[1] This search for national identity spilled over into music, and particularly opera, as impresarios such as Fortune Gallo courted American composers and predicted that "in the not too distant future we may be hearing operas penned by some of the songsmiths who are now turning out popular tunes."[2] The year 1935 proved him right when George Gershwin completed *Porgy and Bess*.

All of this—the New Deal, the fascination with the heroes of old and the new masses—pervaded the culture of the United States. when the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) was formed in 1935. The FTP was one of the Federal Arts Projects established under the Works Progress Administration (WPA, renamed the Work Projects Administration in 1939), a New Deal relief initiative under the direction of Harry Hopkins formed to ease unemployment in the ravaged economy. The WPA charged the FTP with employing out-of-work theatre professionals. The government mandate required the Project to put on high-caliber productions without interfering with the commercial theatre. The FTP was also supposed to help create a distinctly American school of art and thought. To carry out this endeavor, Hopkins appointed Hallie Flanagan, a Guggenheim recipient and professor of drama at Vassar College, to run the FTP. Flanagan turned mostly to experimental theatre and caravan shows to keep clear of commercial turf, and also to preserve the focus on the history and culture of the United States as part of an effort to keep her finger on the pulse of her audience. Flanagan also publically insisted that the FTP was truly a *federal*, as opposed to *national* enterprise; i.e., that the national office existed primarily to coordinate local, state, and regional activities, rather than to issue executive orders from on high

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[1] See William Stott, *Documentary Expression in Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Jeff Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[2] Quoted in John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 438–39.

(although the situation necessitated more central control than she publically let on). This double mandate to create both employment throughout the United States and a new American art meant that the FTP solicited projects that closely examined the entire country, moving beyond the traditional urban centers of the theatre world. The result was that the FTP became a driving force of Depression documentary, along with the other arts programs of the WPA, the Federal Art, Music, and Writers Projects.[3]

Kurt Weill's arrival in the United States coincided with the formation of the FTP. Ostensibly on a temporary visit, the composer came to oversee the production of the Max Reinhardt spectacle *Der Weg der Verheißung*, renamed *The Eternal Road* for audiences in the United States However, two years later, Weill was still in the country and had composed a musical play for New York (*Johnny Johnson*, 1936) and a film score (*Blockade*, released in 1938, although Weill's score was eventually cut). Having written for East Coast Broadway and West Coast Hollywood, Weill set his sights on the rest of the country with an eye towards working with the FTP, perhaps encouraged by the success of the FTP production of *Johnny Johnson* ran from May–July in Los Angeles during 1937. For Weill, the Project represented a chance to capture the culture of his new country in a way that was familiar to him: through the experimental theatre community. In the United States of the 1920s and 1930s, several groups sprang up devoted to broadening dramatic forms, using techniques familiar to Weill from his Weimar career, including documentary aesthetics, video projections, folkloric subject matter, puppetry, and non-linear story-telling. Throughout Weill's career, both American and European, he searched for innovative ways to use music and drama together to enhance the theatrical experience. He was familiar with the experimental theatre community not only in Germany, but

[3] Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 255.

in France as well. Many of the most prominent avant-garde writers and theatre professionals in the United States became involved with the FTP in its short existence, including Orson Welles, Sinclair Lewis, Michael Gold, Marc Blitzstein, T.S. Eliot, and Hanns Eisler. Weill was also familiar with government-sponsored cultural projects from his work with the state operated *Krolloper* (a subsidiary of the *Staatsoper Berlin*), the venue which he and Bertolt Brecht originally meant to house *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.[4] The Project also helped him to shape a new image of himself as a thoroughly "American" composer given that Flanagan and Hopkins placed so much emphasis on creating a new school of national art.

Weill's work with the FTP encompassed the new production of *Johnny Johnson* and two unperformed pieces, one of which remains only in fragments—the constitutional pageant *The Common Glory* (1937–1938) with a libretto by Paul Green (the librettist of *Johnny Johnson*)—and one of which was nearly complete when Weill abandoned it: *One Man from Tennessee*, sometimes called *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, with a libretto by H.R. (Hoffman Reynolds) Hays (1937). While Tim Carter has extensively explored the history and cultural implications of *Johnny Johnson* and *The Common Glory*,[5] *One Man from Tennessee* has remained obscure. Yet it is Weill's most complete surviving work written specifically for the FTP, and reveals many aspects of the composer's newfound vision of music-theatre in America, as well his processes of adapting his work for new audiences. Weill and Hays clearly crafted their version of the Davy Crockett myth to cater to the needs of the FTP. They featured an American folk hero from Tennessee with links to Texas and Washington, DC, in hopes of appealing to a wide segment of

[4] John Rockwell, "Weill's Operatic Reform and its Context," in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 51–60, at pp. 54–59.

[5] See Tim Carter the Introduction to Paul Green and Kurt Weill *Johnny Johnson: A Play With Music in Three Acts*, ed. Tim Carter, Kurt Weill Edition, Series I, Volume 13 (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music/European American Music Corporation, 2012; Tim Carter, "Celebrating the Nation: Kurt Weill, Paul Green, and the Federal Theatre Project (1937)," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 5 (2011): 297–334.

the United States's population, rather than just the New York or Hollywood audiences. The musical play's large cast and strong political message about land ownership made it unsuitable for commercial production, but ideal for the FTP, which relished the possibilities of activism in the theatre, although the FTP's enthusiasm for politically tinged projects certainly faded after the 1937 fiasco of *The Cradle Will Rock*. The structure of *One Man from Tennessee*, which includes a chorus narrating throughout, also represented something new; in the 1930s choral speech became a significant part of many experimental theatre projects which Flanagan publically endorsed. In her opening address to the First Production Conference of the New York City Unit of the FTP, she urged her directors to "experiment with dance movement and choral speech, not divorced from, but [as] a part of theatre production."[6] Flanagan placed so much emphasis on choral speech in order to link the contemporary theatre with Greek practices, and give the project some cultural credibility. *One Man from Tennessee* takes the idea of communal choral speech one step further and turns that speech into song, giving the play a unique structure.

Weill's work on *One Man from Tennessee* also recalls his work in Europe, particularly to his collaboration with Bertolt Brecht. The pair developed a style of theatre they described as "Epic Theatre," which also drew on Greek theatre, and which emphasized a highly stylized aesthetic of interruption and alienation, all in the service of making the theatre didactic, with a particular focus on the plight of the downtrodden.[7] In *One Man from Tennessee*, Weill adapted some of these theories for a Depression-era American audience, particularly the use of the narrator, which the chorus of *One Man from Tennessee* embodies, and the work's emphasis on

[6] Hallie Flanagan, "Opening Address," *Highlights of the First Production Conference of the Federal Theatre Project Held at Poughkeepsie, NY, July 22–23, 1936*, LOC/FTP, Box 1, Folder 1.1.9a.

[7] For a discussion of Brecht's fascination with music theatre and opera's role in the formation of Epic Theatre, see Joy Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008).

the evils of a capital-driven society. Thus the show combined the American documentary impulse with the meta-theatrical aesthetics of epic theatre.[8] The music in *One Man from Tennessee* often does not flow organically out of the action, nor from the emotional need for the characters, but rather serves as a narrating frame in which the action takes place. Such devices owe something to Weill's European works. Yet *One Man from Tennessee* lacks Brecht's violent alienation, as Weill and Hays smooth over the interruptive aspect of the music.

A Symbiotic Relationship

Two years after Weill arrived in New York, he became interested in the Federal Theatre Project. His first contact with the FTP came in October 1936 when Flanagan expressed interest in mounting a production of *Johnny Johnson*, Weill's musical play with a libretto by Paul Green. Weill and Green wrote the piece for the Group Theatre, a company dedicated to experimental theatre and radical politics, but by the time *Johnny Johnson* opened on Broadway on November 19, 1936, the internal dissent and financial difficulties facing the Group pushed Weill to look elsewhere for creative opportunities. The FTP's productions of *Johnny Johnson* opened in Boston on May 25 and in Los Angeles three days later. These productions not only kept Weill's first American stage work in the public eye, but also reinstated much of the material that the Group Theatre left out of the original. The FTP's restoration of *Johnny Johnson* likely endeared the administration of the Project to Weill just as his relationship with members of the Group was

[8] David Kilroy has explored the importance of meta-theatre—i.e. any "device that calls attention to itself as being dramatic or any device that operates reflexively within its own contexts such that it may be construed as being 'about' the artistry of the drama or 'about' the perception of drama" such as plays, ceremonies, trials etc., within plays—to Weill's later U.S. work; "Kurt Weill on Broadway: The Post-War Years (1945–1950)" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University) 1992, 43ff. I also draw on Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metatheatre, and Perception* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1986).

dissolving over disagreements accrued during the production of the film that eventually became *Blockade*.[9]

As an immigrant looking to make a name in his new country, Weill saw in the FTP a unique opportunity; the program had the potential to bring him national recognition, and with its mandate to produce uniquely "American" works, he could represent himself as a foreigner who was willing to adapt to his new country. However, when making overtures to the FTP, Weill also made sure to emphasize his European training. In 1937, he wrote in *Modern Music* that the roots of musical theatre were Greek and Medieval, both very strongly European. However, while he praised ancient practice, Weill then proceeded to denigrate the European operatic scene after the nineteenth century as "produced for private enjoyment at the courts of princes and aristocratic patrons. … Not having to fight for its life, it grew spoiled, over-refined, exigent, following whims and disregarding general laws,"[10] emphasizing what Americans perceived as the worst aspects of European culture: the crumbling aristocracy and its "over-refined" pretentiousness. However, Weill then presented a cure: "So-called artistic freedom is something special. The creative artist seeks independence, he wants to conceive his work freely, unaffected by outer compulsion," emphasizing the "American" values of liberty and freedom of expression. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that

> The best possibility for the birth of a new form of music drama, it seems to me, lies in the Federal theatre. This young organization, which in a short time has become one of the most important and most promising factors in the theatre and the music of the country, possesses not only the outer essentials but the inner compulsion to undertake the solution of this problem. A generously supported undertaking, which arose out of necessity, it rests in the hands of youth, and has a progressive spirit such as distinguishes few theatre

[9] See Chapter 2 for a fuller account of Weill's association with the Group Theatre and the production of *Blockade*.

[10] This quotation and those that follow come from Kurt Weill, "The Future of Opera in America" translated by Joel Lifflander, *Modern Music* 14 (1937), available online at http://kwf.org/the-future-of-opera-in-america.html, accessed October 17, 2011.

> enterprises in the world. Spreading all over the country, it has the practical means to bring dramatists, composers, actors, singers, chorus and orchestra together for one great, unified work of art.

Throughout the article, Weill invents a historiography of music theatre that begins in Europe, but grounds to a halt because of misguided cultural values, and so must continue in the United States, where the culture is more conducive to true artistic expression.[11] He briefly mentions his own European work, situating himself in this teleology as the figure that can bring the cultural weight of Europe into the fertile ground of the United States. Weill knew that his European-ness was one of the only measures of cultural capital that he brought with him when he crossed the Atlantic, and he used it to his advantage any way he could. Indeed, he often emphasized the "Greek" aspects of *One Man from Tennessee*, particularly in its use of a narrative chorus.

The idea of Greek theatre served as a bridge between European and American theatrical ideals. When Hallie Flanagan went before the House of Representatives in 1938 to try and save the project, she reminded the congressmen that "four centuries before Christ, Athens believed that plays were worth paying for out of public money; today France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark Russia, and Italy and practically all other civilized countries appropriate money for the theatre."[12] Flanagan explicitly associated ancient Greek practice with the "civilized" countries of Europe, and expressed her belief that government-sponsored theatre would bring the United States up to their level. By emphasizing the Greek connection, Weill both highlighted his

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[11] Weill's narrative of opera also derives from his participation in the *Amerikismus* movement in the Weimar Republic. As Lydia Goehr has observed, Weill's Weimar era works along with those of Ernst Krenek, Max Brand, George Antheil and Karol Rathaus were meant "to stand opposed to a certain European—and particularly German—political and operatic tradition by aligning themselves with a presumably progressive politics and musicality associated with the New World"; *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 269.

[12] Hallie Flanagan, "A Brief Delivered by Hallie Flanagan, Director, Federal Theatre Project, Works Progress Administration before the Committee on Patents, House of Representatives, Washington D.C." February 8, 1938, available online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgibin/ampage?collId=ftscript&fileName=farbf/00040002/ftscript.db&recNum=0, accessed February 12, 2013.

European-ness and positioned himself in line with Flanagan's views about how theatre in United States should progress.

Weill often employed similar strategies when trying to get his foot in the door. When Weill first came to the United States, he made similar claims about the Group as he did about the FTP, writing in his notes for a 1936 lecture at the Group summer retreat that

> The Theatre [*sic*] which was in its origins, in The Greek Theatre, the Japonese [*sic*] Theatre and the Medieval Mysterium Plays a purely popular art, became now an aristocratic art.

But, as he adds later,

> The idea of the Group Theatre is the only way to create and cultivate a theatre art which will exist by itself and which cannot be touched by the success of the movies, radio, television etc. Since the German theatre culture has been destroyed, there are, with the exception of the Russian theatre, not many Group Theatres left in the world.[13]

By extolling the virtues of the FTP or the Group, Weill continued to establish himself as someone trained in the old ways of Europe, but who was now only interested in the new "American" theatre. By turning away from the Group toward the FTP in 1937, Weill also demonstrated that he no longer held to radical Left ideals just as the country began to take drastic measures against the supposed Communist insurgency. Weill made the break with radical politics just as the Dies Committee (the precursor to the House Un-American Activities Committee) was formed in May 1938.

Weill's demonstration of his cultural capital was not lost on the FTP, and the relationship proved symbiotic, at least for a time. The FTP commissioned *The Common Glory* from him and Paul Green in summer 1937, but by the end of the year after two wildly different scenarios and a multitude of delays, Green began to take control of the project in ways that did not suit Weill. As work on *The Common Glory* waned, Weill got involved with FTP playwright Hoffman Reynolds

[13] Kurt Weill, "Notes for a Lecture for the Group Theatre," WPD(e), 65.

Hays, director Charles Alan (who had served as assistant director on *The Eternal Road*), actor Burgess Meredith, and producer Louis Simon. On March 22, 1938, barely a month after Weill and his collaborators brought *One Man from Tennessee* to Flanagan, Pierre Loving of the translations department suggested that "the National Service Bureau publish a catalogue of Plays by Exiles (from non-democratic countries). Some of the greatest writers in the world are exiles today and have no access to a public owing to the censorship of their writings from their native countries."[14] The idea took off, and by the following July, the FTP had produced such a list, and had formed a Committee of Exiled Dramatists, which consisted of several political figures officially unaffiliated with the FTP, whose purpose was to promote works of foreign-born refugees. [15] During most of 1938, the FTP searched for acceptable plays by exiles, but without much success. Although he was a composer, Weill's status fit Loving's criteria of an exile, which perhaps made him attractive to the FTP. Flanagan's explicit call for experimental theatre also seemed to have been directed particularly at people like Weill, who was known as a member of the European avante-garde. One of his first interviewers in the United States described him as "one of the interesting modernist composers."[16] Already in 1936, she had called on the members of the Project to support the forward-looking theatre:

> Architects today shatter facades and let the steel show; musicians shatter melody and experiment with dissonance; painters turn away from sentimentality to an objective view of nature and the economic scene—but theatre still clings to melody, to the facade, to sentimentality.[17]

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[14] Memo from Pierre Loving to Irwin Rubinstien, March 22, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 39, Folder "Rubinstein, Irwin #1."

[15] LOC/FTP, Box 128, Folder 2.4.36.

[16] R.C.B., "Kurt Weill Has Secured a Niche of his Own at Age 35:He's Visiting Here in the Interest of His Incidental Music to "The Eternal Road,"—Explains the Role of Jazz," *New York World Telegram***,** December 21, 1935, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/347-kurt-weill-has-secured-niche.html, accessed October 18, 2011.

[17] Flanagan, "Opening Address."

By attracting prominent theatrical experimenters, perhaps Flanagan hoped to raise the status of the FTP in the minds of the cultural elite. People like Weill, whose European fame followed them to the United States among such circles, gave the FTP a measure of cultural legitimacy.

Johnny Johnson also became a favorite of the FTP. Like many other playwrights, Weill and Green allowed the FTP to perform the play for only $50 in royalties, the standard agreement for an FTP production, and substantially lower than commercial rates.[18] Although the Project only mounted those two productions, they planned more in Chicago, Seattle, and New York.[19] *Johnny Johnson* was popular in FTP circles for a number of reasons. The first was simply practical: *Johnny Johnson* requires sixty-nine speaking roles. While the Group performed it with thirty-six actors, the FTP's cast was over one hundred, including sixty speaking actors (some of whom sang) and forty-three extras. While it was also a theatrical enterprise, Flanagan made it publically clear that the primary function of the FTP was the re-employment of out-of-work theatrical professionals, although privately her ambitions settled more on experimental theatre. The more parts in the play, the better the FTP's numbers. The FTP also liked *Johnny Johnson* because of its strong anti-war message; the piece appears on several lists of anti-war plays in the Project's files.[20] Furthermore, *Johnny Johnson* fit the historical aesthetic associated with FTP productions. The figure of the common man pervaded many FTP dramas, particularly in

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[18] Letter from Emmet Lavery to Irene McCullen July 21, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 36, Folder "Lavery, Emmet – Director, Play Dept, No. 5."

[19] "Notes from Production Conference 1/22/1937," NARA/FTP, Box 18, Folder "Play Policy Board – Conference 1/22/37"; "Play Policy Board Meeting," NARA/FTP. Box 18, "Production Schedule," NARA/FTP, Box 21, Folder "Production Schedules"; letter from Julius Evans to Hallie Flanagan, February 10, 1937, NARA/FTP, Box 38, Folder "Motherwell, Hiram - Play Policy Board,"; Letter from William Stahl to Hallie Flanagan, April 8, 1937, NARA/FTP, Box 31, Folder "Stahl and State Directors, 1937."

[20] "Notes from Production Conference 1/22/1937," NARA/FTP, Box 18, Folder "Play Policy Board – Conference 1/22/37."

combination with the Depression-era fascination with national history. But the FTP also put on many plays about the lives of famous Americans. Several became very successful, including Michael Gold and Michael Blankfort's *Battle Hymn* (1936) about the life of John Brown, and E.P. Conkle's *Prologue to Glory* (1938) on the early life of Abraham Lincoln.

The movement toward a new American art particularly permeated the operatic world. Benjamin Britten and W.H. Auden, two other European émigrés, tried their hand at the genre with *Paul Bunyan* in 1941, which was produced by the same group that put on Hays's original *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, the inspiration for *One Man from Tennessee*. Like *One Man from Tennessee*, *Paul Bunyan* features narrative choruses and folk song pastiche. Theodor W. Adorno even began, though never finished, composing an opera based on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* called *Der Schatz Indianer-Joe*. American composers also took on their national heroes in productions like Douglas Moore's operatic version of *The Devil and Daniel Webster* from 1938. In 1940, Roark Bradford turned his novel *John Henry* into a musical play of the same name with a score by Jacques Wolfe. Most of that music derives from the long tradition of ballads about the steel-driving hero. Davy Crockett holds the same place in the American consciousness, and Weill's *One Man from Tennessee* fits in culturally with all of these other folk works.

The Ballad of Davy Crockett *by H.R. Hays*

The Davy Crockett project began long before Weill came into the picture. H.R. Hays was a poet, anthropologist, and German-poetry enthusiast who had worked as a contributor for the Modernist literary magazine *The New Review* early in the 1930s.[21] He was also familiar with the works of

[21] "Current Magazines," *New York Times*, February 22, 1931, p. 61.

Bertolt Brecht; he saw the Theatre Workshop production of *Die Mutter* in 1935, and became a lifelong admirer of the playwright, even helping to bring him over in 1940.[22] He probably wrote *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* for Howard Koch of the Educational and Dramatists' Project, which was part of the Drama Department of New York's Emergency Relief Bureau, a precursor to the FTP.[23] The first mention of the play appears on August 28, 1935 in letter from Koch to Flanagan.[24] Koch writes that as an educator, he has seen a great deal of success using the theatre to teach his students (he does not mention their age or level of education) various subjects, particularly in English classes with a series of "dramatic classics" from Euripides to O'Neill. "But," he continues, "when faced with the problem of choosing plays suitable for the history classes, [instructors] were confronted with [a] dearth of material." Earlier efforts at American historical drama, he explains, were "artificial and highly theatrical, not at all adapted to the requirements of a modern audience." He had therefore written and commissioned several plays on American historical subjects, including Davy Crockett. He had three requirements: that the plays illuminate a significant period of American history, that they be both educational and entertaining, and that they measure up to professional, commercial standards. Koch wondered whether the FTP would be interested in collaborating on this endeavor. While there is no record of Flanagan's reply, soon after Koch's letter, the FTP formed the American Historical Unit. This was never one of the major production hubs of the Project, and it seems to have been an

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[22] James K. Lyons, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 23.

[23] Koch also wrote a play for the FTP, *The Lonely Man*, which was about Abraham Lincoln. This Howard Koch may be the same man who was one of the writers for Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds* radio drama that was broadcast in 1938, and who also served as one of the screenwriters for *Casablanca* in 1941. However, while the timeline fits, the Koch who worked with Welles and Bogart wrote a memoir, *As Time Goes By: Memoirs of a Writer* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1979), and this makes no mention of working with the Emergency Relief Bureau, nor of the *The Lonely Man*.

[24] Letter from Howard Koch to Hallie Flanagan, August 5, 1935, NARA/FTP, Box 12, Folder "Koch, Howard."

experimental project that never quite got off the ground. Only one play appeared under the auspices of the unit, Hays's *Ballad of Davy Crockett*, but there were plans to mount *Free Land* by Harry Holland.[25]

While facts surrounding the genesis of Hays's *Davy Crockett* remain somewhat unclear, the daily reports from the Information Division (the branch of the FTP that dealt with advertising and publicity) paint a very clear picture of the weeks leading up to the opening of its production of Hays's play.[26] *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, a one-act play, had premiered on January 7, 1936 at Columbia University, performed by the Morningside Players, a dramatic group dedicated mostly to putting on student-written productions.[27] However, Hays, who got his master's degree at Columbia in 1928, may have pulled strings to get a production at a university given his educational intentions. The FTP picked up the play the following spring. *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* had a life similar to most small FTP productions, with a set of workshops and informal performances before its official run. Arrangements were made on April 17, 1936 for a shortened version of the play at the Drama Study Club Lunch. Ten days later, a "play in the making" was presented (the location is unclear) in cooperation with the American Historical Unit, probably *Davy Crockett* as it was the Unit's only work in production at the time. As was standard practice, the Information Division also searched for groups and organizations that might be especially interested in the play, targeting their advertising towards Texan groups, such as the Texas Centennial Bluebonnet Society, who might have been familiar with Crockett's real-life exploits

[25] "Production Schedule," undated, NARA/FTP, Box 528, Folder "Miscellaneous."

[26] "Daily Reports, April 17–May 25, 1936," NARA/FTP, Box 529, Folder "Reports–Daily Activity."

[27] "News of the Stage" *New York Times* January 7, 1936, p. 26.

at the Alamo. *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* opened on May 21 at the Majestic Theatre, played for nine performances to 2,140 people, and closed on May 30.[28]

Hays's version of the play almost had a life beyond its original performance, probably because 1936 was the centennial of the Battle of the Alamo, which may have been the reason Hays wrote it in the first place. Even before the FTP production opened, plans were made to mount a production in Arkansas as part of the centennial celebration at the War Memorial Building in Little Rock. However, Hays refused to grant the rights after the New York production, possibly because he had already begun revisions.[29] Soon after the FTP production opened, John McGee, then the director for the Southern Region of the FTP, wrote to Flanagan wondering if the play might be appropriate to stage as part of the opening of the Dallas Exhibition Building.[30] Flanagan liked the idea; she had called it "a very good show, with the leading part played as brilliantly as anything in New York," while it was still in rehearsal.[31] However, she replied to McGee the next day that while she was sending the script, New York City Director Philip Barber did not think that the company was good enough to send to Dallas. Thus it seemed that the life of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* was over.

Although ostensibly an educational endeavor at least in its FTP guise, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* had some political bite to it. Hays's script survives in the FTP Collection at the Library

[28] "Performance and Attendances of all Productions of the Federal Theatre Project of New York City," November 11, 1935 to November 12, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 528, Folder "National Service Bureau."

[29] Telegram from William Farnsworth to John McGee, March 20, 1936, and Telegram from Katherine Clugston to John McGee, June 22, 1936, both NARA/FTP, Box 37, Folder "John McGee #2."

[30] Letter from John McGee to Hallie Flanagan, May 26, 1936, reply May 27, 1936, NARA/FTP, Box 25, Folder "Southern Region #3."

[31] Letter from Hallie Flanagan to John McGee, April 30, 1936, NARA/FTP, Box 37, Folder "John McGee #4"

of Congress.[32] It is a fairly simple fictionalized chronological account of the life of its title character, with seven episodes linked together by two hillbilly musicians—a fiddle player and a banjo player—who frame each scene (see table 1.1 for a summary of the plot). Numerous writers of the 1930s used history as allegory, trying to transmit political commentary through lessons of the past. In *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, questions of land ownership come up constantly throughout the play, an issue which loomed large in the mind of the Depression-era United States as banks repossessed many of the farms in the South and West. The problem became so widespread that violence erupted in the middle of the country, where in Iowa farmers nearly lynched a lawyer conducting a foreclosure, and attacked a sheriff and the agent of a New York mortgage company. In response, between 1932 and 1934, twenty-five state legislatures enacted enforced moratoria on foreclosures. When creditors fought back, the matter made it all the way to the Supreme Court in cases such as *Home Building and Loan Association vs. Blaisdell et al.*, but the courts backed the bills in twenty-two cases.[33] This concern unites the entire play, which otherwise would seem to be in two disparate parts without anything in common. Crockett begins the play as a backwoodsman, but somewhat suddenly becomes a politician about half-way through. The young Crockett loses all respect for his father when the latter cannot save the family farm from a bank surveyor who comes to reclaim the property; Crockett's beloved Sarah's parents hesitate to let Crockett marry their daughter because their farm faces similar trouble; and Crockett goes to Congress to fight for the rights of those who settled the land before the banks started to lay their claims.

[32] H.R. Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett: A Play in 7 Scenes*, LOC/FTP, Box 589, Folder S117(1).

[33] Lee J. Alston, "Farm Foreclosure Moratorium Legislation: A Lesson From the Past," *American Economic Review* 74 (1984): 445–57, at pp. 446–47.

Table 1.1 Summary of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* by H.R. Hays

Scene	Action	Musical cue
Prologue	The fiddler and the banjo player introduce the story.	Musicians play "an old ballad air." Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 1: "Interior of a cabin"	Davy's Ma, Pa, and Uncle Josh talk about moving, Josh talks about fighting in Texas. The schoolmaster comes by and expressed dismay that Davy has not been at school, and Pa becomes angry. The schoolmaster leaves and the surveyor enters, demanding paperwork for their house that the Crocketts do not have. He exits and the family talks about options as Josh leaves for Texas. Crockett enters and says his good-bye to Josh. Davy describes his first killing of a panther. Pa does not want to hear it and come to blows, causing Davy to run away.	
interscene 1	Musicians sing.	"Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Had" [*sic*] Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 2: "A camp fire in the woods"	Crockett sits alone, singing to himself in the woods. Job Spindle, a yankee peddler enters running, saying he's lost and asks Crockett to share his fire. Crockett agrees. Spindle reveals that he does not like the woods, and Crockett eventually frightens him away with his wild ways. The spirits of the woods in the form of animals come to honor and bless Crockett.	"Fur on a Blindworm"
interscene 2	Musicians sing.	"Golden Slippers" Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 3: "A Cabin"	Sarah and Crockett flirt in the woods. Crockett wants to marry her, but Sarah says her parents will not agree; they are afraid of losing their land and want Sarah to marry someone with more money. Crockett goes to	"I Knew a Little Boy"

	negotiate with her parents. Pa seems affable, but Ma will not listen. Crockett begins to charm Ma by playing a banjo and asking her to dance ("I Knew a Little Boy"). Spindle interrupts, peddling, but they keep dancing. Ma briefly relents, but only offers to let Crockett marry Sarah if he works for them for a while. Crockett does not agree and runs off with Sarah, leaving Job behind with an angry Ma.	
interscene 3	Musicians sing.	"Hard Times" Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 4: "A large tree with a roughly built platform under it on one side of the stage. At the other side a tavern whose door shows a section of the bar"	Spindle attempts to interest some people in the thimble and pea game. Alexander, a political candidate, prepares for his stump speech. Some bystanders talk about land troubles and muse that all would be better if Jackson was president. They come up with Crockett as an alternative. Alexander places his carpenter in the crowd as a ringer. The bystanders argue, but eventually decide to try to convince Crockett to run. Crockett is originally reluctant. Sarah comes in with news, but Crockett sings to himself distractedly ("The Bear and the Wildcat"). She reveals that his uncle Josh has died, and upon hearing that, he changes his mind and decides to run. He hires Spindle as an electioneer. Crockett and Alexander chat about running a campaign and giving speeches, and Alexander reveals he is against Crockett on the land issue. As Alexander begins to make is bid for congress, Crockett heckles him until, eventually taking over the speech entirely. He eventually leads the crowd off in a chorus of "We're the Boys for Mexico"	"The Bear and the Wildcat" "We're the Boys for Mexico"
interscene 4	Musicians sing.	"Little Brown Jug" Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 5: "A dinner party in Washington"	A Senator is throwing a dinner party and has invited Crockett in order to dissuade him from pushing the land bill. The ladies are eager to see the wild-man. The party makes small-talk while waiting for Crockett to arrive. He arrives "in full backwoods costume," as	"The Bear and the Wildcat"

	wild as ever. The party tries to talk politics, but Crockett ignores them. The guests become uncomfortable as Crockett's manners prove less than satisfactory. Crockett finally relents and begins to push his bill, taking a stance as a man of the people in the room of cultural elites. When they will not listen, Crockett sings dances on the table ("The Bear and the Wildcat").	
interscene 5	Musicians sing.	"Yankee Doodle" Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 6:"Office of President Jackson in the White House"	Jackson tells his secretary to let in Crockett, who is now speaking for the Texas delegation. Jackson and his secretary chat about Texas and politics as they wait for Crockett. Jackson is tired and cynical. Crockett barges in and pleads for the plight of people in the Texas region. Crockett appeals to Jackson's soldier instincts, but he becomes angry. Crockett brings up the land bill and Jackson admits he killed it. Jackson becomes even angrier when Crockett suggests Vice President Martin van Buren is manipulating policy. Captain Morgan arrives with bad news from Texas and asks for aid. Jackson does not want to upset Mexico, but Crockett begins to convince him to send the requested reinforcements. However, before the order can go through, Van Buren enters and changes Jackson's mind. Undeterred, Crockett calls Spindle and resolves to go fight at the Alamo.	
Interscene 6	Musicians sing.	"Roll Missouri Roll" Two stanzas of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett"
scene 7: "Inside the fortress of the Alamo"	Crockett and Spindle sit at the Alamo, the latter playing his thimble game. The Mexicans signal that they are going to attack. As they prepare for battle, Spindle and Crockett chat about their marriages, then about the afterlife. Occasionally, there are bursts of fire throughout. Crockett occasionally fires back. Travis enters and asks Crockett's advice about ordering men into a hopeless battle. Crockett assures him that when the cause is just, it is acceptable.	

> Crockett continues to reassure him and Travis exits. The soldiers continue to fire sporadically at the Mexicans and Crockett and some other soldiers charge, leaving Spindle behind, praying for rescue. The Mexicans kill the unit and chase Crockett back on stage. Santa Anna claims Crockett as his prisoner. Crockett attacks him and gets fatally shot in the process. Spindle approaches Santa Anna as the curtain falls.

The figure of President Jackson, who constantly lurks in the background of the action and actually appears in scene 6, had contemporary political significance. Jackson, the consummate populist, became a favorite of President Roosevelt during the early months of 1936 as Republicans began to rip into his plans for Social Security.[34] In January 1936, just as the play premiered, Roosevelt compared himself to Old Hickory by claiming the same enemies: "material power," "sterile intellectualism," "the great media," and "outworn traditionalism."[35] The backdrop of Jacksonian politics may have made the play attractive to the FTP given Roosevelt's rhetoric at the time. In *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, Jackson's name first comes up in scene 4, the election scene, when Ned, a bystander at a political rally, says that he would like to see General Jackson run for president because "he was brung up in these parts," and "He's one of us folks." "Maybe," Ned wonders, "we'd stand some chance of gitting a preemption bill through if he was president," referring to the legal term for squatter's rights.[36] However, the fictional Jackson as he appears in scene 6 "gives the impression of being ill"; and he appears as only a

[34] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 282.

[35] Quoted in Mark Leff, *The Limits of Symbolic Reform: The New Deal and Taxation, 1933–1939* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 165.

[36] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 4-3.

"glimpse of the backwoodsman" he once was.[37] Crockett almost convinces him to side with the people on the issue of land ownership, but the ailing president eventually falls to political pressure from Vice President Martin van Buren, showing that while he may once have been a great champion of the people, he has become just another aging, out-of-touch politician.[38] In 1929, Roosevelt had successfully campaigned for governor of New York on a platform of agriculture, emphasizing his roots as an up-state man who could ease the tension between "the great metropolitan districts and us farmers of up-state."[39] He was finishing his M.A. at Columbia University at the time, and as a man of New York stock he would have been familiar with Roosevelt's gubernatorial campaign. Hays may have believed in Roosevelt then, but his portrayal of Jackson in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* betrays disillusionment with the President, and Jackson's feebleness may have been Hays's way of warning modern audiences by presenting a nightmarish vision of the future of the current political path.

Politics aside, the structure of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* made it ideal to turn it into a musical given that there was already a great deal of music in the original play itself. Before each episode, the fiddle and banjo players sing two stanzas that wrap up the previous events and introduce the next episode. Nothing in the script or the program indicates the melody for these stanzas, but the scansion and some of the lyrics of the first appearance are reminiscent of one of the oldest Davy Crockett songs, a minstrel number that first appeared in 1846 under the title

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[37] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 6-1.

[38] This connection, at least, has some basis in fact; Crockett's autobiography is peppered with digs against Jackson and his cabinet despite the fact that historically Crockett originally ran on a pro-Jackson platform. See David Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee*, 1834, a facsimile edition with annotations, ed. James A. Shackford and Stanley J, Folmsbee (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 205–6.

[39] Quoted in Gertrude Almy Slichter, "Franklin D. Roosevelt's Farm Policy as Governor of New York State, 1928–1932" *Agricultural History* 33 (1959): 167–76, at p. 169.

"Pompey Smash."[40] In the song, after detailing his birth the title character recounts a fight between himself and Crockett. He usually begins to tell his story with variation on the lines

> I'll tell you what a time I had with Davy Crockett
> Half horse, half coon, and half sky rocket.
> I met Colonel Davy a-going out a-cooning,
> Says, I "Davy Crockett, how do you hunt without a gun?"[41]

These lines echo the first lyrics of Hays's play:

> Now listen all you gals and boys
> And I'll tell you about Davy Crockett,
> He was nursed by a one-eyed grizzly bear,
> Growed up half-alligator, half-skyrocket.[42]

Several versions of the song appeared in print in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although there are significant differences in scansion between these two verses, they are not so deep as to preclude Hays's lyrics using the Pompey Smash tune. These folk tunes made for ease of production, but also lent *Davy Crockett* an air of authenticity that Weill, as I discuss later, only partially attempted to preserve with his musical settings.

Along with contrafacts, Hays explicitly quotes several well-known tunes. With the exception of the opening, in which the musicians play an unspecified "old ballad air," the interscenes always include either a popular folk tune or spiritual that thematically relates to the surrounding events. For example, by the end of scene 1, the Crockett family faces imminent eviction by the banks; Crockett's beloved uncle Josh Hawkins has decided to go down to Texas to fight at the Alamo; and Crockett himself has just had an irreparable fight with his father. The musicians respond with the spiritual "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Had [*sic*]." As is typical

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[40] William R. Chemerka and Alan J. Wiener, *Music of the Alamo* (Houston: Bright Sky, 2008), 22–23.

[41] This particular version of the lyrics comes from William A. Owens with musical transcriptions by Jessie Ann Owens, *Texas Folk Songs*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: TXL SMU, 1950),130–32. The Owens transcription comes from a version sung by Lemuel Jeffus in Lovelady, TX in 1938.

[42] H.R. Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, no page number.

for the play, the banjo and fiddle players exchange a few words, and then one of them begins to sing part of the ballad. The other interscene folk tunes are "Golden Slippers," "Hard Times," "Little Brown Jug," "Yankee Doodle," and "Roll Missouri, Roll." One folk song appears in the drama itself: "We're the Boys of Mexico," a pro-U.S. jingle to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" from *The Rough and Ready Songster*, a book of Mexican-American War songs from the Zachary Taylor campaign of 1848. It comes at the end of the scene in which Crockett campaigns for Congress.[43] This singing of folk songs both during and in between scenes was typical of contemporary folk plays. James Light's *Ruint* (1925), a farce about a civilized outsider among a group of ill-bred country folk, ends with a rousing rendition of "Old Dan Tucker," and Lynn Riggs's *Green Grow the Lilacs* (1931) had so much music that when Samuel French published the script in 1932, they also issued a companion volume of *Cowboy Songs, Folk songs, and Ballads from "Green Grow the Lilacs by Lynn Riggs (as produced by the Theatre Guild, Inc.)*.[44]

Beyond the folk tunes and spirituals, Hays included some original music, but its precise nature is somewhat unclear. Crockett sings three original songs, one at the beginning of scene 2 when he is alone in the woods; another in the middle of scene 3 as he tries to convince the parents of his beloved Sarah that he is a worthy match for their daughter; and a short tune as he weighs the pros and cons of running for congress in scene 4, which he sings again at the close of a dinner party as he dances on the table in scene 5. All appear to be *a cappella* except the second,

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[43] An American Soldier, *The Rough and Ready Songster: Embellished with Twenty-Five Splendid Engravings, Illustrative of the American Victories in Mexico* (New York: Nafis and Cornish, 1848), 20–21. The song is somewhat anachronistic as the elections in the play take place "about 1827." In fact, the real Crockett was elected to the House of Representatives in 1826. The historical Crockett receives several mentions in *The Rough and Ready Songster* as a hero of the Alamo, and even gets one entire song to himself, "The Death of Crockett," sung to the tune of the "Star-Spangled Banner," at pp. 167–69.

[44] Barrett H. Clark, "Our New American Folk Drama," *English Journal* 16 (1927): 759–70, at p. 764; Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007),12, 274 n18. In 1943, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II adapted *Green Grow the Lilacs* into the musical *Oklahoma!*

in which Crockett accompanies himself on the family banjo. No music for the FTP production survives, and no composer appears in the program. The most likely scenario has these songs all sung to the tune of other folk songs not indicated in the script, just as "We're the Boys of Mexico" took the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy," but the scansion of all three sets of lyrics is too generic to help with identification. The songs may also have been cut in the performance without music ever being written.

Whatever the nature of the music in the FTP production, the author felt that he was not up to the task of making good musical decisions for the drama. On the first page of the script, Hays notes that "the tunes suggested as the inter-act music before the scenes that follow can be improved upon."[45] Music, however, makes up an integral part of the story-telling; the musical interludes that frame each scene provide the twofold function of commentary and of filling in the blanks of the narrative. A song accompanies each of the important events in Crockett's life before the war: running away, courting Sarah, and running for Congress. *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* almost begs to be a musical, but it seems that Hays could not quite do it on his own. Nor was he alone in believing that something may have been missing from his play. There is an FTP reader's report by M. Walsh on *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* from March 3, 1937, well after the original production, but also well before Weill got involved.[46] Walsh notes that music would likely slow down the final three scenes even though Hays's last song (aside from the brief interscene interludes) appears at the end of scene 4 ("We're the Boys of Mexico"). Since no music appears in the last two scenes in the FTP version of the script, Hays may have gone back to the FTP proposing a revised version of his original play, resulting in this reader's report. Hays

[45] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, no page number.

[46] M. Walsh, "Reader's Report on *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* by H.R. Hays," LOC/FTP, Box 144, Folder "prr f1098."

may have also revised the script, which originally included music in the final scenes, in between the original production and *One Man from Tennessee*.

One Man from Tennessee

Weill's involvement in the *Davy Crockett* venture remains one of the more mysterious projects of his career, not least due to the fact that there are several common misconceptions in current scholarship on the composer. The first, propounded by Jürgen Schebera, is that Hays produced "a libretto with scenes … which is treated like a ballad (two singers comment on the action in folk style)," citing the script in WLA, Box 2, Folder 21.[47] In fact, that script is Hays's original play that the FTP put on in May 1936 (or possibly a revised version of the 1936 play); an exact copy of it survives in LOC/FTP. The second major misconception is that the show was titled *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*; Weill and Hays re-titled the musical version *One Man from Tennessee*. But Hays completed a separate libretto for the musical, and it too survives in WLA.[48]

The exact circumstances that brought Kurt Weill into the Davy Crockett project also remain unclear, but Charles Alan, whom Weill knew as the assistant director for *The Eternal Road*, and actor Burgess Meredith, who fell in love with Weill's music during his participation in the failed U.S. production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1933 and had tried out for *Johnny Johnson*, were certainly involved from the beginning. Exactly which of these three had the original idea remains unknown. Of the three candidates—Alan, Meredith, and Weill himself—the last seems the most likely to have introduced the project to the other two. Given the obscurity of the original show, those unattached to the FTP had little chance of hearing of it, and Weill was

[47] Jürgen Schebera, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life*, trans. Caroline Murphy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 260, 357 n28.

[48] H.R. Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, WLA, Series 20, Box D2, folder "1938."

the only one involved with the Project at the time. Other circumstantial evidence suggests that during this period, Weill and the FTP had a very close working relationship, making him the mostly likely candidate to have introduced Hays's play to Alan and Meredith. When McGee sent a memo to T.A. Mauntz, the director of the FTP's Department of Information, asking for a press release for *The Common Glory*, Mauntz replied on September 27, 1937:

> Fortunately, Weill had already arranged to be here for a conference at the same time. Since the release was intended for Friday's papers, (an ideal time since that is actual date of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution) a great deal of very fast work had to be done. With Mr. Weill I drew up the attached release, phoned Mrs. Flanagan in Washington and cleared it with her, and it has now gone out.[49]

The casual tone that pervades this letter suggests a fairly close relationship between the composer and the FTP. Anne Powell, a magazine representative at the Office of Information of the FTP, sent out an article by Robert Garland on Weill's music to the company Let's Make Music in January 1938 (the article does not survive), and offered to help put that company in contact with Weill in California.[50] Hays's later amanuensis Sandy McIntosh reports that Weill approached Hays at some point in 1937 with the idea turning *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* into a musical play, further strengthening the possibility that it was originally the composer's idea.[51] Weill may have also been aware of Hays through several another connections. Both Brecht and Franz Werfel, two of Weill's previous librettists, had associations with Hays. Hays greatly admired the German playwright, and knew the Weill/Brecht collaborations from the 1920s, and his numerous translations of Werfel survive in undated manuscripts.[52] Given Hays's connection

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[49] Letter from T.A. Mauntz to John McGee, September 27, 1937," NARA/FTP, Box 527, Folder "Mc 1937." It is unclear if the release ever made it into the papers.

[50] Letter from Ann Powell to Let's Make Music, January 4, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 528, Folder "Powell, Anne #1."

[51] Sandy McIntosh, *Hays' Crockett*, unpublished manucript, 3.

[52] Sarah Funke of Glen Horowitz Bookseller, e-mail to author on April 1, 2011.

to other German émigrés, it seems likely that he and Weill first came up with the idea of collaboration. Either Flanagan or McGee, who had both liked the original production but who were both dissuaded from further productions by Barber, was probably the one who made the connection.

Whoever started the project, it probably began in earnest during the summer of 1937 given that Weill's first apparent mention of it appears in a letter to his brother Hans in Mannheim on September 4, 1937. He alludes to working on "other projects" besides *The Common Glory*. Presumably he meant *One Man from Tennessee*, suggesting that it probably entered his mind sometime that summer.[53] The FTP had plans underway by November 22, 1937 when John McGee sent a memo to all assistant directors to give them an idea of what would be discussed at the next meeting of the Play Policy Board (the branch of the FTP that decided which plays to produce), including *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* with music by Weill under the heading "Not Complete." [54] "Not complete" probably meant "in progress" as Weill wrote to Paul Green on December 11, just before he left for the West Coast, to tell him that Hays had finished a third version of the libretto so he probably began to work seriously project at the latest in November 1937.[55] By December 5, 1937, the project had become public knowledge. The *New York Times* announced that Weill, Alan, Meredith, and designer Robert Edmond Jones (who had created the sets for the first U.S. production of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in 1931) had formed a theatrical company financed by singer Libby Holman.[56] The first enterprise of this new group was to be

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[53] Kurt Weill to Hans Weill, September 4, 1937, W-Fam, 356.

[54]John McGee, "Memo to all Assistant Directors," November 22, 1937, NARA/FTP, Box 18, Folder "Play Policy Board #1."

[55] Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 320 n55.

[56] "Gossip of the Rialto," *New York Times*, December 5, 1937, p. 5, continued on p. 7.

The Ballad of Davy Crockett by H.R. Hays with music by Kurt Weill; the second was to be a musical version (also composed by Weill) of Albert Bein's as yet unfinished *Heavenly Express*.

Meredith's memoirs provide the clearest account of this new company, even if his memory cannot always be trusted:

> In December 1937, Kurt Weill, Charles Allen [*sic*], and I formed a corporation that we called the Ballad Theatre. Our purpose was to produce plays in which a new musical form would be used. A chorus of singers, like a musical Greek chorus, would sing the story line, and the actors would go into action only when the mood was prescribed by the chorus. The chorus would be large and varied and, most important, would replace the orchestra. In other terms, the voices would perform the harmonies and functions of the orchestra, provide the narrative and exposition, and accompany the lead singers.[57]

Some of the details clearly do not line up, such as the assertion that the chorus would replace the orchestra, an idea which Meredith claimed that Weill "had either experimented with in the past or had dreamed up."[58] No such piece with an *a cappella* chorus by Weill exists, although he did write many pieces with prominent choral parts; nor is there any evidence that he ever experimented or thought of experimenting with such an idea, although it might have found favor with the FTP, which could claim that this new strategy constituted something truly experimental. However, Meredith's account is not entirely inaccurate, and he does emphasize the most important aspect of *One Man from Tennessee*: the role of the chorus. Just as Meredith says, a large choir narrates the entire action of the story, filling in events that are not depicted onstage. Meredith's account of the influence of Greek theatre also resonates with some of Weill's writings from around this same time.

Weill never explicitly mentioned the "Ballad Theatre," but his writings from the late 1930s reveal something of what he thought this new music theatre should be. Meredith's

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[57] Burgess Meredith, *So Far, So Good: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 59–60.

[58] Meredith, *So Far, So Good*, 60.

statement that Ballad Theatre in some sense grew from Greek theatre likely started with Weill, who constantly reiterated that his music-theatrical ideals logically descended from Greek, Medieval, and Japanese antecedents. Aside from his statement in *Modern Music* and to the Group Theatre, he gave one more similar account of the history of opera in a 1937 issue of *Stage.*

> The great theatre culture of the past, from which all that we have today derives, the Japanese theatre, the Greek, the medieval mystery, are unthinkable without music; they regard music as an indispensable element of dramatic art; they do not use music merely to intensify the dynamic growth of the action and the rhythm of the performance, but as a substance which, when blended with language, becomes one of the most powerful formal values of theatre. In the Greek theatre the chorus represents the heart and frame of the action.[59]

Like Meredith, Weill emphasizes the need to return to the Greek practice of a narrative chorus that provides a meta-theatrical frame for the action of the play, and helps the audience interpret the events that the characters depict.

After the announcement in the *New York Times* appeared, Weill, Alan, and Meredith, made contact with Louis Simon, a regional director of the FTP, who then made an official overture to Flanagan. On February 18, 1938 Simon sent a telegram to her office requesting an appointment and a phone call, saying he had "held conference with Kurt Weill and Charles Alan persuading them to offer [to the] Federal Theatre material and plans of music theatre," and that Holman and Meredith were both on board. Three days later, Simon sent Flanagan a letter fully explaining the project:

> The idea briefly and essentially is this: to set up a unit in New York that would be independent of the New York City Project, in order to produce a repertory of music-plays in a special style so that the social content of the plays would be correctly brought out. In order to achieve the distinction of style the unit would have to be governed by the combined forces of Weill, Alan, and me; being exclusively responsible to you, or to some one person mutually acceptable. Although Weill, Alan and I would work in close collaboration, our individual functions might be tagged as follows: Simon, producer;

[59] Kurt Weill, "The Alchemy of Music," *Stage* 14 (1936): 63, available online at http://kwf.org/the-alchemy-of-music.html, accessed October 18, 2011.

> Alan, director; Weill, musical director. Weill and Alan think that my experience in the Federal Theatre equips me best to handle those problems of production peculiar to the Federal Theatre set-up. We might further need the exclusive services of a scene designer, who, depending on the person, might be added to the governing board. [60]

He wrote that their first production will be *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, and that they had several other projects in the works, including a new translation of *The Threepenny Opera*, a re-working of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman* and *La Péricole*, Harold Smith's *Tell Us Democracy*, and possibly a Paul Green play (probably *The Common Glory*). Although he does not call the proposed new unit the "Ballad Theatre," the project is clearly some continuation of it given the reference to "a repertory of music-plays in a special style."

Various documents cast doubt on currently aspects of *One Man from Tennessee*, which David Drew dates to January–April 1938.[61] Simon also reports to Flanagan on February 18 1938 that "Weill and Alan have adapted Hoffman Hayes' [*sic*] *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. This work is complete." This report came just after Weill returned to New York, having been in Hollywood since December the previous year. Moreover, Simon does not mention Hays at all, but instead says that Weill and Alan have adapted the original play. Parts of the surviving piano-vocal score bear this out; at the end of the libretto is another version of the second full song, "Song of the Trees," bearing the heading "lyrics by Charles Allen [*sic*]." In a letter to Paul Green on November 24, 1937 Weill also wrote that he and Alan had "a very good collaboration … for the Davy Crockett-play,"[62] implying that Hays was only peripherally involved.

There are conflicting accounts, however. McIntosh's record of Hays's involvement in play makes clear that Hays was the primary librettist, and Julie Hays, H.R. Hays's daughter,

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[60] Letter from Louis Simon to Hallie Flanagan, February 18, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 24, Folder "General Correspondence 'S' #4."

[61] David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), 297.

[62] Quoted in Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 320 n55.

recalls that "Weill and Lenya arrived at our little cottage. Weill had an enormous number of projects going—all at the same time—and he was constantly on the telephone. Lenya, on the other hand, collapsed on her bed the moment she arrived. That's all we saw of her the entire weekend."[63] Weill mentions such a cottage to Lenya on May 15, 1938, writing from Hollywood that "Hays has written a letter full of excuses; he hasn't worked on a single line of the play since I've been gone. But he writes that he's rented a little *cottage* five miles from New York City, with a *swimming pool* in the neighborhood. The name of the place is Congers (N.Y.)."[64] Given that this letter comes significantly after Simon promised Flanagan a finished product, it probably also was written after the visit remembered by Julie Hays. It might be that Hays's *modus operandi* was to spend time in cottages outside of the city to write. Most likely, Weill and Hays began working on the play sometime between early September and November 1937, and that the cottage visit that Julie Hays remembered occurred during that period. Sometime in late November, Weill became frustrated with Hays and turned to Alan for help around January 1938, just as he did on *The Eternal Road*. Weill and Alan probably completed the draft that now resides in WLA, and sent it on to Hays for approval and revisions, which, if Weill's May 1938 letter to Lenya is accurate, he never completed to Weill's satisfaction.

Unfortunately for Weill *et al.*, the FTP in early 1938 was in no position to grant any unit complete artistic freedom given their shaky economic and political circumstances. Flanagan replied to Simon on February 24, saying that his plan was "not feasible," but that some version of the company might be carried on under McGee, who was planning work on experimental

[63] McIntosh, *Hays' Crockett*, unpublished, 3.

[64] W-LL(e), 269, emphasis in the original.

theatre with several other members of the FTP. Flanagan contacted McGee about the project, and he wrote her back saying

> Although the suggestion in Louis Simon's letter is impossible, I still think that he is a very good producer and Weill a very good composer, and I thought we should not lose an opportunity and something really exciting, particularly since Burgess Meredith has told me he wants to act in some of these operas.[65]

Despite McGee's enthusiasm, this letter seems to mark the end of the company's attempt to bring the Davy Crockett project to the FTP.

Although neither McGee nor Flanagan explicitly mention it, the fiasco surrounding Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* hangs over this entire exchange. Flanagan and McGee's reluctance to let the company answer only to Washington likely stemmed from the implosion of the previous FTP unit given such independence: John Houseman and Orson Welles's Project 891. In the summer of 1937, the FTP pulled the plug on Project 891's production of Marc Blitzstein's pro-union extravaganza *The Cradle Will Rock*, due either to financial constraints or political pressure (the jury is still out as to which). Welles and Houseman mounted a commercial production with great success. From the time it opened at the Mercury Theatre on December 5, 1937, *The Cradle Will Rock* was a hit, and the FTP was left with all of the political fall-out and none of the revenue. *The Cradle Will Rock* was one reason why the Dies Committee stepped up its investigation of Communism in the FTP, and these accusations eventually destroyed the Project altogether. In early 1938, still reeling from the entire affair, Flanagan and McGee were in no position to offer autonomy to another group, particularly not one that that wanted to produce dramas with "social content," musical or otherwise. Still, Flanagan felt badly about how *Cradle* had turned out. On January 28, 1938 a month before Simon contacted her, she wrote (though never sent) a letter to Hopkins admitting that what happened to *Cradle* was "a tragic mistake in

[65] Letter from Hallie Flanagan to John McGee, February 24, 1938, NARA/FTP. Box 37, Folder "John McGee #1."

the history of the Federal Theatre" and that it had cost them Houseman and Welles, two of their finest assets.[66] However, her remorse over *Cradle* did not overcome her desire to see this new production company attach itself to the FTP. The idea collapsed soon after it arose, leaving the mostly finished play without a home. Weill chose not to continue with the project and, as he told Green in 1942, he had never been satisfied with the libretto in any case.[67]

Ultimately, *One Man from Tennessee* was probably doomed to failure from the very beginning. Hays never produced a satisfactory libretto (the characters were weak and the plot predictable), and even if he had, the collaborators may not have been willing to work within FTP guidelines that, due to the problems surrounding *The Cradle Will Rock*, may have been too strict. Although initially enthusiastic, Meredith became the president of Actors' Equity in the beginning in 1938 and lost interest. He and Weill reunited for the radio cantata, *The Ballad of the Magna Carta*, which shares some interesting structural similarities with *One Man from Tennessee*, including a prominent chorus. *The Ballad of the Magna Carta* is the only published remnant of the Ballad Theatre project. After it became apparent that *One Man from Tennessee* would never appear before an audience, the FTP made several half-hearted attempts to work with Weill again, but none ever got past the planning stages. In July 1938, Emmet Lavery of the FTP play department wrote a play called "Horse Opera," which was to be "a history of the film industry done in Living Newspaper technique," but they could not contact the composer, who was on the West Coast.[68] The project continued without Weill and never came to anything. In April 1939,

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[66] Unsent letter from Hallie Flanagan to Harry Hopkins, January 28, 1938, NARA/FTP, Box 41, Folder "Hallie Flanagan–NYC Correspondence–January 1938."

[67] Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 327 n66.

[68] Emmet Lavery, "Round-up for the Week Ending July 15, 1938," NARA/FTP, Box 7, Folder "Exhibits & Lectures - Bosworth & Loving #1"; letter from Emmet Lavery to James R. Ullman, January 17, 1939, NARA/FTP, Box 40, Folder "Ullman, James R."

Samuel B. Harrison proposed a version of his play *The Odyssey of Reini Kugel* to Benson Inge, the head of the FTP department that dealt with translations, saying that Weill had already agreed to write the music.[69] Inge liked the play and expressed excitement that Weill was involved and sent it on to Halstead Welles, the proposed director of *The Common Glory* (whom Weill never liked). But that, too, never got off the ground.[70] A year later, the FTP collapsed under financial troubles and accusations of Communism from Congress, and America's first and only experiment with federally sponsored theatre vanished. In 1942, both Gilbert Miller and Paul Green expressed interest in *One Man from Tennessee*, but Weill had already moved on.[71] Louis Simon came back into Weill's life once more: they worked together on an all-black production of *The Threepenny Opera* translated by Harald Smith that the composer mentions in a letter of July 19, 1939.[72] Weill remained lukewarm since he had not seen the translation and Simon was considering another composer, and that, too, came to nothing. By mid 1938, Weill had also begun serious work on a more promising project: *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

The Plot(s)

Before Weill and Hays (or Weill, Hays, and Alan) began work in earnest on their new version of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, they constructed a synopsis of their vision of the story. This synopsis survives in WLRC, and is labeled Property of Charles Alan, filed with Weill's other 1938 papers. However, in light of my reconstructed timeline, it probably dates from late 1937 (see the Appendix for a transcription). It presents a vision of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* that

[69] Letter from Samuel B. Harrison to Benson Inge, April 19, 1939, NARA/FTP, Box 251, Folder "H."

[70] Letter from Benson Inge to Halstead Welles, April 20, 1939, NARA/FTP, Box 250, Folder "W."

[71] Letter from Weill to Lotte Lenya, April 30, 1942, W-LL(e), 343.

[72] Letter from Kurt Weill to Louis Simon, July 29, 1939, WLA, Series 40, Folder "Simon, Louis."

lies somewhere between the play the FTP originally produced and the script for *One Man from Tennessee*. According to the synopsis, Weill and his librettist meant for their version to follow the structure of the original. They describe the play as "built on an original ballad describing episodes in the life of Davy Crockett. Each pair of stanzas of the ballad is followed by a scene dramatizing the episode." This original ballad, to be composed by Weill, would replace the contrafact of the original play. The synopsis also keeps the seven-scene structure of the original, and each scene presented in the synopsis has an analog in the original Hays script. Of the seven scenes, three remain roughly the same as in Hays's text. Both versions of the story open with Crockett getting in trouble for skipping school, killing his first panther, and then fighting with his father over the latter's need to control his son's life, a fight which results in Crockett running away. Scene 2, in which Crockett meets his foil Job Spindle in the woods, watches as he gets scared away, then confronts several animal spirits who tell him about his destiny, also remains fairly close to the original. Scene 4, Crockett's confrontation with the aging President Jackson, is nearly identical in the two versions.

However, the synopsis also contains many elements that more resemble *One Man from Tennessee* than the original *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, the most prominent being the presence of a chorus. Instead of a simple fiddler and a banjo player singing the narrative ballad between scenes, the synopsis describes "a group of poverty stricken hilly billys [*sic*] who play folk instruments and sometimes act bits which help the transitions, meaning, or the development of the story." In Weill, Hays, and Alan's original vision, this chorus served more than just a narrative function; they were characters themselves. The synopsis says that they enter, then

> briefly indicate that they have lost their land, are on the road and have stopped to spend the night in the open air. Most of them are beaten and disheartened, but one young man is rebellious. It is he who recalls the story of Davy Crockett, hero of the poor frontier farmers, and it is he who plays him in the scenes that follow.

Thus it seems that the characters in the Davy Crockett story originally came from the members of the chorus, who were also characters in their own right, adding another meta-theatrical layer to the drama. The synopsis does not place this group in a specific historic period, but only indicates that by the time they tell the story, Crockett is already a legend. Weill and company may have meant for this group to be contemporary migrants who had lost their land, similar to those depicted in *The Grapes of Wrath* a year later. Eventually, Weill and the company abandoned that particular set-up, likely because it was too similar to *The Eternal Road*, which has a group of Jews hiding in a synagogue telling the stories of their history to a similarly rebellious youth (it also resembles the opening of the final version of *The Common Glory*). The chorus, however, remained in *One Man from Tennessee* as simply "a group of ragged musicians."[73]

Two characters are significantly more developed in the synopsis than in Hays's original script: Crockett's wife Sarah and his foil (and in later versions, nemesis) Spindle.[74] In the original *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, Sarah appears in only two scenes. In the first, scene 3, she is a buxom young lady who rebels against her parents by loving Crockett. She appears just once more in scene 4, "no longer the easy going girl of the previous scene. She has had a hard life and shows it,"[75] to play cheerleader to her disillusioned husband, express hesitation at the idea of him leaving her for a place in Congress, announce that Hawkins has died, and then in a complete and sudden reversal of character, to support Crockett's decision to run for Congress. In the synopsis,

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[73] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, P-1.

[74] Both characters are entirely fictional. The real Davy Crockett married twice, first to Polly Finley and, after she died, to Elizabeth Patton. See Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 57–69, 125–7. Spindle also has no real-life counterpart.

[75] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 4-12.

when she appears in scene 4, she "relishes the idea" of moving to the city: "she, after all, has suffered from the hardships of pioneering and is dazzled by the thought of life in Washington." She plays a major role in convincing Crockett to run for Congress, albeit not for the best of reasons. As in the original script, she also brings the letter that tells Crockett that Hawkins has died. In the synopsis, though not the original play, she also appears in the next scene, a dinner party at the home of a leading democratic congressman. Finally, she makes her last appearance (her fourth) in the synopsis at the end of scene 6, as Crockett has finally given up on politics. Before he goes home to Tennessee, however, he tells an anxious Sarah that he feels he must go fight at the Alamo first. All of these new appearances carry over to the musical play, although as I discuss later, she is even more developed in that version, and sings one of the best songs in the show, "Time is Standing Still," a torch song.

The character of Spindle, originally played by Hays himself, also evolved significantly between the original script and the synopsis.[76] Spindle is Crockett's foil in both plays, a crooked Yankee peddler who makes a living selling wooden nutmegs and other similarly dubious products. In the 1936 version of the play, he is little more than a sidekick who occasionally helps the hero, but in the synopsis, and later in *One Man from Tennessee*, he evolves into Crockett's enemy, attempting to foil him at every turn. In all three iterations of the work the two meet in the woods just after Crockett runs away, but from here on in the later two versions, Spindle's character diverges. In Hays's, sounds in the woods scare off the weak-willed peddler, but the synopsis notes that it is Crockett who frightens Spindle away with his "wild behavior," which sets the stage for their later animosity. In the courting scene, Spindle originally shows up as a simple nuisance, but in the synopsis, as in *One Man from Tennessee*, he is Crockett's rival for

[76] Program for "The Ballad of Davy Crockett," NARA/FTP, Box 144, Folder "Vassar Collection of Programs and Promotional Materials."

Sarah's hand. Originally, Crockett convinces Spindle to help him run for Congress, but in the version in the synopsis, it is the other way around. Spindle has become a land speculator himself, and

> approaches the [democratic campaign manager] and suggests Crockett, slyly offering to back him. He makes it clear that Crockett's popularity is to be used, but that Crockett himself is naïve enough to be handled if he gets to Washington. … The scene ends with wild excitement, the crowd singing and carrying Davy into the tavern, but Job is smiling up his sleeve for he intends to pull the strings.

In the next scene Spindle is not present in the original version, but in the synopsis Crockett, who is trying to push a land bill through congress, "appeals to Spindle but the latter tries to ease out of the situation and Crockett realizes he has been betrayed" and resolves to go to President Jackson personally. In *One Man from Tennessee*, this political episode becomes even more contentious. Spindle does not appear in any version of scene 6, the Jackson scene, but he appears in all versions of the final scene, albeit in very different capacities. Hays has him as just another cowardly soldier in Crockett's unit, but in the synopsis, and later in *One Man from Tennessee*, he arrives as an emissary from Washington, "a savior, ready to patronize Crockett." As a banker, he has offered to buy the land from the Mexicans, who will accept only if the forces at the Alamo surrender. Crockett refuses the offer and dies heroically. In both the synopsis and the earlier version, Spindle gets the last word, approaching Santa Anna with his catchphrase, "the hand is quicker than the eye."

There are only a few notes in the synopsis on where the authors planned to insert musical numbers, and most of those coincide with the musical cues in the original score, such as the two stanzas of the actual "Ballad of Davy Crockett" that occur between scenes, the song Crockett sings to win over Sarah's family, and at the end of the election scene. The only other song indicated in the synopsis goes to Spindle, who between scene 3 and scene 4 sings "The Hand is

Quicker than the Eye," a sort of reverse catalog aria; the synopsis describes the song as "cataloging [Spindle's] exploits as compensation for failure in love." The song appears in *One Man from Tennessee*, but there Spindle does not betray any sign that his exploits are compensation for anything. None of the other non-narrative or non-phenomenal songs that appear in *One Man from Tennessee* are indicated in the synopsis.[77]

The synopsis contains many thematic alterations from the FTP script as well. Crockett is a significantly different character, which foreshadows his personality in *One Man from Tennessee*. Though he starts out similarly as a robust yet naïve mountain man, by scene 5 (the dinner party scene) in the synopsis, Crockett has grown cynical and weary of Washington politics, whereas in the original version, he is as rambunctious as ever, jumping on the dinner table and generally making a ruckus. In the synopsis, he simply resolves to visit Jackson. This gives the character more of an arc; in the original version he is much more one-dimensional and has much less development. The synopsis also brings out the land issue even more than the original play. By casting the narrative chorus as displaced settlers, Hays and Weill put the homeless and landless before the audience at every scene break. Weill further highlights the issue at the end of the play by bringing Spindle in as a speculator attempting to buy Texas from the Mexicans. Crockett refuses on the grounds that the people of Texas would then have to buy their family land back from Spindle's bank, which was the same problem Crockett's family faced in scene 1.

Though no material between this synopsis and the full draft of *One Man from Tennessee* survives, several unused songs and musical passages indicate that there was a stage between

[77] In this chapter, I borrow the term "phenomenal" music (in preference for the more conventional, but incorrect, "diegetic") from Carolyn Abbate, who defines the term as "a musical or vocal performance that declares itself opening, singing that is heard by the singer, the auditors onstage and … the theatre audience;" see *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5ff.

them. Weill sketched three pages of music for an “Indian Battle” and indicated that it would be no. 7 in the full score, likely placing it somewhere around the early middle of story given that the final libretto contains twenty-three musical cues. The presence of this music indicates that Weill and Hays probably experimented with including Jackson earlier in the story. In the final draft of *One Man from Tennessee*, after Crockett encounters the spirits of the forest, in Interscene II, the chorus tells the story of his relationship with the general and their campaigns in the Creek Wars of 1813–1814 in great detail with typical tall-tale flourishes:

> VOICE
> Then he up and joined
> With the volunteers
> To fight under
> General Andrew Jackson
> Agin the injuns,
> Aburning and scalping
> On the other side of the Tennessee River.
>
> VOICE
> When it come to the fight
> He felt wolfish all over.
> He fired old Betsy
> A mile a minute
> Till the barrel got hot,
> And frrrp!, he cooled it
> With a squirt of terbaccer.
>
> VOICE
> And the injuns run
> And Davy took after ’em,
> Hopping the hills
> And wading the rivers.
> He got over the ground
> So fast his feet
> Hit the back of his head.
>
> VOICE
> Then all around him
> Sump’in was falling,
> Rattle and patter,
> Kerthump! Kerplop!

> "I never see hailstones
> In sunshine," says Davy,
> "Seems like there must be
> A million or more!"
>
> VOICE
> But it wasn't no hailstones.
> Danged if he hadn't
> Outrun his own bullets
> He'd shot out of Betsy
> The day before![78]

Though Weill set this passage to the standard interscene music that the chorus sings throughout the first act, the presence of such a long, colorful description is probably a remnant of an actual scene (possibly pantomimed given that Weill composed quite a long Indian Battle with no words).

By the time of the full libretto, Weill, Hays, and Alan had made further changes (see table 1.2). The original seven scenes were expanded to eleven. Only one scene of *One Man from Tennessee* has no antecedent in earlier versions of play: the first between Crockett and Hawkins. The remaining extra scenes came from splitting the original scene 4 into three parts and from splitting the original scene 6 into two. Weill and Hays also shifted the dinner-party scene to a box at the theatre, possibly to save money on props, or perhaps to emphasize the theatrical nature of politics.

Table 1.2 Summary of *One Man from Tennessee* by H.R. Hays

Scene	**Action**	**Music**
Act I		
Prologue: "A corner of the interior of the Alamo"	A rag-tag band of musicians enter carrying the body of a man (1). They are approached by a man one of them calls Job Spindle, who identifies the corpse as Davy Crockett and says he should be buried like any average soldier. Against Spindles's protestations and offers of bribes, the	1. Opening March (orchestra)

[78] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, Interscene II, no page number.

	musicians say that Crockett belongs to the people now, and they resolve to spread his legend.	
scene 1: “An open spot in the woods”	Josh Hawkins sings about his life as a wanderer, echoed by the chorus (2). He and his nephew Crockett discuss Josh’s plans to move to Texas. Crockett wants to go, but Josh discourages him. Crockett asks Josh about serving under Andrew Jackson. Josh leaves after wishing Crockett luck, and Crockett forlornly sings a verse of a folk song (3).	2. “Oh I’m a Rolling Stone” (Josh and chorus) 3. “Good-bye Josh” (Davy)
scene 2: “Interior of the Crockett cabin”	Ma, Kate, and Billy (Crockett’s mother and siblings) do chores (4) as Ma bemoans the fact that they might have to move again. They are in the midst of planning a party with Crockett enters. He is disconsolate because Josh has left. Pa enters and announces that the surveyor is approaching. The family tries to keep him from coming in, but forces the door. He announces that the Crocketts have three days to get off their land. When Crockett protests, the surveyor threatens to arrest him and leaves. Spurred by the surveyor’s treatment, Crockett resolves to run away and live in the woods (5).	4. “When the summer breezes blow” (Ma) 5. “Where the Green Pines Shadow the Ground” (Davy and chorus)
interscene 1	The chorus describes Crockett’s life in the woods	Interscene I
scene 3: “The same open space in the woods as scene one”	Job Spindle, a peddler, is lost in the woods and comes across Crockett’s camp. Spindle is nonplussed at Crockett’s wandering lifestyle, but tries to sell him things anyway. Crockett does not want anything. Spindle then tries to get Crockett to play Three Card Monte with a pea and three thimbles. He says he needs a man to win so that other customers do not get discouraged. Crockett seems interested, and Spindle presents his scheme of making money to build up a business. Crockett becomes angry and scares Spindle away when he threatens to clear people off the land. Now left alone, Crockett is visited by spirits who tell him about his destiny (6).	6. “Song of the Trees” (chorus)
interscene 2	The chorus describes how Crockett enlists with Jackson to fight Indians, but that Crockett is lonely without a home and a family	Interscene II
scene 4: “Sarah’s House. A divided stage. To the left we see the interior of the	Ma (Sarah’s mother) sings about how sad she is about losing her only daughter (7). Spindle flatters her in hopes of winning her daughter’s hand. In the woods, Crockett courts Sarah, telling her about	7. “A Mother Weeps” (Sarah’s Ma)

cabin … To the right, the woods."	his plans for them. Sarah is flirty and responsive, but worried about her Mother's favor for Spindle. She worries that her mother might make her marry Spindle because her family is about to lose their farm. Crockett resolves to talk to the family. Ma rejects him for Spindle, but Sarah still prefers Crockett. Ma kicks him out of the house, but Crockett comes back in the window, appealing to Pa. Ma has none of it, so Crockett tries to impress her by asking her to dance (8). She is briefly charmed, but not for long. Crockett's claims that his possessions are plains further fails to impress, and Crockett finally runs off with Sarah.	8. "Look Your Partner Straight in the Eye" (Davy)
interscene 3	The chorus describes Crockett and Spindle's disparate lives.	Interscene III
scene 5: "A painted drop with large trees in the center. One side goes up and discloses Spindle perched on a stool in his office."	Spindle sings about his philosophy of life (9). Spindle, who now runs a newspaper, has a meeting with Alexander. They begin playing Three Card Monte as Spindle hints that he might be generous with an elected official who will raise taxes on foreign goods that impede on Spindle's trade. The two strike a deal, and Spindle goes off singing.	9. "The Hand is Quicker than the Eye" (Spindle and chorus)
scene 6: "Interior of Davy's home."	Edmonds attempts to convince Crockett to run for congress. Crockett refuses. Edmonds leaves and Sarah enters. She thinks running is a good idea, but Crockett ignores her and begins to sing about the woods (10). Sarah says she has a letter, and reads it to Crockett, telling him (with the help of the chorus), that Josh has died (11). With this new information, Sarah convinces Crockett to run for congress to fight for what Josh fought for in Texas (12).	10. "When the Summer Breezes Blow" (Davy) 11. "Death of Josh Hawkins" (Sarah and chorus) 12. "Watch out for Me" (Davy, Sarah, and chorus)
scene 7: "The Tavern of Tucsonville, Tennessee. A tavern right with a table and benches. A big tree	Alexander, Spindle, and a carpenter prepare for Alexander's speech. Alexander begins to orate. Crockett enters during the speech with a procession and a band. He jumps up on a table opposite Alexander and begins campaigning. The	13. "When I'm in Congress" (Davy and crowd)

left with an election platform. Rear drop shows Spindle's Emporium, Tusconville Torch [and the] Publisher and Bank of Tucsonville."	crowd turns his way. Crockett and the crowd sing about the promise of his congressional career (13). They march off, leaving Spindle alone onstage, who echoes their song, but implies that he will buy Crockett the way he bought Alexander.	
Act II		
scene 8: "A gilded room behind a box in a Washington Theatre"	The chorus sings about the perils of politics (14). A senator meets with Spindle, who is upset that the tariff bill has not past because Crockett has opposed it. Fanny and the Senator's wife enters and distracts the senator. All are opposed to Crockett's proposed land bill. Spindle plays on Fanny's vanity to convince her to manipulate another senator into opposing Crockett's bill. Crockett enters and tries to pitch the land bill. Fanny seems charmed, but the senator's wife and Spindle intervene. Eventually the party brushes them off. Crockett tells his wife he will talk to the only man who will listen: Jackson.	14. "Politics" (chorus and Fanny)
interscene 4	The chorus describes Jackson as an old soldier who misses his home state of Tennessee	Interscene IV (chorus)
scene 9: "Jackson's private office"	The chorus sings about how badly things are in the states (15). Crockett bursts in on Jackson, who appears "ill but preserves his erectness and some flashes of his old fire." Crockett appeals to Jackson's memories of Tennessee, speaking to him as a comrade, pushing the land bill. Jackson notes that Crockett has opposed him, but seems ashamed. When Crockett implies that Vice President Van Buren is manipulating Jackson, the president becomes angry. Captain Morgan enters with bad news from the Alamo. Crockett urges Jackson to send aid, and Jackson appears sympathetic until Van Buren enters and convinces him otherwise.	15. "All Goes Badly" (chorus)
scene 10: "Drop showing the outside of the White House"	Crockett finds Sarah waiting outside. They recognize that they never had a chance in Washington and resolve to go back to Tennessee. Crockett, however, says that he must go to fight at the Alamo first, against Sarah's protestations (16).	16. "I'm Not Living by the Clock" (Sarah and chorus).
scene 11: "Corner of the roof of the Alamo"	Davy reprises Sarah's song. Crockett and the men wait for the Mexicans to attack. Spindle appears saying he has cut a deal with Santa Anna to buy	17. "Battle of the Alamo"

Texas as long as the Alamo surrenders. Crockett refuses on the grounds that the people living on the land would be no better off; they would have to buy their land from Spindle rather than the Mexican government. Crockett attacks the Mexicans, the rest of the soldiers following (17, 18). Spindle cowers in the ensuing battle. Crockett staggers onstage, wounded, and dies. Santa Anna approaches Spindle, who invites him to play the thimble game.	(orchestra) 18. "You Can See the Mexicans" (Chorus)

The characters of Spindle and Sarah continued to evolve between the synopsis and the libretto. Spindle has become even more of an adversary; he actively opposes Crockett's election to congress by officially backing Alexander (in the original play and the synopsis he supports Crockett, in the latter because he hopes to manipulate him later on). As he becomes more of an opponent, however, he also loses his power. Both the synopsis and the original *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* end with Spindle approaching Santa Anna with his catchphrase, "the hand is quicker than the eye," playing a version of Three Card Monte with three thimbles and a pea that he has used to cheat money out of people throughout the play. *One Man from Tennessee* ends the same way, but begins with a group of non-specific musicians (not homeless settlers, as in the synopsis) taking Crockett's body and promising to tell his story against Spindle's protestations, so while he does get the last word, the drama is essentially cyclical, ending where it began, with Spindle's inability to stop Crockett's legend from spreading.

Sarah appears in the same places as she does in the synopsis, but her character is much stronger and more sympathetic in the full libretto. Instead of convincing her husband to run for Congress because she "is dazzled by the thought of life in Washington," as in the synopsis, in the libretto she does so because she believes in his political power; she even suggests the land bill that becomes her husband's obsession during his tenure in office. Unlike earlier versions of the

story in which Hawkins's death simply inspires Crockett's campaign, it is she who makes the connection between Hawkins's principles fighting for freedom in Texas and the idea that Crockett could fight for the same thing in Congress as a way to honor his memory. Compare the scene from *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* to the same in *One Man from Tennessee*.

> (*Ballad of Davy Crockett*)
>
> DAVY (*softly*): Josh was nearer to me than my own pa. It seems we was fighting for the same things, him and me. A free life and a way of gitting ahead. Even if we run off into the woods we run smack up against the same things.
> SARAH: I knew from what you said of him it'd mean a powerful let to you.
> DAVY: Josh Hawkins, killed fighting for his land.
> SARAH: The Mexican government's putting down the republic.
> DAVY (*dreamily*): Be sure you're right, then go ahead. It's like a sign.
> SARAH: A sign?
> DAVY: A sign for me to go ahead! (*Strikes his thigh*) I'm agoing to run! We won't be beat! We'll show 'em![79]
>
> (*One Man from Tennessee*)
>
> SARAH: You can't do anything for [Hawkins], now. You don't see what's in front of your eyes, Davy. If he went to Texas to git land, ain't there plenty of folks right here that's in a bad way for lack of land? Look at us, look at the rent we pay!
> DAVY: That's the government's fault.
> SARAH: And you don't even go to town to hear the speeches! You can't always do nothing but win the beef at shooting matches. You got to stand up for yourself with the rest of 'em. If we had a bill through congress to make land free, we could plant a cornfield. Oh, Davy, ain't we ever going to have no brats or nothing?
> DAVY: What's that got to do with Texas?
> SARAH: Don't you see? You can do something … for us and the folks like us and Josh Hawkins. You can run for congress.
> DAVY: Run for congress?
> SARAH: You'll be the best congressman they ever had. You'll do things instead of making promises. You'll have a bill. You'll fix it so's we'll all git the land. Don't you see?
> DAVY (*slowly*): I could … do all that … If I set out to.
> SARAH: You'll be the biggest man in the state of Tennessee.
> DAVY: Be sure you're right, then go ahead. It's like a sign.
> SARAH: It is a sign.
> DAVY: Sarah, I *will* run. And it won't be no joke neither. We won't be beat! We'll show 'em.[80]

[79] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 4-17.

Their roles are essentially switched, with Crockett numbly echoing Sarah in *One Man from Tennessee*, rather than the other way around. Sarah has less of a presence in the dinner party/theatre scene, where she only appears at the end to urge Crockett to come watch the play. This prevents her from being snubbed by the other women onstage as in the synopsis, which makes her seem more commanding when she actually does enter.

Crockett's character also continued to evolve; he becomes even more of a politician in *One Man from Tennessee*, which consequently differs thematically from both the original play and the synopsis. *One Man from Tennessee* places a much stronger emphasis on the second half of the play—Crockett's campaign and subsequent time in office—and in doing so puts more weight on the political issues in general, and of land-ownership specifically. Where *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* is about a legendary woodsman who stumbles onto a political issue, *One Man from Tennessee* is about an ordinary man who spends his life dedicated to fighting for the rights of the people. No longer an unselfconscious mountain man, Crockett's earnest, if somewhat naïve, efforts to drum up support for his bill that would allow settlers to own the land they had farmed for generations make the audience much more sympathetic to Crockett's cause, and therefore much more likely to relate the events on stage to reports in contemporary newspapers. As a consequence, the issue of the land also arises in scenes of *One Man from Tennessee* where it does not in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, such as the one in which Spindle and Crockett first meet, and at the end in the finale at the Alamo.

Other moments in which land ownership was an issue in the original story are also expanded. The surveyor in the second scene of *One Man from Tennessee* (analogous to the first scene in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*) is one such example; he is much nastier than his

[80] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 6-6–7.

predecessor. In *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, the surveyor's part is limited to a page and a half. He enters, accuses Pa (Crockett's father) of insubordination, demands papers, and when the family produces none, says they must vacate the property by the next day. He even claims to "be a poor man himself," just before he exits, although Ma remains unsympathetic. All of this happens before Crockett even appears on stage for the first time. In *One Man from Tennessee*, Crockett has already come home when the surveyor enters, so he and Crockett directly interact. Where the original surveyor seems to be a hapless pawn of the establishment, this one is actively malicious. The encounter begins similarly, but the surveyor eventually attacks the Crocketts for their position: "If you folks weren't so shiftless you'd have money in the bank to buy your land proper. I know your kind. I've run folks like you off of government land in three states. You got no ambition and you'll never get ahead. We don't want folks like you in this country."[81] Crockett responds by insulting him, causing the surveyor to threaten to get a warrant for his arrest. Crockett's explosion drives the surveyor away, setting up a rivalry between Crockett and speculators that will last the entire play. This brings the issue of the land to forefront immediately, and creates a connection with the protagonist that is absent in the original play. It also highlights some of the national sentiment that Weill faced when he arrived in the United States. The surveyor claims that those without money enough to by property do not belong in his country, a description that could extend to many of Weill's fellow refugees. By turning the surveyor into a villain, Weill and Hays implicitly condemn the idea that "American-ness" springs from a connection to the land, a connection that the composer lacked in 1938.

Crockett and Spindle's rivalry also begins over the disagreement over the correct way to handle squatters in *One Man from Tennessee*, where in earlier versions of the story the rivalry

[81] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 2-11.

seems based on the differences between rural and urban lifestyles and principles. The Crockett in *One Man from Tennessee*, on the whole, is less of a force of nature than his counterpart in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. In the latter's scene 2, when Spindle and Crockett first meet in the woods, Spindle seems frightened of nature itself, while Crockett seems to have a peculiar bond to his surroundings.

> DAVY (*ecstatically*): I'm asitting here and thinking of the whole world and what ought to be mind in it [*sic*]. I'm thinking of the canebrake and the rivers and the sunset and yonder star and the folk that live between that star and the dirt we're asitting on. I can feel a power coming into my bones and a strength into my hands.
> JOB: I feel different. The cane's big and dark and the wind sounds like a rushing river. I like a small place with walls to it keeping the dark out. Let's build up that fire.
> DAVY: That fire's no matter. The fire's inside you or it ain't nowhere. I got a funny feeling that my inside's growing bigger than my outside. I got a funny feeling that if I was to put my fingers to my mouth and whistle the stars'd shine brighter and the woods would shiver like live meat.
> JOB: Don't do it.
> DAVY: I'm agoing to do it. I'm going whistle on account of the strength in me and the wild colors that's gleaming inside of my head. I'm going to blow my signal into the black night, under the dark of the trees.
> JOB: For god's sake don't![82]

Crockett's earthy persona frightens Spindle, and he runs off. *One Man from Tennessee*'s Crockett is far more laconic. while he maintains some connection to the land, he is no longer wild and ecstatic. Spindle, on the other hand, becomes much more a businessman rather than a hapless peddler. In the later version of this scene (scene 3 in *One Man from Tennessee*), he tries to sell Crockett on the idea of a partnership, which at first appears like a good idea to Crockett who likes the idea of being rich, until he asks Spindle what they would do if people were living on the land they wanted to build on. Spindle responds, "Squatters? We'll burn them off, easy as anything, if they make a fuss we'll get the soldiers." Crockett subsequently explodes.

> DAVY: Soldiers! Why you low snake in the grass …
> JOB: I … I … I …

[82] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 2-4.

> DAVY: With your buying and selling…
> JOB: What's wrong with that …
> DAVY: You and your houses and your iron fences …
> JOB: I ain't said nothing …
> DAVY: You low thieving skunk … you …
> […]
> DAVY (*ominously*): I got a funny feeling that if I was to put my fingers to my mouth and whistle the stars'd shine brighter and the woods'd shiver like live meat. That's how I feel about the woods.
> JOB: But … but … but you ain't going to do it … you ain't.[83]

As in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, Crockett's whistle scares Spindle into running away, but this Spindle vows revenge against Crockett, establishing their rivalry. Crockett, while he expresses concern for the woods, only turns on Spindle when he threatens the settlers, and their rivalry begins for economic, rather than environmental reasons. Crockett's ties to the frontier are familial rather than natural, and that strengthens the audience's connection to the problem of land and home ownership. These changes combined with the expanded election and lobbying scenes, mean that the focus of the new play is on issues of the common people rather than on a single legendary figure with a unique relationship to the forest.

By expanding and fleshing out the original election scene, this shifts the weight of the play away from Crockett's exploits as a wild man in the canebrake and onto his political career. In addition, the dinner party/theatre scene is much longer in *One Man from Tennessee*. Crockett is still very much a wild mountain man in by this point in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. As the dinner party ends, Crockett "yanks the cloth and everything off the table and leaps up on it as the others try to jump up with cries of dismay. He dances on the table whooping loudly."[84] At the theatre in *One Man from Tennessee*, Crockett is much more circumspect, politely bowing to the ladies and grudgingly asking an unnamed senator to help his bill pass the upper chamber. When

[83] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 3-4.

[84] Hays, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, 5-10.

the senator refuses, Crockett merely goes to his wife for comfort, without shouting, singing or dancing.

The land problem comes to a head in the denouement of *One Man from Tennessee*, where Crockett goes to fight at the Alamo in the name of the people living on the land. When Sarah asks him why he cares whether the United States or Mexico wins Texas, he answers "To me it ain't a question of the U.S. government agin the Mexican government. It's the folks like you and me fighting for what's theirs."[85] In the Alamo scene, Spindle, now a banker, comes to buy Texas from Mexico, Crockett refuses on the grounds that it does nothing for the people currently living on the land; if Spindle had his way, says Crockett, the people would merely be evicted by Spindle rather than the Mexican government. While the Crockett in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* does go to fight at the Alamo, his motivations stem from a sense of solidarity with the soldiers, from being fed up with Washington, and from vague notions of freedom. Spindle, a fellow cowardly soldier in this version, makes no attempt to buy the land, and Crockett is never presented with an option to surrender.

As the politics of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* rose to the surface in *One Man from Tennessee*, they deepened and gained additional shades of meaning as well. While the ostensible issue at hand is farm ownership, migration also becomes an issue in the later version. The protagonist of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* is a wild man who cannot be tamed and who gets drawn into politics almost accidentally. *One Man from Tennessee*'s Crockett yearns for home as much as he yearns for freedom. He is a migrant who tries to fix his situation through political means, and when that fails, he returns to being a soldier and goes to fight in Texas.

[85] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 10-3.

Even though the idea of the wandering settlers vanishes in the final version of the libretto, the tragedy of homelessness and landlessness remains a prominent theme, further strengthening the story's message about the hardships of migration. In the earlier version, Crockett takes pride in his lack of roots, but this troubles his counterpart in *One Man from Tennessee*. Here, the chorus tells the audience what the character would never admit. At the end of scene 2 in *One Man from Tennessee*, after the surveyor leaves, Crockett angrily proclaims "I don't need no home—no land—no folks … I can git along with bears and panthers better than with folks." But in the same breath he declares "I'm sick of living this way, never getting ahead, never getting nothing and being treated lower than dirt," suggesting that the speculator problem is as much a factor in his decision to run away as his desire to be free of his family.[86] However, despite his declaration, the chorus lets the audience know that Crockett's sojourn in the woods is not entirely happy. "Interscene II," which follows the only scene where we see Crockett's life in the woods, tells the audience how lonely the protagonist is after returning from the war:

> But through it all
> He was a lone man.
> Never could settle down.
> No place in the world
> He could call his own,
> For sump'n was pushing on him.[87]

The action then jumps to Sarah's courtship, as if marriage and implied subsequent "settling down" (which includes land ownership) were a solution to the problems presented in the chorus. The same moment in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, between scenes 2 and 3 merely describes Crockett's desire for female companionship without reference to his loneliness or desire for a place in the world.

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[86] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 2-13.

[87] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, Interscene II, no page number.

All of these alterations reflect the differences between 1936 and 1938 in both Weill's life and the nation's politics. The stronger emphasis on land ownership probably came from Meredith. In April 1936, one month before the original production, John Steinbeck, a friend of Meredith's, wrote a series of articles in the *San Francisco News* about the plight of migrant workers, bringing the issue to the national stage. Many of the migrants Steinbeck describes are former small farmers whose land was no longer viable and who had subsequently lost their homes to foreclosure, like those in *One Man from Tennessee*. Steinbeck's descriptions of hoards of "bewildered and beaten" migrants traveling in "open rattletraps cars loaded with children and dirty bedding, with fire-blackened cooking utensils" strongly echo the opening of the play as described in the synopsis: a lonely group of migrants.[88] These articles were so influential that they were republished as the pamphlet *Their Blood is Strong* in April. Given Meredith's close relationship with Steinbeck, he may have influenced Weill to emphasize the issue even more.[89]

Between 1936 and 1937 the political wind had also shifted against President Roosevelt. Between his inauguration in 1933 and his reelection in 1936, Roosevelt wielded more executive power than any President before (or since). However, his popularity began to unravel beginning early in 1937. On February 5, almost immediately after taking his second oath of office, Roosevelt began a wildly unpopular, protracted, and eventually failed initiative to reform the judiciary by requesting the power to appoint a new Supreme Court judge for every one that refused to retire at the age of seventy, along with other powers in the lower courts. Although he

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[88] John Steinbeck, *Their Blood is Strong* (San Francisco: Simon J. Lubin Society of California, 1938), 1–2. These articles served as Steinbeck's inspiration for *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939.

[89] In his memoirs, Meredith says that he does not remember when he met Steinbeck, but "the occasion was casual and must have been during the making of the film *Of Mice and Men*," which came out in December 1939. This means that Meredith and Steinbeck could have been in contact as early as 1938, when much of the work on *One Man from Tennessee* took place; see Meredith, *So Far, So Good*, 124. However, Meredith's memory was notoriously faulty by the time he wrote he memoirs, so they could have met even earlier (or later).

claimed he needed the power to improve judicial efficiency, neither Congress nor the U.S. public was fooled. The Supreme Court had proven to be a thorn in Roosevelt's side throughout the reforms of the New Deal, and the country recognized Roosevelt's scheme for what it was, a disingenuous attempt to bring the courts under his control.[90] On top of that, May 1937 saw the country again plunge into economic recession after the first signs of recovery, and a series of violent confrontations between organized labor and the police. By the following winter, more than two million workers across the country had been laid off. This second economic dip combined with the political scheming frustrated the people, and the sharper political tone of *One Man from Tennessee* compared to its predecessor *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* perhaps reflects this frustration. The portrayal of Crockett as a world-weary politician in the theatre scene in the rather than an ecstatic wild-man in the dinner party scene in particular reflects the national dissatisfaction with the entire political system.

The changes to Crockett's character make him more like one of the most memorable icons of the Depression: the Hero of the People, a figure that became even more recognizable as the decade went on. In 1935, Kenneth Burke called on the American Writer's Congress to replace the symbol of "the worker" in Communist writing with the symbol of "the people." He argued that "the people" was a positive symbol that incorporated the ideal of a classless society, as opposed to the worker, a negative symbol which appealed only to sympathy.[91] He contended that the call for classlessness in turn appealed to the longings of the masses to replace their own class values, saying that "one cannot extend the doctrine of revolutionary thought among the

[90] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 325–26.

[91] Kenneth Burke, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America, Speech by Kenneth Burke to American Writers' Congress, April 26, 1935," in *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*, ed. Herman W. Simons and Trevor Melia (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 267–73, at p. 270.

lower middle-class without using middle-class values—just as the Church invariably converted pagans by making local deities into saints."[92] Burke's idea caught on, and the following years saw a flowering of art centered around "the people" including Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes* (1936) and Frank Capra's film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).[93] *One Man from Tennessee* also follows Burke's suggestion. In *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*, Crockett is simply a local hero made good, but in *One Man from Tennessee* he has been "converted" into a "saint," to use Burke's metaphor. He has been absorbed into the larger rhetoric of the time. "I speak for the folks," he tells President Jackson, "you and me was elected to do what's best for people we come from."[94] Like the deepened political emphasis, his personal transformation between the two plays reflects the changes to the nation.

The Music

The music for *One Man from Tennessee* survives in two copies of an incomplete piano-vocal score that Weill intended for rehearsal, and a folder of sketch material that includes several discarded numbers as well as music for some of the songs that appear in the libretto but that Weill never set in their entirety, all in WLA.[95] The libretto of *One Man from Tennessee* contains twenty-two musical numbers, including incidental and atmospheric music. The piano-vocal score includes music for eighteen of those numbers, missing "When the Summer Breezes Blow," "A Mother Weeps," "Interscene IV," and "You Can See the Mexicans." Of those eighteen, sketches

[92] Kenneth Burke, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," 269.

[93] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), 124–25.

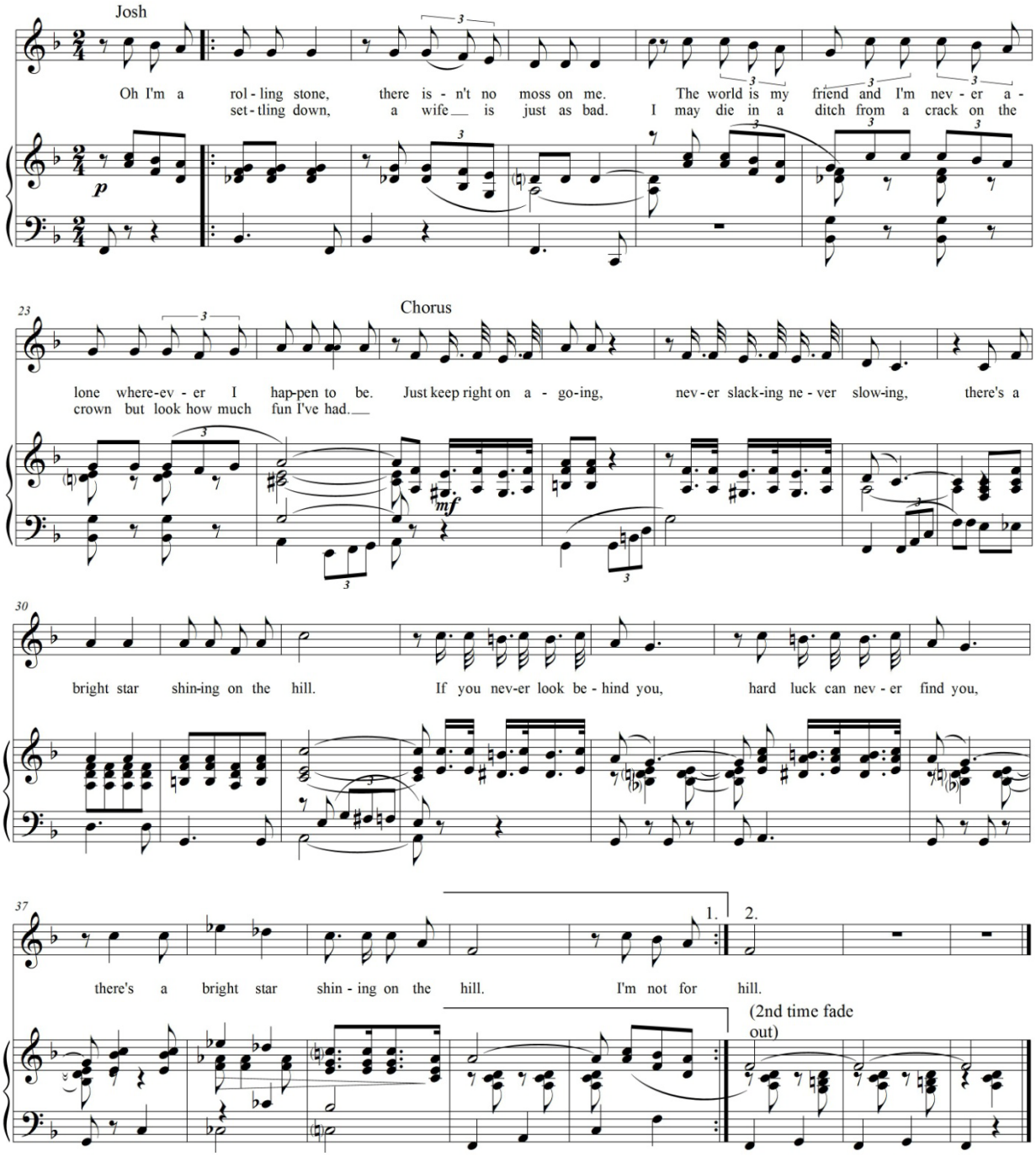
[94] Hays, *One Man from Tennessee*, 9-2.

[95] Kurt Weill, *Davy Crockett, vocal score (incomplete)*, WLA, Box 2, Folder 21 and Kurt Weill, "Sketches for "Davy Crockett" WLA, Box 2, 20.

also survive for fourteen. No sketches survive for the three instrumental pieces ("Introduction," "March," "Battle of the Alamo") or "Look Your Partner Straight in the Eye." Weill also sketched some music for "When the Summer Breezes Blow," and "A Mother Weeps," but never completed them. Furthermore, the sketches contain music for a discarded song called "I'll Cook the Corn and Taters," which "When the Summer Breezes Blow" eventually replaced, and the "Indian Battle." There is also another version of the tune for "Fur on a blindworm/wings on a frog (etc.)." Eventually, this became "Good-bye Josh," but it is labeled "beginning of Scene 2," whereas the same lyrics appear in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* as Crockett sits alone by the campfire just before Spindle enters. Some dialogue notes that appear in the score indicate that Weill and his librettist may have originally intended to place it near the portion of the plot in which Crockett is visited by spirits of the woods at the end of scene 2, but eventually they settled on end of scene 1.

The music of *One Man from Tennessee* generally falls into three types: interscene or beginning-of-scene choral numbers; phenomenal numbers; and non-phenomenal numbers. Musically, each is stylistically distinct. The early interscene numbers all have the same tune, which is derived from Hawkins's "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone," a tune which eventually Weill reworked into "Nowhere to Go but Up" in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (see example 1.1). The non-choral numbers which open scenes, beginning with "The Hand is Quicker than the Eye," do not have the same tune and are generally stylistically closer to the music of Weill's Weimar period. Most of the phenomenal numbers are pastiches of American folk genres. The non-phenomenal numbers are stylistically the most diverse, even if all fall into standard Tin Pan Alley types of the time.

Example 1.1 *One Man from Tennessee*, "I'm a Rolling Stone," mm. 16–43.

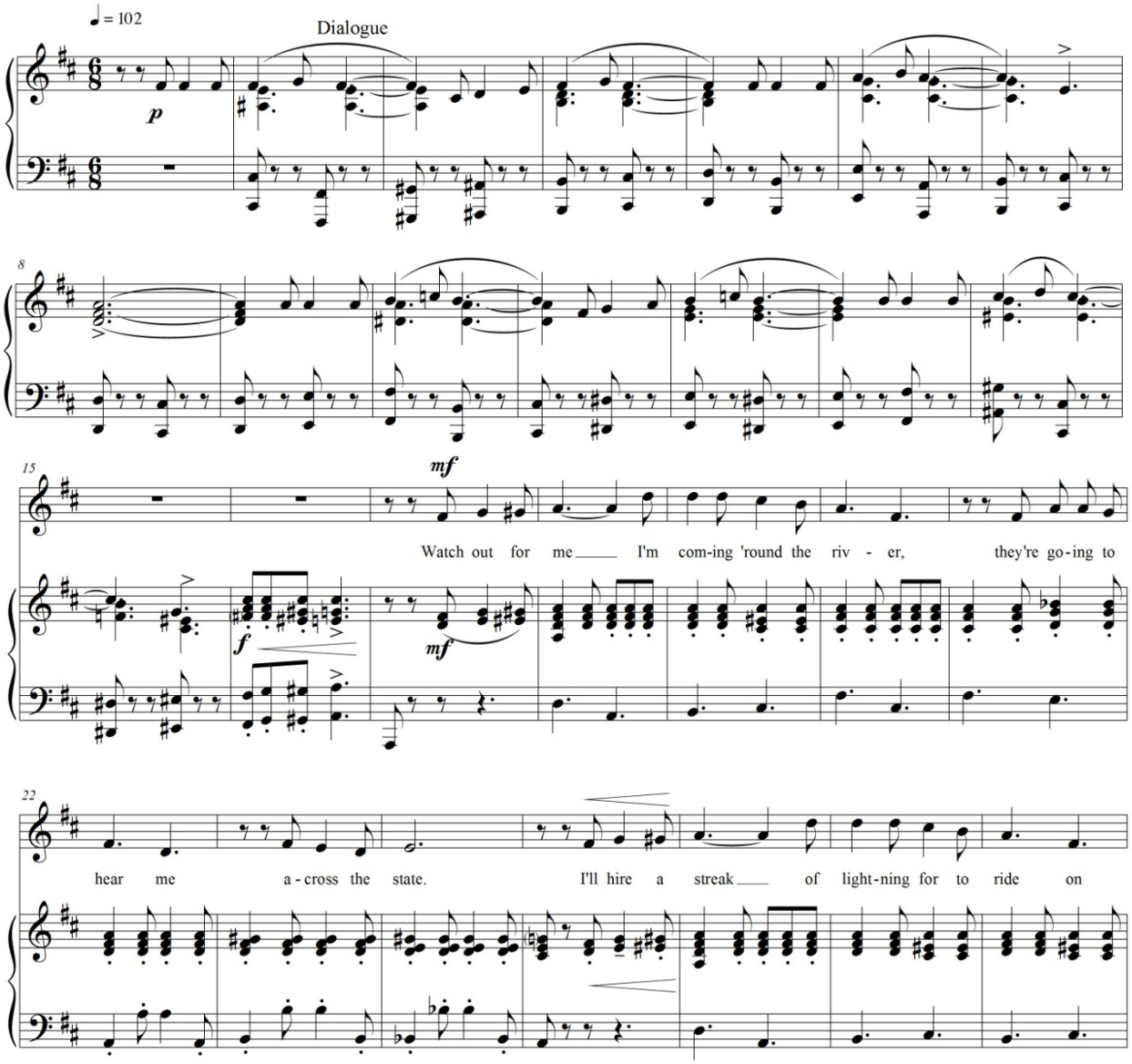


There are many aspects of *One Man from Tennessee* that reflect theatrical practices of the United States. The numbers "Watch Out for Me" and "Time is Standing Still" in particular,

while they do relate to the plot, have lyrics non-specific enough to be separated from the context of the story and sold separately as sheet music. The tune "Watch Out for Me" (transcribed fully in example 1.2) harkens back to many 6/8 hymns such as "God Will Take Care of You," as well as faux German folk songs such as "Ich hab' mein Herz in Heidelberg verloren." This gives the piece the naïve air of the folk songs that were popular in this period, making it a candidate for sheet-music publication and popular consumption. By this point Weill had already tried to do something similar with "Johnny's Song" from *Johnny Johnson* (the B section even reworks the B section of "Johnny's Song"), so he knew that a break-out song often made a show more popular. It also has a structure typical of a contemporary popular song (ABAC), plus a coda that harkens back to "Where the Green Pines," a tune which returns throughout the show. The sections each consist of an even sixteen measures in accordance with the standard popular-song structure of the time. "Watch out for Me" has a fairly simple tonal scheme as well. After an introduction that underscores dialogue, the A section (m. 16) begins and stays in D major without much tonal movement. The B section (m. 33), begins in the mediant (F# minor) and then moves to the dominant by m. 38 before repeating the progression beginning in m. 42. The C section balances the B section by shifting to the submediant by m. 67 then working its way back to D major via V/V in m. 75. Both the mediant and submediant are fairly standard alternative key areas in popular songs of the day (see George and Ira Gershwin's "Do What You Do" and Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered," respectively, both composers that Weill admired), whereas Weill's German numbers (particularly in his work with Brecht) tend to be primarily strophic and tonally static, albeit harmonically very complex. The entire march follows the pattern of cookie-cutter popular songs of the era until the coda, which

repeats some of the odd harmonies of “Where the Green Pines,” but which could also be easily excised from the piece for popular sale.

Example 1.1 *One Man from Tennessee*, “Watch Out for Me,” complete number.



Example 1.2 (cont.)

29

Chorus

and print your name ___ and mine up in the stars! *f* We'll tell the folks you'll do a-way with

36

Davy

tax - es and is - sue ev' - ry man a mule or two!

Sarah

I'll have the wom - en

43

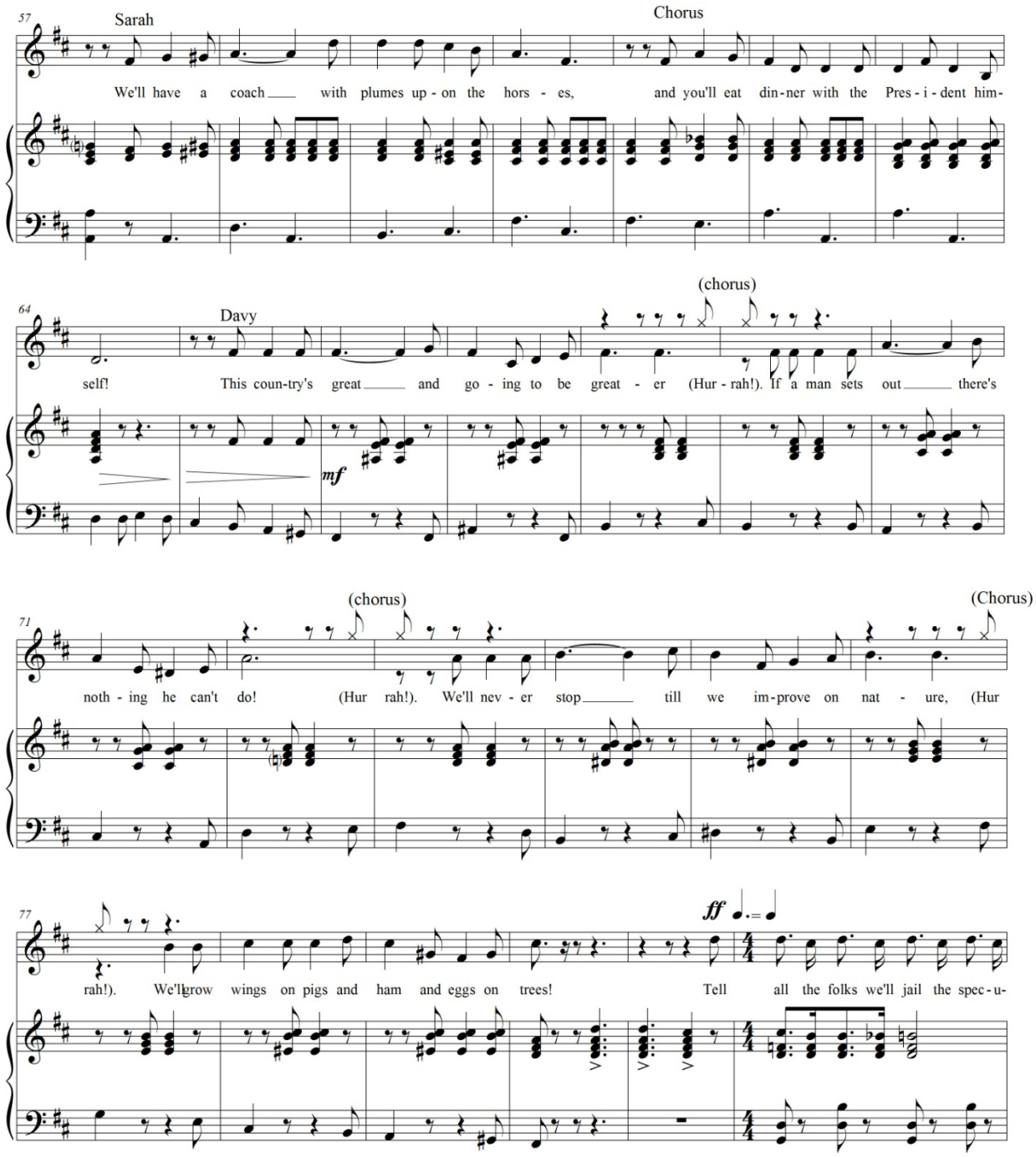
Davy

see to it their men - folk won't get no sleep un - less they vote for you. You'll have a

50

silk dress, Sar - ah, and a hat on that's ev' - ry bit ___ as big as a cart - wheel.

Example 1.2 (cont.)



Example 1.2 (cont.)

83

la - tors! Say there's trees to make a road way to the moon, say there's wat - er-falls en-ough to grind the

87

moun-tains in - to pow - der, and we've grains en-ough to spare, till we make ma-chines that run by burn - ing

91

sun - light, and re - gu - late the weath - er and the heat! Tell

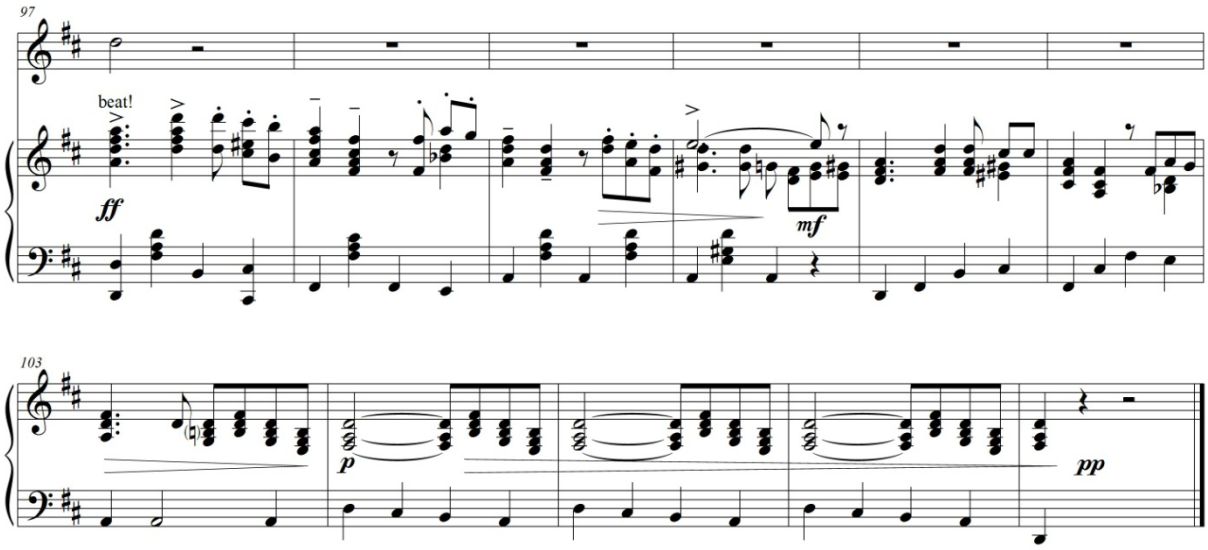
(Marching off)

94

all the folks that me a Gen' - ral Jack - son are set - tin' out to run and can't be

ff

Example 1.2 (cont.)



The other non-phenomenal numbers come at typical moments that instigate songs on Broadway. Crockett's first song "Where the Green Pines" echoes the "I'm setting out" number that occurs in many Broadway shows. Examples include "I'm on My Way" from *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and "I Have Confidence" by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II from *The Sound of Music* (1959). "Song of the Trees," although not explicitly a dream sequence, shares some characteristics; musically, the drones highlight the mysticism onstage as Crockett communes with members of the chorus, originally animal spirits in *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*. "Time is Standing Still" is a torch song in the vein of "What'll I Do" by Irving Berlin from the third edition of *The Music Box Review* (1923), and "When I'm in Congress" falls in nicely with songs in which characters describe how they would run the world such as "If I Became the President" from the Gershwins' *Strike Up the Band* (1930).

There are several moments, however, when the non-phenomenal numbers seem to recall Weill's European style. The most prominent of these is Spindle's number, "The Hand is Quicker

Than the Eye." The number deals with a subject familiar to Weill from his work with Brecht: corruption. The music is also similar; the tune is the most chromatic of any number of the show, and the one most reminiscent of jazz melodies with its oddly placed half-steps and flat scale-degrees 3, 5, and 6. The chromaticism is appropriate given that Spindle is the only featured urbanite in a world of characters from the canebrake and the plains, people which Weill musically represents with faux American folk song. "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" also uses one of Weill's favorite accompaniment rhythmic motives from his German period, a series of dotted notes followed by two notes on the beat (see example 1.3). This common pattern occurs in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Aufsteig und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Die Bürgschaft*, *Der Silbersee*, and *Die Sieben Todsünden*.[96] The examples from *Die Bürgschaft* are particularly interesting; they come at moments when the issue at hand, as in "The Quicker than the Eye," is dishonesty regarding money, first as Johann Mattes wonders whether he should keep the money that he suspects belongs to his friend David Orth (example 1.4a), and then again at the end of Act I when the three blackmailers realize that Mattes has kept Orth's money for himself (example 1.4b). Kim Kowalke links these rhythmic motives to Weill's concept of "gestus," which the composer most comprehensibly defined in 1929. Music, Weill wrote,

> can reproduce the *gestus*, which elucidates the events on stage. It can even create a type of fundamental *gestus*, which prescribes a definite attitude for the actor and eliminates any doubt or misunderstanding about the respective incident. In the ideal case, it can fix this *gestus* so powerfully that a false representation of the relevant action is no longer possible. … Music has the potential to define the basic *gestus* of an event to the extent that at least an incorrect interpretation will be avoided. … Generally we find gestic music

[96] For a discussion of common rhythmic cells in Weill's European music, see Kim H. Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1989), 124–28. The motive in "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" is Kowalke's motive 3. Several other numbers in *One Man from Tennessee* also bear some resemblance to Kowalke's figures: his motive 2 (alternating eighth notes with two sixteenth notes) appears briefly in "Song of the Trees," mm. 3–5, and his motive 6 (alternating triplets with dotted sixteenth/thirty-second notes in varying combinations of each), closely resembles passages in "Where the Green Pines." Neither of these examples, however, is as striking as "The Hand is Quicker than the Eye," the first is too brief and the second is not exact.

whenever an incident relating men to one another is represented musically in a naïve manner.[97]

Example 1.3 *One Man from Tennessee*, "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye," mm. 1–12.

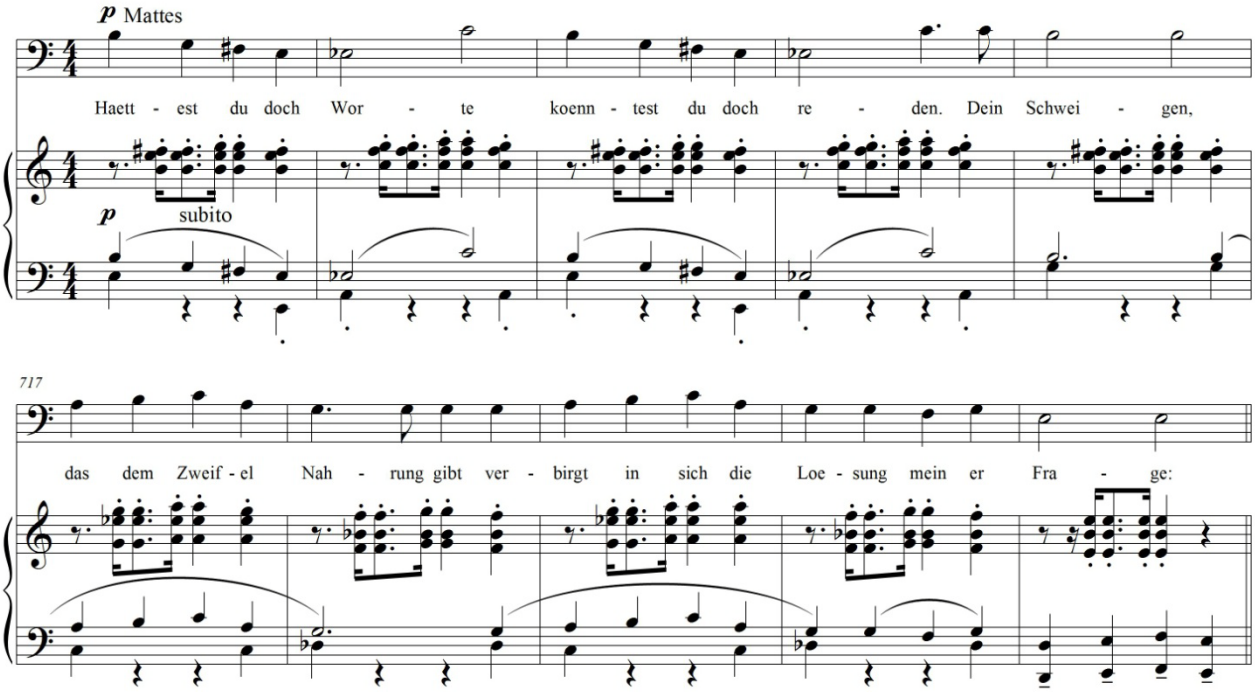
It's a mir-a - cle of nat-ure, that near-ly ev'-ry creat-ure hopes to get some - thing for noth-ing, al - ways

hop - ing on the sly, which is all I need to men - tion when I call to your at -

ten - tion that the hand is real - ly quick - er vast - ly quick - er than the eye.

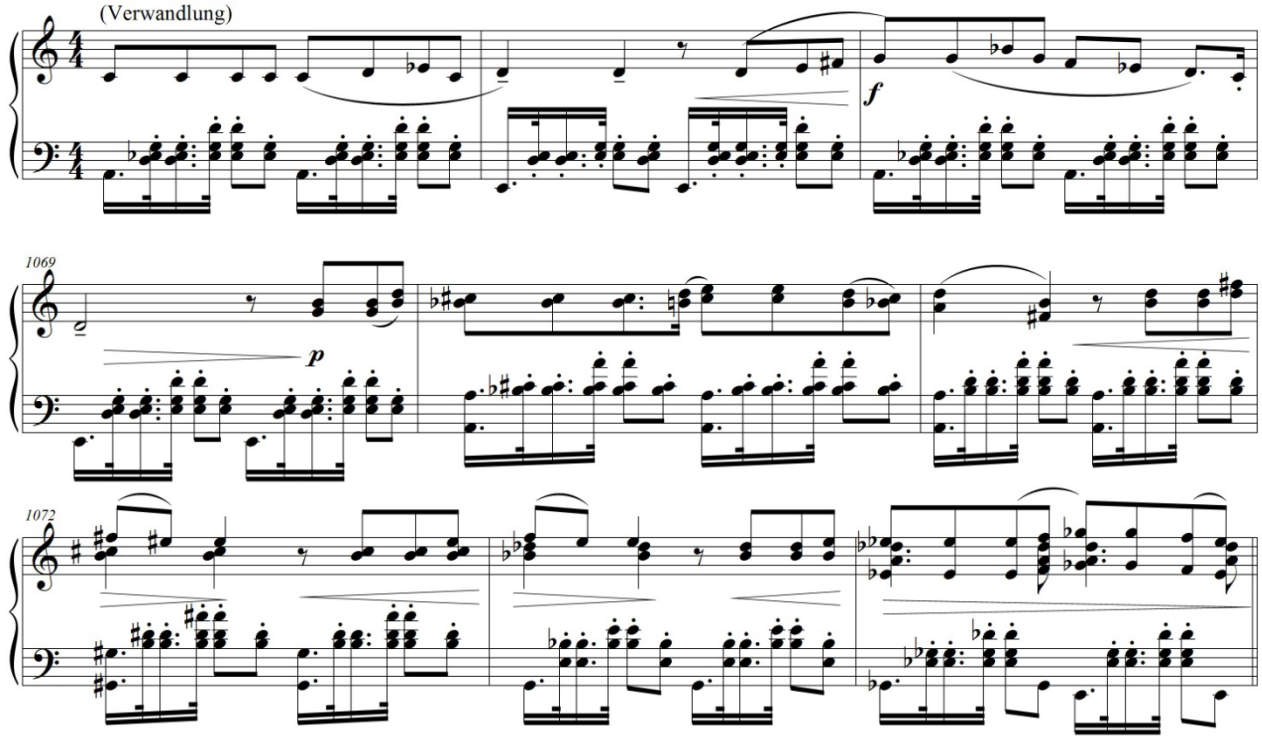
[97] Kurt Weill, "Über den gestichen Charakter der Musik" (1929), translated in as "Concerning the Gestic Character of Music" in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 491–95, at p. 492.

Example 1.4a *Die Bürgschaft*, no. 8, mm. 712–21.



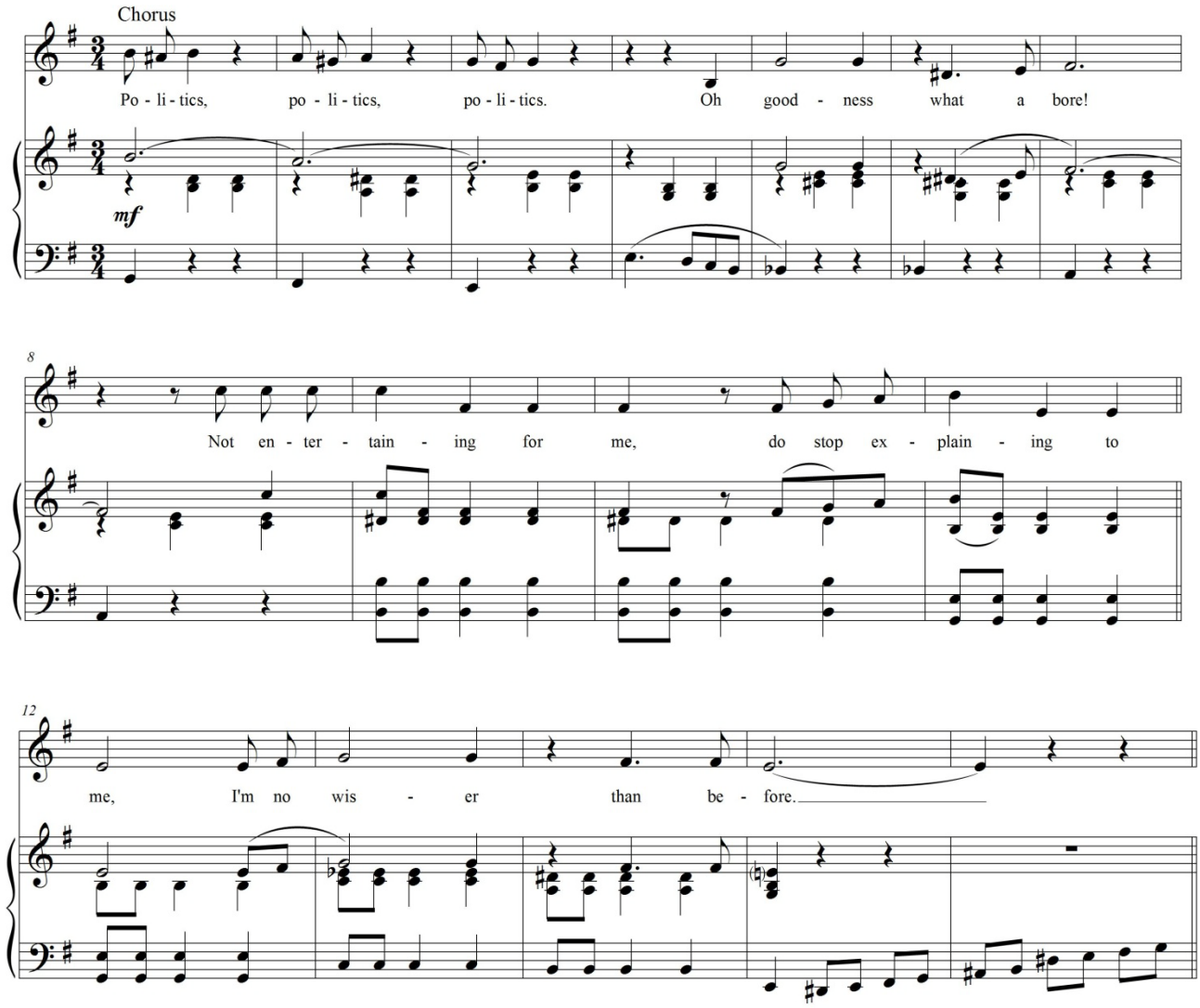
Weill also located the *gestus* in the rhythm, specifically dance rhythms, which he felt conveyed more than lyrics alone. Given his families of related rhythmic figures, and the similarity between the sentiments expressed in “The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye” and these two moments in *Die Bürgschaft*, this particular figure may be Weill’s way of musically illustrating dishonesty.

Example 1.4b Die *Bürgschaft*, no. 10, mm. 1066–74.



The foxtrots and tangos that Weill used in *Johnny Johnson* were not going to work in a period piece, but the opening number of Act II, "Politics," describes the confusion of the upper classes confusion and their lack of political interest or acumen, even if it seems couched in a language more typical of the 1930s than of Crockett's time. Weill's genteel waltz setting (see example 1.5) adds an entirely new dimension to the straightforward lyrics. The waltz, as a dance of the upper classes, implies that the characters in the scene believe that politics should be conducted only by the cultured elite, but the lazy indifference and puzzlement described in the lyrics show how little these gentlemen and gentlewomen actually care about the pursuit. The waltz, with its circular rhythms, also conveys a sense world-weary cynicism.

Example 1.5 *One Man from Tennessee*, "Politics," mm. 1–16.



The libretto demonstrates this in the next scene as the senator and his entourage prove the point of the song perfectly. Weill often called upon genres or styles, particularly dance styles, to add layers of meanings to lyrics. In 1929, he wrote that the "Dreigroschenfinale," often cited as one of Weill finest examples of parody, was actually "by no means a parody; rather, here the

concept of 'opera' was applied directly to the resolution of the conflict."[98] In other words, the situation onstage prompted a particular musical genre to instigate resolution. Similarly, the tight-knit harmonies of the barbershop quartet that represents the family of Anna-Anna in *Die Sieben Todsünden* helps reinforce the idea of the family as a united front against their daughter. Weill was particularly fond of ironic waltzes; he used them in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* as Jack eats himself to death, and in *Die Bürgschaft* to introduce the highwaymen who later become the blackmailers, as well as for Minny Belle with "Oh Heart of Love" in *Johnny Johnson*.

The interscene numbers in *One Man from Tennessee* present Weill's early efforts to communicate musically with Americans using a genre familiar to him from his German work: the *Ballade*, translated into a "ballad" for American audiences, specifically the "Ballad of Davy Crockett," possibly inspired by the title of Hays's original play. "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone" and its subsequent reiterations as the interscenes all have the same tune, so that the audience could easily link them together as one larger piece. Although the tune is a fairly simple pentatonic melody reminiscent of many American cowboy songs of the era—including Weill's own "Cowboy Song" in *Johnny Johnson*—Weill's harmonic setting is also reminiscent of his previous *Balladen*. The first interscene serves as a perfect example. Although the song seems to be in F major, Weill never gives the listener a pure tonic chord, but rather always lands on an added sixth sonority, always as an accompaniment figure (see example 1.6), one common in Weill's early music.[99] Taken together, all of these narrative numbers begin to resemble the

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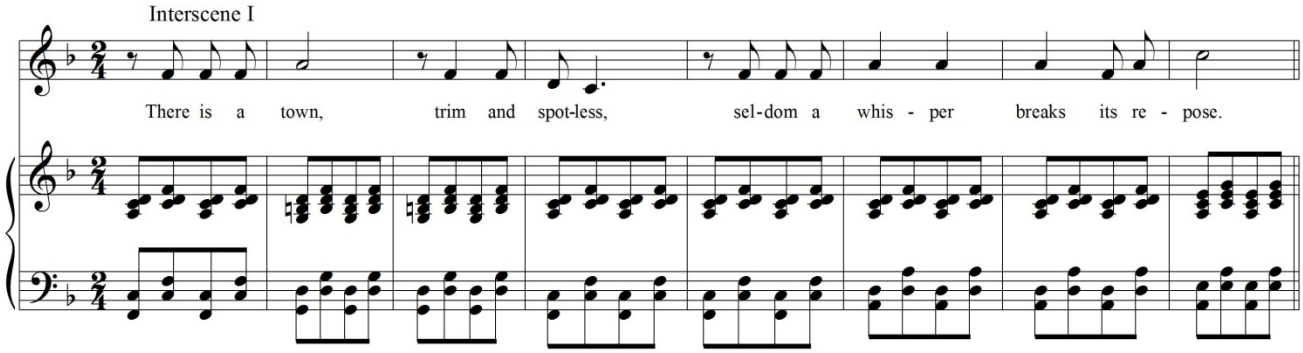
[98] Kurt Weill, "Korrespondenz über *Die Driegroschenoper*," (1929) translated as "Correspondence about *Die Dreigroschenoper*" in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 486–88, at pp. 487–88.

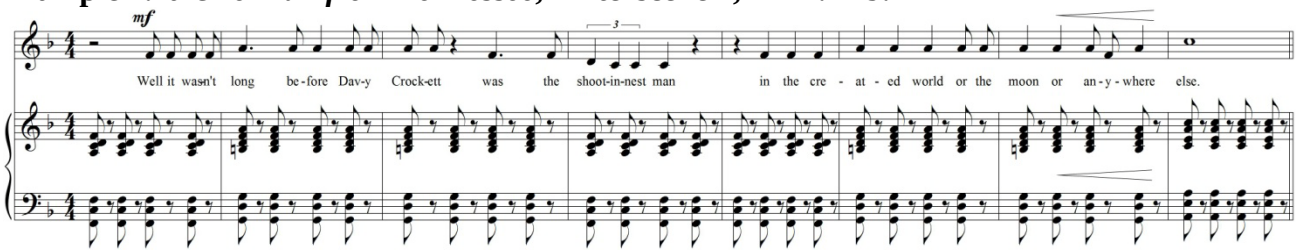
[99] Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 140. Although many popular songs of the time used the same sonority, the added sixth chord often arises out of melodic movement, whereas in Weill's music it almost always acts as pure accompaniment; see Allan Forte, *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era, 1924–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7–8.

Ballade. Kowalke has identified the unifying features of the five pieces labeled "Ballade" in *Die Dreigroschenoper*: they are all strophically set texts with different accompaniments in every verse. Each of these numbers in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, like the various interscenes in *One Man from Tennessee*, are narrative numbers, strengthening the link. Put together, the "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone" and the later interscenes follow this pattern. "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone" is accompanied by a dotted-sixteenth-note figure; the first interscene gets straight eighth notes nearly all the way through; the second has a more staccato rhythmic pattern; and the last is a waltz (see examples 1.1, 1.6, and 1.7). Unfortunately, Weill left no indication of how he meant to orchestrate these numbers, which would have proven illuminating; one of the primary ways Weill differentiated the strophes of his German *Balladen* was by way of orchestration.

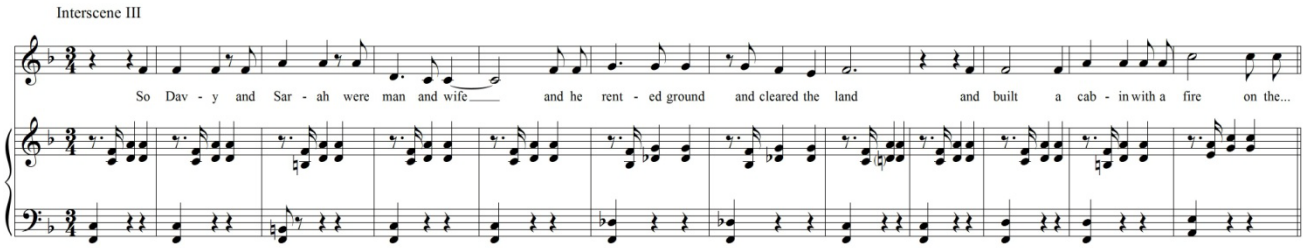
Example 1.6 *One Man from Tennessee*, "Interscene 1," mm. 6–12.



Example 1.7a *One Man from Tennessee*, "Interscene 2," mm. 2–9.



Example 1.7b *One Man from Tennessee*, "Interscene 3," mm. 2–13.



In broader terms, the music falls into two major sections that reflect the plot: Crockett in the woods, and then in politics. Each large division of the plot is preceded by a song that sets the tone for the subsequent scenes. Hawkins's "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone" introduces the singer's life as a wandering mountain man, and Spindle's "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" the portion of the story dominated by politics. "Oh I'm a Rolling Stone" and "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" are parallel in many ways. They are the only two numbers sung for the benefit of the audience that clarify character, and these two characters represent the two most formative influences on the protagonist's actions. Hawkins's number provides the tune for the interscene music that follows, and all of the numbers based on Hawkins's song are purely narrative. Without these narrative interscenes, the audience would be unaware of what drove Spindle to the

canebrake in the first place (he stole a melon), of Crockett's previous relationship with Jackson (both participated in the Creek Wars), or of Crockett and Sarah's marriage. This pattern sets up an expectation of a regular structure that Crockett's entrance into politics abruptly disrupts.

The shift of the action to political matters signals a change in the function of the chorus. Previously, the chorus only supported Crockett or provided narration, but just before the story turns to politics, Spindle sings "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye," a tribute to his life as a double-dealing miser, accompanied by the chorus. The difference between this number and the one immediately preceding ("Interscene III," a waltz narrating Crockett and Sarah's marriage) is striking. "Interscene III" has the tamest harmony of any of the previous interscene numbers, while "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" would sound at home in *Die Dreigroschenoper*. The chorus is apparently no longer on Crockett's side. The song also indicates something of the scene to come, in which Spindle, now a newspaper man, uses his skills as a fast-talking cheat to convince the politician Alexander to back laws that would prevent competition. The song also foreshadows the corrupt political system that Crockett is about to enter. With "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye," the chorus, rather than simply narrating, begins to comment upon the action by supporting and echoing Spindle. Similarly, one might expect the second act to open with a continuation of the "ballad," given that between the acts Crockett has run for, been elected to, and served part of his term in Congress in the intervening time. Instead, the act opens with the ironic waltz "Politics" that does nothing to fill in the narrative gaps but, rather, describes how boring the intricacies of politics can be to those with no stake in them. Similarly, "All Goes Badly," the number that opens the subsequent scene, is also somewhat reminiscent of Weill's European sound, and describes Jackson's failing health and presidency, establishing him as only a puppet figure.

"The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" also heralds a shift in the meta-theatrical relationship between the chorus and the characters on stage. The lines between the narrative frame provided by the chorus and the inset drama begin to blur.[100] While the chorus has sung in support of characters before ("Where the Green Pines" and "Song of the Trees"), Spindle's solo number represents the first time since Hawkins's "Oh, I'm a Rolling Stone" that a song occurs at the beginning of a scene. "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" represents the first distortion of the structure. The next choral number, "Politics," is the only choral number to migrate into the action (although the chorus does "read" the letter explaining that Hawkins has died); Fanny picks it up twice in the middle of the scene to indicate how little she understands about what is going on around her. Next comes "All Goes Badly," which merely describes how the weakened Jackson misses Tennessee and does not intrude on the scene, but is explicitly sung while Jackson is onstage, unlike the other interscene numbers.[101] The final number "You Can See the Mexicans" represents the most blatant choral intrusion on the action. The chorus has returned to a narrative function, describing the action offstage, but in the middle of the scene.

This shift may point to the reason why Weill never composed music for the "Interscene IV," which was to begin the Oval Office scene. The simplest explanation for omitting it is that it helps move along the narrative. The first four scenes of Act I take place months or years apart. The campaign sequence (scenes 5–7) and most of Act II take place only moments or days apart (the time between the acts is an exception), and therefore require no intervening narration. The second reason is musical. The interscene songs (not including the one in the second act that

[100] I am using the terms "frame" and "inset" after Hornby, *Drama, Metatheatre, and Perception*, 33ff.

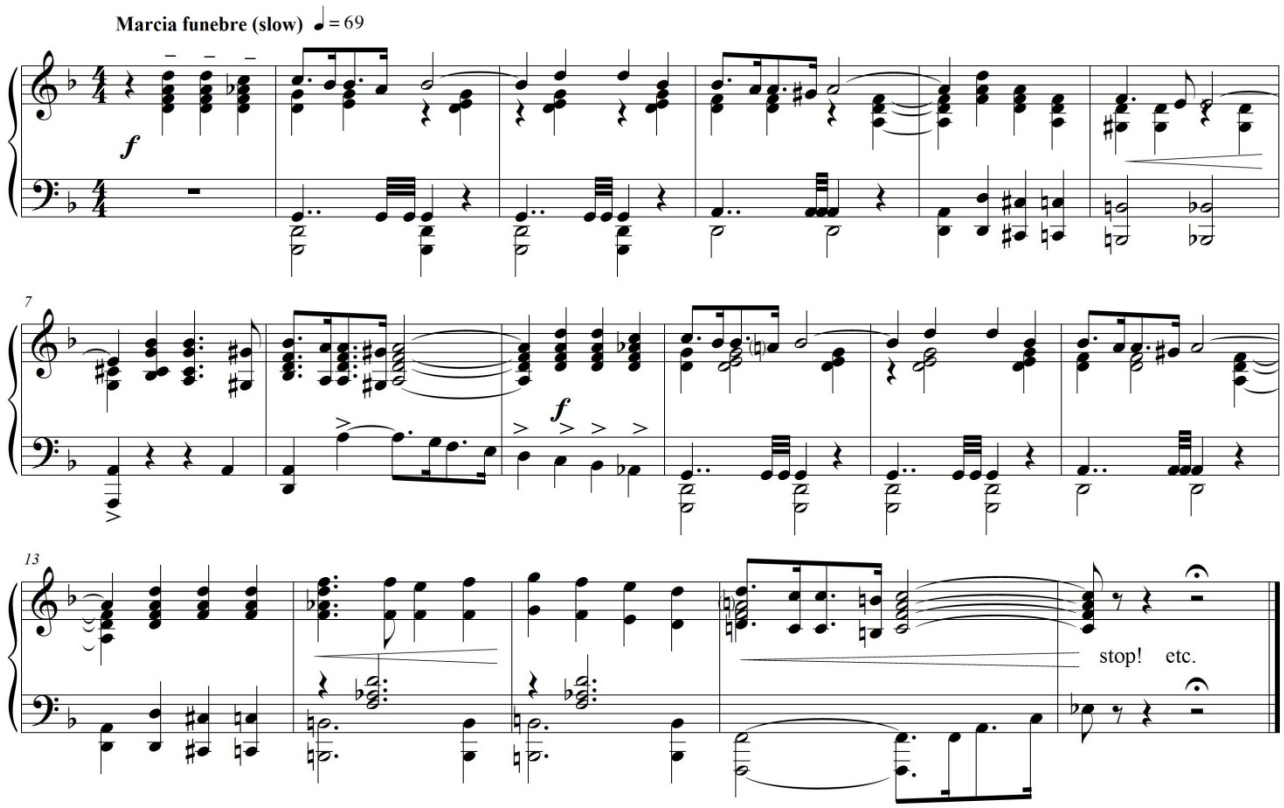
[101] While the numbers labeled "interscene" are pointedly separated from the scenes they precede, these other choral commentary numbers have individual titles and individual melodies, and they appear in the libretto after the curtain rises on the appropriate scene, which may also indicate that the authors intended the "interscene" numbers to be sung with the curtain down.

Weill never set) all occur before Crockett hears that Hawkins has been killed. While Hawkins is still alive, his music represents Crockett's ties to him. When Hawkins dies, his music dies with him, which may explain why Weill did not write music for "Interscene IV," which is largely descriptive rather than narrative anyway. The authors may also have decided that "Interscene IV" was redundant giving the song's lyrical similarity to "All Goes Badly." The final reason is generic. While folk songs commonly depict the outlandish exploits of wild mountain men, politics are far less conducive to folk-ballad lyrics.

Besides the interscenes, Weill uses another musical trick to unite an otherwise quite eclectic score: a musical motive that appears in the score at key points in the drama. The tune first appears as the funeral march that opens the play (example 1.8), and then is given words in "Where the Green Pines Shadow the Ground," after the slow introduction gives way to the body of the song. Weill first sets it to the words "Be sure you're right, then go ahead" (see example 1.9). Anyone in the audience familiar with the Davy Crockett legend would likely recognize these words as Davy Crockett's motto, and one which had been part of the Davy Crockett song tradition since its beginnings in the early nineteenth century when the man himself was still alive.[102] In Hays and Weill's version of the myth, the young Crockett gets this motto from Hawkins in scene 1, which links it to the other recurring music in the play, the ballad. The importance of these words marks this tune in the minds of the audience, and likely would bring up the association with the motto whenever the tune recurred. The tune appears for the second time as the coda to "Watch Out for Me." Hays reinforces the connection by having Crockett state the motto just as he decides to run for office, only a few lines before he bursts into song. Its last appearance comes at the very end of the piece as "Battle of the Alamo," an instrumental passage

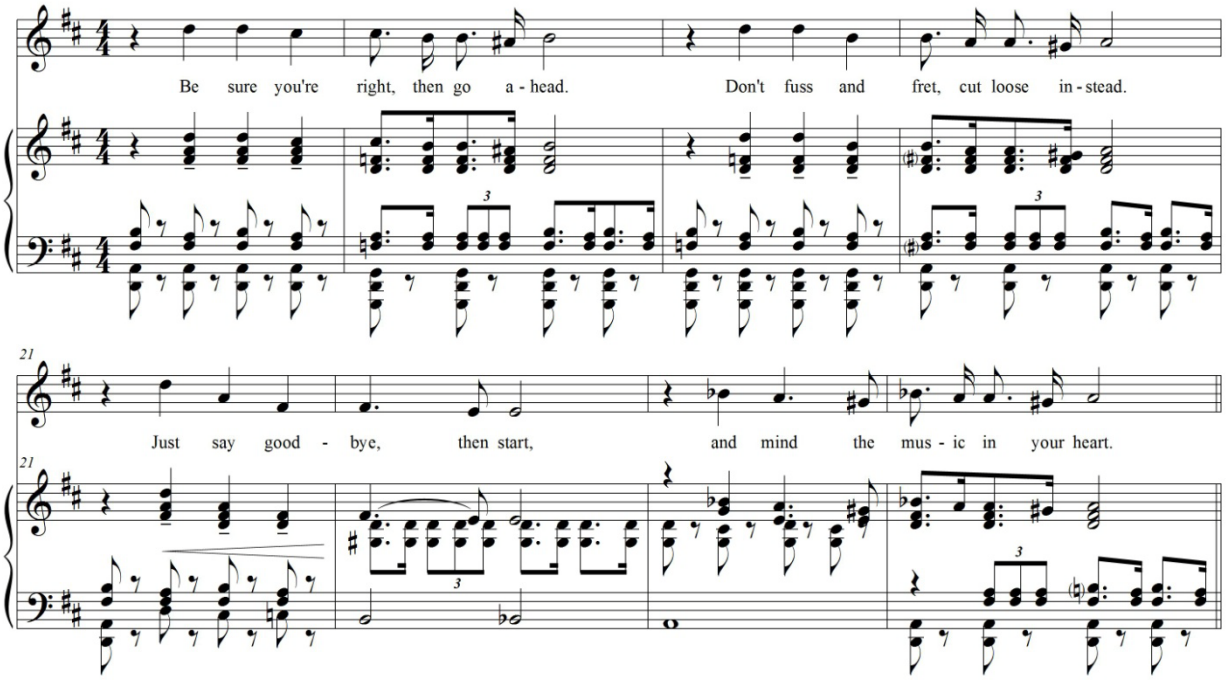
[102] Chemerka and Wiener, *Music of the Alamo*, 20, 61.

Example 1.8 *One Man from Tennessee*, "Opening march," complete number.



that probably replaced the choral "You Can See the Mexicans," which Weill never composed. Here, the tune reaches its apotheosis; it is majestic and grand, but also tragic as it likely plays during the battle that the audience knows will ultimately prove fatal to the hero (example 1.10). Thus Weill uses the motto in a way similar to the so-called "fate" motive in Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, appearing at key points in the plot: when Crockett sets out on his own, when he decides to run for congress, and at his last stand at the Alamo. The implication is that all of these events are related, and that all are tied to Crockett's self-assurance that, the music tells us, leads to his heroic, but ultimately disastrous death.

Example 1.9 *One Man from Tennessee*, "Where the Green Pines Shadow the Ground," mm. 17–24.

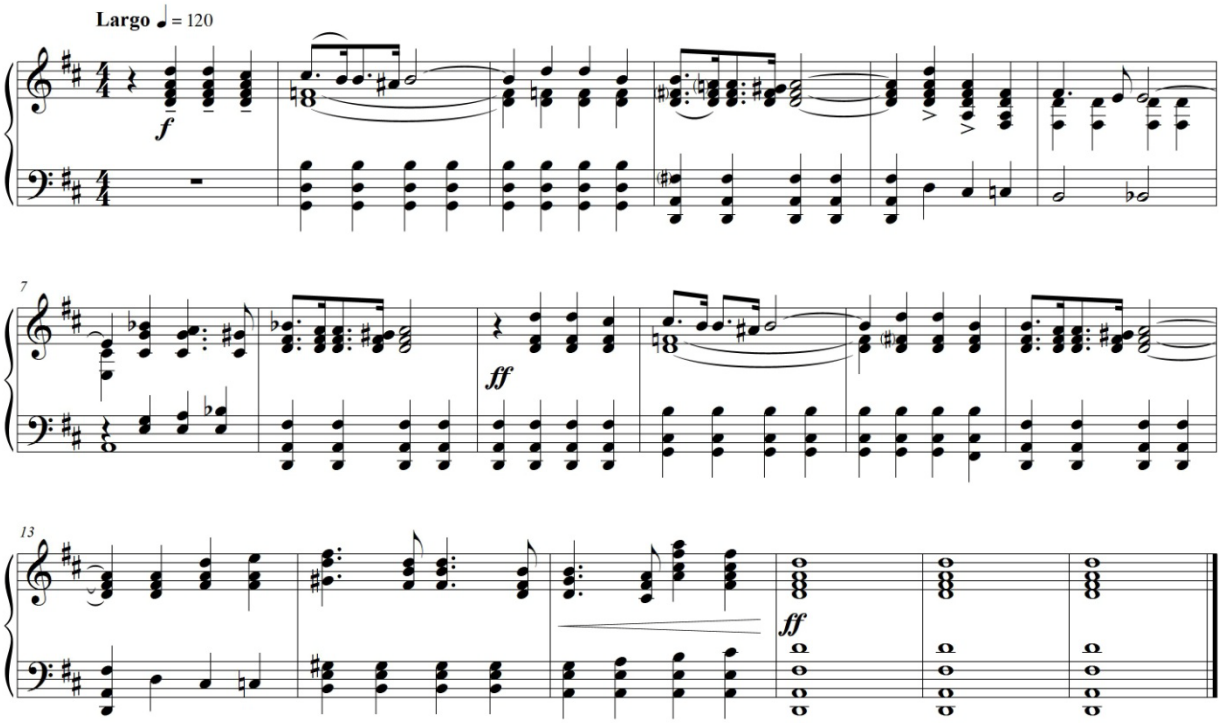


Weill used this motive often throughout his work in the 1930s.[103] Its first appearance came in 1934 as the Tango-Habañera in *Marie Galante* (example 1.11). Although engraving plates exist, the tune was not published with the original *Marie Galante* music, allowing the composer to reuse the tune at his discretion. The composer first recycled it in *Der Kuhhandel* (1934) as part of Juan and Juanita's farewell. Weill also incorporated the melody into the end of *Johnny Johnson*'s "Song of the Goddess" as the Statue of Liberty mourns the fact that so many people go to war in her name (example 1.12). The melody did finally receive publication in 1946 as "Youkali/Tango-Habañera" with lyrics by Roger Fernay that detail a paradise called Youkali.

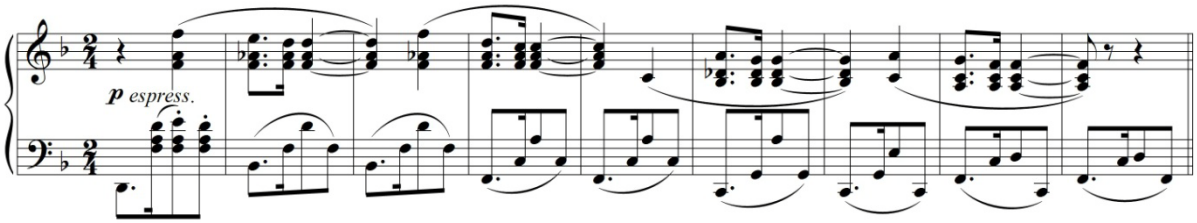
[103] See Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* , 270–74, 284–85, for a summary of the various uses and a history of this tune, although Drew does not discuss its use in *Johnny Johnson*.

The recurrence of the tune throughout this period indicates that Weill did not want to let it go, but perhaps could not quite find the right way to present it. He used it first as a tango, then a love theme, then a contemplative melody, and finally to signify a backwoodsman of the American frontier.

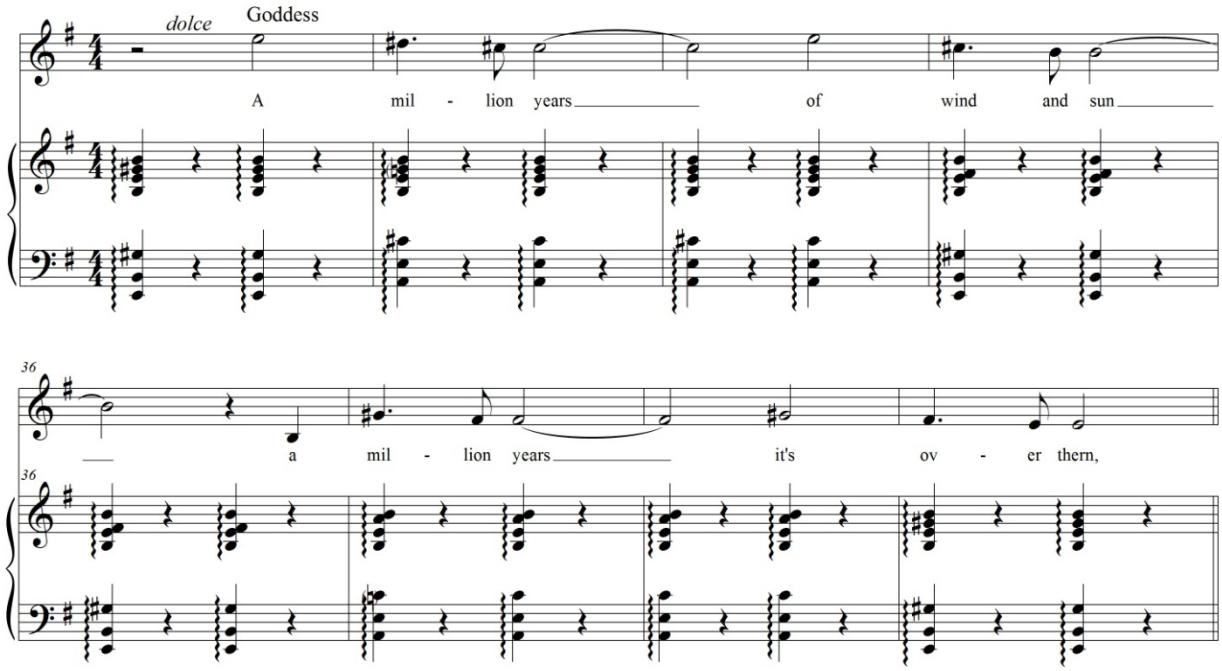
Example 1.10 *One Man from Tennessee*, "Battle of the Alamo," complete number.



Example 1.11 *Marie Galante*, "Tango-Habanera," mm. 58–66.



Example 1.12 *Johnny Johnson*, "Song of the Goddess," mm. 32–39.



JOHNSON JOHNSON, Words by Paul Green; Music by Kurt Weill TRO-© Copyright 1940 (Renewed) Hampshire House Publishing Corp., New York, NY and Warner Chappell Music, Inc., Los Angeles, CA

During this period, Weill often used a tune to musically unite an entire musical play. The tune usually appears in briefly in the beginning, then continues to sound at crucial moments throughout the play, finally appearing in full at the end of the production. In *Johnny Johnson*, "Johnny's Song," first appears at the end of Act I, scene 1 in the orchestra, reappears again throughout, and sounds at the end of the play with the text "When Man was First Created." Weill also thought about using the same device in *The Opera from Mannheim*, a project he discussed with E.Y. "Yip" Harburg and Sam and Bella Spewack from March through June 1937, but that never got off the ground. When Ronald Sanders interviewed Harburg on April 10, 1978 for his biography of Weill, his notes reveal that the *The Opera from Mannheim*

> concerned a Jewish theatrical troupe that used to travel Germany, giving musical comedies which they had written themselves. In the story, they are escaping Nazi Germany and going to America, and they are first seen on the boat trying to rehearse and prepare their show. They had left the score behind, however, in their hurried escape from Germany, and they had to work at summoning up their memory of the whole thing. They get most of it fairly quickly, but they have a hard time remembering the waltz number

> that climaxed the show—"the waltz that every German show had to have," says Yip. Finally, they put on the show in America, and the waltz gradually emerges through the course of it, and finally comes out in the end.[104]

The idea of the waltz echoes the treatment of the motto motive and "Johnny's Song" in their respective shows. Weill finally got to use the trick in 1941 in *Lady in the Dark*, in which the protagonist Liza Elliot spends the entire show alternatively trying to remember and trying to repress the tune of "My Ship," which she sings at the end to signify that she is now free of her psychiatric maladies.

Like most aspects of *One Man from Tennessee*, the score is uneven. Despite the unifying motto motive and the recurring ballad music, the numbers in the style of the Weill–Brecht collaborations make strange bedfellows with the American folk-tune pastiches and the Broadway standards. Taken individually, many of the numbers are charming, but too many are Weill's early attempts at writing song types that he eventually perfected in later shows. "September Song," from *Knickerbocker Holiday*, for example, echoes some of the themes of "Time is Standing Still"; both are love songs (although sung in a very different context) about not having enough time for romance. Similarly, the beginning of the "Song of the Trees" foreshadows some of the music that transitions into the dream sequences of *Lady in the Dark*, and the folk song pastiche reemerges in *Down in the Valley*.

The FTP Aesthetic

In his seminal study *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, John Dizikes observed two principles that united New Deal art with New Deal politics, particularly in the Federal Arts Projects: the "return to the land as the source of fundamental value" and the focus on social

[104] "Telephone Interview with E.Y. "Yip" Harburg Conducted by Ronald Sanders," April 10, 1978, NYPL, Ronald Sanders Papers, NYPL, Box 20 , Folder 6 "Research Materials, Knickerbocker Holiday, Chap 18–20."

justice.[105] *One Man from Tennessee*'s focus on the political machinations behind land ownership follows this pattern. The subject matter also reflected the FTP's goal of producing a new, uniquely "American" theatre, and the structure betrays a goal of maximizing employment (the FTP's primary mission). *One Man from Tennessee* has ties to the documentary Living Newspaper productions, which often focused on land and housing problems with an eye towards reforming the injustices of the system.[106] The FTP was interested in experimental theatre at the time, particularly new ways of representing the American public. The narrative chorus represents that elusive Depression-era construct of the citizens of the United States: "The People." Although *One Man from Tennessee* may be structurally flawed, it is a telling example of both the aesthetics of the FTP and of the 1930s in general.

One Man from Tennessee resembles Weill's other projects from the same period in a number of interesting ways. The fact that McGee approved of Weill's ideas for *The Common Glory* suggests that the composer had some understanding of what would work within the Project. Like *Johnny Johnson*, *One Man from Tennessee* has room for numerous speaking roles. The script calls twenty-eight individuals, plus up to thirty-eight individual "voices" that come out of the chorus. The Crockett–Sarah–Spindle love triangle also bears some resemblance to the Johnny–Minny Belle–Anguish Howington one in *Johnny Johnson*; the small-town boy (Crockett/Johnny) loves the town sweetheart (Sarah/Minny Belle), but faces the town business-man (Spindle/Howington) as a rival for her hand (the triangle appears again in Weill's *Down in the Valley*, 1948, another piece based on a folk ballad by the former FTP playwright Arnold Sundgaard). The characters of Crockett and Johnny were also likely linked in Weill's mind. Both

[105] John Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 464.

[106] On Living Newspapers as documentaries, see Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 105–9.

are small-town Southern war heroes who get in over their heads when they become involved in politics. Weill had a particular affection for the Johnny character, and wrote several times that he wanted to write music for another of the same archetype.[107] During brainstorming sessions for *The Common Glory*, Weill enthusiastically argued for, and got, a version of the story that included a Jonathan Smith, whom Weill described as "a kind of Johnny Johnson from 1776[108]," and pushed for "the Johnny Johnson-kind of humor," probably meaning his naïve but amusing misunderstandings of his surroundings. The younger Crockett in *One Man from Tennessee* appears to be another attempt to revive that "common man" archetype that Johnny represented to Weill. When Crockett enters politics, however, he begins to more resemble Sam Adams, the other hero of *The Common Glory*; a former backwoodsman unwillingly drawn onto the national stage and now disillusioned with the political process. Though only a fragment of music for *The Common Glory* survives, in the correspondence surrounding it, Weill suggests using a chorus "surrounding the stage, singing the 'American dream,' taking part in the action, building up, with movement and excitement, our 'al fresco' painting of the Revolution and forming a bridge from the ideology of 1776 to the present day."[109] This idea made it into the most final version of the libretto; the stage directions at the opening call for "Two chorus groups of men and women enter[ing] from the pit from the left and right front of the auditorium. They are dressed in the dark but varying colonial garments of the early pioneers and represent the commenting and

[107] Weill may have been attracted to Johnny as a universal "fool" archetype. Weill's mentor Ferrucio Busoni advocated using stock characters in operatic projects because they lent the piece an "objective" air, and allowed the spectator to concentrate on the entire drama, rather than the emotional expression of a single character. See Tamara Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality: Ferrucio Busoni's Master Class in Composition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 182. The character is also an American "everyman," that Weill likely perceived was popular at the time (see the Introduction).

[108] Letter from Weill to Paul Green, October 13, 1937, copy in Ronald Sanders Collection, NYPL, Box 21, Folder 2.

[109] Quoted in Carter, "Celebrating the Nation," 318.

interpretive chorus of the play."[110] The idea of these two choruses strongly echoes the ragged group of pioneers that Weill and Hays describe in their synopsis, and while that particular aspect did not make it into the final script, the "commenting and interpretive" function of the chorus is a part of *One Man from Tennessee*.

The political dimensions of *One Man from Tennessee* also likely appealed to the FTP even after the fiasco surrounding *The Cradle Will Rock*, given that Davy Crockett was a historically "safe" figure. The Project produced two Living Newspapers that dealt specifically with the problems presented in *One Man from Tennessee*: homelessness in rural areas of the United States. The first, *Triple-A Plowed Under* (1936) dealt with the Supreme Court's decision to shut down the Agricultural Adjustment Administration that year. The piece features a scene in which a farmer argues with a banker over the foreclosure of his farm, echoing the first scene of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* and the second of *One Man from Tennessee*. The similarity was not lost on the administration of the FTP; McGee considered both *Triple-A Plowed Under* and *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* for the performance as part of the Arkansas Centennial Commission at the War Memorial Building.[111] The second, less successful Living Newspaper was *Dirt*, which only played in Iowa. Typically for a Living Newspaper, *Dirt* turned to the past to explain the trials of the present. In this case, a voice over a loudspeaker berates a third son of an English nobleman who has settled in 1879 Iowa.

> THIRD BOY: English money has done more in developing this part of Iowa that all of the rest put together. *It's a free country!*

[110] Paul Green, *The Common Glory*, LOC/FTP, Box 618, Folder S348(1).

[111] Telegram from Hallie Flanagan to Bureau of Research and Publication, May 26, 1936, NARA/FTP, Box 35, Folder "Gilder, Rosamund – Director, Bureau of Research and Publications."

> LOUDSPEAKER (*with force*): *A Free country?* Is it? IS IT? Let's see how free a country is when a corporation can own half a million acres of the finest land obtainable … can impose upon country after country a system of almost *feudal* land ownership.[112]

This exchange echoes Crockett's final confrontation with Spindle, in which the former accuses his lifelong nemesis of buying Texas to create a monopoly on land. The theme of homelessness also runs through the most famous of the FTP's Living Newspapers *"…one third of a nation…"* (1938) which dealt with urban homelessness, and featured a long scene with a crooked speculator in nineteenth-century New York City.

One Man from Tennessee also shares structural and thematic similarities with the Living Newspaper productions. Weill witnessed the writing and staging of *"…one third of a nation…"* when he and Paul Green visited the Federal Theatre Summer Program at Vassar in July 1937 as the production came into being.[113] Hays became involved in the genre as well; he authored another Living Newspaper, *Medicine Show*, with music by another German émigré Hanns Eisler, in 1940. Therefore, both he and Weill were definitely familiar with the genre. Living Newspapers often turned to the past to explain the problems of the present. Most began sometime around World War I, but a few looked back even further. Both *"…one third of a nation…"* and *Dirt* turned to colonial times to explain problems of urban housing and rural land ownership respectively.[114] *One Man from Tennessee*'s strong message regarding contemporary politics echoes this practice. McGee's idea of pairing *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* with *Triple-A Plowed Under* strengthens this idea; the former would have acted as a prequel to the latter, which has scenes taking place in World War I. The Living Newspapers also usually had narrators who

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[112] Quoted in Laura Browder, *Rousing a Nation: Radical Culture in Depression America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 144.

[113] Pierre de Rohan, "First Federal Summer Theatre: A Report," in *Federal Theatre: Summary of the Federal Theatre Activities to September, 1938*, NARA/FTP, Box 357, Folder "Federal Summer Theatre."

[114] Browder, *Rousing the Nation*, 129, 144.

somehow participated in the action, often via loudspeaker. As a period piece, *One Man from Tennessee* did not make use of the device, but the documentary structure, and the choral narratives, have some parallels with the genre. *One Man from Tennessee*'s characters are also iconic archetypes, similar to those of the Living Newspaper. Thematically, Living Newspapers tended to revolve around the trials of an "everyman" figure who takes on larger societal problems, such as the "Consumer" in the Living Newspaper *Power* (1937), which tackled the problems surrounding the Tennessee Valley Authority, or the "Little Man" in *"…one third of a nation…"* who strives to understand the politics of urban housing. As Flanagan put it:

> In *Power*, the struggle inherent in all Living Newspapers becomes, through the character of the Consumer, more explicit. It is the struggle of the average citizen to understand the natural, social and economic forces around him, and to achieve through these forces, a better life for more people.[115]

She could as easily have been speaking about Crockett, a folk hero whose biography was modified so that he could stand for an American "everyman." The episodic nature of *One Man from Tennessee* with its large chronological skips also reflects the structure of the Living Newspapers—which were often a collection of scenes, usually moving chronologically through time, connected by a political theme—even if it has a stronger narrative thread.

These similarities are likely a factor of their shared roots in avant-garde European theatrical techniques. Flanagan, who spent a year traveling around Europe in 1926 studying international theatre on a Guggenheim Fellowship, learned about and adapted the Living Newspaper from the Soviets. What began as a simple matter of comrades acting out the news for illiterate colleagues in the Soviet Union eventually evolved into elaborate productions with

[115] Hallie Flanagan, Introduction to *Federal Theatre Plays*, ed. Pierre de Rohan (New York: Da Capo, 1973), p. x.

oversized props, loudspeakers, and acrobatics.[116] The form migrated to German workers' theatre groups sponsored by the Communist Party. Some of these German productions included scenes written by Brecht.[117] The Living Newspapers of the FTP also borrowed several elements of Brecht and Weill's "Epic Theatre" paradigm that the pair developed in the late 1920s and early 1930s, including narrators, and slide projections.[118]

An American "Epic Theatre"?

All of these elements of *One Man from Tennessee* (the documentary nature, the stock characters, the pedagogical nature of the story, the rocky relationship between frame and narrative) have roots in Weill's theories and conceptions of "Epic Theatre" that he developed with Brecht in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Weill and Brecht together wanted theatre to critique society, rather than non-judgmentally depict events in an effort to educate their audience. In 1928, Weill wrote "The new operatic theater that is being generated today has epic character. It does not propose to describe, but to report," and Brecht similarly wrote in 1929 that theatre must be "epic. It must report."[119] In the summer of 1936, Weill clarified what he meant by "report" in the lecture to the Group Theatre during their summer retreat. His notes read

> Instead of playing a scene, we tell in a song what happened in this scene.— Fantasy, Unrealoity [*sic*]. The powers behind a man speaking through music. ... *Orchester music*

[116] Lynn Mally, *The Americanization of the Soviet Living Newspaper* (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2008), 4–6. Eventually professional troupes formed to perform Living Newspapers, most prominently the Blue Blouses, named after the color of workers' shirts. American Communist and workers troupes formed their own Living Newspaper troupes of the same name, but these were largely defunct before the FTP began experimenting with the form.

[117] Browder, *Rousing the Nation*, 120.

[118] Browder, *Rousing a Nation*, 127; Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, 54.

[119] Bertolt Brecht, "Letzte Etappe: Oedipus," (1929), translated by John Willett as "Last Stage: Oedipus," in *Brecht on Theatre: Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 24–25.

> [*sic*] carrying on the action, giving tempo for the production, the bridge between scenes. —Music is not descriptive.[120]

In *One Man from Tennessee*, the chorus does exactly as Weill describes, "carrying on the action, giving tempo for the production," and acting as a "bridge between scenes." Weill also made use of similar choruses in his work without Brecht, most notably *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* with a libretto by Georg Kaiser, and *Die Bürgschaft* with a libretto by Caspar Neher. The function of the chorus in the latter, also an operatic dramatization of a folk-tale, in particular, seems to foreshadow *One Man from Tennessee* in the way it narrates events that take place off stage, such as Mattes giving chase to Orth at the end of Act I, and the war and plagues of Act III. The chorus of *Die Bürgschaft* usually sums up each scene with a short chorale-like passage, a genre that would have been very familiar to Weill's German audience. Weill may have been trying to replicate that feeling in his American audiences by using folk song-like settings in between the scenes of *One Man from Tennessee*.

As in his German works, the use of the chorus in *One Man from Tennessee* produces an episodic structure that, to Weill, was an integral part of Epic Theatre. In the production book of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, he wrote that "the epic theater is a stepwise *sequence of situations*. Therefore, it is the ideal for of musical theater, for only such situations can be set to music in closed forms."[121] The idea of "closed musical forms" permeates much of Weill's writing from the later 1930s as well; he believed that the open-ended Wagnerian music-dramas were a failed attempt at realism and as such inherently undramatic. The future of opera, he believed, lay in a return to separate numbers. *One Man from Tennessee* exemplifies this idea; all

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[120] Kurt Weill, "Notes for a Lecture for the Group Theatre," 65.

[121] Kurt Weill, "Foreword to the Production Book of the Opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*" (1930), translated in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 514.

of the choral numbers are self-contained and independent, as are the phenomenal and non-phenomenal numbers within the scenes. All also have very easily discernable, well-balanced forms.

However, Weill's use of the chorus in *One Man from Tennessee* is far more extensive and sophisticated than in his earlier works, foreshadowing the onstage choruses in his post-war Broadway musicals. Although Weill and Brecht originally agreed on their concepts of Epic Theatre, eventually they each took them in different directions: Brecht developed these ideas about theatrical reporting into the *Verfremdungseffekt* in 1936 after seeing a performance of a Chinese company in Moscow,[122] but Weill, who was always more interested in reforming opera rather than politics, continued to cultivate his "closed-form" musical set-pieces in the United States with his choral musicals, beginning with *One Man from Tennessee* and continuing with *Love Life*, *Down in the Valley*, and *Lost in the Stars*. None of these attempt to make the subject strange to the public, which would have alienated U.S. audiences to the point where they would avoid seeing the show altogether, but all employ a large chorus that both narrates and comments upon the action in closed musical forms.

One Man from Tennessee also resembles many American theatrical techniques of the time. In the 1930s, numerous dramatists experimented with collective narrative bodies, which is likely how Meredith, Alan, and Weill got the idea. Many of these experiments were conducted under the auspices of the FTP. As we have seen, Flanagan herself particularly singled out choral speech as one of the theatrical experiments the FTP should be pursuing. Like Weill and Meredith, she equated the practice with the Greeks as well, saying in her opening address to the First Production Conference of the New York City Unit of the Federal Theatre Project in late

[122] Bertolt Brecht, "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst" (1936), translated as "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," in *Brecht on the Theatre*, 91–99.

July 1936 that, "we must continue to experiment with dance movement and choral speech, not divorced from, but part of theatre production. … We must see the relationship between the men at work at Boulder Dam and the Greek chorus."[123] Several playwrights took up Flanagan's challenge. The most successful was Michael Gold and Michael Blankfort's *Battle Hymn*, which the FTP's Experimental Theatre Unit put on in 1936. When the play opened in San Francisco, John Hobart particularly praised the company for pulling off the difficult passages of choral speech:

> Preceding each of the three acts is prologue, impressionistically staged with a narrator and a chorus of 20 or so actors. The three prologues not only display the Federalites' aptitude for the technically difficult choral speech but effectively clarify the political and economic background of the prewar period.

Another anonymous review praised the same features:

> Of unusual interest were the three prologues, with a "speaker" preparing the audience for each act, assisted by the cassocked chorus in two parts, symbolic of North and South. Donald Grey was excellent as the choragus.[124]

This fascination with choral speech likely sprang from two sources. The first was simply practical; the FTP's primary mission was to employ as many out-of-work theatre personnel as reasonably possible: the more parts in a production, the more actors could be employed, and choruses provided a way to provide more work. The second was more philosophical. The Great Depression saw a major cultural shift towards populism, as politicians, writers, musicians, and artists alike all addressed their art and rhetoric to that great watchword of the 1930s, "The

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[123] Hallie Flanagan, "Opening Address to the First Production Conference of the New York City Unit of the Federal Theatre Project" July 22–23, 1936, LOC/FTP, Box 1, Folder "1.1.9a." Flanagan's frequent references to Greek theatre had as much to do with politics as with art; she often turned to ancient history to argue for a federally funded theatre, saying things like "Government support of the theatre brings the United States into the best historic theatre tradition and inter the best contemporary theatre practice. Four centuries before Christ, Athens believed that plays were worth paying for out of public money"; Flanagan, Introduction to *Federal Theatre Plays*, ed. de Rohan, p. (New York: Random House, 1938), vii.

[124] Both reviews are in LOC/FTP, Box 31, Folder 1.1.31e.

People," particularly after Burke's call to the American Writer's Congress, which in turn engendered calls for a "People's Theatre" by critics like Samuel Sillen.[125] Many other contemporary productions used a narrator that participated to some degree, but by using a chorus, Weill and Hays managed to tap into both the myth of the common man and the populist sensibility of the era.

Finally, by using a well-known folk hero, Weill and his collaborators capitalized on the contemporary search for a usable past. The authors made sure to emphasize Crockett's humanitarian qualities, constantly bringing up the land issue and reminding the audience that Crockett opposed President Jackson's treatment of the Cherokee Indians. Like many FTP productions that depicted the lives of famous Americans, *One Man from Tennessee* portrays Davy Crockett as an everyman inexorably drawn onto the national moral or political stage. The point is made clearer still by removing Crockett from Hays's original title, reflecting the trend in the FTP of plays about historical characters without naming them (such as *Battle Hymn* and *Prologue to Glory*, discussed above). *One Man from Tennessee* was clearly meant to appeal to the Depression-era audience searching for a past that could help them understand the trials of the present.

Conclusion: The Same Old Story

The constellation of Brechtian Epic Theatre, German experimentalism, New Deal radicalism, Tin Pan Alley style, and the documentary impulse that makes up *One Man from Tennessee* produced rather quixotic results. Although this peculiar amalgam did not doom the project to failure, Weill and his collaborators never managed a smooth transition from one idea to another, and the result

[125] Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 124.

was a patchwork musical score grafted onto a libretto that alternates forced folksiness with a somewhat obvious political message. Both the libretto and the score have shining moments—"The Hand is Quicker than the Eye" has a certain humorous charm, and the scene at the theatre is genuinely poignant at times—but these do not overcome the weakness of the libretto or a score that seems to jump from style to style for no apparent reason.

However, *One Man from Tennessee* did represent a step forward for Weill. His previous collaborator, Green, insisted on an almost entirely phenomenal score for *The Common Glory*—and also the use of period-specific music—which hamstrung the composer in his efforts. Although imperfect, Hays's libretto allowed Weill to begin to experiment with the boundaries between phenomenal and non-phenomenal music, experiments he built on in his later work, particularly *Lady in the Dark* and *Lost in the Stars*. *One Man from Tennessee* also represents Weill's first attempts to write music in an idiom more familiar to his audience in the United States. Although *Johnny Johnson* had an American subject, Weill's sweet-and-sour score is often more reminiscent of his German music. With *One Man from Tennessee*, Weill began to write the type of music he returned to in *Railroads on Parade* and *Down in the Valley*.

One Man from Tennessee is just one of many unfinished projects from the files of both Weill and the FTP that never saw the light of day. With the present surviving documents, companies might be able to perform a version with just piano, and several of the songs have been recorded by Joy Bergen, but overall it would take a good deal of effort on the part of both scholars and musicians to put together a workable performance. Yet it remains an integral part of the composer's and the country's history. Part political documentary, part American myth, and part rural epic, *One Man from Tennessee* represents a pivotal moment in Weill's musical career,

incorporating both old and new theatrical aesthetics in ways that he would later to use to revolutionize American musical theatre.

CHAPTER TWO
WEILL GOES WEST: *THE RIVER IS BLUE* AND *YOU AND ME*

The focus of film music to me is the original film opera. This cannot be done by adapting old operas for the screen, for the conception of stage-opera music is bound to be different from what film-opera must be. To adapt existing operas—arias, duets, ensembles, finales, dances, marches and the like—means to mutilate either screen action or the music itself. Music of film-opera has to create and develop its own forms out of typical screen action, combining its different laws of space, time and motion with constant music laws. Although the stage opera and the libretto can be written separately and frequently are the basis of film opera presupposes the closest and minutest collaboration of writer, composer and director. The first film-opera, once written and produced, will evoke a host of others, so the question is: who will have vision and courage enough to take the first step?

Ernst Toch (1937)

Even before coming to the United States, Kurt Weill had dreams of composing for films. Hollywood had played a profound role in shaping Weimar culture, as Weimar composers, including Weill, Ernst Krenek, and Paul Hindemith employed Hollywood film techniques like montage, split screen, and dissolves in their operas, and theatrical theorists like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht drew on Charlie Chaplin's films in their efforts to create politically relevant theatre.[1] On March 4, 1934 while he was still in Louveciennes (to the west of Paris) working on *Der Kuhhandel*, he excitedly wrote to Lenya:

> Last night I got a call asking me to wire my address to Marlene [Dietrich], which I did right away, and by this morning there was the following telegram: "Would you be interested in coming here [Hollywood] and working with [Josef von] Sternberg and me on a musical film. Time required approximately six months. Wire me whether you want

[1] Bryan Gilliam, "From Hollywood to Berlin: The Influence of American Film on Weimar Music Theater," in *Amerikanismus, Americanism, Weill: Die Suche nach kultureller Identität in der Moderne*, ed. Hermann Danuser and Herman Gottschewski (Schliegen: Edition Argus, 2003), 147–59.

> to and whether you can. Everything else taken care of by Paramount. Warmest regards, Marlene." … I think one can only say yes to this, no? Sternberg and Marlene and six months of work—that doesn't come up often.[2]

He was even willing to postpone work on *Marie Galante* and *The Eternal Road* in order to pursue a project in Los Angeles. Then, a little over week later, the opportunity vanished. On March 13, Weill told Lenya:

> I'm afraid this beautiful project has gone the way of all flesh. During the first few days when no answer was forthcoming, I thought they were using those tactics to keep me hanging. But now, after a week without news, I believe the whole thing has fallen through. Either someone has raised some stink about me, or the whole thing isn't being done at all. Who knows? It would be a pity if were buried, because it really was a big chance, and it would've been great fun for me, as you can imagine: beautiful trip, the new surroundings, and last but not least, the highly interesting work—to say nothing of the faces of all those who are green with envy. Can you make sense of this whole affair? First such enthusiasm that Marlene turned Paris upside down from Hollywood in order to get my address, then the enthusiastic telegram from Sternberg, and then—when they were supposed to get serious about negotiations, etc.—not another word.[3]

The Dietrich/Sternberg project was just the first of many opportunities for Weill in Hollywood that disappeared almost as quickly as they arose. Weill's time on the West Coast was marked with all the hope, disappointment, bewilderment, and ego that he expressed to Lenya. Still, he continually sought movie work from 1934 on, even though he only composed three original commercial movie scores, for *The River is Blue* (1937; the film was eventually released in 1938 as *Blockade*, without Weill's music), *You and Me* (1938), and *Where Do We Go from Here?* (1945), and he was frustrated with the film adaptations of his musicals *Lady in the Dark* (1944), *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1944), and *One Touch of Venus* (1948). He also composed one non-commercial film, *Salute to France* (1944), as part of his involvement in the war effort.

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[2] W-LL(e), 115.

[3] W-LL(e), 120.

Weill's description of the two advantages of Hollywood (steady, well-paying, relatively long-term employment, and collaboration with two former Weimar associates) represents the primary appeal of the West Coast to the many artists who were forced to flee Europe. The film industry needed screenwriters, composers, musicians, and directors to fill the growing audience demand for movies, and Jewish as well as anti-Fascist émigrés were initially happy to oblige. Like many émigrés, Weill was also well paid for his efforts on the West Coast, even if his products were left on the cutting-room floor. His $7,500 paycheck for *The River is Blue* proved a strong incentive for Weill to abandon the stage and head west to work with members of the Group Theatre.[4] After internal strife tore the Group apart, Weill teamed up with fellow exile Fritz Lang on *You and Me*, for which he earned $10,000.[5] In contrast Weill earned only about $3,168 from his annual stipend from Heugel until 1936, whereas the royalties from *The Eternal Road* came to $3,474.71 for the first month and never reached that peak again. Weill's multiple letters to the financial team in charge of that project indicate that he may never have received a substantial portion of his money, if he received any at all (see the Introduction).[6]

Despite the draws, Weill did not flourish in Hollywood, either creatively or socially. As Saverio Giovacchini has discussed, the film industry was home to a strong Popular Front presence, spearheaded primarily by two groups of people: what he calls the "Hollywood New Yorkers," a cohort of intellectuals and stage professionals who were drawn west by the appeal of a wider audience, and by "Hollywood Europeans," the wave of anti-Fascist émigrés that pursued

[4] Sarah Whitfield, "Kurt Weill: The 'Composer as Dramatist' in American Musical Theatre Production" (Ph.D. diss., Queen Mary College, University of London, 2010), 166.

[5] W-LL(e), 230.

[6] Whitfield, "Kurt Weill," 148, 152.

the steady employment and creative opportunities.[7] Neither group offered Weill what he wanted on an artistic level. The Group dissolved, leaving Weill and his score for *The River is Blue* behind. During the production of *You and Me*, Weill attempted to work within, and socialize with, this exile community, but he soon found that neither the employment nor the company suited him, and eventually he went back to New York. Weill also had a tense relationship with his two Hollywood agents: Bert Allenberg, who worked for him until 1938, and Arthur Lyons, who took over after.[8] Weill never felt that Lyons lobbied hard enough on the his behalf. On June 16, 1941, for example, he wrote to Lyons:

> This same story is going on now for two and a half years and I'm getting awfully tired of it. During the first two years of our contract you were not able to make me a single movie offer although I had built up for myself one of the finest reputations in the American theatre and music. Then, after the unique success of *Lady in the Dark*, you told me that I was "hot news" for Hollywood, that I was in the top class of Broadway composers and that you had offers for me from all the major studios in Hollywood and that it would take only a few weeks to close a first class deal for me. Half a year has gone by since the opening of *Lady in the Dark*. All the Hollywood producers, directors and actors have seen the show and everybody agrees that it is one of the greatest shows New York has ever seen. And still you haven't made me a single offer.

He went so far as to fire Lyons twice, once in 1941 and then again in 1947. Weill's complaint that he had obtained no Hollywood work despite the fact that he was "hot news" is also a recurring motif in his letters from this period. Weill believed every person who told him he was going to be a star, but in Hollywood, the "Dream Factory," telling someone that they were the "next big thing" was nothing more than simple politeness.

Weill's two film scores from the late 1930s have gone almost entirely unnoticed in the present scholarship. The facts that Walter Wanger dropped Weill's music for *The River is Blue*

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[7] Saverio Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 10ff.

[8] See WLA, Box 47, Folders 1 and 9 for Weill's correspondence with both his agents.

before Weill had a chance to polish it, and that the score for *You and Me* was heavily revised for the final cut by Paramount music director, Boris Morros (who was also a double-agent working for the USSR),[9] plays a role in their recent neglect. These two scores, however, have much to tell us about Weill's concept of what he believed opera could do for the movies, which he wrote and spoke about at length both in Europe and in his early years in the United States, and how his ideas clashed with prevailing sentiment regarding ways to create cross-genre musical films during the period.[10] Even modernist composers like Aaron Copland argued that music in film played a secondary role. As Sally Bick has observed, "throughout his writings, Copland speaks repeatedly about the role of music serving the screen image."[11] Not only was Weill interested in creating a more equal role for music in the movies, but he also wanted to revolutionize the techniques of film scoring by incorporating some of the ideas of epic theatre. Throughout his German career, Weill wrote extensively about the problems of "music drama" (as opposed to opera) such as the Wagnerian leitmotif, problems which became common practice in early film scoring. Weill was not opposed to the idea of leitmotifs on principle, but he wanted leitmotifs to participate in the events of the film, rather than run parallel to them, which was a criticism he leveled at Wagner and his followers. He also tried to adapt the idea of the sung-through *Lehrstück*, or "didactic piece," to a filmic medium.

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[9] Dorothy Lamb Crawford, *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 168.

[10] For Weill's early thought on opera and the movies, see "National Music, Opera, and the Movies: An Interview with Kurt Weill," *Pacific Coast Musician* 26/13 (July 1937), pp. 12–13, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/352-national-music and "Kurt Weill in Hollywood—But Not of It," (1937) unpublished typescript, WLA Box 74, Folder 4, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/350-kurt-weill-in-hollywood, accessed February 13, 2013.

[11] Sally Bick, "Composers on the Cultural Front: Aaron Copland and Hanns Eisler in Hollywood," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001), 64–65.

Despite shared political goals, Weill was just as socially out of sync with the larger Hollywood community as he was aesthetically. Although he attended parties and salons at the homes of Screenwriter Salka Viertel and others, he felt out of place in, and at times disgusted with, the company, particularly within the émigré community, even those with whom he had had close contact in the 1920s, such as Otto Klemperer. This disconnect sprang from several sources. Weill was somewhat younger than many members of the Los Angeles émigré community, and his youth made him better able to adapt to the culture and milieu of the United States. Unlike many of the central figures of that community, Weill fled for racial, political, and aesthetic reasons, and he may have felt that, like many Jewish radicals (as Jean-Michel Palmier has pointed out), his politics set him apart—and above—his co-religionists, who fled Germany only because of anti-Semitism.[12]

Weill did participate in larger aesthetic movements during his two film projects. Weill's Hollywood movies are inflected by the multiple trends of modernist thought during the time. As Ehrhard Bahr has argued, this émigré community was not simply a mutual support network, but also the breeding ground for a new kind of "exile modernism," based on dialectic experiences of displacement.[13] This phase of modernism was defined by the collisions of the paradisiacal landscape of Los Angeles in the 1930s and the harsh realities of exile; of the technological world and the natural one; and of experimentalism and approachability—not to mention crises of political ideals and a new focus on human suffering. The defining features of modernist art of the era—including ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty—still inflected these works. Weill's score

[12] Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, trans. David Fernbach (New York and London: Verso, 2006), 12.

[13] Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 8ff.

for *The River is Blue* plays with the line between musical and non-musical sounds as everyday objects such as typewriters and machine-guns are incorporated into the score. Weill's score for *You and Me* in particular emphasizes the internal suffering of second-class citizens as they try to walk the straight and narrow.

Weill's negative experiences in the Hollywood of the 1930s profoundly influenced the rest of his career. His break with the West Coast also heralded a larger shift in his efforts to reach U.S. audiences. Prior to 1938, the composer primarily worked within Popular Front-aligned communities like the Federal Theatre Project, the Group Theatre, and the loose network of Los Angeles émigrés. However, by 1937 (the year Weill went to Hollywood), such Leftist theatrical and film enterprises were beginning to crumble from internal and external pressures, leaving Weill stranded with his fellow émigrés, a community that in some ways adhered to the German cultural and artistic traditions Weill had spent years working against on both sides of the Atlantic. Weill's failure to work productively in Hollywood with both native-born Americans and émigrés alike (or their failure to work with him) seems to have been the final straw in his Popular Front involvement, and after 1938 he worked almost entirely within more commercial (although not necessarily popular) entities such as the Playwrights' Producing Company.

Hollywood Opera

As the 1930s saw numerous technical innovations within the film industry, creative professionals like actors, directors, editors, and musicians raced to keep up with artistic invention to match. The addition of synchronized dialogue in 1927 with Warner Brothers *The Jazz Singer* inspired many musicians (and film professionals more generally) to think about new ways to integrate dialogue and score within movie-making. The film industry particularly attracted classically

trained composers since it represented both a site for potential creative modernization, and a way to earn a living as a musician during difficult economic times. Some of the composers who were attracted to the movie industry soon realized that they were not willing to compromise their artistic style for the new medium. In 1935, Arnold Schoenberg famously demanded the exorbitant fee of $50,000 from producer Irving Thalberg of MGM for scoring the film adaptation of Pearl S. Buck's novel *The Good Earth*, along with complete control of all sound—including dialogue—in the movie, so that they could deliver their lines in *Sprechtstimme* along with the soundtrack.[14] Hollywood, it turned out, was not interested. Other aspects of high art did attract those in the film industry; with the rise of movie musicals, many film professionals began to wonder if opera was a viable filmic genre. The influx of musical émigrés contributed to this speculation, particularly those (like Weill) who had been involved with musical theatre in Germany.

During the 1930s, the term "film opera" rarely meant sung-through dramatic material written for film, but instead encompassed a wide-range of conceptions and ideas centered on uniting music with action on screen. In 1931, Hans Heinsheimer explicitly denied that stage opera made an appropriate subject for film, writing that "works of art which are drawn from the material of opera" were "absolutely opposed to film. The material is too rich or too poor, too complex or too simple; it cannot be adapted without distortion."[15] Instead, as Marcia J. Citron has observed, the elements of opera that inflected film, including "image, pacing, and ritual," create a "covert intermediality," even though "opera's signifiers are subordinate" when "they

[14] John Russell Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Émigrés, 1933–1950* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 81. After Schoenberg turned down the opportunity, the job eventually went to Herbert Stothart.

[15] Hans Heinsheimer, "Film Opera—Stage vs. Screen," *Modern Music* 8.3 (March–April 1931): 10–15, at p. 13.

join the medial realm of film."[16] In the late 1930s and early 1940s, composers and directors tried to create such a "covert intermediality" by composing the score as the film was being shot so that music and drama were closely intertwined. Bernard Herrmann recounted that when he was composing the score for *Citizen Kane* (RKO, 1941), that "I worked on the film, reel by reel, as it was being shot and cut. In this way, I had a sense of the picture being built, and of my own music being a part of that building. … In many scenes in *Citizen Kane* an entirely different method was used, many of the sequences being tailored to match the music."[17] The idea that music and film interacted with each other was the defining feature of new genre of film opera. Both of Weill's film scores engage with opera. His score for *The River is Blue* reveals how he felt the Wagnerian practice of leitmotifs should be adapted to film, as well as how he felt music should motivate certain important plot events. In *You and Me*, Weill revisited the idea of the Brechtian *Lehrstück*, which Joy H. Calico calls a consciously anti-operatic genre.[18] Other films also aspired to operatic dimensions, such as William Dieterle's *Juarez* (1939), which contained such markers as exoticism, lengthy story-telling, and sumptuous sets and costumes, as well as Erich Wolfgang Korngold's sweeping, romantic, and leitmotif-driven score.

However, before the idea was codified in the late 1930s, the aim was to find new ways of combining elements of opera, film, and theatre in an entirely new genre. As early as 1923, Russ Rhees, then the president of the University of Rochester School of Music, gave an interview to the *Los Angeles Times* that discussed the prospect:

> 'The union of music and spoken drama produced the important musical development we call opera,' he said. 'Film-opera, or whatever the result of the new combination will be

[16] Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33.

[17] Bernard Herrmann, "Score for a Film: Composer Tells of Problems Solved in Music for *Citizen Kane*," *New York Times*, May 25, 1941, p. X6.

[18] Joy H. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008), 31.

> called, will be equally important. The greatest composers will write it, great prize contests will be given and the first exhibitions will be historic occasions.' Already pioneer work in the formation of this new art of 'composing for the screen' is being done in this country, indicating that the art will find its origin and primary development in America … as opera took its start in Germany and Italy.[19]

In 1929, Fox Studios announced production of a "Hollywood Opera," a film called *Married in Hollywood* based on Oscar Straus's *Ein Waltzertraum*. "Of course," opined Grace Kingsley of the *Los Angeles Times*, "it was just bound to happen."[20] Films such as these sparked the interest of serious musicians and critics, who began to see the beginnings of an entirely new genre that would revolutionize opera. "Grand opera, believe it or not, is on its last legs," declared Julian Johnson of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1931: "it is an ossified art. … Melodically, its only unquestioned masters are dead men. Dramatically, it is absurd. Scenically, it is ridiculous. As to great acting, except in notable isolated instances, it never existed." Instead, he predicted that "the opera of tomorrow will be on the motion-picture screen":

> it will be the natural medium—the only medium for full expression—of the new music. Now this music, already forecast [by those such as Gershwin], is not new music in the melodic sense. It will have new progressions, startling contrasts, and perhaps an amazing instrumentation, but its base always and forever must be the faculty of harmony and cacophony to portray human emotion. The score of the screen music drama will be built as the scenario is built; it will be the interpreter, the commentator, the forecaster of moods and emotions, and it will travel as the camera travels in all its shuttle-like weaving.[21]

In 1934, Stephen Watts in *Cinema Quarterly* observed that opera and talking film had a great deal in common in the way the music related to the dialogue. He wrote that "in opera quite

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[19] "Film-Opera Predicted for Future," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1923, p. I17.

[20] Grace Kingsley, "Fox to Make Hollywood Opera," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1929, p. A10.

[21] Julian Johnson, "Los Angeles and the Opera of Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 1931, p. J8.

frequently the music the music echoes the words that have just been spoken. That is one way music with dialogue can be used."[22]

The idea of film opera also appealed to those who wanted to bring high art to the masses. As figures like Rhees, Johnson, and Watts heralded the coming of a new age of film scoring, the movie business was already drawing on operatic plots, music, and stars with great success, as Paul Fryer has discussed.[23] These films democratized what had been a genre only open to the moneyed classes.[24] Figures like Metropolitan opera singer Geraldine Ferrar and directors like Cecile B. DeMille and D.W. Griffith created films inspired literally (such as Ferrar and DeMille's *Carmen*, 1915), or stylistically (such as Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, 1915) by opera.[25] When synchronized dialogue arrived, these silent operas gave way to lighter fare, as with as the operettas *Naughty Marietta* (1935) and *The Rose of Rancho* (1936). Hoping to repeat Ferrar's success, Metropolitan Opera regulars including Grace Moore, Laurence Tibbetts, Kirsten Flagstad, and Lily Pons flocked to Los Angeles with hopes of parlaying their singing careers into superstardom. Even though these films would be considered "operetta" in today's terminology, the designation "opera" still appeared in newspapers and publicity material, probably as a marker of prestige. As Fryer has observed, "every studio, no matter how prosaic their usual output, wanted to include serious subjects, with a legitimate pedigree, among their releases, and if these films could feature great names from the legitimate stage, so much the better."[26] This was

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[22] Quoted in David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York and London: Continuum, 2002), 3–4.

[23] Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC, and London: MacFarland, 2005).

[24] Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*, 49.

[25] See Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*, 13–36.

[26] Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film*, 54.

necessary, as critic Ethan Mordden has observed, for early film-makers trying to rise above the medium's "start as trash produced by immigrants for a public of goons."[27] As is suggested by the title of *Opera Vs. Jazz*, a failed Gladys Swarthout and George Raft vehicle about a love affair between a classical singer and a band leader, the idea of 'opera' stood in opposition to the latter lowbrow style. But despite the highbrow label of the genre, the Popular Front still recognized that, as Citron has noted, opera has always been a vehicle for social critique.[28] Those pushing for the new genre made sure to keep the publicity grounded in the populist language of the Cultural Front. In his English subtitles for the French film *Louise*, Deems Taylor made sure that the audience understood that "'Louise' is not 'Grand' opera, dealing with the ways of upholstered kings and queens, but the simple story of the simple people of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, now retold in terms of their favorite medium, the screen."[29]

Along with the influx of opera stars, the film industry also became home to the first wave of refugees escaping Fascist Europe. Classically trained musicians, many with backgrounds in opera, came to the West Coast because it was one of the few places to find steady work. With the rise of the operetta-like "film opera" genre (which in many cases traced its ancestry to light Viennese operetta), many modernist German-speaking composers—with support from their native-born modernist colleagues—began experimenting with ways to push the boundaries of "film opera" away from the operetta paradigm. In 1937, Frank S. Nugent of the *New York Times* celebrated the possibility of a revolution in film opera with the coming of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Ernst Toch, Franz Waxman, Igor Stravinsky, and even Weill.[30] Citron writes that part

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[27] Ethan Mordden, "Hollywood Highbrow," *Opera News* 64/4 (October 2004): 36–40, at p. 36.

[28] Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 20.

[29] Mae Tinee, "Movie Critics Enjoys 'Louise' as Film Opera," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1940, p. 13.

of the émigré enthusiasm for film opera sprang from the fact that opera had a very different function in Europe, where it "served as a more natural product of the culture and forged bonds more easily with the public," and that in the early history of sound film, many movie theatres in the United States were lavish palaces that hosted top-notch orchestras like the opera houses in the Old World, even if the cultural status of movies was not that of opera.[31] However, Europeans as well understood that if they wanted film opera, they needed to consider their audience; in an interview with the *Washington Post*'s Lucille Neville, Boris Morros, the Russian-born head of the music department at Paramount, said that "opera must be changed on the screen if Americans are to enjoy it … —a sort of 'by the people, for the people' policy. It must be done dramatically, yet without foreign exhibitionism of acting and vocalizing that embarrasses and bores Americans. Its singers must be American and they must sing in English." He also recommended Bing Crosby as a model for American opera singers.[32]

Before Weill joined the Group in Hollywood in 1937, the composer's only experience with the business side of film-making occurred in 1931 with G.W. Pabst's version of the *Threepenny Opera*. The experience left Weill with a bitter impression of what directors could do to a stage piece. Pabst attempted to make drastic alterations to the music, but Weill successfully sued for complete control of the score (Brecht was not so lucky with the script).[33] These experiences likely led Weill to write in 1932 that film producers "nowadays make no secret whatsoever of their view that film is a business and that art is therefore allowable only insofar as it is business (which often fails to turn a profit even without art). If we have not yet reached this

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[30] Frank S. Nugent, "Cinema Wields the Baton," *New York Times*, April 11, 1937, p. 175.

[31] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 21, 30.

[32] Lucie Neville, "Hollywood Pines for Opera," *Washington Post*, May 8, 1938, p. TT1.

[33] Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1979), 68.

crass form of industrialization in the theatre, it is essentially due to the fact that most theatres work with subsidies from public resources and therefore must stress the cultural purposes of theater."[34] Some of his contemporaries took Weill's victory over Pabst to be the dawning of a new age of cooperation between composers and directors. Heinsheimer lionized Weill, writing

> he has taken the standpoint that the sound-film has its own artistic principle of form which is not to be interpreted by engineers or theatre conductors, that the laws of the sound-film are not subordinate to the film director, but that here there is a new realm for the creative musician, to which he alone possesses the key. Trespassing is to be punished. There has been up till now scarcely a single instance of a musical film constructed according to the fundamental principles of a new form. On this account Kurt Weill's lawsuit will have an historical significance.[35]

Although it was frustrating, Weill may have been more encouraged by the successful lawsuit than he should have been—all of his experiences in film were marked by similar efforts by outside parties to alter his score, and Weill never won a similar battle again.

Weill wrote a considerable amount about film music, both before and after leaving Europe, much of it in line with his later contemporaries in the Popular Front. His views on the function of film music and the place of opera in movie theatres evolved over time. Even before his work with Pabst, Weill did not think that the film industry had a place for a composer of any quality, writing that given the conditions under which composers worked (strict stylistic restrictions, little time to write), "no composer of rank or name would seek out such work,"[36] a sentiment echoed by many in United States.[37] Still, he recognized that talkies were here to stay; in "Der Tonfilm kommt," a radio feature from 1928, Weill emphasized that, although talking

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[34] Kurt Weill, "Das Formproblem der modernen Oper," (1932), translated as "The Problem of Form in Modern Opera," in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 541–42.

[35] Heinsheimer, "Film Opera," 14.

[36] "Kein Musiker von Rang und Namen für eine solche Arbeit zu gewinnen war." Kurt Weill, "Tonfilm, Opernfilm, Filmoper," (1930) in GS2, 109–14, at p. 109.

[37] Bick, "Composers on the Cultural Front," 64.

films represented new competition for opera and spoken theatre, they also opened new artistic opportunities, even if no one quite understood how to take advantage of them yet.[38] Like many, he also wondered whether talkies were an improvement on silent film. By 1930, he felt he had come by the answer, writing that in order for composers to create good scores, they had to come by a good director and (echoing Nugent on the other side of the Atlantic) to have a say in other aspects of the film, including decisions about acting, setting, etc. Aesthetically, Weill argued for many of the same principles in film music that he did for theatre music. He railed against "illustrative" music, particularly Edmund Meisel's score for *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großtadt* (1927); he argued that "we need an objective, almost concert-like film music."[39] As with the theatre, he felt that the score should be part of the action and capture the pacing of the film. Although like Hansheimer, he felt that actual opera would not translate well to the screen (his thought was that the pacing was too slow, and that long solo passages would look ridiculous), he did feel that there was some room for operatic musical innovation in film music, writing that "in musical talkies, not only can the characters sing, but also their environment."[40] He played with this idea in the film sequence of *Royal Palace*, in which a car horn blasts out the love motif, turning it into something mundane and somewhat crass, revealing some of the artifice of operatic procedure.[41]

By the time Weill arrived in the United States, his feelings toward had become less radical—at least in public. By the late 1930s as he was preparing to write his first original film

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[38] Kurt Weill, "Der Tonfilm kommt," (1928), in GS2, 377–79.

[39] Kurt Weill, "Musikalische Illustration oder Filmmusik," (1927) in GS2, 437–39, at p. 438.

[40] Weill, "Tonfilm, Opernfilm, Filmoper," 112.

[41] Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theatre: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 82–83.

score, he felt that something resembling the "film opera," described by Johnson and the others was inevitable. He traced the idea to Busoni, who Weill said "foresaw the enormous musical possibilities of film as the vehicle of a new form of tone-drama."[42] Like many of his contemporaries, he framed this new genre as something that could only grow out of American culture. In 1937, he mused that "in America the new musical art work may after all develop from the medium of the movies. For nowhere else has the film attained the technical perfection and popularity which can smooth the way for a new art form."[43] He offered little in the way of the specifics he discussed in Germany, possibly as he was trying to leave his options open given that he had on the horizon concrete offers to compose film scores.

In some ways, however, Weill differed from his contemporaries regarding how film music should work. Olin Downes argued in 1931 that the music should be "as integral to the film spectacle as the music of *Götterdämmerung* is integral to the final drama of the 'Ring.' … When [this type of scoring] arrives we shall have a wonderfully subtle and unified form of art." But Weill had already advocated for a complete withdrawal from the Wagnerian music drama.[44] Many scholars, both contemporary and historical, have observed that music in film often serves to help the audience suspend their disbelief and their sense of individuality in order to enter the fantasy of the world on screen, the way Wagner's music draws the audience into the *Ring*. Hanns Eisler and Theodor W. Adorno, writing from a Marxist perspective in 1947, noted that "the

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[42] Kurt Weill, "National Music, Opera and the Movies," *Pacific Coast Musician* 24/13 (1937): 12–13, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/352-national-music, accessed October 4, 2012.

[43] Kurt Weill, "The Future of Opera in America," *Modern Music* 14/4 (1937): 183–88, available online at http://kwf.org/grants-a-prizes/33-foundation/kwp/331-the-future-of-opera-in-america, accessed October 4, 2012.

[44] Olin Downes, "Music and Film: Some Considerations Concerning Experiments in a New Art-Form," *New York Times*, March 8, 1931, p. 114.

function of music in the cinema is one aspect—in an extreme version—of the general function of music under conditions of industrially controlled cultural consumption," and that

> acoustical perception preserves comparably more traits of long bygone, pre-individualistic collectivities than optical perception. … This direct relationship to collectivity, intrinsic to in the phenomenon itself, is probably connected with the sensations of special depth, inclusiveness, and absorption of individuality, which are common to all music. But this very ingredient of collectivity, because of its essentially amorphous nature, leads itself to deliberate misuse for ideological purposes.[45]

Throughout their treatise *Composing for the Films*, Eisler and Adorno bemoaned the way film music composers capitalize on the consciousness-erasing and collectivizing effect of music to obscure the problematic messages of the cultural industry in films. More recently, Claudia Gorbman has observed that some of the features "central to film music" are that it "removes barriers to belief; it bonds spectator to spectacle, it envelops spectator and spectacle in harmonious space. Like hypnosis, it silences the spectator's censor. It is suggestive; if it is working right, it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream."[46] In this light, film music is guilty of the charges Brecht leveled at opera. Throughout his writings, Brecht referred to opera, and particularly Wagnerian opera as a "drug" and a "narcotic" that lulled audiences into a passive state. Weill, conversely, wanted music to comment on the plot, and to illuminate the social problems that the film depicted. His previous experiments adapting film techniques to the stage reveal that he had more interest in the estranging aspects of film than the realist ones. As Alexandra Sherman Monchick has discussed, film was an integral part of Edwin Piscator, and later Brechts, concept of Epic Theatre because it brought a certain shocking realism

[45] Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing for the Films* (1947) (London: Continuum, 2007), 13–14.

[46] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 55.

to an otherwise fictional event.[47] Weill had experimented with such methods in *Royal Palace*, which has a score and aesthetic, Monchick argues, based on film techniques, including montage, quick cutting between scenes, and abrupt juxtapositions of different musics to represent these scene changes.[48] Bryan Gilliam has discerned filmic techniques at work in the *Der Protagonist* and *Mahagonny-Songspiel*, including the extended pantomime sequences in the former, and the use of titles and film projections.[49] This epic stance directly opposed the standard Wagnerian aesthetic of Hollywood at the time.

Amidst established and acknowledged Wagnerian talents like Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Weill's anti-Wagnerian stance (which he had staked out in 1927 and reiterated when he came to the United States, as we saw in the Introduction) was bound to run into trouble. One operatic element he specifically denounced was large orchestras; he felt that as a mechanical medium, film music should be composed for mechanical instruments like the Hammond organ, an idea that would not find much support.[50] Weill was also contemptuous of "Wagner's intention to announce each idea and every character through a motif." He was not against leitmotifs in general, he just insisted that they perform a critical function unlike those in Wagner's operas. Rather than simply representing a character or idea, Weill felt that leitmotifs should provide the audience with information. As an example, he cited Bizet's *Carmen*, whose theme emphasizes "the contradiction of her outward appearance and the tragic side of her

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[47] Alexandra Sherman Monchick, "Silent Opera: The Manifestation of Silent Film Technique in Opera During the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2010), 123–25.

[48] Monchick, "Silent Opera," 128–46.

[49] Bryan Gilliam, "Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s," in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–12, at p. 8, 11.

[50] Kurt Weill, "Musikalische Illustration oder Filmmusik." 439.

character," even if those dimensions are not obvious in the libretto.[51] Weill's strong positions on Wagnerian aspects of music and (film-)opera may explain why he had such trouble working with members of the Group, who (despite their avant-garde leanings), wanted a more traditional film score. His views also may have made him an appealing choice to the anti-Wagnerian Lang, whose *Die Nibelungen* films (*Siegfried* and *Kriemhild's Rache*, both UFA, 1924) also deliberately subverted Wagner's operas. Ultimately, however, neither project worked out.

Weill's dislike of leitmotifs probably had several sources. As with most of his aesthetic stances, here Weill echoes his teacher Ferruccio Busoni. As Tamara Levitz has observed, Busoni felt that Wagner was "a cruel tyrant, who had autocratically ruled German musical life, misled German musicians, and crippled musical developments in Germany."[52] However, Weill's prejudice against this specific practice likely came from Bertolt Brecht who, as Hinton observes, misunderstood Wagner's use of leitmotifs; Brecht saw the Wagner's music as simply doubling the stage action, rather than participating or commenting on the action, and thus contributing to the narcotic effect of his operas.[53] Weill was also not the only composer in Hollywood looking for an alternative to leitmotifs in the standard film score. Aaron Copland believed the practice, while appropriate for opera, added nothing to the drama of film, writing that leitmotifs

> may help the spectator sitting in the last row of the opera house identify the singer who appears from the wings for the orchestra to announce her motif. But that's hardly necessary on the screen. … In a high-class horse opera I saw this method was reduced to its final absurdity. One theme announced the Indians, another the hero. In the inevitable chase, every time the scene switched from Indians to hero the themes did, too, sometimes

[51] Kurt Weill, "Busoni's *Faust* und der Erneurerung der Opernform," (1926), translated as "Busoni's *Faust* and the Renewal of Operatic Form," in Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 468–72, at p. 470.

[52] Tamara Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality: Ferrucio Busoni's Master Class in Composition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 60.

[53] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theatre*, 145–47.

> so fast that the music seemed to hop back and forth before any part of it had time to breathe.[54]

Weill may have perceived a similar problem, given his constant attention to dramaturgy and pacing. Adorno and Eisler similarly thought the practice did not suit the filmic medium because of the brevity of the scenes and the shots, but also decried the perversion of Wagner's original purpose in using leitmotifs, writing:

> Wagner conceived [a leitmotif's] purpose as the endowment of the dramatic events with metaphysical significance. When in the *Ring* the tubas blare the Vahlhalla motif, it is not merely to indicate the dwelling place of Wotan. Wagner meant also to connote the sphere of sublimity, the cosmic will, and the primal principle. The leitmotif was invented essentially for this kind of symbolism. There is no place for it in the motion picture, which seeks to depict reality. Here the function of the leitmotif has been reduced to a musical lackey, who announces his master with an important air even though the eminant personage is clearly recognizable to anyone.[55]

While *Composing for the Films* was published ten years after Weill completed his first film score, many of these idea echoes Weill's writings in which he criticized "psychological" music and the unrealistic nature of Wagner's *oeuvre*. The idea that leitmotifs in films become "musical lackeys" resembles Weill's dislike for "announcing" characters and ideas with leitmotifs for no reason other than to identify them.

Although Weill's critique of Wagner's leitmotifs—that they merely run parallel to the story rather than comment on or provide insight into the plot—does not stand up to scholarly scrutiny, he may have had another target in mind: Richard Strauss. Weill initially admired Strauss, particularly his *Salome*, but by 1919, he wrote to his brother Hanns "Strauss has faded. Think of everything in Strauss that is false, trivial, veneered and contrived being replaced by the finest kind of modernism, in Mahler's sense, as the result of a great personality expressing itself

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[54] Aaron Copland, *Our New Music* (1941), excerpted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 83–91, at p. 88.

[55] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, 2–3.

in the most profound way."[56] Later, he came to see Strauss as a purveyor of the sort of music drama he and Brecht tried to reform. Weill also had political reasons to dislike Strauss given that the old master had become the head of the Nazi Reichsmusikkammer in 1933, and supported the National Socialist position on the arts (at least at first), if not their entire agenda.[57] Despite Strauss's sometimes ambiguous relationship with the Nazis, many émigrés spoke out against his actions including Thomas Mann, his librettist Stefan Zweig, Bruno Walter, and Otto Klemperer, who refused to program Strauss's music until 1936 (although at least Mann and Walter did not like Strauss before the rise of Fascism).[58] The Hollywood leitmotif practice at the time more resembled Strauss's than Wagner's; the latter (despite the claims of Weill and Brecht) did use leitmotifs to comment on characters actions, while the former's use was much less sophisticated. Hollywood composers use of leitmotifs more resembled Strauss, and they even invoked him on occasion: Dmitri Tiomkin wrote in his autobiography that he drew on Strauss's sound for *You Can't Take it With You* (Columbia, 1938), and an anonymous radio announcer, speaking of Franz Waxman in 1950, said that "If one had to ally him with any established 'school' of composition, it would perhaps be that of Richard Strauss" (Waxman did not have a chance to address this claim as it was not the interviewer, but the announcer, who made the comparison).[59]

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[56] Quoted in David Drew, "Schoenberg and Weill," in *Sundry Sorts of Books: Essays on the British Library Collections, Presented to O.W. Neighbor on his 70th Birthday*, ed. Chris Banks, Arthur Seele, and Malcom Turner (London: The British Library, 1993), 346–53, at p. 351. See also Levitz, Teaching New Classicality, 88.

[57] For a detailed account of Strauss's changing relationship with the Third Reich, see Chapter 8 of Michael Kater, Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[58] Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era*, 220–23,

[59] Dmitri Tiomkin, Please Don't Hate Me! (1959), excerpted in Cooke, The Hollywood Film Music Reader, 117–38, at p. 123; "A Radio Interview with Franz Waxman" (1950), in Cooke, ed., The Hollywood Film Music Reader, 139–46, at p. 146.

Weill and the Group Theatre in Los Angeles

Weill's Hollywood career is also a study in bad timing. After the financial failure of *Johnny Johnson*, the Group Theatre nearly fell apart under financial pressures and internal politics, and some members, including Weill and two of the three founding directors, Cheryl Crawford and Harold Clurman (Lee Strasberg stayed behind), went West with hopes of reinventing the organization. However, when Weill arrived there on January 27, 1937, a few days before the rest of the Group, the Progressive communities on both coasts were already disintegrating due to both outside pressures and internal strife. As entities like the Production Code Administration and figures like Joseph Breen and Will Hays patrolled films for political propaganda and immorality, the radical spirit of the earlier 1930s gave way to bitter infighting and personal conflicts, as financial needs that people had been willing to put aside for the greater good now became too big to ignore. Even though Weill remained constantly optimistic throughout his first Hollywood trip, which lasted from January to June 1937, this economic and political turmoil (on both a national and personal level) likely doomed any chance Weill had of working in the Hollywood Progressive community.

Like many Left-wing artistic collectives, by the late 1930s, the Group Theatre was in dire straits, both financially and administratively.[60] Even before Weill's collaborations with Group, trouble was already brewing. Cheryl Crawford, ostensibly a director, often found herself stuck with day-to-day administrative duties, while Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg bickered about the overall goals and dramatic techniques of the company. In the summer of 1936 when members of the Group (including Weill) were on retreat in Connecticut, Clurman delivered a paper titled

[60] Much of my account of the Group Theatre is drawn from Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Story of the Group Theatre and the Thirties*, 2nd ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), and Wendy Smith, *Real Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931–1940* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990).

"Group Organization," calling for centralized control of artistic and administrative decisions to be vested in a "managing director"—i.e., him. Although the other two directors were amenable, the actors, led by the strong CPUSA presence in their midst, rebelled, arguing that such a structure was antithetical to the communal ideals of the company. Meanwhile, the Group had not had a financial success since Clifford Odets's *Awake and Sing* in 1935, and everyone was banking on *Johnny Johnson* to get them out of the red with both their accountants and their critics. But *Johnny Johnson* closed after sixty-eight performances, and afterwards the Actor's Committee issued a paper brutally criticizing the three directors and calling for a major overhaul of the Group's administrative structure, although they were short on specifics. With everyone at each other's throats, some members decided to take a break from New York and fled west to Hollywood. Before they left, however, the directors announced their resignation, and some of the actors stayed behind resolved to come up with a plan for the future.[61] Meanwhile, some saw the defection to the West Coast as tantamount to total betrayal. In 1974, Elia Kazan recalled of the people who left for the movies earlier than 1937 like Franchot Tone, "we looked down on them, we thought it was a defect of idealism on their part, they were traitors."[62] Even in Hollywood, members of the Group still felt guilty; Clurman recalled that "once, while I lay afloat in the pool, basking lazily in the Sunday sun, Franchot Tone observed me with friendly malice and remarked: 'The life of a prostitute is pretty comfortable, isn't it?'"[63]

Members of the Group who defected to Hollywood felt that they were in need of a fresh start and financial security, Clifford Odets in particular, who had left in early 1936. His *Waiting*

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[61] Clurman, *The Fervent Years*, 184.

[62] Helen Krich Chinoy, *Reunion: A Self-Portrait of the Group Theatre* (Washington DC: American Theatre Association, 1976), 535.

[63] Clurman, *The Fervent Years*, 187.

for Lefty (1935) and *Awake and Sing* had earned him a place as one of the most celebrated playwrights of the age, and his Left-wing ideals made him a darling of Progressive circles. However, his third play for the Group, *Paradise Lost* (1936), was not a hit, and in a business where you are only as good as your most recent play, Odets had grown weary of his role as the company's playwright. He also resented the fact that he had no control over in how his plays were produced. In 1961, he recalled:

> Clurman finally got to think that I was kind of like a cow who dropped a calf and didn't know anything about it. … I dropped this calf and some people would rush up and grab it, wipe it off, and take it away, and I would be left there bellowing. And while they were hustling this calf around, you'd think I had no relationship to it. ... And finally you got the sense that here I was not only writing the plays, but when they couldn't raise the money, I would probably finance the plays or get the people myself to finance the plays. It got the sense that there was some kind of cabal, some kind of clique consisting of Clurman, Kermit Bloomgarden, who was the business manager who gave great loyalty to Clurman and something called the Group Theatre, and [Elia] Kazan. They ran everything. They put on the plays. They had the fun. They had the excitement. And I would just stand there, on my legs, like a bellowing mother cow who couldn't locate that calf she just dropped.[64]

Like many other members of the Group, he was also looking for more financial security, in his case because of his recent marriage to actress Luise Rainer (who chose to remain in New York throughout most of his work on *Castles in Spain/The River is Blue*). Hollywood seemed like a good opportunity to make both more money and a fresh start.

Initially, the cohort that left for Hollywood in February 1937 included Clurman, Kazan, Luther Adler, Roman "Bud" Bohnen, Phoebe Brand, Morris Carnovsky, Lee Cobb, Ruth Nelson, and Dorothy Patten. Soon, Clurman negotiated a deal with independent producer Walter Wanger to cast all but Cobb and Patten in *Castles in Spain*, a Spanish Civil War epic loosely based on the novel *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, with a script by Odets and Lewis Milestone, and directed by the

[64] Chinoy, *Reunion: A Self-Portrait of the Group Theatre*, 500.

latter.[65] Their version of the story originally concerned Spanish Loyalists (in the original novel, they were Russians) in Paris who dreamed of going back home to fight in the revolution. The script would also include a love story between a Spanish soldier and a beautiful Russian spy.

Although a Hollywood production, the promise of working on a film that embraced a current Leftist cause like the Spanish Civil War with the independent Wanger and the proven Progressive Odets seemed like a good compromise to the Group. Odets was ideal given that he had achieved commercial success in Hollywood with *The General Died at Dawn* (Paramount, 1936), but retained his political edge. Weill also appeared to be a good choice for the music given his well-known double identity as both a European composer and a member of the Berlin avant-garde. German and Viennese composers like Korngold, Steiner, and Waxman had created a reputation for the European brand, writing scores for what Giovacchini calls "papier maché," epics, as "mitteleuropean actors, directors, and screenwriters worked out an operetta tradition of American cinema with its real (Vienna, Paris) and imaginary (Liliputias) destinations, characterized by glossy studio shoots, musical numbers, and a fable-like approach to Old Continent milieu."[66] The grand, exotic backdrop of Spain and the strong anti-Fascist moral fell in line with these films like *Ninotchka* (MGM, 1939), and a European composer such as Weill would appear to be in line with promoting the same brand for the Group's film. At the same time, the film was also intended to provide the Left-wing community in Hollywood with an opportunity to test the waters of producing a film that dealt with contemporary political issues, a situation familiar to Weill from his days in Berlin with Brecht.[67] But in an era where the Breen

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[65] G.W. Pabst had made a French film based on the same story in 1927. Milestone was good friends of the Group, and had lent the company money during the turmoil of 1936; Clurman, *The Fervent Years*, 176.

[66] Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism*, 61.

[67] Greg M. Smith, "Blocking 'Blockade': Partisan Protests, Popular Debate, and Encapsulated Texts," *Cinema Journal* 36 (1996): 18–38, at p. 18.

Office, named after its head Joseph Breen, and the Hays Production Code strictly patrolled the movie business for any hint of licentiousness or propaganda, attempting to make a film about an ongoing war that had U.S. public opinion divided was a risky venture.

Weill may have been attracted to the project for a number of reasons. Even though he witnessed the internal squabbling in the Group during their retreat in Connecticut in the summer of 1936 and their mishandling of their production of *Johnny Johnson*, he was likely not disposed to feel kindly toward commercial enterprises given the problems that surrounded the *The Eternal Road*, including Louis Nizer's failure to pay him his fair share of the royalties. On April 8, 1937, Weill wrote to Nizer, complaining that "I don't think that ever in the history of [A]merican theatre an author has been treated the way you treat me."[68] The Group may not be perfect, he may have realized, but at least they were fair, and he had a guaranteed contract. The story of a group of exiles longing to return to their homeland to fight an invading madman might also have appealed to him as a recent exile from Germany. Moreover, the strong anti-Fascist message of the script may have enticed him given that many émigrés feared the spread of Fascism to the United States. As film historian Christopher Robé has observed, the Spanish Civil War "symbolized, at least for a time, the utopian hopes of the international Left."[69] Weill was certainly concerned with the Spanish Civil War: on March 25, 1937 he wrote to Lenya from Los Angeles that he was "totally mesmerized by the events in Spain. André Malraux is here. He's the great French writer (*La condition humaine*) who went to Spain to fight on the side of the Loyalists and founded the air force, which just now has been decisive in winning a battle," and that after speaking to him at a party, "it gives you the urge to drop everything and go there and

[68] Letter from Weill to Louis Nizer, April 8, 1937, WLA, Box 47, Folder 12.

[69] Christopher Robé, "The Good Fight: The Spanish Civil War and U.S. Left Film Criticism," *Framework* 51 (2010): 79–107, at p. 80.

get involved."[70] However, before *The River is Blue/Blockade*, films about the Spanish Civil War were restricted to documentaries such as *The Spanish Earth* (Contemporary Historians, 1937) and *Heart of Spain* (CBC, 1937). Weill may have relished the opportunity to break new artistic ground by participating in the first major production to take on the subject. The production team also featured a number of the Left-wing powers in Hollywood like Wanger, Milestone, and Odets (and later Dieterle and John Howard Lawson, who took over screenwriting duties when Odets left), and Weill likely hoped to network with them.

Walter Wanger was born Walter Feuchtwanger in San Francisco and educated in both Europe and the United States. By 1937, he had forged a reputation for himself as a strongly independent voice within the otherwise highly vertically organized studio system, and seemed an ideal collaborator for both Weill and the Group.[71] Even as most of the film industry moved west, he maintained his studios in Astoria until 1931, working in the New York community until the very last possible moment, when the Great Depression forced him to shut it down. He also had a reputation for taking on socially relevant material, generally from a Left-wing perspective. His blend of European and American manners combined with his Progressive ideals probably made him very attractive to Weill. However, despite the reputation he maintained, Wanger was not entirely independent; between 1935 and 1936, he depended on Paramount for distribution, and after 1936 on United Artists. In theory, either studio could pull the plug on a project they felt was too controversial or otherwise unsatisfactory, but throughout production on *The River is Blue/Blockade*, they let him work in relative freedom. After the release of that film, however, United Artists cracked down on him.

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[70] W-LL(e), 223.

[71] My account of Wanger's career is drawn from Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

The stage seemed set for a successful collaboration. On Weill's first day in Hollywood, he wrote to Lenya that right from the train station, studio employees

> took me straight to the Walter Wanger office, where Milly [Milestone], and Cliff were waiting for me. I started working on the script immediately, and after one hour I had already succeeded in writing a song that will work into the story line brilliantly. It'll be a kind of revolutionary song, but at the same time, a love song. Wanger, who is surprisingly nice and cultured, was enthusiastic about the idea and has great expectations for this song. What's more, I gather I'll be able to do all kinds of things in the film, because they've built entire scenes around the music.[72]

The fact that Weill participated in these early meetings probably made him very hopeful about this new project; in his writings he noted that for a truly good film score, the director, screenwriter, composer had to work closely together, and that the music should be written along with the film. Despite the fact that generally, composers began their scores after principal photography, Weill had reason to believe contemporary practice was changing. In 1935, the composer Max Steiner had worked in parallel with director John Ford on *The Informer* (RKO).[73] However, Weill did not understand that this kind of standing in Hollywood had to be earned; by the time Steiner and Herrmann began to work closely with directors they were already well-respected talents with a number of successful scores under their belts. Although these initial meetings seemed promising, Weill probably composed most of the score after the script was completed.

The situation started to deteriorate fairly quickly. Odets completed a final continuity draft sometime in late January or early February, but the script had very little resemblance to the

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[72] W-LL(e), 196.

[73] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classic Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 114–15. Kalinak argues that this parallel process "accorded Steiner a determining influence in the development of the film's protagonist," making this picture one of the few where the composer apparently did influence the course of production in a meaningful way.

original hard-hitting story.[74] In this version, the Spanish soldier Marco shoots a man for looting during the war, then falls in love with the thief's beautiful daughter Norma. Because of the war, she cannot leave Spain immediately, so Marco invites her to stay with him (and his friend Luis) for a few days, without telling her of his deed. She returns his feelings, but must return to Paris, and he lets her go, believing she would not be able to forgive him for killing her father. In Paris, Norma cannot find employment because she is not a French citizen, and is not allowed to work. Eventually, she is hired by Monsieur Ney, an art gallery owner, as a companion for his blind daughter Felice. Ney falls in love with Norma, who cannot forget Marco, and eventually proposes. However, on the night of her engagement dinner, Norma receives word that Marco is in Paris and runs away from Ney. The lovers return to Spain to fight the good fight. Norma, originally intended to be a spy, becomes an apolitical love object, and Odets barely makes Marco's Loyalist sympathies explicit. Almost nothing survives of the original idea of veterans in Paris, and the Spanish Civil War becomes merely an exotic backdrop for a love story. This de-politicization of the story bears the mark of studio pressure, which later caused Odets to leave the project altogether.

In addition to studio pressure on the collaborators, there was confusion over scheduling and casting. On February 26, the *Los Angeles Times* announced that the project previously known as *Castles in Spain* would now be called *The River is Blue*, and that filming would begin the following Monday,[75] but in his letters to Lenya from around the same time, Weill frequently worried that Wanger and Milestone's failed efforts to find a leading man would doom the film, a

[74] It survives as Clifford Odets, "Castles in Spain," Walter F. Wanger Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, U.S. Mss 136AN, Box 64, Folder 26.

[75] Edwin Schallert, "Madeleine Carroll in 'Personal History,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1937, p. 10.

prediction that was eventually fulfilled. [76] At some point, Madeleine Carroll and Charles Boyer (another émigré) were cast as the leads, but by March 5, the *New York Times* reported that filming had been suspended because MGM could not release Boyer in time, and without his star-power, Wanger could not justify the cost of the film.[77] A few days later, on March 11 and 20, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Wanger hoped that William Powell, Franchot Tone, or Spencer Tracy would sign on.[78] Eventually, Henry Fonda was cast, but long after Weill had left the project.

Meanwhile, tensions developed between Weill and the rest of the production team. Throughout his Hollywood trip, Weill kept in contact with Lenya, who stayed in New York to continue her roles in *The Eternal Road*, and his letters contain a brutally honest account of his feelings about the goings-on in Los Angeles. As early as February 7, the composer started to have doubts about Milestone, writing Lenya, "the movie is going very slowly, and I've already found that it will be a tough battle insisting on the few things that show what I can accomplish in the film medium. They won't be much in any case, because it's a completely realistic film, and Milly doesn't have the slightest sensibility for original films that incorporate fantasy."[79] By March 3, he reported that "we're having big trouble with the movie, because Wanger is creating difficulties and we're trying to do the whole thing with another studio (which, however, I believe

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[76] W-LL(e), 208.

[77] "Screen News," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1937, p. 16. Several references to Boyer survive in the Odets script as Max, a rival for Norma's affections, frequently compares himself to Charles Boyer, suggesting that Boyer was intended to star in the film from the very beginning.

[78] Edwin Schallert, "Wanger after Powell or Tone for 'River is Blue,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1937, p. 16. Schallert also noted that Weill had been contracted to compose the score along with the writing of the film against typical Hollywood practice. On Spencer Tracy, see Edwin Schallert, "Larry Blake, Ace Impersonator, Gets Big Build Up at Universal," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1937, p. 8.

[79] W-LL(e), 204.

will be very hard). Wanger says he can't spend as much money on the movie as Milly would like him to, because he thinks that the film will be banned in most European countries."[80]

Still, he started composing his score in earnest based on Odets's final continuity draft that day (mostly because he knew he would get paid either way), hoping to be done by April 1, even though by March 8, he knew that the film would probably never be shot. Since there were some diegetic songs that needed words, he collaborated with lyricist Ann Ronell, to whom he had been introduced by Ernst Toch.[81] "Of course," he wrote to Lenya, "I could write any old thing and deliver it and take my money, but you know how it is with me, I started to get interested and worked out a genuine and probably very good full score." Later he wrote that "I'm working on the music for the film as if it were being shot, so I can show these people what I imagine film music ought to be. Of course, I've caught fire, and I'm writing very good music. I'm convinced it will cause a sensation, because it's much better than what the others are doing."[82]

Weill had good reasons for believing the movie would never reach the filming stage. Aside from the problems of finding a leading man, the strife that drove members of the Group to Hollywood began to tear apart the film team. Milestone and Odets's script proved unsatisfactory to Wanger; Odets felt that the producer was being bullied by the Breen Office; and Milestone disagreed about casting.[83] After several months of drafts going back and forth trying to come to an agreement about the story, Wanger finally fired both and hired the hardline Communist John Howard Lawson (on Clurman's recommendation) to overhaul the entire story, and émigré

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[80] W-LL(e), 211.

[81] Tighe E. Zimmers, *Tin Pan Alley Girl: A Biography of Ann Ronell* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 35. Ronell had a long and successful career as a lyricist both in Hollywood and on Broadway. She also worked with Weill for the film version of *One Touch of Venus* in 1948.

[82] W-LL(e), 213–14.

[83] Bernstein, *Walter Wanger*, 131.

director William Dieterle to direct, both members of the Leftist enclave in Hollywood. Both Lawson and Dieterle were obvious choices. Lawson had long been an outspoken critic of Fascism, both on Broadway and in Hollywood. His play *Success Story* had been a hit for the Group in 1932, and he was instrumental in organizing the Screenwriters Guild. Dieterle was still working on *Juarez* (Warner Brothers, 1939), the last of his trilogy of anti-Fascist biopics (the first was *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, First National, 1936, and the second was *The Life of Emile Zola*, Warner Brothers, 1937—for which Weill later professed much admiration to Paul Green[84]), in which he would covertly criticized the Spanish Civil War.[85] Based on the struggle for power in the New World in 1864, *Juarez* featured Left-wing superstar Paul Muni (who also starred in *Pasteur* and *Zola*) as the title character, the rightful governor who is forced out of power by Napoleon III (Claude Raines). Instead, the well-meaning but naïve Austrian Maximilian I (Brian Aherne) takes the title of emperor, bringing along his wife (Bette Davis). The Mexican setting and the struggle between the native Mexicans (loyal to Juarez) and the invading Fascists (loyal to Maximillian) recalled contemporary events in Spain, and the frequent references to the threat of U.S. intervention on the side of the former (though it never actually occurs) also likely resonated with audiences of the Great Depression.

After Lawson had finished the script, which was now about a poor Spanish farmer joining the Loyalist cause (although the romantic subplot about the Russian spy remained), Lawson, Dieterle, and Wanger held an audition of Weill's music in early April 1938, during Weill's third trip to Hollywood; he had completed his score based on Odets and Milestone's

[84] Letter from Weill to Paul Green, August 19, 1937, copy in the Ronald Sanders Papers, NYPL, Box 21, Folder 5.

[85] See Chris Robé, "Taking Hollywood Back: The Historical Costume Drama, the Biopic, and Popular Front in U.S. Film Criticism," *Cinema Journal* 48 (2009): 70–87 for a discussion of Dieterle's trilogy as anti-fascist propaganda.

original script and had had it copied by the studio.[86] After the audition, Wanger decided to give the composing and scoring duties to Werner Janssen, but he did not tell Weill, who found out from the newspapers. On April 6, 1938, he angrily sent a telegram to both Wanger and his agent Bert Allenberg complaining about his treatment.[87] Allenberg wrote back on April 9, denying any knowledge of the news stories, and attempting to calm him down by explaining that his score was "not effective enough, and did not have enough power," and Wanger had only commissioned a new score so that Weill would not have to write something new for free.[88] The following October, Weill and Allenberg formally parted ways, and the composer hired Arthur Lyons as his agent in Hollywood.[89]

The reasons the production team rejected the score are unclear, but Dieterle, who was working with Korngold on *Juarez* may have desired a more traditional score of Wagnerian dimensions, while Weill's consisted of simpler, folk-like tunes that evoked a more realistic, human story. By this point, Weill's relationship with Wanger had soured. The composer was frustrated with the producer's dawdling, and the producer began to think that Weill was too German and too modernist for Hollywood. Wanger's previous film, Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once*, released in January 1937, went too far in a "German direction."[90] Evidence in Weill's letters shows Wanger's increasing conservatism regarding music after *You Only Live Once*. On

[86] This version survives in WLRC, Series 10, Box R5, Folder 1. It is labeled "*The River is Blue*, based on a screenplay by Clifford Odets."

[87] WLA Box 47, Folder 15.

[88] WLA Box 48, Folder 18.

[89] Telegram from Bert Allenberg to Weill, October 31, 1938, WLA Box 48, Folder 18.

[90] Quoted in Bernstein, *Walter Wanger*, 123.

March 20, 1937, Weill wrote to Lenya of a fight he had with Wanger regarding the score of an unnamed Chaplin project:

> He says: *"I'm afraid your music isn't popular enough for this picture."* I say: *"You heard what Chaplin said."* He: *"Yes, but Chaplin also said your music is distinguished and I don't want distinguished music."* I: *"What do you want?"* He: *"'*Ich küsse Ihre Hand, Madam*' or '*Zwei Herzen im Dreivierteltakt.*'"* I: *"I can write you as popular songs as these, but better."* He: *"To Hell with better, I don't want better."* … He's scared to death because of the Fritz Lang film, and now he only wants to cater to the very lowest common denominator.[91]

After the film, renamed *Blockade*, was released in 1938, Weill probably felt lucky to have escaped the project given the controversy it caused.[92] The Breen Office insisted that the location be obscured, so Lawson expunged all but the most unavoidable topical references in the script, and changed the plot so that instead of being a story of democracy versus Fascism, it was now a story about the horrors that war wreaked on the innocent. Still, despite the watered-down content, Wanger promoted the film as a completely new Hollywood product, one with a political message. The producer even started spreading false rumors that the film was so subversive Franco's agents had asked to review a copy. The ploy worked, and suddenly a film that no one had seen became a major flashpoint for a conversation about Hollywood and propaganda—a conversation that Weill, acutely aware of his visitor visa, probably wanted to avoid. In the end, the film pleased neither pro-Loyalist or pro-Franco parties. When the Left saw the film, they found its message watered down and not pointed enough. American Catholics, firmly against the anti-religious Loyalists, were angry at the portrayal of the Republican army as welcoming and sympathetic to religion; in real life, the Republican army was no such thing.[93]

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[91] W-LL(e), 220, emphasis in the original.

[92] For a more in-depth discussion of the controversy surrounding *Blockade*, see Smith, "Blocking 'Blockade.'"

[93] Bernstein, *Walter Wanger*, 132.

Despite the failed *River is Blue* project and their interpersonal tension, Weill tried to stick with Wanger, probably because he did not have other contacts at that point. *The Opera From Mannheim* (discussed in Chapter 1) began as a project called *Vogues of 1937* when Sam and Bella Spewack teamed up with Wanger in late March 1937.[94] Initially, director Max Gordon was interested, but the project fell through less than a month later.[95] According to Weill's letters to Lenya, film offers such as these would dematerialize almost as soon as they were offered, including *Wuthering Heights*, *52nd Street*, and many others. However, things grew increasingly frosty between Weill and Wanger, and they cut ties. Weill also continued to think about New York throughout this period; he pursued a musical version of Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom* with Theresea Helburn and the Theatre Guild as Hollywood became more frustrating.[96] The only offer that panned out was with Fritz Lang, a project that eventually became *You and Me*.

The Ideal Score

Because Weill knew that the Odets script would never be shot by the time he began composing the score for *The River is Blue*, he felt the freedom to "show these people what I imagine film music ought to be," as he wrote to Lenya. The music for the film survives in two sources: a set of sketches, and the version he had the studio copy for his "audition," which has forty sequences of music. As David Drew has observed, Weill borrowed many of the themes in *The River is Blue* from projects that his U.S. audience would not know, including *Marie Galante*, *Der Silbersee*, and *Der Kuhhandel/A Kingdom for a Cow*. Drew speculates that the composer's "growing sense

[94] W-LL(e), 225.

[95] W-LL(e), 233.

[96] David Mark D'Andre, "The Theatre Guild, *Carousel*, and the Cultural Field of American Musical Theatre" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2000), 4–20.

that the score had only a contractual significance is reflected in the increasing reliance on borrowed material."[97] However, Drew did not have access to Odets screenplay, which has shot numbers lining up directly with the numbers in the studio copy (see table 2.1 for a summary of the plot with the corresponding shot numbers and sequences). A close examination of both documents reveals that even though Weill recycled material, he carefully constructed his music in a way that demonstrated how he believed composers should use leitmotifs. For the purposes of this analysis, I use "leitmotif" as a contemporary term, common in film music analysis, rather than as it as been defined historically by composers such as Wagner and Weill. I am following Peter Larson, who defines the term as a short section of music that "has acquired the function of a sign and has come to mean something else than itself within a particular context"; "they acquire meaning because they are introduced at the same time as one sees particular persons, etc. in the opera or film."[98] In *The River is Blue*, Weill plays with all the ways leitmotifs can interact with the diegesis. He has four major themes: a love theme, a revolutionary song, the tune from a music box, and an "alert" motif, only the last of which never sounds from an onscreen source. For the first two and the last of these themes, Ann Ronell composed a set of lyrics (copies were deposited for copyright purposes in the Library of Congress), which indicates that Weill wanted them to stay with the audience after the film, and hoped to sell them as sheet music later.[99]

Table 2.1 Summary of *Castles in Spain* by Clifford Odets.

Scene	Setting	Action	Shot numbers	Sequence in Score[a]
–	–	Main titles	–	1
1	An apartment in a Spanish	A writer and a news correspondent sit behind enemy lines in Spain waiting for a train to arrive. As it does,	1–2	2 (shots 1–10)

[97] David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 284.

[98] Peter Larsen, *Film Music* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 70.

[99] Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 285.

	town	the news correspondent begins to film the station.		
2	The town	A train arrives in the station, and a military figure pushes those evacuating the city onto the train. The camera reveals that the city is in shambles with boarded up houses and overturned streetcars. Anxious citizens are looking through peepholes down at the chaos below.	3–7	
3	Norma and her father's apartment	Norma Bonnard anxiously packs her things. Her father arrives and reveals they do not have enough money to leave the city. Norma becomes distressed because they have been on the run her entire life. Her father says he would like to see her settled as well, and says he has a painting to sell, which should allow them to make a more permanent home somewhere. They agree to leave the next day.	8–10	
4	The battlefield	Two armies—the Loyalists and the rebels—advance at each other on a field. The Loyalists appear to be losing, but a young officer, Marco, starts to sing, which rallies the troops. He and his friend Luis lead their side to victory.	11–18	3–4
5	The town	The citizens await the victorious army, which has not been home for five months. It arrives singing the same song as the in previous scene. A celebration ensues. Marco invites Luis to stay at his home, and Luis looks forward to clean sheets and a real bed. Marco reveals that before the war, he was a chemist.	19–24	5
6	The town	A poster is put up stating that looting and sniping are punishable by immediate execution.	25	
7	Army headquarters	Marco is leading a military tribunal. A young soldier is brought in for being a sniper. Marco strips him of his commission and kicks him out, threatening execution if he is caught a second time.	26	–
8	The street	A man with a looted painting is shot dead in the street. Marco and the professor (the curator of the National Art Museum) recover the painting.	27–28	6 (shots 28–33)
9	Bonnard's office.	Marco and the professor confront Bonnard about his black-market art contacts. Bonnard bargains for safe departure for himself and his daughter, and starts to return the stolen art, but pulls a gun and shoots the professor. Marco shoots Bonnard in self-defense. Norma, drawn by the noise, rushes into the room, as Marco observes, unseen.	29–52	7 (shots 33–42)
10	A courtyard	Norma and the professor's weeping widow stand in the rain as Militia men finish digging graves and march away. Marco approaches Norma, who runs back to her apartment. Marco follows.	53–56	8
11	Norma's apartment	Marco asks Norma some questions about her father. Norma reveals that she and her father are refugees from Czarist Russia. She is allowed to leave, and Marco offers to guide her to the station because they	57	

		are shelling the road.		
12	The street	Norma and Marco walk to the station, but bombs begin to fall. Marco leads Norma into a wine cellar to hide.	58–60	9
13	The wine cellar	A drunken man welcomes Norma and Marco to the cellar, but is immediately killed as the cellar caves in. Marco comforts Norma, who collapses in tears. He offers her some wine and she takes it. They kiss.	61–76	10 (shots 69–75)
14	The street	A crew is working to clear a path into the wine cellar. On the other side, Norma and Marco are embarrassed about their tryst. An officer breaks through and reveals that the trains have been shut down after the shelling. Norma, frightened of the soldiers, tries to get away, but stops in her tracks when she sees the ruins of her building. Marco offers her a room, and she reluctantly takes it.	77–87	–
15	Marco's house	Luis is happily asleep in Marco's guest room. Norma and Marco wake him up, and Marco reassures Norma that Luis is not violent and shows her around the house. Marco tells her she has to stay three days in order to wait for the shelling to stop. She agrees and cries herself to sleep. Luis is disappointed that he must share his space with Norma as he and Marco sleep in a hotel lobby.	88–106	11 (shots 83–85) 12 (shots 88–101) 13 (shots 101–5)
16	The hotel lobby, the street.	An uncomfortable Marco and Luis are awakened by reveille and return to Marco's home. After they receive their rations, Marco convinces Luis to save some for Norma. Luis observes that Marco is falling in love with Norma, and Marco denies it.	107–12	14 (shots 107–10) 15 (shots 111–12)
17	Marco's home	Norma awakens and goes through her morning toilette. Marco and Luis return and reassure her again that they are not dangerous. Marco leaves, and Luis and Norma make small talk over breakfast. Luis reveals that Marco has also recently lost his father. Norma overcomes her fear and becomes friends with Luis.	113–27	16 (shots 113–15) 17 (shot 125)
18	The street	Trucks with soldiers appear at the communal kitchens as Marco and Luis return for more rations. They sit down on the curb to eat, and argue about how much food to save for Norma. Eventually, Luis agrees to contribute.	128–30	18
19	Marco's home, the roof	Norma has cleaned Marco's home when the men arrive. Norma follows Marco to the roof, where he gives her some food. As they discuss their previous lives, the tension dissipates. They start to flirt, but are suddenly interrupted by Luis with a live rooster that he has brought for supper.	131–49	19 (shots 132–41)
20	Marco's home later that evening	Luis has procured a screen to give Norma some privacy and Luis and Marco fight over the couch.	150–56	–

21	Marco's home the next morning, the street	Luis's rooster crows, frightening Norma and Marco, who run into each other's arms. Embarrassed, they begin to prepare for the day. As he cooks, Marco sings a folk song, joined by Luis. Norma then sings a Russian version of the same song. A soldier enters and says Norma must leave that night. In order to cajole Marco into confessing his feelings, Luis proposes to Norma, and when that does not work, tries to convince her that Marco does have feelings for her. Norma does not believe him, and says she wants to get away from the war in any case. Having failed with Norma, Luis goes outside to Marco to try to get him to open up, but Marco reveals that he killed Norma's father.	157–77	20 (shots 157–unknown) 21 (shots 168–69)
22	The street	Marco and Luis escort Norma to the train station. Norma is sad to be leaving as she feels like the past few days have been a reprieve from the war. She reveals that her father left her only a music box. Marco is uncomfortable because of his secret. He tries to tell her, but confesses his love instead.	178–83	22 (shots 178–82) 23 (shot 183)
23	The train station	At the train station, the platform is crowded with the poor, wounded, and hungry. Marco tries to convince Norma to stay and Norma tries to get Marco to come with her. However, they admit that they probably will never see each other again. She gives him her Paris address and offers him the music box, but he refuses. Some children become interested in the music box, so Norma opens it. The people on the platform are transported by the music. The spell is broken when the conductor urges everyone onto the train. They bid each other a tearful goodbye.	184–200	24 (shot 184) 25 (shots 185–87) 26 (shots 188–94) 27 (shots 195–200)
24	The breadline	Marco has received a letter from Norma. Marco tells Luis he wishes he was in two places at once. In the background, women and children are starving.	201–9	28 (shots 201–2) 29 (shots 205–unkown)
25	Paris, Department of Labor	An official tells Norma that because she has a League of Nations passport, she cannot legally be employed in France. The official implies that many young women become prostitutes, and Norma is shocked. The official recommends work as a housekeeper.	210–15	–
26	A mountain pass in Spain	Marco reads another letter from Norma to Luis as they drive toward their base.	216–17	30
27	Ney's Gallery in Paris	Norma enters the gallery and asks a uniformed figure if M. Ney, who she believes knew her father, is in. The officer leaves to find him. Meanwhile, Max (Ney's son-in-law) is posing for his portrait. He greets two customers, a married couple. The husband smiles	218–32	31 (shot 218)

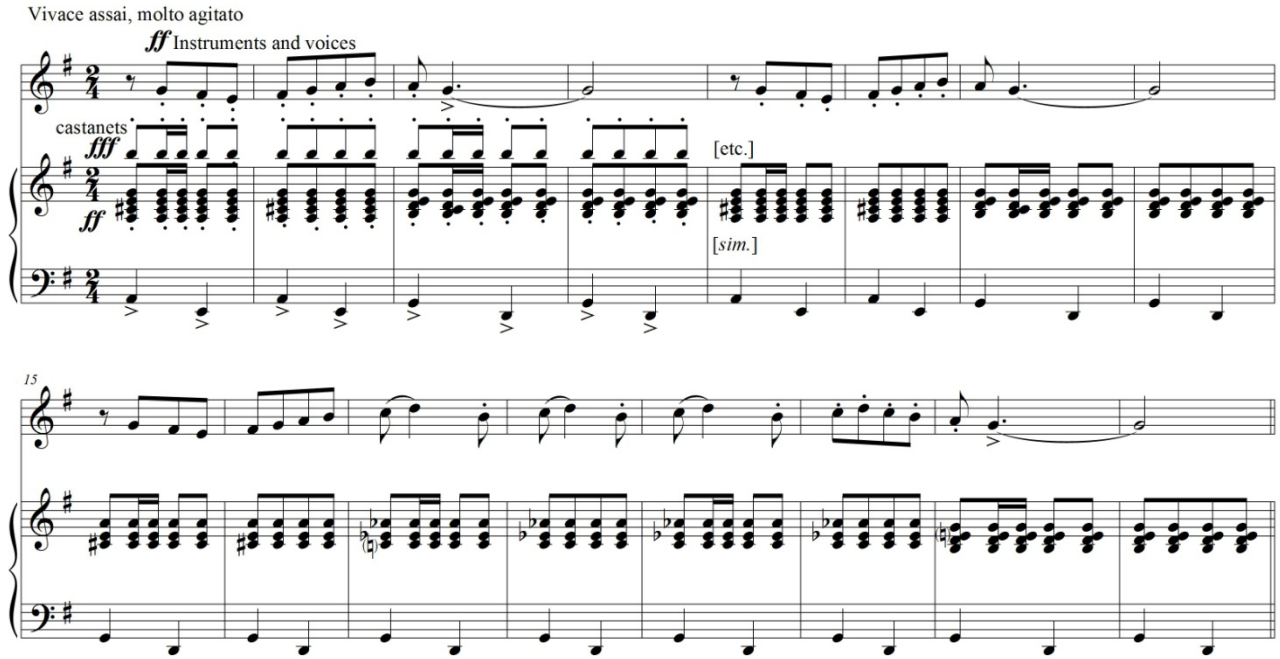
		at Norma, and the wife feels insulted. Ney comes out to calm down the wife, but she and her husband leave anyway. Angry at losing the sale, Ney denies that he knows Norma's father and throws her out. On her way to the door, Norma faints.		
28	Ney's office	Ney revives Norma, and apologizes for his behavior. Max recommends that Norma become a companion for his blind wife (Ney's daughter) Felice. Norma accepts the job.	233–37	32 (shot 234)
29	A road in Spain on the way to France	Marco is still pining for Norma as Luis and Ortega (another soldier) long for the comforts of France while a French song plays on the radio. Marco suddenly gets out of the car and walks toward the French border to the dismay of the rest of the car, who believe Marco's rash actions will give them away. As Luis is wounded, Marco turns back and they run out of frame.	238–56	33 (shots 238–unknown, 244–51)
30	A hospital ward in Spain	A wounded Marco and Luis are in the hospital. Marco reads another letter from Norma, in which she begs him to reply to her.	257–64	–
31	A courtyard in Paris	The scene is suggestive of a Renoir painting. Norma reads to Felice from *Madame Bovary*, and Max and Ney relax on the other side of the courtyard. As Norma reads, Max is staring at her, which Ney notices. Ney reminds Max that he is married, and Felice comes to her husband's defense. Nevertheless, Ney asks Max and Norma to chance places. Ney starts to flirt with Norma, but the radio interrupts with news of the civil war in Spain. Norma leaves, and Ney reveals he's thinking of marrying Norma.	265–78	34 (shots 265–unknown)
32	A hospital ward in Spain	Marco wonders why Norma keeps writing even though he has yet to respond. Luis tells Marco that Norma loves him, but Marco does not think he can give her the life she wants, and that "some wealthy man" is going to propose to her.	279–80	35 (shots 278–79)
33	A major's office	The major sends Marco to France as the head of a delegation to France to drum up support, despite Marco's report.	281	
34	A train platform in Spain	As Marco and the delegation depart for France, a group of soldiers and civilians remind them of their duty by singing the revolutionary song (the one from the beginning of the film). As the train pulls away, Marco resolves to visit Norma and, when their work is done, to tell her that he killed her father.	282–85	36 (shots 284–85)
35	A jewelry shop in Paris	Ney is buying an engagement ring for Norma.	286	–
36	A park in Paris	Felice tells Norma that Ney will be a good husband, but that she (Norma) will have to mother him, and that if there is anyone else, she should not marry him. A shot of a nearby man with a newspaper reports that	287–92	–

		the Spanish delegation has arrived. Norma says that since she does not know if Marco is dead or alive, she's going to accept Ney.		
37	Outside the Velodrome Hotel	Marco completes his address to his troops, congratulating them for a successful mission, and sends Luis to find Norma.	293	–
38	The Ney gallery	Ney proposes to Norma, and she accepts. However, as she is embracing him, she sees Luis over his shoulder standing in the gallery. Ney plans for an engagement party and leaves. Luis tells Norma that Marco is in town and wants to see her even though they are leaving that night. Norma agrees to meet Marco.	294–309	37 (shots 304–9)
39	Norma's engagement party	Ney, Norma, Max, Felice, a lawyer, and a Doctor and his wife are celebrating the engagement. It begins well enough, but Ney begins to get drunk, and Max starts to flirt with Norma, who cannot stop watching the clock, waiting for her rendezvous with Marco. As Ney becomes belligerent, everyone leaves but Max and Norma. Max corners Norma, who says she does not want to marry Ney. Felice overhears, and Norma takes advantage of Max's distraction to escape the room.	310–65	38 (shots 310–unknown) 39 (shot 348) 40 (shot 359–unknown, 372–85. 404–30)
40	An amusement park	Marco waits for Norma, who is late. She arrives, and Marco tries to tell her about her father, but she cannot stop telling him how much she loves him and she has missed him, making Marco even more uncomfortable. Finally, the truth comes out, and Norma, in shock, runs out of the scene. Marco runs after her and catches up with her on board a small train ride. The intercut shots of their ride emphasize the turmoil of their emotions as the train goes through a tunnel. After the ride, thye walk silently around the park, Norma's body language indicating that she has forgiven Marco. They arrive at the hotel of the rest of the Spanish delegation.	366–94	
41	A hotel	Marco and Norma reaffirm their love for each other. Marco invites Norma to come with him to Spain, but she refuses, saying she wants to settle down. As Luis eavesdrops, she suggests he stay somewhere less dangerous with her, and issues an ultimatum. Sensing Marco is torn, Luis rallies the men to begin singing the revolutionary song outside the window. Norma leaves, and Marco runs after her, but is intercepted by Luis, who reminds him of his duty. Marco overtakes Norma and says that he must remain in Spain, and this time Norma agrees to stay with him. The singing from the men swells.	395–430	

[a] If the shots are not specified, they match the shots for the scene.

The “alert motif” (see example 2.1) is the only leitmotif which is not tied to any emotion or event, but rather operates in a manner similar to the so-called “fate” motif in *Carmen*, the one that Weill praised in his 1926 article. Instead of accompanying an important idea or person, it occurs at key moments in the story that the audience might otherwise dismiss as unimportant. It also highlights visuals that emphasize the suffering of people in Spain, which was one of the main goals of the film. It is a simple sixteen-measure melody, but often only the first two measures appear to cue the audience that something important is happening. Weill makes sure this leitmotif is marked as important in several ways. First, it is the only non-source music that is

Example 2.1 *The River is Blue*, “Alert motif,” sequence 1, mm. 7–22.



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not always played by instruments; sometimes it is marked for a woman’s nasal voice, sometimes for multiple voices, sometimes for voices plus instruments (as in its first appearance), and sometimes just for instruments. No words appear in the score, so it is likely that it was just supposed to be a high, nasal “ah” sound when scored for voice. The entire music that plays over

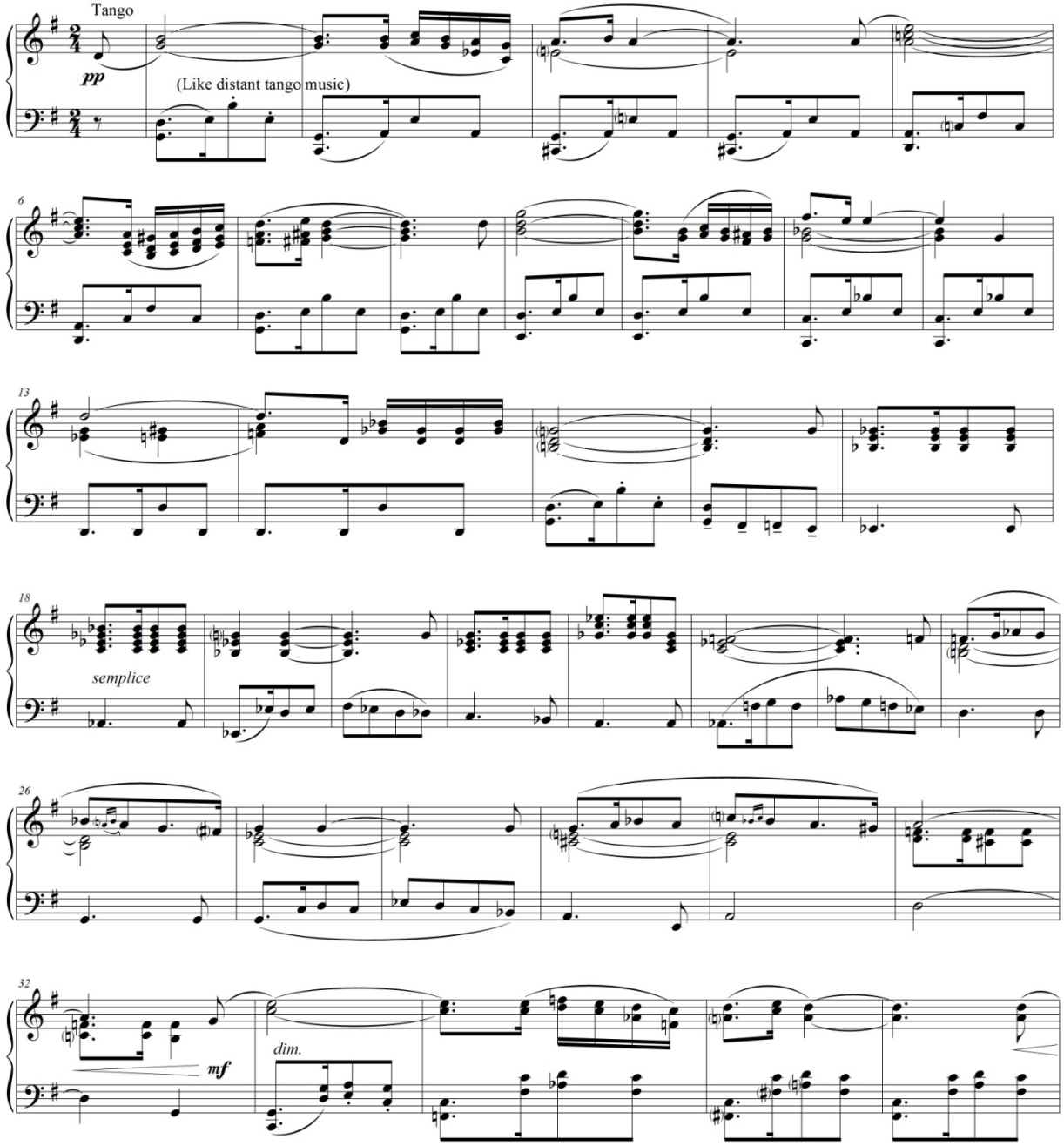
the opening credits is an extended version of the leitmotif, so it is well established in the viewer's memory by the time the drama actually starts, and its vocal timbre sets it off from the rest of the score.

After the introduction, Weill's "alert" leitmotif occurs almost immediately as the camera shows people evacuating a dead city where "the doorways and windows of the houses are boarded up."[100] A few moments later, it sounds again, this time under a shot of an "anxious eye" looking through an upper-story peephole window. Peepholes are a prominent visual motif in Odets's screenplay, emphasizing the public nature of the setting, even though the story itself is mostly concerned with private matters. At this moment, visual and aural leitmotifs occur simultaneously, reinforcing one another. After that, a complete restatement from the overture occurs when the camera moves to the train platform in scene 23, showing the poor, dejected, and wounded boarding the train that will eventually take Norma to Paris (once Norma and Marco enter the scene, the music switches to a combination of the love theme and the revolutionary song). The music links these two train station scenes, and helps the images of suffering stay in the minds of the audience after the film is over. The theme also bookends the scene in which Marco kills Norma's father (scene 9), and is heard in scene 17, when Luis tells Norma that Marco has also recently lost his father. Both of these moments are important plot points: the killing of Bonnard at first appears to just simply emphasize the violence of the revolution, but soon comes back to haunt Marco when he falls in love with his daughter, and Norma's realization that Marco also lost his father opens her up to his feelings for her.

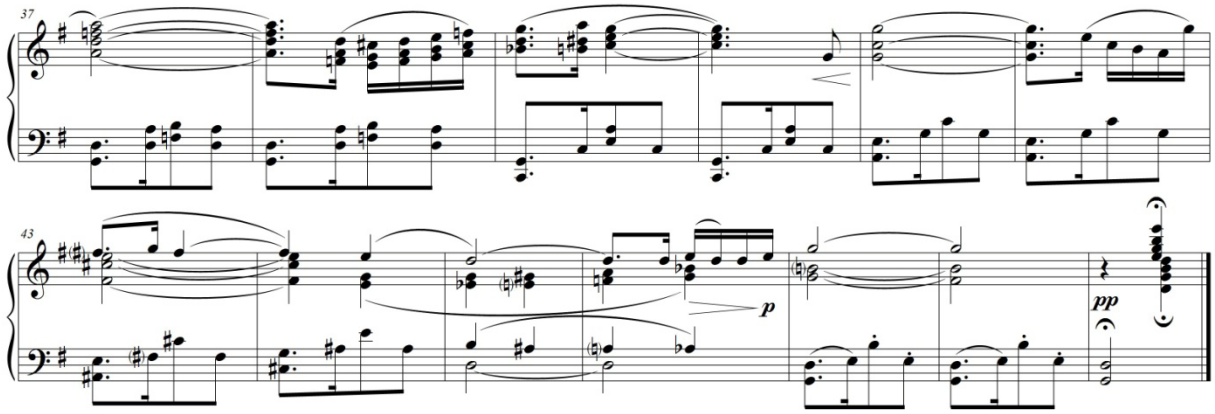
The love theme (example 2.2), a tango that Weill borrowed from *Marie Galante*, mostly appears in the score, but it is played by an onscreen tango orchestra in the amusement park scene

[100] Clifford Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 2.

Example 2.2 *The River is Blue*, "Love theme," sequence 10, mm, 1–49.



Example 2.2 (cont.)



THE RIVER IS BLUE (Finale) (March), Words by Ann Ronell; Music by Kurt Weill. TRO-© Copyright 1938 (Renewed) Hampshire House Publishing Corp., New York, NY and Ann Ronell Music c/o The Songwriters Guild of America, Brentwood, TN

as part of a representation of Norma's emotional journey in scene 40. The fact that it is a tango reveals that Weill was still using dance forms to illuminate and highlight the subtext, as discussed in the previous chapter. Here, the tango emphasizes the bittersweet nature of the love affair. Ironically for a love theme, the tango more often emphasizes the distance between Marco and Norma, rather than their feelings for one another. A fragment first appears when they first meet in scene 11: Marco has convinced Norma to accompany him to headquarters for questioning, but bombing intervenes in the next scene. It appears in full as Norma and Marco are trapped in a wine cellar in the aftermath of the raid in scene 13, and as they fall in love. When Norma falls asleep in a chair in Marco's home, the tango plays in the background, indicating that she is dreaming of Marco at shots 101–5 (scene 16), and again at shots 113–15 (scene 17). This is another moment when Weill makes sure the music tells the audience something that the visual image cannot. At shots 101–5, the screenplay describes a series of shots in which Norma curls up in a chair with Marco's coat, and cries herself to sleep. The image would seem to indicate that she is upset over her father, but the music tells the viewer that she is thinking of Marco as well. Similarly, between shots 113 and 115, the screenplay describes Norma waking up and going

through her morning toilette, but the presence of the love theme in the score tells the audience that she is thinking (or possibly has been dreaming) of Marco. The theme also emphasizes their physical separation, as in the case of full statement of the theme at the end of the scene at the train station, discussed above. The theme also appears when Marco gives away his company's position to run to the French border to meet Norma in scene 29, and when Norma is at her engagement party, watching the clock and anticipating a rendezvous with Marco in scene 39. Interestingly at this moment, Odets screenplay indicates that the music-box theme should be playing, not the love theme, which may indicate that Odets thought of the former as some kind of love theme, and did not envision a separate musical idea representing Marco and Norma's relationship, further proof that there was a good deal of disagreement between all of the members of the creative team.

The most prominent theme in the score is the revolutionary song, which strains the definitions of source and score since it flows in and out of the diegesis regularly and rapidly (example 2.3). The revolutionary song also affects the plot, rather than simply commenting on it. In its first appearance in scene 4, just a head-motif is heard as a battle begins between Marco, Luis, and the loyalists on the one hand, and the "Defenders" (nationalists) on the other. The head-motif disappears and the music descends into chaos to represent the battle, and to represent the fear that the loyalists are feeling amid the machine-gun fire. The screenplay at shot 15 reads as follows:

> At the first burst of fire from the Defenders, several of [Marco and Luis's] men stop in their place—fright. Luis attempts to urge them on and is about to plunge into drastic action when Marco throws up his arm and sweeps Luis forward with him. At the same time, Marco breaks into the song. Luis quickly picks it up. Other men join in and soon the frightened soldiers sweep into action again, all singing the song. The Attacking Men [*sic*] keeping same pace [*sic*], carrying on their song. The sound of machine guns—men

> drop—others in back of them pick up their guns and march on, never varying their pace, never stopping their song.[101]

This moment is cued in Weill's score with the "Marco Singing," and is the first appearance of the song. Thus the song does not merely reflect the action but, rather, instigates it, which was one of Weill's main tenants of effective music-theatrical practice.[102]

The song reappears thrice more in the diegesis. In the subsequent scene, the army marches back into town singing the song as "windows, doors, etc. are thrown open and people stream into the street to meet the troops … a couple of people run out with torches, climb on lamp posts and light them … another group of people can be seen righting the trolley car … the song swells."[103] It is also heard when Marco leaves for France in order to spread news of his cause. The screenplay at shot 284 reads "As we pull away from the crowd we see the mute appeal on the upturned faced of the people. The rain comes down. Some one [*sic*] starts up the song. Somebody else picks it up, and before long, the entire crowd is singing it."[104] Its final appearance comes at the very end of the film as Norma, who is tired of living a chaotic life on the road, asks Marco to choose between her and his cause. As Marco is agonizing, at shot 404, the screenplay reads "Suddenly the silence is broken by a song, a song from a dozen throats—a song which brings back a vivid picture of Spain and an appeal to Marco's conscience."[105] Eventually the power of the song wins over Norma, and both go back to Spain to fight. In all of

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[101] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 6.

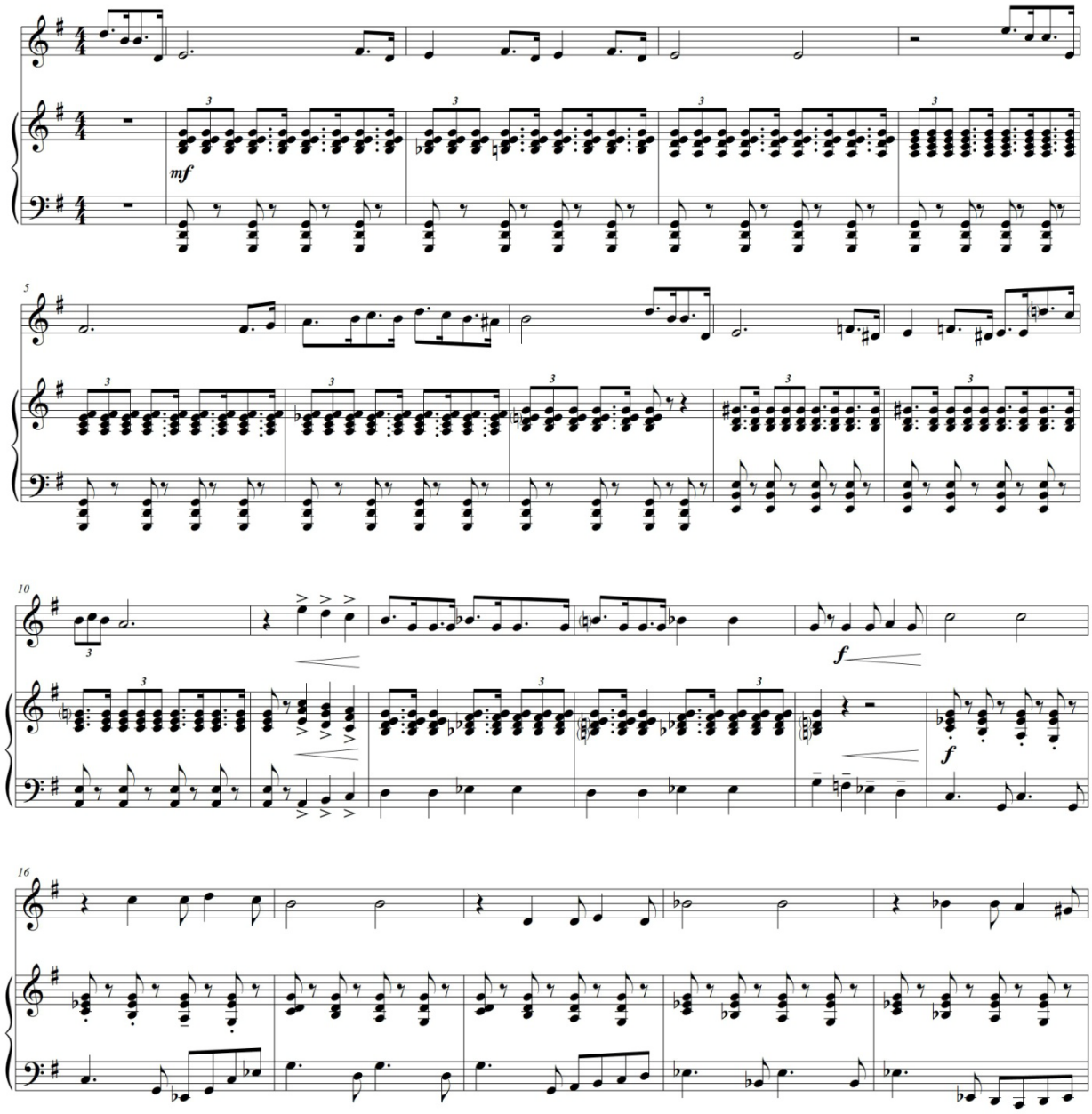
[102] Weill often used the device of a melody appearing in the orchestra, then migrating into the action a great deal during this period. It appears in *Johnny Johnson* with "Johnny's Song," in *One Man from Tennessee* with "Be Sure You're Right," and most famously in *Lady in the Dark*, with "My Ship."

[103] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 8.

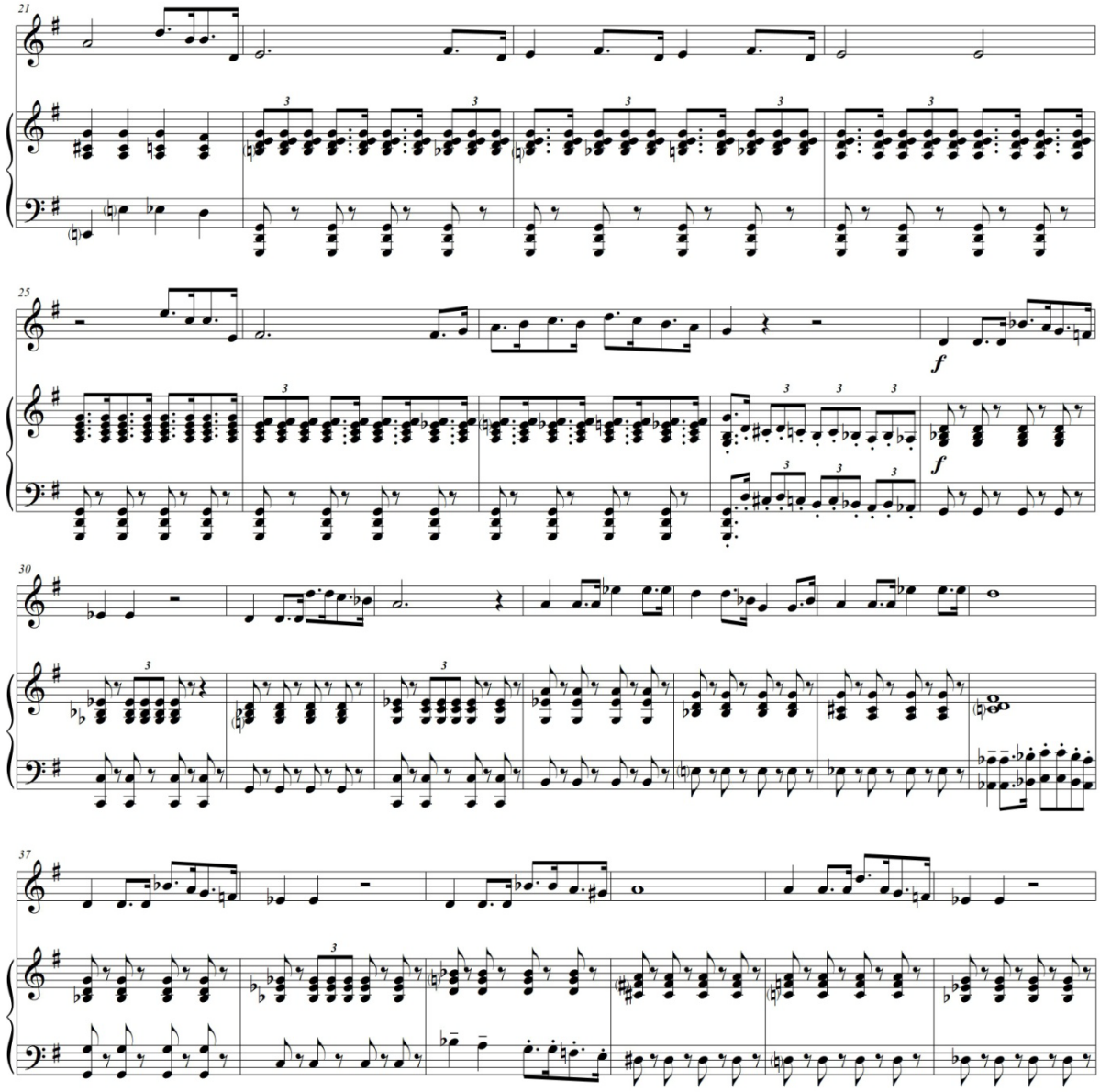
[104] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 106.

[105] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 141.

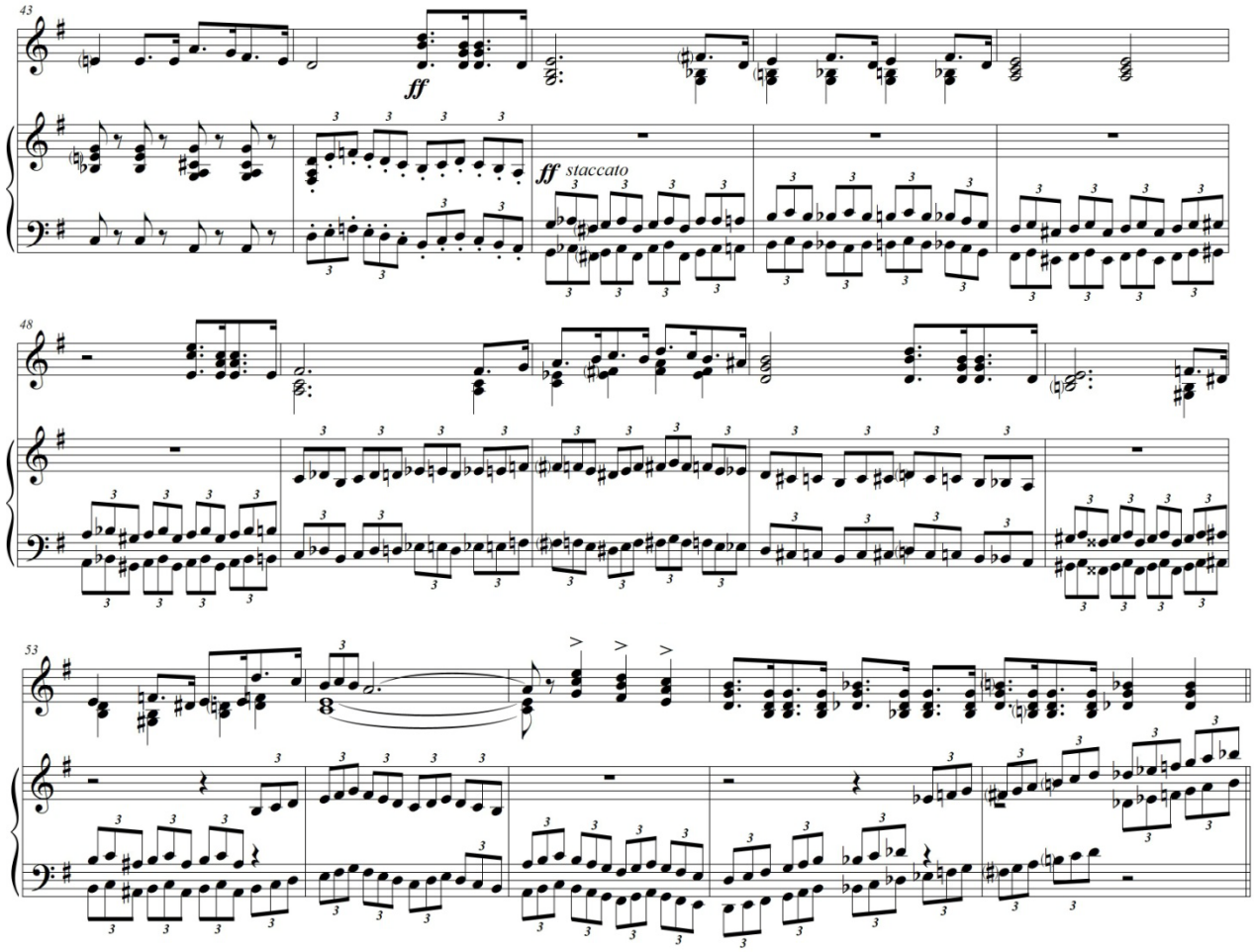
Example 2.3 *The River is Blue*, "Revolutionary song," sequence 4, mm. 1–57.



Example 2.3 (cont.)



Example 2.3 (cont.)



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its source uses, the song galvanizes Marco (and in the end, Norma), and returns him to his cause when all hope seems lost.

In the score, the revolutionary song occurs three more times, and only in fragments. The B section appears during the scene in which Marco and Norma walk to the train station to bid an agonized goodbye to one another. Here the revolutionary song mixes with fragments of the love theme, making clear the multiple, unspoken tensions that exist between the two characters. On a personal level, love and war are interfering with their budding romance, as Marco tries to tell Norma that he killed her father because of his duties to the revolution, but cannot bring himself

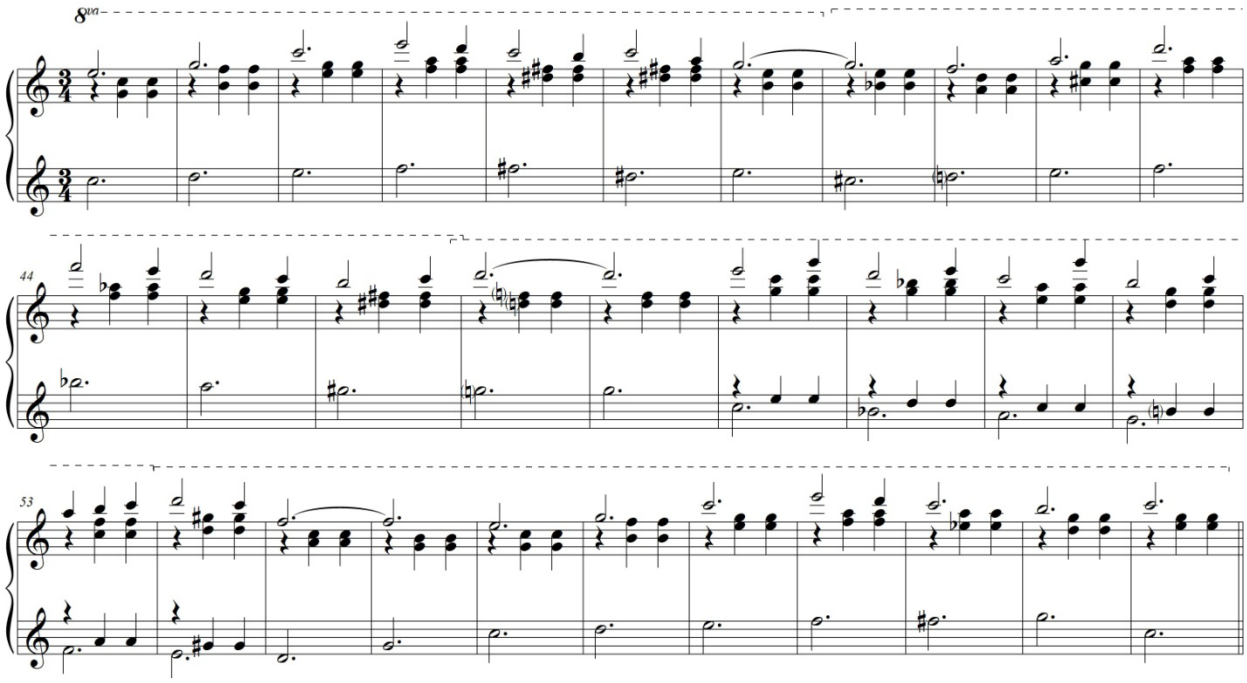
to do so. But more than their personal circumstances are keeping the lovers apart. All around them are children and other villagers starving in the streets, begging for food and comfort. Norma wants tells Marco that she wishes she could stay in Spain but needs the stability that Paris can provide. "I ask only for quiet, peace, security!" she cries. "My whole country asks for that. My people ask for their homes, for the fruit of their own trees," Marco replies.[106] Marco (and the music) tell the audience that the unspoken other option of Marco accompanying her to Paris is not viable; he still has a duty to the revolution. The clash of the two themes in this scene reveals that on both a personal and political level, love and revolution are at war.

Weill also uses the song to cue a transition from the private world of Marco and Norma's love to the public world of the war. After the first morning at Marco's home, the A section of the song appears in the underscoring as the audience sees hungry and wounded troupes returning from the front lines (shot 128). It also sounds at shot 216 as Marco and Luis drive to a hide-out in the mountains and reading a letter from Norma, simply cueing a return to Spain (the previous scene involves Norma unsuccessfully looking for employment in Paris). In these two instances, Weill uses the song as a more conventional leitmotif—that is, a tune that recurs in the score, tied to a character, place, thing, or idea, but that does not comment on or affect the diegesis.

There is also a music box that plays a Viennese waltz which sounds at three key moments in the story, associated with both nostalgia and the hope for a better world (example 2.4). The music box belongs to Norma, and it is one of the few possessions left to her by her father. Norma first opens it during her conversation with Marco on the roof as they discuss their lives before the war. The theme underscores a similar conversation as Norma and Marco walk to the train, interrupting the revolutionary song that has previous dominated the score of that scene. Norma

[106] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 65.

Example 2.4 *The River is Blue*, "Music-box theme," sequence 19, mm. 33–63.



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opens it again at the train station just before she is about to leave, and here its power to evoke a better world is made explicit. Norma offers it to Marco as a present, but Marco declines, saying "Aladdin had his lamp—and you have the music box. There might be a dark night … you might wish for me. Sisst! Play it! Presto, there I am! I don't believe in magic, but it can happen."[107] The "magic" of the music box subsequently spreads to the rest of the platform as Norma opens it, and a series of shots show the people transformed:

> 188. MED. SHOT
> The group of children squatting around the music box. Norma comes in and sits into the picture to pick up the box. One of the children, a small boy, taps on the glass lid of the music box. Norma smiles encouragingly to the boy—starts the machine going! Music! The children are transfixed by this wonder!

[107] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 69.

189. CLOSE UP
A pair of business men passing by, stop. Their quiet intense conversation ends. They stare.

190. CLOSE UP
A wounded soldier looks from the platform of a car.

191. CLOSE UP
An old man stops and crosses himself.

192. CLOSE UPS
Of several children—allowing smiles to steal across their sad faces.

193. CLOSE UP
On small girl is even stirred enough to clap her small hands. But immediately she stops—startled by her very oneness.

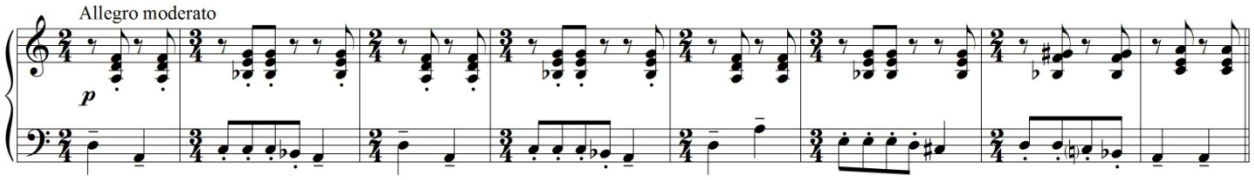
Here is another case of music affecting the characters rather than simply paralleling the action; the music soothes and gives hope and pleasure to the desperate people who are on the station platform. The music from the box appears once more toward the very end of the film as Marco and Norma discuss their life: a note in the score tells us that "while Norma and Marco [are] walking thru the amusement park, they pass three different kinds of music: a Viennese girl orchestra (strings only), an Argentine Tango orchestra, and a Calliope (which is the music of the scenic railway). This choice of orchestras and the music they play indicates Norma's way from the past to Spain and from there."[108] In the score, the Viennese orchestra and the calliope play the music box theme, followed by the tango orchestra playing the love theme. Here, the music box's nostalgic function is made explicit, as it represents the beginning of Norma's journey.

Aside from these major recurring themes, there are smaller, localized leitmotifs that help shorter passages of the film hang together. The music that underscores scene 15 at shot 88 in which Luis, who has been looking forward to a real bed for months, is finally snug in his clean pajamas and new sheets (example 2.5), returns the next morning when Marco convinces Luis to

[108] Weill, *The River is Blue*, 77.

save some of his rations for Norma, at shots 111–12. The bass line of this song is revealed to be a folk song that Luis and Marco know in Spanish and Norma knows in Russian at shots 168–69 (example 2.6). According to the score, Luis sings the first verse, Marco the second, and Norma the third (in Russian). This is another moment where a non-diegetic theme suddenly invades the action, and gives the audience an impression of how close the three are becoming.

Example 2.5 *The River is Blue*, sequence 12, mm. 1–8.



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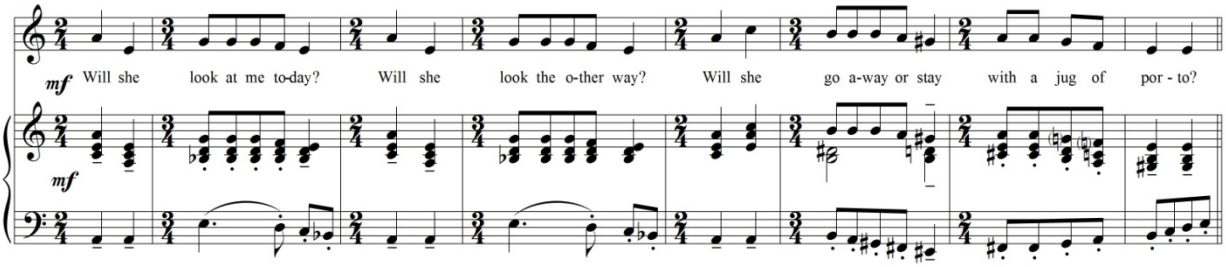
Example 2.6 *The River is Blue*, sequence 21, mm. 1–8.



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Conventionally in musical theatre, when one character picks up another's music, it shows an emotional connection. By making this moment a folk song, Weill shows a transnational cultural connection as well, emphasizing the universalizing themes of the film. Aside from this folk song, there is a can-can that plays on the radio during most of the early scenes in France, which highlights the relatively carefree nature of French life as compared to the events in Spain.

There are also many moments of conventional Hollywood accompaniment in Weill's score, such as the uses of the revolutionary song described above. Other recurring passages of

music serve to create atmosphere. Weill composed an agitated section of music that sounds underneath Norma ashamedly trying to avoid Marco after their interlude in the cellar, and then again in a comic scene in which Luis and a rooster disturb the lovers' conversation. Similarly, Weill composed a generic section of "hurry" music that appears whenever anyone is in a rush. Such techniques had been part of movie scoring since the silent era, when entire books were published with a myriad of generic "action" music for pianists to play to enhance the mood without commenting on the story.[109] True to contemporary Hollywood practice, Weill uses these sections in places that are not necessarily important, but that require that the music alter or help the pacing of the visuals, speeding it up in the minds of the viewers. Weill also knew that his score would never be recorded, and so likely only thought about the important themes of the score, preferring to give less attention to the less vital moments. Weill was also not above "mickey-mousing," that is, when music directly accompanies actions on screen. For example, shot 25 (which sets the tone of war for the rest of the film) reads "A pick comes flying into scene striking the wall and making a large hole. The pick is withdrawn. A torch is stuck into the hole—a crudely hand-painted placard is pasted on the wall."[110] Here, Weill's score contains three rising "stingers" (sharply articulated chords) labeled "pick," "torch," and "placard."

As well thought out as his score for *The River is Blue* is, it also reveals Weill as a Hollywood novice. The first two major themes are much longer than typical leitmotifs linked to an event or a character, and have clear internal structures, a rondo-like ABACDA in the revolutionary song, and a simpler ABA for the tango. This length gave Weill a few advantages. Although both themes reappear in full often throughout the score, often only small motives

[109] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 61.

[110] Odets, *Castles in Spain*, 10.

reappear (particularly of the revolutionary song), which meant that Weill had multiple ways to signal the return of the idea of revolution instead of just relying on one simple tune, which would have gotten too repetitive. However, their length may have had something to do with why Wanger and Milestone rejected Weill's score. Weill may have thought that a strong, recognizable melody would be memorable enough to signal the return of themes and ideas, but it violates what Neil Lerner calls the "conventions of inaudibility," or the idea that the audience should not consciously be aware of the score.[111] As Eisler and Adorno pointed out in *Composing for the Films*, melody becomes problematic because it distracts from the visual element.[112] The clear form of the revolutionary song did not pose much of a problem it generally appears in the diegesis rather than the score (and when it does appear in the score, it does so in fragments), but Weill's concern with the internal consistency of form of the love theme meant that it held to its own internal pacing, and does not match the rhythm of the drama in the scenes it accompanies. When he was considering his two major themes for *The River is Blue*, Weill may have let his operatic impulse run a little too free. In opera, long melodies and clear forms make for clarity of expression, one of Weill's life-long concerns, but in films they can be distracting. To be fair, there are long passages in Odets's screenplay where there is no dialogue, but one or the other of these themes appears prominently in the score. However, during moments where characters are speaking, such as the scene in the wine cellar when Marco and Norma begin to develop feelings for each other and the love theme first appears, long and recognizable melodies become distracting and confusing given that the audience does not know where to focus.[113]

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[111] Neil Lerner, "The Classical Documentary Score in American Films of Persuasion: Contexts and Case Studies, 1936–1945" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1997). 15.

[112] Eisler and Adorno, *Composing for the Films*, 4.

[113] Weill may have been aware of the problem given that he wanted the theme to be played "like distant tango music," making it almost feel as if it had an onscreen source.

Weimar in Hollywood

After his failure to secure a credit on *The River is Blue*/*Blockade*, Weill turned to those, like himself, who had fled Fascist Germany. Some, like Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht, left for political reasons. Others such as Franz Werfel and Arnold Schoenberg left because their Jewish heritage put them in danger, even if they held no public political beliefs.[114] Still others, such as Weill, fell into both categories. As many scholars have noted, a new "Weimar on the Pacific" grew out these émigré communities in Los Angeles.[115] Bound together by a common language, cultural heritage, and history of suffering, many émigrés took comfort in being able to keep up Old World social rituals and gatherings, such as the salons at the home of screenwriter Salka Viertel and Joe May.[116] However, at times, this community became isolated from the rest of Hollywood, and American-born composers such as David Raksin began to refer to them as the "bei-unskis," (because they always seemed to prefer life "bei uns"). [117] Weill was eager to find a place for himself in the broader U.S. business, and detested this self-imposed isolation.

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[114] As Sabine Feisst has discussed, Schoenberg actually leaned toward autocracy in private, and his authoritarian views emerged in the United States when he advocated for a Zionist "Jewish Unity Party" with a strong hierarchical structure, with himself at the top. See Sabine Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World: The American Years* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86. As Erhard Bahr has observed, Werfel embraced modernism in the early 1920s, but gave up his avant-garde leanings around 1923, condemned revolutionary activism, and subsequently became one of the most popular Viennese novelists among conservative Catholics. See Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific*, 172–73.

[115] In addition to those already cited, see also Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, eds., *Driven Into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, from the 1930s to the Present* (New York: Viking, 1983); Jan-Christopher Horak, *Fluchtpunkt Hollywood: Eine Dokumentation zur Filmemigration nach 1933* (Münster: MAkS, 1984).

[116] Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific*, 29ff; Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism*, 46ff.

[117] Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise*, 9.

As Jan-Christopher Horak and Jennifer Bishop have observed, Hollywood provided a natural haven for refugees; business connections between Berlin and Los Angeles already existed, and the American film industry promised an international market.[118] Exiles also had political allies that helped ease the transition. Even before 1933, Hollywood was home to many German expatriates, including figures like Max Steiner, Ernst Lubitsch, and Dieterle. This first wave of immigrants banded together to bring German-speaking refugees to safety in the United States. Lang was particularly generous in finding opportunities for fellow German-speakers fleeing Europe; when Klemperer told the director that the actor Frederick Kolm needed work, Lang promptly recommended the actor to Lubitsch, and other refugee producers.[119] Other émigrés participated in organizations such as the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League (HANL), the Hollywood Democratic Committee, and the Motion Picture Artists Committee for Loyalist Spain, in which they collaborated with the native-born Progressive community to fight Fascism and provide assistance to Hitler's victims.[120]

Weill's interactions with these émigré communities were only slightly more productive than his experience with Wanger and the remnants of the Group Theatre. Although Lang and the composer shared a reasonably similar background and artistic vision for the project, Weill found Lang's famously dictatorial style overbearing and difficult. Moreover, he found himself at odds with Boris Morros, whom he believed advised Wanger and Dieterle to drop his score from *The River is Blue*.[121] Lang, who had been in Hollywood for two years and had completed two films

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[118] Jan-Christopher Horak and Jennifer Bishop, "German Exile Cinema, 1933–1950," *Film History* 8 (1996): 373–89, at p. 378.

[119] Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism*, 78.

[120] Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism*, 81–86.

[121] W-LL(e), 250. No evidence survives to either support or contradict this belief.

before Weill's arrival (*Fury*, MGM, 1936, and *You Only Live Once*), had the upper hand, but even he fell to studio pressures in the end. Years later, Lang referred to *You and Me* as the worst film of his career.[122] History seems to agree: film historian Robin Wood writes that, despite the Brechtian nature of the film, it suffers from "a safely capitalist moral, teaching criminals to be good citizens and obey the law because that way they will make more money."[123]

Unlike many of the anti-Fascist refugees that made up the Hollywood émigré community, Lang did not leave Germany fleeing for his life. The director had earned a name for himself as one of the foremost auteurs of the Weimar Republic, first with epics such as *Metropolis* (UFA, 1927), which featured a world populated by decadent, carefree class, and the workers who live under their city in filth and misery, and then gritty thrillers such as *M* (Nero-Film AG, 1931), the story of a community tracking a child predator. He became so famous that in 1933 Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, invited him to take over the German film industry based on his *Nibelungen* films, apparently willing to ignore Lang's Jewish mother (he offered him the title of "honorary Aryan").[124] Lang refused and left for France shortly thereafter, leaving behind his wife and longtime script-writing partner Thea von Harbou (who had strong Nazi sympathies). After making one film in French (*Liliom*, Fox Europa, 1934), he came to the United States on an invitation from David O. Selznick.[125]

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[122] Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 262.

[123] Robin Wood, "Brecht and Lang," *Cineaction* 52 (2000): 4–11, at p. 4.

[124] Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang*, 8–10; Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*, 156.

[125] Anton Kaes, "A Stranger in the House: Fritz Lang's *Fury* and the Cinema of Exile," *New German Critique* 89 (2003): 33-58. Lang's film may have been part of the reason Weill and Theresa Helburn of the Theatre Guild may have been attracted to the property, as I discuss in the Introduction.

Once in Hollywood, Lang continued directing stories about the nature of law and order with a trilogy of "social problem" films, each with a different studio, and each starring Sylvia Sidney (who was married to Luther Adler of the Group Theatre). The social-problem film arose after the Production Code banned politically-minded gangster films like *Little Caesar* (First National Pictures, 1931), *The Public Enemy* (Warner Brothers, 1931), and *Scarface* (Caddo, 1932). While Hollywood Progressives saw these films as showing the seedy underbelly of Depression-era life, the Code insisted they were glamorizing and therefore encouraging an immoral lifestyle. In response, the same actors, directors, and writers channeled their consciences into movies about the failures of the justice system, and the oppressive effects of poverty and unemployment on those who could otherwise be productive members of society. As film historian Giuliana Muscio has observed, during the 1930s, "faced with the Depression and, later, the administration's experimental reformism, Hollywood films described 'reality' in their own way, promoting adaptation to the new social demands of the citizen at a loss."[126] Themes of flight, prejudice, and homelessness characterize these films. Paul Muni went from playing the villainous Tony in *Scarface* to the role of James Allen, a homeless World War I veteran who unwittingly gets caught up in a robbery and is subsequently forced to serve time in *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (Warner Brothers, 1932). Group alumnus John Garfield earned roles like the lead in *Dust Be My Destiny* (Warner Brothers, 1939), in which he played a reform-school teenager forced on the run for a crime he did not commit.

Lang's first American efforts turned out two classic social-problem films. *Fury* (1936), with a score by émigré composer Franz Waxman, starred Spencer Tracy as Joe Wilson, who barely escapes a lynch mob bent on revenge, received good reviews from all quarters. Frank S.

[126] Guiliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 71.

Nugent wrote that *Fury* "impresses me as being the finest original drama the screen has provided this year."[127] Lang was relatively happy with the final product save for the ending, which was to have been simply Joe's impassioned speech about the nature of justice. Instead, the studio pressured him into ending with an unconvincing kiss between Joe and his fiancée Katherine (Sidney). Given this dissatisfaction, Lang switched to Wanger's independent studio for *You Only Live Once*, with Henry Fonda as the luckless Eddie Taylor, who commits murder while serving time for a crime he did not commit on the night he is proved innocent. Sidney joins him as his devoted fiancée Joan Graham, who never leaves his side as they evade the police. Lang was unhappy with Alfred Newman's score, which he thought was too romantic for his gritty story. Wanger meanwhile, had become an admirer of Mussolini, so Lang went to Paramount for the final installment of this informal trilogy, *You and Me*.[128]

The film began its life in 1936 as a romantic comedy about two parolees by Norman Krasna. Joe and Helen fall in love and marry, but while Joe tells Helen that he has spent time in prison, Helen keeps her own incarceration a secret. Eventually, Joe finds Helen out and leaves her, but on the day their baby is born, the pair reconcile. Krasna wrote two screenplays based on this story, one completed on August 25, 1936, and a revised version completed on January 13, 1937.[129] Originally, George Wallace was slated to direct George Raft and Carol Lombard, but Wallace and Lombard dropped the project, so producer B.P. Schulberg invited Sidney.[130] Sidney

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[127] Frank S. Nugent, "Mob Rule Under the Camera's Eye," *New York Times*, June 7, 1936, p. 142.

[128] Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, "Interview with Fritz Lang," (1969), reprinted in *Fritz Lang Interviews*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003),101–26, at p. 105

[129] These two screenplays, as well as all other drafts of the script for *You and Me* survive in PPS, Series "Production Files."

[130] James Robert Parish, with Steven Whitney, *The George Raft File: The Unauthorized Biography* (New York: Drake Publishers, 1973), 110–11.

suggested Lang as director and either Lang or Sidney brought Weill onto the project. Virginia van Upp then wrote a new, darker version of the script which included songs for Weill, with lyrics by Johnny Burke and Sam Coslow. This later version, dated December 12, 1937 (which also probably served as the initial shooting script given that it fairly closely matches the shooting schedule)[131] continued the trend Lang began in *Fury* and *You Only Live Once* of films concerning those who fall between the cracks of the justice system. The film stars Sylvia Sidney and George Raft as Helen and Joe Dennis, two clerks in a department store owned by Mr. Morris, a man who hires paroled convicts as a public service. They fall in love, but Helen's parole conditions stipulate that she cannot get married. Without telling either her parole officer or Joe, she marries him anyway, but he discovers her deception and leaves her, and in despair over human nature, returns to his criminal ways. However, just as he is about to rob the man who employed him, Helen returns to explain to her estranged husband and his gang that crime does not pay, literally. Complete with blackboard and chalk, she breaks down the math of criminal activity, proving that legitimate employment is a better path to wealth. Believing she has lost Joe forever, Helen then disappears, but Joe and his formerly criminal friends track her down just as she is giving birth to their first child, and all ends well. Table 2.2 contains a more complete summary of the film, as well as the musical cues, and how those cues line up with Weill's handwritten cue sheet.

Table 2.2 Summary of *You and Me*, final cut, by Virginia van Upp.

Scene	Setting	Action	Musical Cue	Cue Sheet
—	—	Main Titles	Title Music[a]	1
—	Morris's department store	Opening montage of Morris's department store showing the various goods and services that can be procured there (1).	1. "Song of the Cash Register"	

[131] Fragments of the shooting schedule survive in FLP, Box 8, Folders 52 and 54, © 1990 American Film Institute.

1	Morris's department store	A sequence of salespeople interacting with customers. Helen catches a woman shoplifting, but does not turn her in. A salesman intimidates a child into buying a toy out of sight of the child's mother, who praises the service at Morris's. At the kitchenware counter, an angry woman complains that her gadget does not work as advertised.	—	—
2	Morris's office	Morris's wife is unhappy because Morris hires parolees. Morris defends his practice as good citizenship.	—	—
3	Morris's department store	Gimpy, a store employee, is visited by Mickey, a criminal boss from the old days. Mickey hears that Joe is going away and wants Gimpy to tell Joe that he (Mickey) needs to see him.	—	—
4	Morris's department store	Joe is selling sports equipment to a flirtatious young woman. While guiding the woman to the shoe department, he passes Helen and they steal a glance at each other. In the shoe department, Gimpy tells Joe about Mickey's visit, and Joe brushes it off.	—	—
5	Morris's office	Morris gives Joe letters of reference, and Joe thanks him for his belief in him. Outside the office, Mickey approaches Joe with a proposition, but Joe declines.	—	—
6	Outside the department store	Joe meets Helen outside the department store for one last night on the town. Helen admires the perfume *Hour of Ecstasy*. They hear music (2) and decide to go dancing. As they approach a club, Joe says that he likes clubs because they were forbidden while he was still on parole. Helen looks hesitant, but follows him in.	2. Dance tune[b]	2
7	A club	Inside the club, Helen and Joe dance (2). Joe offers Helen a drink, and she accepts as the band strikes up another tune (cue sheet no. 3). Another man begins to flirt with Helen, and Joe almost starts a fight over her. Joe tells Helen that he is afraid he will never get married to anyone because the girl will leave once she finds out he has been in jail. Helen realizes Joe would never marry without telling his future wife of his past. A fanfare announcing the arrival of a singer interrupts their conversation (4). A nightclub singer appears and sings about her love for a no-good sailor who is constantly leaving as images depict the events of the song (5). Helen stares longingly at Joe. After the song, another dance tune strikes up and Helen and Joe leave (6). On the way out as Helen is in the restroom, Joe beats up the guy who was bothering Helen earlier.	3. Dance tune (cont).[b]	
			4. Singer's introduction[b] 5. "The Right Guy" 6. Dance tune[b]	3

8	The bus station	Just as the bus, with Joe, is pulling away, Helen asks Joe to marry her, and Joe rushes off the bus. He admits that she was the reason he was going away. They decide to get married that night, and go off in search of an information bureau to find out where to get married.	—	—
9	The subway	Joe talks excitedly about their coming marriage and how Helen means a new life to him. Helen looks uncomfortable. They get off the subway to find the information bureau and get married (7).	7. Main title theme[a]	4
10	Helen's apartment	Helen and Joe try to quietly enter her dark apartment, but disturb Helen's elderly landlady Mrs. Levine, who wants to throw Joe out until Helen tells her than she and Joe are married. Mr. and Mrs. Levine bless the new marriage and leave them alone. While Joe is unpacking his things, Helen hides her parole card, which pointedly instructs her not to marry. Helen tells Joe that Morris does not like employees to marry, so they should not tell people at the store.	—	5
11	The department store	Helen's parole officer Mr. Dayton says he will drop by some time. In the break room, Joe tells Helen he has a round-the-world honeymoon trip planned.	—	
12	Various restaurants around the town	Joe takes Helen to four exotic restaurants: Swedish, Italian, Chinese and Viennese (8). In the final restaurant, Mickey and some members of the old gang approach Joe and Helen, but Joe sends them away	8. Four variations on the main title theme representing each of the different countries[a]	
13	Helen's apartment	As Joe and Helen return to the apartment, Helen tells Mrs. Levine that spotters from the store visit employee's homes to check up on them, and she would appreciate her not mentioning Joe.	—	—
14	The department store	Joe overhears Morris talking to a man who has married another employee of the store and gets suspicious.	—	—
15	The parole office	Mr. Dayton tells her she is on the home stretch if she continues to walk the straight and narrow.	—	—
16	The department store, just before Thanksgiving	Mickey continues to try to convince Joe to come back to the old gang.	—	—
17	Helen's apartment	As Helen is showering, Joe discovers the bunch of letters in Helen's closet where she has been hiding her parole card. However, he thinks they are love letters. Angry, Joe goes out in the rain to see	—	—

		Mickey.		
18	The street	Joe walks in the rain. As a signal switches from "go" to "stop," he turns back.	—	—
19	Helen's apartment	While Joe is gone, Helen's parole officer visits. He questions her about Joe, warns her to stay away from him, and leaves. Helen finds Joe in the other room and worries about how much he has heard, so she makes up a story about why he was there. Joe says he has been suspicious because he knows a married couple who works at the store, and Helen tells him that the woman is a relative, hence the exception. Joe accepts the story.	—	7
20	The department store at Christmas	The store is decked out for Christmas (9). Mickey tries to get Gimpy to bring Joe to a reunion of the old gang. Gimpy convinces Joe to come with him without telling him they are meeting Mickey.	9. "Jingle Bells," followed by "Silent Night."[b]	
21	A bar	Mickey and the gang are around a table reminiscing fondly about their time in jail. As they realize that they have to stick to together, they start chanting, and the scene dissolves into a flashback. Their chant recalls a big shot trying to escape on his own (10). They work themselves into a frenzy as Joe and Gimpy arrive, tapping the secret password on the door. Inside the bar, a piano starts playing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and Joe says he feels at home as the guys continue chanting (11). The flashback returns, telling how the big shot died in his attempt (12). The gang tells Joe they want to rob the store. Joe defends Morris. Mickey reveals that Helen is also on parole. Joe takes a swing at Mickey and the rest of the gang, knocking one into the piano, and runs out.	10. "The Knocking Song" 11. "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"[b] 12. "The Knocking Song (cont.)	8
22	Helen's Apartment	Helen is trying to make a cake for Joe with the help of Mrs. Levine. Helen tells Mrs. Levine she is pregnant, but not ready to tell Joe. Joe comes home and, in a distracted moment, gets Helen to admit she had been in jail. He immediately walks out and returns to the bar to join the ex-convicts Christmas party.	—	
23	An attorney's office	Mickey makes sure he is protected in case of lawsuit, and the lawyer reminds him that the fees do not cover anyone else. The lawyer calls the FBI immediately after Mickey leaves.	—	—
24	The bar	The gang is preparing to rob Morris's store. Joe asks Mickey if he has procured legal protection for everyone, and Mickey says he has. On the way home, Gimpy is confused because Joe has gone back to the old ways, and he believed Joe when he praised Morris. Back at the bar, a man tells Mickey	—	—

		to lay off because the Big Shot says so. Mickey looks frightened but goes ahead anyway.		
25	Helen's apartment	Helen cannot sleep. Joe comes in. Helen tries to explain, but Joe silently collects his things and leaves. The next morning, Helen gets a call from Gimpy warning her about the plan to rob the store and tries to get Helen to convince Joe to back out.	—	—
26	Morris's office	Helen goes to Morris to tell him of the impending crime.	—	—
27	An alley near the department store	Gimpy and Joe put the robbery in motion (13).	13. Robbery (reminiscence of "Song of the Cash Register)[a]	9
28	The department store	The gang enters the department store, only to find Helen, Mr. Morris, and the police waiting for them. Joe accuses Helen of being a "squealer." Mr. Morris promises their jobs back if they listen to Helen. Mr. Morris and the cops leave, and Helen proceeds to explain that crime does not pay, not because it is immoral, but because the math does not add up. To prove it, she breaks down the numbers for the current job. Outside the store, Mickey is captured by the Big Shot's men. All but Joe are convinced, and thank Helen for setting them straight. Joe accuses Helen of lying and runs out. The gang chides Joe for his treatment of Helen. Everyone leaves but Joe.	—	10
29	Helen's apartment.	Helen reveals she's pregnant, and tells Mrs. Levine that she's leaving and that she is not going to tell Joe about the child.	—	—
30	The Department store	Joe is left alone in the store, and thinks over the last few hours (14). He comes to the conclusion that Helen was right and picks up a bottle of *Hour of Ecstasy*. He is about to leave when he turns around, rings up the perfume on the cash register, and pays for it.	14. A variation on the main titles, eventually becoming a reminiscence of "The Song of the Cash Register"[a]	11
31	Helen's apartment	Just as Joe arrives home, Helen is leaving. She hides from him and makes it out without his seeing her. Joe arrives to find a goodbye letter from Helen.	—	

32	Mr. Dayton's office	Joe has come in looking for Helen. Mr. Dayton tells Joe that Helen does not want to see him, and that his marriage to Helen was never legal. Mr. Dayton tells Joe that they did not send Helen back to prison because she is pregnant. Joe leaves in stunned silence.	—
33	The department store	The store employees discovers that Mickey has died in a gang slaying. Joe enlists their help to find Helen. A sequence of shots of the gang searching follows (15).	15. Variation on main titles[a]
34	A room	The gang, still looking for Helen, is worried that they're failing. Gimpy enters announces that he has found her at hospital, and she is in labor.	—
35	A hospital	The gang anxiously awaits news from the delivery room. A nurse enters and announces that Helen has given birth to a healthy baby. Joe is allowed to see Helen and they agree to get married legally.	—
36	City Hall	In the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Levine, the gang, and their son, Joe and Helen are married.	
—	—	End credits	Main title theme[a]

[a] Some ideas for this music appear in Weill's sketches, but he did not complete them. Morros later elaborated on them for the final film.

[b] Not composed by Weill. For a list of composers who worked on *You and Me* with the numbers they wrote, see Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 292–93.

Van Upp also gave the story a political edge. In her version, the department store owner Mr. Morris and the lead gangster Mickey present opposite sides of the capitalist spectrum. Mr. Morris represented the "good" capitalist; although he is somewhat crass (in a line that was eventually cut, he yells at his head-of-advertising "I pay *you* to understand music—if Chopin can sell tea-kettles use him!"), he is kind and honest, and makes a point of hiring ex-convicts in order to give them second chances. Mickey is later introduced in his hide-out, where he and his gang are running a sort of department store of stolen goods:

D-3 MEDIUM SHOT – MICKEY – AT TABLE

MICKEY (*turns around*): Did they pay off?
BATH HOUSE (*Approaching the table he hands him a check.*): Sure. They want anything you got. Auto parts—clothes—canned goods—anything—(*as Knucks passes by*) He better hurry up with them cans. They want to re-label them tonight.

D-4 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – OF KNUCKS

KNUCKS (*Working on the cans, stripping them of their labels.*): I can't get used to it. Me that made my reputation high-jackin' Scotch—workin' in tomato soup and hominy. It seems kind of sissy.

D-5 MEDIUM SHOT – MICKEY AND BATH HOUSE – AT THE TABLE

MICKEY (*with satisfaction*): Do you realize we're gettin' out of the penny ante class? (*Taps the check.*) This fence in Cleveland will take all we got. So will the guys in St. Louis – Memphis, Syracuse. The whole country's going crazy about cut-rate prices and there's nothin' you can sell cheaper than stolen goods. (*As an after-thought*) I wonder where the chumps think cut-rate stuff comes from.[132]

Mickey's reference to "chumps" (a word he uses often throughout the script) reminds the audience of the opening number, which states, "You can't get something for nothing / and only a chump would try it." Many of the scenes which depict Mickey as the "bad" capitalist who cheats, steals from, and exploits his workers were cut before shooting began, but a remnant of this theme remains in Helen's final monologue, when reminds the criminals "there's always a boss on any job, you've simply traded Mr. Morris for another boss. But this one doesn't pay your wages in advance and get his profit afterward. This one takes his profits first, and you get what's left to divvy up among you." In this light, Helen's lesson demonstrates the classic Marxist argument for the exploitation of the worker, and proves that the New Deal system (represented by Morris) is much better for the store employees. Van App's script also equated parolees with émigrés. In Krasna's first draft, Joe's last name was Damati, which he changed to Dyson for the second. Van Upp reinstated the name Damati, which hints at Italian heritage. Eventually, the Production Code

[132] Van Upp, *You and Me*, D-1–2.

pressured the company to change the name again (in the final version, he is Joe Dennis) because they were afraid it would offend Italian viewers.[133] Joseph Breen also advised that "The Jewish Characterizations of Morris and Mr. & Mrs. Levine [Helen's landlady and husband] will not be objectionable."[134] While much of what made Morris Jewish, including his fast-talking sales and advertising advice, was cut, Mr. and Mrs. Levine remained clearly Jewish characters (as they had since Krasna's first draft). Although most of what represented émigré life in the United States was cut before the final release, the film's trailer exhorted the audience to think about "these American men and women without a country. To all appearances, they lead the lives of average Americans. They seek employment, they look for a place to live. But though they are Americans, they may not vote, they have no civil rights." Although these are revealed to be parolees, the metaphor for émigrés still resonates.

At first glance, Lang and Weill made a fairly well-matched pair. Lang consciously drew on Brechtian theatre for *M*, and Brecht held up Peter Lorre's performance as the title character as an example of the epic style of acting.[135] Lang was also interested in Brecht's theories of music and theatre, and wanted to adapt them for film, and Weill was the natural choice for such a collaboration given his previous relationship with Brecht. Both Lang and Weill had similar positions on Wagner. Lang's *Nibelungen* films deliberately misread and critiqued the mythos of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, particularly the character of Siegfried, who first appears as hero in Lang's work, but who is later revealed to be a destructive force.[136] Weill had been

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[133] Letter from Joseph Breen to John Hammell, December 7, 1937, FLP, Box 8, Folder 53, © 1990 American Film Institute.

[134] Letter from John Hammell to A.M. Botsford and Fritz Lang, December 38, 1937, FLP, Box 8, Folder 54, © 1990 American Film Institute..

[135] On the Brechtian characteristics of *M*, see Wood, "Brecht and Lang," 5–7.

[136] Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*, 158–60.

working against Wagner's music-dramatic practices since his early training with Busoni, and he made it clear that he intended to continue the trend in the United States. Lang was interested in extending some of the music-theatrical techniques that Weill and Brecht had developed in Germany, such as anthropormorphizing inanimate objects to show the oppressive nature of modern society. For example, Friedrich's vision of the demon Moloch in the machine in *Metropolis* shows how the factory of the city destroyed the lives of the workers, literally gobbling them up.[137] Weill's idea that the background should sing offered Lang a chance to explore other ways of having inanimate objects speak, illuminating the hidden forces of society in a uniquely Brechtian way.

The first hint of a collaboration appeared on April 17, 1937, just as Weill began to doubt the viability of *The River is Blue* even though he had largely finished the score. He told Lenya that he was beginning to lose faith in Hollywood even though it promised intriguing projects, including one with Lang, "which would not be uninteresting."[138] However, at the time he was preoccupied with the Federal Theatre Project's Los Angeles production of *Johnny Johnson*, which opened May 27. Four days later, on May 31, Weill wrote to his brother Hans, "After an endless wait, a film project has come about, indeed, it is very interesting since I have a first class director who is at least partially willing to work with me and my new ideas for music in film."[139] He reported that he hoped to complete the music in three weeks. Weill left Hollywood the following June to work on his two projects for the Federal Theatre Project (*The Common Glory*

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[137] David L. Pike, "'*Kaliko-Welt*': The *Großstädte* of Lang's *Metropolis* and Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*," *Modern Language Notes* 119 (2004): 474–505, at pp. 495–96.

[138] W-LL(e), 233.

[139] "Nach endlosem Warten ist nun doch noch eine Filmarbeit für mich zustandegekommen, und zwar eine sehr interessante, da ich einen erstklassigen Regisseur habe, der eng mit mir zusammen arbeitet und mich meine eigenen, neuen Idee für Musik im Film wenigsten teilweise verwirklichen lässt." W-Fam, 350.

and *One Man from Tennessee*, see Chapter 1). During the second part of 1937, Weill thought very little about Hollywood as he was networking within the New York scene. The networking paid off; he struck up a friendship and a creative collaboration with Maxwell Anderson that was to last him the rest of his life. However, by December, Weill knew he had to return to Hollywood to make good on his deal with Lang, and it was during this trip that Weill composed most of the music for *You and Me* with Paramount lyricists Johnny Burke and Sam Coslow, and even recorded some of it, including the "Knocking Song,"[140] which was conceived by music supervisor Phil Boutelje (though Weill wrote the music).[141] Since on this trip, which lasted from December 1937 to February 1938, Lenya accompanied Weill to the West Coast, and Weill was less effusive in his other correspondence, a detailed record of his dealings with the West Coast does not survive. Weill arranged to return to New York earlier than planned, receiving permission from Morris and Lang and agreeing to a delay in his final payment (a sign of how frustrating Hollywood had become), and he and Anderson began work on what turned into *Knickerbocker Holiday*.[142] Work on that project was cut short in April 1938 when Weill went back to Hollywood to oversee the recording of his music, while Lenya secured a nightclub act in New York.

Initially, the prospect of a Weill–Lang collaboration excited the Progressive musical community. In his column "On the Hollywood Front," in *Modern Music*, George Antheil wrote that "what I've heard is in Weill's best style and if it's not barbarously cut upon the dubbing stage it will certainly prove a sensation in Hollywood and, very possibly, pave the way to better

[140] Letter from Boris Morros to Weill, February 15, 1938, WLA Box 48, Folder 49.

[141] Lyrics for "Knocking Song," undated, FLP, Box 8, Folder 54, © 1990 American Film Institute. In this set of lyrics, the knocking motive was "short-short-short-long," as in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

[142] Letter from Ralph W. Nelson to Fritz Lang, February 2, 1938, FLP, Box 8, Folder 53, © 1990 American Film Institute.

things for all composers."[143] The next month, he continued to praise the film, writing that "Paramount tells me the score is excellent. I have only heard sections; what I did hear is typically Weill, it makes no concessions to Hollywood. Most 'better' composers who come out here believe that one must make concessions; it is a mistake; one need only satisfy the rigors of the motion picture form, which is, of course, dramatic and special unto itself."[144] Weill and Lenya hoped to parlay that good press into a hit song with "The Right Guy," which Weill wrote for the film, a typical torch song which details the singer's love for a no-goodnik. In *You and Me*, the song occurs while Helen and Joe are in a nightclub after work, before they reveal their feelings for one another. As the nightclub singer (Carol Paige) intones the song, Helen stares longingly at Joe, foreshadowing his later turn to crime. In the screenplay, the description of the montage that accompanies the song indicates that the sailor should look like Joe (although his face is obscured in the final version), furthering the connection. Lenya incorporated it into her act, and Weill tried to push the song to publishers; it was published by Famous Music Corporation, Paramount's in-house firm, but the song never took off.

Meanwhile, Weill had his own troubles with Morros and Lang. He put on a good face in public, writing to Morros on March 17, 1938, while he was still under the impression there was a chance his score for *The River is Blue* might work out, that "I am looking forward with great excitement to collaborate with you on these two important scores and to show the world what the combination Morros–Weill can do."[145] Privately with Lenya, he was not so kind. On April 28, he wrote "I'm in the midst of fight all the mess that surrounds this Boris Morros. He really is the

[143] George Antheil, "On the Hollywood Front," *Modern Music* 15/2 (January–February 1938): 117–18, at p. 117.

[144] George Antheil, "On the Hollywood Front," *Modern Music* 15/3 (March–April 1938): 187–88, at p. 187.

[145] Letter from Weill to Boris Morris, March 17, 1938, WLA, Box 47 Folder 11.

end. Now they're [Morris and Lang] trying to twist things so that someone else would collaborate on the *score*, because time is so short. … The whole thing is so deeply immoral and vicious that it's impossible to retain any enthusiasm, and I have only one desire: to finish up and never see these miserable con men again." He did add, however, that "the movie could turn out to be very good." He also wrote that even though he was frustrated with his colleagues, he enjoyed the recording process, even though Lang was "so incredibly unmusical it makes you want to tear your hair out."[146]

Weill left Hollywood again in late May, leaving the recorded score in the hands of Morros and Lang, who promptly set about revising it. Lang resented Weill for leaving, telling interviewers in 1969: "Weill left me in a lurch by going to New York where he had an offer to work with the Spewacks" (referring to *The Opera from Mannheim*).[147] Weill wrote eight songs for *You and Me* (see table 2.3), as well as several pages of underscoring, but Lang decided to use only three of them in the end—"You Can't Get Something For Nothing," (also called "The Song of the Cash Register"), which opens the film; "The Right Guy," in the nightclub scene; and "The Knocking Song" in a dream-like sequence in which Joe remembers his life in prison—and only a minimal amount of the underscore.[148] All the songs that were cut had lyrics by Burke, which suggests that he may have withdrawn his permission to use these songs for *You and Me*.

Table 2.3 Songs Weill composed for *You and Me*.

Song title	Alternate title	Lyricist

[146] W-LL(e), 261.

[147] Higham and Greenberg, "Interview with Fritz Lang," 105.

[148] The music for *You and Me* survives in WLA Box 33, Folders 457–59. Folder 457 is dedicated to several versions and sketches of the "Knocking Song" and "The Right Guy," well as the only complete copies of "The Barbershop Quartet," "Romance of a Lifetime," and the Gigaboo. Folder 458 contains studio copies of the conductor's score, as well as the published version of "The Right Guy." Folder 459 contains sketches, as well as the music for "Too Much to Dream," and "You Can't Buy Love." The cue sheet is in this final folder.

Knocking Song[a]	Five Years Ain't So Long Knocking Scene	Sam Coslow
Romance of a Lifetime	—	Sam Coslow
Barbershop Quartet		Sam Coslow
The Right Guy[a]	—	Sam Coslow
The Song of the Lie[b]	—	Johnny Burke
Song of the Cash Register[a]	You Can't Get Something for Nothing	Sam Coslow
We're the Kind of People Who Sing Lullabies[b]	—	Johnny Burke
You Cannot Buy Love[c]	—	Unknown
Too Much to Dream	—	Sam Coslow

[a] Appears in the final film

[b] Does not appear in the final film, but was copied by the studio

[c] The first page of this song is lost, so the original title and lyricist are unknown.

The result was that the film released on June 3 was a somewhat strange blend of social-problem film, German expressionist fantasy, and musical, and it left critics befuddled and confused. Nugent wrote that the film was "remarkably bad."[149] Antheil expressed his profound disappointment with the final product, writing "I must register my keen disappointment with Kurt Weill's *You and Me*. This picture score I heard in part before production was completed and had 'gone out upon a limb for.' But the ultimate dubbing made it a drab affair indeed. Here again, however it is difficult to know where the fault lies, whether in Weill, the studio's music department, or the picture itself. I strongly suspect the latter, but … it is more difficult to distinguish a bad from a good score, than a bad from a good picture."[150] An anonymous reviewer from the *New Yorker* wrote that "'You and Me' is the weirdest cinematic hash I ever saw. To describe it as simply as possible, it is a naïve morality play with impressionistic

[149] Frank S. Nugent, "The Screen in Review," *New York Times*, June 2, 1938, p. 19.

[150] George Antheil, "On the Hollywood Front," *Modern Music* 16/1 (November–December): 62–65, at p. 63.

Teutonic overtones by Fritz Lang and Kurt Weill."[151] The *Variety* reviewer opined "Lang tries to blend dramatic music with melodramatic action more than heretofore. It's a sort of Mercury theatre, by way of Marc Blitzstein–Orson Welles, with European flavoring, also. However, it's rather confusing."[152] Weill, for his part, was deep into work on *Knickerbocker Holiday* by the time *You and Me* came out, and had all but disavowed the project.

The Gangster Musical

In *You and Me*, Weill and Lang set out to unite the musical with the gangster film using the Brechtian technique of having the music provide social commentary on the action. They had their work cut out for them given that music in the contemporary scoring practice generally served to lull the audience into the sort of trance that epic theatre actively worked against. Other contradictions abounded. While musicals generally emphasized spectacle, glamour, and happy endings, gangster movies dealt in grit, realism, and tragic downfalls. All of these issues, combined with the communication problems discussed above, point to the reasons *You and Me* came out so badly. However, although all parties involved eventually disavowed the project, their attempt to fuse these two genres reveals new aspects of both Lang and Weill's conceptions of film music. Weill's surviving documents, including seven unused numbers, expose the difficulties he faced composing this score, as well as his Brechtian conception of how song could function in film musicals.

There are several types of sources for the music of *You and Me*. For the five songs that Weill expected to be in the film, studio copies were made (see table 2.3), with indications of how

[151] "The Current Cinema, *New Yorker*, June 11, 1938, p. 62.

[152] "You and Me," *Variety*, June 8, 1938, clipping available in MHL/CC, Folder "You and Me."

they were intended to be performed. After the studio copies were made, more numbers were cut, and the resulting musical cues are left behind in a cue sheet (table 2.4 is a partial diplomatic transcription) in Weill's handwriting, which includes all of the musical cues that made it into the film save one, the scene in the department store at Christmas (scene 20), during which "Jingle Bells" and "Silent Night" play in the background. The references to "The Song of the Lie" are the only places where Weill wanted music but none appears in the film. The sheer volume of the material for the film is a testament to the difficulties Weill and Lang faced when trying to adapt the *Lehrstück* to the conventions of film.

Table 2.4 Weill's cue sheet for *You and Me*.

Number	**Musical Cue**	**Description of action**
1.	Main Title Cash register	—
2.	First dance tune Second dance	—
3.	Torch Song (introduction to torch song) Third dance tune	—
4.	Song of the Lie Information (theme)	—
5.	Honeymoon	Do not marry (Song of the Lie)
6.	—	Walk in the rain (stop sign) (theme in minor)
7.	Reminiscence, Song of the Lie Knocking Song	It's you and me
8.	Knocking Song (cont)	Fight with electric piano — Sylvia standing along after George walked out Leading to dive (do you hear us)
9.	Robbery	—
10.	—	—
11.	George alone in department store George coming home Search for Helen	—

Lang intended to lessen music's narcotic effect, described by Eisler and Adorno above, by writing a Brechtian *Lehrstück*, or "teaching play."[153] Weill was the natural choice to provide music for a *Lehrstück* considering he had already written two with Brecht: the radio cantata *Der Lindberghflug* (1929) and the school play *Der Jasager* (1930). However, Lang failed to take into account that the didactic use of music in these two pieces was dependent on their medium. As Calico has observed, music in a *Lehrstück* "imposes a degree of order on an otherwise flexible text, and it facilitates communal participation."[154] Neither function is possible in a movie theatre. There is no need to impose order on the text because, by the time the film is shot, edited, and released, the text is no longer flexible. Weill also consciously wrote music for amateurs for *Der Jasager* and *Der Lindberghflug*; the former was meant for school children, and in the latter, the part of Lindbergh was to be sung by an audience member at home, following along with the score. By 1938, communal singing in movie theatres had gone out of practice.

Still, the idea of a Brechtian-ganster-musical was not entirely inconceivable. While Eisler and Adorno despaired over the state of contemporary movie scoring, they did note that one solution to the problem of music in movies lay in

> the topical songs and production numbers in musical comedies. These may be of little musical merit, but they have never served to create the illusion of a unity of the two media or to camouflage the illusionary character of the whole, but functioned as stimulants because they were foreign elements, which interrupted the dramatic context, or tended to raise the context from the real of literal immediacy into that of meaning. They have never helped the spectator to identify himself with the heroes of the drama, and have been an obstacle to any form of aesthetic empathy.[155]

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[153] Jürgen Schebera, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life*, trans. Caroline Murphy (New Haven: Yale University press, 1995), 260.

[154] Joy Calico, *Brecht at the Opera*, 23.

[155] Eisler and Adorno, *Composing for the Films*, 49.

Eisler and Adorno argue that, by drawing attention to the means of production, musical numbers break the illusion of reality and inhibit the spectator's emotional response, thereby engaging reason. Brecht argued for a similar function of musical numbers in his operas, operettas, and plays with music. Mark Roth has also observed that, despite surface differences, musicals—particularly Warner Brothers backstage musicals like *42nd Street* (1933) and *Footlight Parade* (1933)—and gangster movies both drew from the same reservoir of American myth: "The Depression not only raised questions about the viability of American capitalism, but also called into question the ethos and mythology which was both the product and support of that system. Musicals and crime films were the two major film genres to explore this crisis."[156] Roth observes two main similarities, both of which apply to *You and Me*: both genres are basically urban, and both engage with tension between group and individual success (the loner gangster fails; the rising star succeeds by becoming part of a larger production).[157] Both gangster films and Warners' musicals re-tell versions of the rags-to-riches story that is at the core of the American dream, although gangster films present the dark side of the idea and usually require some moral turn at the end. *You and Me* takes place in an urban environment, and has Joe Dennis struggling to maintain his steady job as a cog in the well-oiled machine of a department store on a small but livable salary, with the ever-present lure of the riches provided by a life of crime.

Weill, limited by the medium of film, set about rethinking the place of music in the *Lehrstück*. Some of his previous comments contain clues to how he approached the issue. The idea that "the environment should sing" in film is closely related to the function of a chorus in a

[156] Mark Roth, "Some Warner's Musicals and the Spirit of the New Deal" (1977), reprinted in *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge, 1981), 41–56, at p. 43.

[157] Roth, "Some Warner's Musicals," 43–44.

Lehrstück, which Calico has identified as an integral component of the genre.[158] In *Der Jasager*, the chorus serves to reinforce the message of *Einverständnis* (acquiescence), stating it at the beginning and end of the drama. In *Der Lindberghflug*, the chorus plays the part of the atmosphere, including fog and clouds in the fifth number. Weill also experimented with this idea in *Johnny Johnson*, in which guns and a statue also sing. The opening of *You and Me* combines these two ideas. The film opens with "The Song of the Cash Register," which plays over a sequence of shots of Morris's department store depicting everything money can buy, from dining sets to beauty treatments. As in *Der Jasager*, the song declares the message of the film, in this case that "You can't get something for nothing / and only a chump would try it." As in *Der Lindbergflug* and *Johnny Johnson*, music gives voice to an otherwise inanimate object, the cash register, which appears periodically throughout the sequence. Lang was familiar with a similar technique from his work in silent film, particularly *Metropolis*, in which he gave a living element to otherwise inanimate objects to make a political point. The most famous example is the machine turning into Moloch the demon, but Froder's work as a human clock is also in this vein.

There are other moments—both that made it into the film and that were left out—in which the environment "sings" to make a didactic point. The nightclub "sings" through the torch singer, elucidating Helen's thoughts, while the visuals jump from the club to a scene on a dock with the shiftless sailor described in the song. Weill also composed "The Song of the Lie," which was shot and recorded, but cut after the May 18 preview.[159] As Helen and Joe are on their way to get married, Joe reveals to Helen that he thinks of this as the start of a new life, while she tries to

[158] Calico, *Brecht at the Opera*, 27.

[159] The scene appears on the fragments of shooting schedules cited above, but not in the final version of the film. See also "Cutting, Dubbing, and Printing Schedule," and Letter from Boris Morros to Evelyn Winters, June 6, 1938, both FLP, Box 8, Folder 53, © 1990 American Film Institute. Several pages of Lang's notes survive pertaining to the re-cutting and reshooting of the non-narrative shots of this song, but by the time of the first preview, the film was already behind schedule and over-budget, so it may have been cut simply because Lang ran out of time.

temper his expectations without revealing her secret. Shots of the subway were interspersed with the conversation, representing Helen's train of thought, "the voice of Helen's conscience," sung by Marsha Hunt (although the studio copy indicates that a chorus should sing it), speaks in the background:[160]

> B-24 INSERT – THE ROLLING WHEELS
> (*Over the rattling of the wheels and over the music we hear a voice—THE VOICE OF HELEN'S CONSCIENCE*.)
>
> THE VOICE (*Sings the* "Song of the Lie"): What are you doing?
> What are you doing?
> With every word you speak
>
> B-25 CLOSE-UP – HELEN LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF HER CONSCIENCE
>
> Are you sincere?
> Are you betraying
> Someone who's praying?
>
> (*There is a short pause in the music*.)
>
> B-26 CLOSE-UP – JOE
>
> JOE:—don't ever lie to me, Helen—
>
> (*The music starts over again…*)
>
> B-27 CLOSE-UP – HELEN
> (*She turns to Joe, looking at him wide-eyed.*)
>
> THE VOICE: These are the words he hopes to hear.
> You better be sure what you're doing.
>
> (*She again turns away from Joe, stares straight ahead.*)
>
> For love can't exist on a lie.
> You'll capture the dream you're pursuing,
> And then it will suddenly die.
>
> (*Helen turns to Joe*.)

[160] "Recording Schedule" May 5, 1938, FLP Box 8, Folder 52, © 1990 American Film Institute.

HELEN (*Bewildered*): Joe…

B-28 TWO SHOT – HELEN AND JOE – (THROUGH THE CLOSED WINDOW PANE OF THE SUBWAY) – (*shadows and lights pass over the picture*)
(*Helen starts to talk—we see it through the window but we don't hear her.*)

THE VOICE: What are you saying?
What are you saying?
You should be sure you're right
Before you start.

B-29 TWO SHOT – HELEN AND JOE – (FROM INSIDE THE SUBWAY)

HELEN (*as if this is her defense for what she is doing*): … I love you more than anything in the world Joe—*keep remember that* … (*But she has hardly said it, her eyes turn away from Joe and she listens again.*)

B-30 INSERT – THE ROLLING WHEELS
(*They begin to turn slower.*)

THE VOICE: If you're just playing
You'll soon be saying

B-31 BIG CLOSE-UP – HELEN
(*She listens wide-eyed.*)

THE VOICE: Where is my happiness?
Where is my heart?

B-32 INSERT THE DOOR OF THE SUBWAY – INSIDE
(*The subway comes to a stop at the same time that the music stops … the doors slide aside.*)[161]

According to the screenplay, the song would have reappeared at key moments in the drama: a scene (later cut) at the information bureau in which Joe asks about quick marriages, and when Joe draws her secret out. In the latter instance, after Joe walks out, Helen has a kind of hysterical fit, signaled by the music, and chaotic visuals. As if in a daze, she picks up the mixing bowl for the cake she was making, and begins stirring the batter vigorously:

F-96 SUPERIMPOSED OVER INSERT – HELEN'S HAND BEATING THE BATTER

[161] Van Upp, *You and Me*, B-7–9.

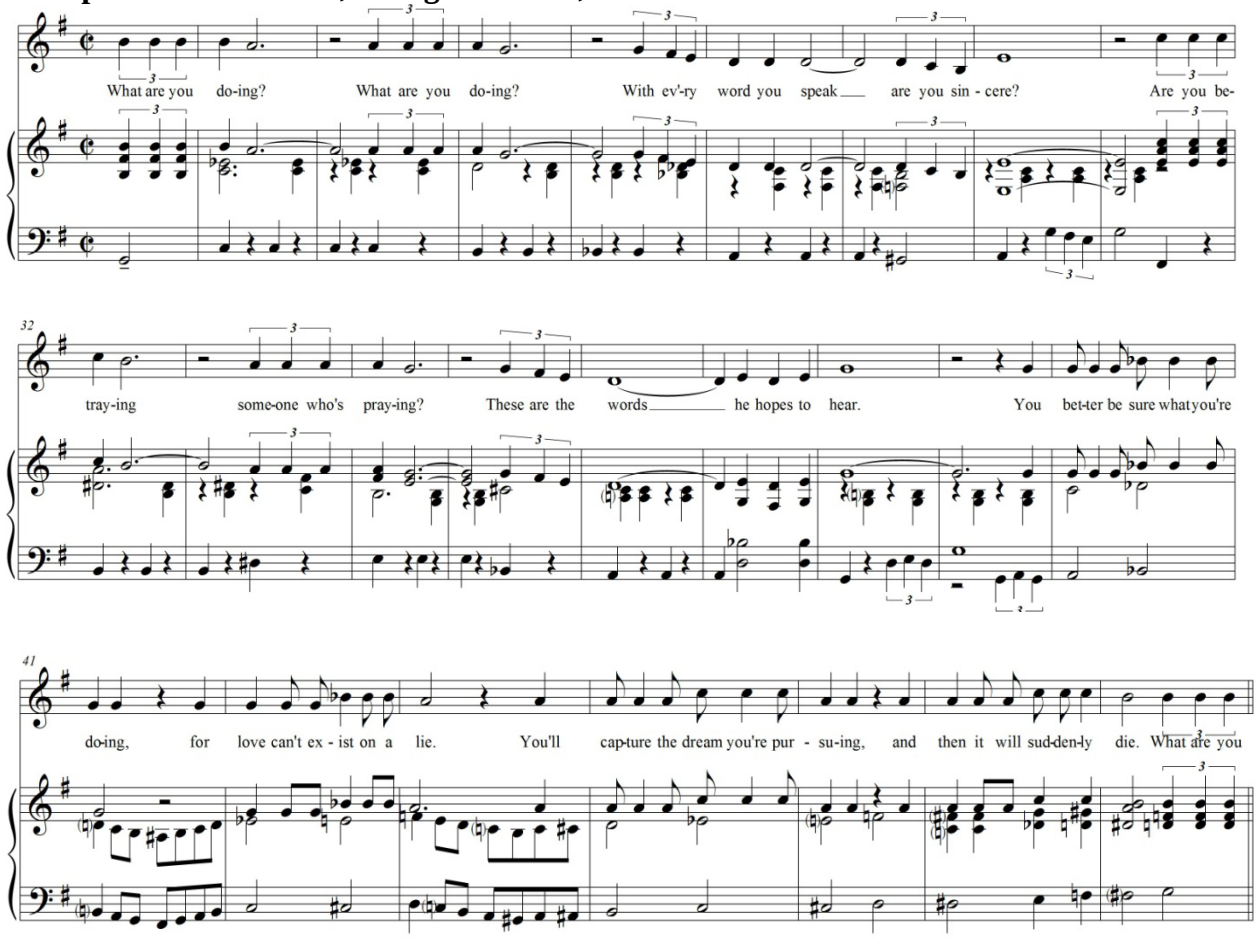
> Picking up the rhythm of the beating, the rattling of the "SONG OF THE LIE" insinuates itself into the room. It mingles into a veritable montage of SOUND and MUSIC. Voices crying "Merry Christmas!"—"Merry Christmas to you!"—"Have a good time."—"Merry Christmas, Kid!"—etc., muddled with "Jingle Bells" played in an hysterical tempo. As the sound changes into the maudlin hilarity of the gang's carousel—the beating spoon and then the whole picture starts to whirl like a vortex—to [Mickey's Dive].[162]

In its original instance, "The Song of the Lie" illuminates Helen's inner thoughts, which her facial expressions tell us are conflicted. She wants to tell Joe about her past but does not want to lose him. Weill's setting with its insistent, repeated-note, triplet figure, reinforces the urgency of the situation (example 2.7).

The non-narrative montages that accompany "Song of the Cash Register" and "The Right Guy," along with the stylized visuals that are associated with "Song of the Lie" and "The Knocking Song," help to jolt the audience out of the stupor that movie music was thought to induce. To further set these sequences apart, Lang gave them a remarkably different *mise-en-scène* than the narrative content of the movie. Most the visuals of *You and Me* are fairly unremarkable, but the montages are marked by slow and partial dissolves, extreme close-ups, and Lang's typical use of *chiaroscuro* lighting. These elements serve to separate the songs from the narrative similar to the way characters step out of the action to sing in *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, and other Brecht-Weill collaborations. These sequences serve the same function that Adorno and Eisler believed the production numbers other film musicals did; they interrupt the action, waking the audience up and giving the audience time for reflection. However, glossy production numbers would have been out of place in a gritty gangster film, so sequences of German expressionist fantasy replaced them in *You and Me*.

[162] Van Upp, *You and Me*, F-22.

Example 2.7 *You and Me*, "Song of the Lie," mm. 23–47.



Kurt Weill YOU AND ME, Lyrics by Sam Coslow and Johnny Burke. Used with kind permission of European American Music Corporation, agent for The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.

Another aspect of the *Lehrstück* that Weill and Lang incorporated in *You and Me* is the idea of having the audience strongly identify with a single character that must make a decision. Weill did this almost entirely through the music. Taking Weill's entire conception of the film as left behind on the cue sheet, it becomes clear that most of the music in *You and Me* was meant to help the audience identify with Helen. In all the earlier drafts, Helen is the most sympathetic, and the movie more about her than Joe, and when Lang, Sidney, and Weill came onto the project, her inner turmoil became the central piece of the drama. Both "The Right Guy" and "The Song of the Lie" give voice to her inner thoughts, and she is the one that eventually proves the message

of “The Song of the Cash Register”—that crime does not pay—in scene 28. In van Upp’s original script, she also sang one more number, “The Kind of People Who Sing Lullabies” (example 2.8). In the December 3, 1937 script, the song appears in scene 22, between when Mrs. Levine leaves and Joe returns home to confront her (which, before the “Song of the Lie” was cut led into its reprise). The action reads:

> F-81 INT. HELEN’S APARTMENT
>
> Now in the kitchenette the percolator bubbles on the stove. The table is overflowing with Mrs. Levine’s contributions. Helen’s face is flushed with excitement and, following Mrs. Levine’s instructions the cake bowl never leaves her hands. Her mixing spoon flays its contents into a creamy magic. MUSIC picks up the regular beat of her spoon and out of this musical rhythm she starts to hum, softly and happily, a kind of lullaby, almost improvising, The melody wells up from her heart, a simple, haunting little song—“THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO SING LULLABIES.”[163]

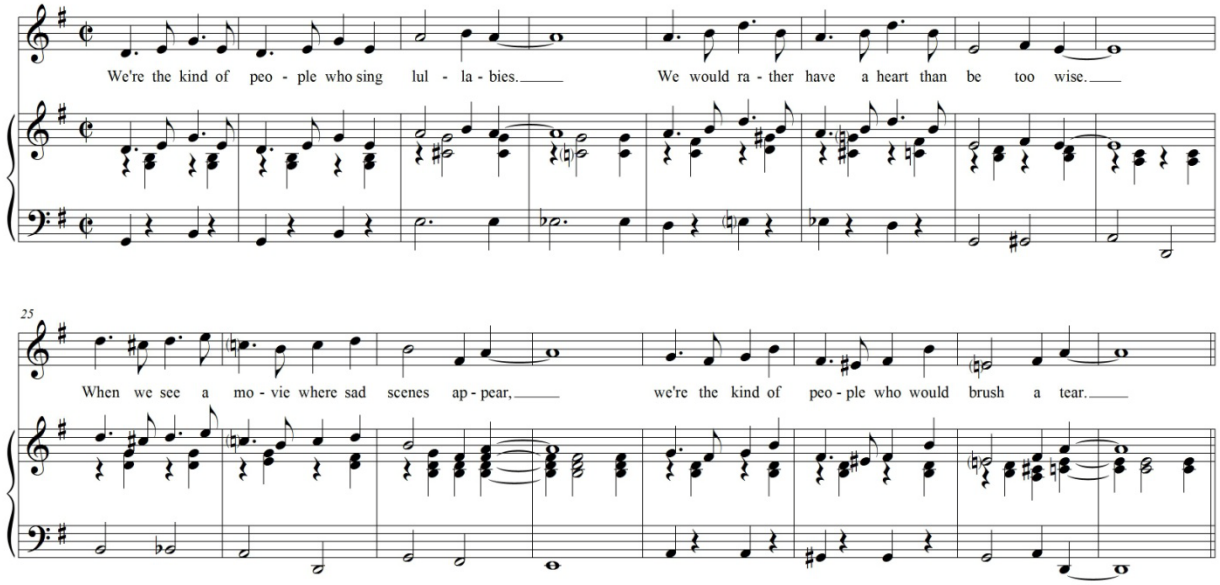
Eventually, “The Kind of People Who Sing Lullabies,” was dropped because Sidney did not want to sing on screen.[164]

For a co-star, Joe is given remarkably little inner life. Even the only number that does not come from Helen comes from Joe’s gang, and pointedly not Joe himself, who enters the scene in the middle of the flashback sequence that accompanies “The Knocking Song” in scene 21. Originally, this song also had a connection to Helen. The original scene after the honeymoon (scene 12), after the Levine’s leave, Joe teaches Helen how to say “I love you” in the knocking language they use in prison. As they sit in the dark of their apartment, Joe begins to reminisce about prison, and Helen perceives that he is falling back into his criminal ways. She quickly turns the lights on, and Joe thanks her for breaking his trance, and realizes that, now that he has Helen in his life, he will remain on the straight and narrow. In the context of this scene, the

[163] Van Upp, *You and Me*, F-19.

[164] Memo from Roy Fjasted to Fred Leahy, January 5, 1938, FLP, Box 8, Folder 52, © 1990 American Film Institute.

Example 2.8 *You and Me*, "The Kind of People Who Sing Lullabies," mm. 17–32.



Kurt Weill YOU AND ME, Lyrics by Sam Coslow and Johnny Burke. Used with kind permission of European American Music Corporation, agent for The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc.

frenzy of "The Knocking Song" that follows demonstrates what happens to Joe (and the rest of the gang) when Helen is not around to keep them on the right track. For the rest, there are only two scenes which seems to focus entirely on Joe, scenes 18 and 30. The first, in which he wanders in the rain, only to return back to the apartment he shares with Helen after taking a traffic signal as a sign to "stop," is without music entirely, although the cue sheet indicates that Weill wanted the "theme in minor" here. In the second, the music seems to represent Helen speaking to him. As Joe is about to leave the department store with his bottle of perfume for Helen, a snippet of "The Song of the Cash Register" plays as the camera turns to the object in question (the original screenplay indicates that bits of the "The Right Guy" should accompany this scene). Joe immediately turns around and pays for the perfume, as Helen has just explained he should two scenes before. This intense focus on the inner life of a single character is consistent with Weill's other two *Lehrstück*. In *Der Jasager*, the chorus encourages the audience to put themselves in the place of the boy, and the fact that the part of Lindbergh in *Der*

Lindberghflug was meant to be sung by an amateur in the home meant that the audience was literally embodying the protagonist. This strong identification between audience and character enhances the message in the same way that the intended identification with Helen is meant to influence the audience's opinion of her final analysis of criminal life.

Some of Weill's ideas for the underscoring also made it into the film. Most of Weill's sketches are unlabeled, but some of those that are do appear. Although the actual music Weill wrote for the robbery cue was dropped, his idea to quote the head motif of "The Song of the Cash Register" stayed.[165] One idea which appears twice in the sketches became the beginning and end titles, as well as the basis for most of the underscoring of the film. Weill also sketched some ideas for the honeymoon sequence in the restaurants, one sheet with themes labeled "China" and "Viennese," and another, less complete sketch with themes labeled "Sweden" and "Italy." Morros used the Chinese and Italian themes, but not the other two. The two that were used are both based on the theme that plays over the main titles. Morros decided to use variations on this tune for Sweden and Italy as well. The theme also sounds in other moments such as the "information (theme)" cue after the introduction of "The Song of the Lie" on the cue sheet (scene 9), and as Joe is wandering around the darkened department store (scene 30).

It is possible that this idea for a single, unifying theme came from Weill; a note on the cue sheet reads "Tying together scenes by short musical sequences (for instance from [scene] five to the kitchen scene [probably scene 13])." Although in the final cut, the only music that occurs in this spot is the end of the example 2.9 tune transformed into a Viennese waltz, the "information" transition does fit this description, and Weill's note of "(theme)" next to it, as well as its prominence in the sketches may mean that Weill meant this tune to be a main theme of the

[165] WLA Box 33, Folder 459.

underscoring. Weill also thought of having the "theme in minor" playing as Joe walked in the rain, but that idea never made it into the film either. Weill also completed a "Gigaboo" which was recorded only as a temporary track to guide the dancing in the "Danceland" sequence, and which Weill knew would be replaced.[166]

Despite the fact that the creative team tried to take advantage of all the possibilities musical production numbers had to offer, Weill still had a lot of trouble composing the music. His approximately 127 pages of sketches, which do not include aspects of all of the numbers, attest to his difficulties in writing this score. Weill had the most trouble with "The Knocking Song" and "The Right Guy"; several different versions of both songs survive in manuscript, none of which accurately reflect how they progress in the movie. He cast the song in several different keys, and went through several different accompaniment patterns, including one tango-like iteration), although the basic tune and structure of the song are always the same. In his sketches and in the studio copy of "The Knocking Song," Weill carefully indicated which lines were to be sung and which were to be chanted, but in the final version, everything is chanted. Lang may have decided that singing gangsters were strange enough to penetrate the suspension of disbelief of the audience, or he may have felt that singing made the ex-cons seem less threatening. Other elements were changed between composition and release. One of the studio copies indicates that "The Song of the Cash Register" was to be sung by five voices, each taking a line or two: four men, which a one set of lyrics describes as "a Sharp, Punchy Bass (voice A)," "experience[d], suave, slightly cynical (voice B), "dramatic baritone (voice C), and "low, poetical (voice E),"

[166] Memo from Roy Fjastad to Fred Leahy, January 5, 1938, FLP, Box 8, Folder 52, © 1990 American Film Institute.

and one woman with a "low quality, Hedda Hopper," type voice (voice D).[167] Only Emery Darcy, who went uncredited, is heard in the final release.[168]

The number of unused songs also points to several times Weill was forced by circumstance to return to the drawing board. Although no evidence survives telling us how some of the discarded numbers were supposed to be used, speculation remains possible given the themes expressed in the lyrics. "Romance of a Lifetime" is a slow ballad that would have fit in the slot allotted for the "torch song" on Weill's cue sheet, a position later occupied by "The Right Guy." During this scene, Helen and Joe listen to a cabaret singer at a club, their feelings for each other still unspoken. "The Right Guy" emphasizes Helen's longing for Joe, who after all, used to be exactly the type of man described in the song: "Just a bit of driftwood / Wand'ring aimlessly / And yet I often wonder / Can he be the guy for me?" If Lang and Weill had used "The Romance of a Lifetime" at this moment, it would have seemed to give voice to both Joe and Helen's inner thoughts, as the lyrics ask "Would you know / The romance of a lifetime? / Would you feel it / If you met face to face?" The darker "The Right Guy" keeps the tone of the film closer to the social-problem films that preceded it, and also clearly puts the focus on Helen, who as I argue above, is the key to the lesson of the *Lehrstück*. There are songs that resemble "The Song of the Cash Register" as well: "You Can't Buy Love" (although the song is untitled) and the "Barbershop Quartet." Both pieces talk about the fact that one cannot put a price on love, the former stating it explicitly, and the latter implies the idea, as the singer says that she "could have a mansion in Brooklyn, / Have rhinestones as big as your fist, / Wear gowns that are symbols of Macy's and Gimbel's, / Cologne that you could not resist," but instead, she's happily

[167] "Song of the Cash Register" lyrics, undated, FLP, Box 8, Folder 54, © 1990 American Film Institute.

[168] "Recording Program," May 8, 1938, FLP, Box 8, Folder 53, © 1990 American Film Institute.

become a washerwoman because "She fell in love / With the baritone of / A barbershop quartet." Like "The Song of the Cash Register," both "You Can't Buy Love" and the barbershop quartet list the things that money *can* buy, which would have fit nicely over the opening montage of products and services provided by the department store. The fact that "The Song of the Cash Register" eventually occupied that position again points to a darkening of the tone given the aggressive nature of the lyrics and their Brechtian, anti-capitalist overtones.

Ultimately, melding the musical with the gangster film proved untenable. Outside of "The Song of the Cash Register," all the songs in *You and Me* had an onscreen source that instigated their entrance into the drama, which shows how difficult it was for Lang and Weill to integrate the fantasy world of the musical with the realism of the gangster film. "The Right Guy," proved the least problematic, as van Upp worked the nightclub singer into the script. The idea of having the rhythm of the music come out of the beating of the spoon in "The Kind of People who Sing Lullabies" is reminiscent of the way the "Song of the Lie," emerged from the rattling of the subway. Weill's original conception of "The Knocking Song," also involved prosaic objects, in which the gangsters use "tables, chairs, glasses, whistles, radiators, keys as instruments and so forming a strange orchestral sound without any orchestra instruments."[169] These attempts to smooth the transition from speech to song betray Lang and Weill's concern with realism, even in such a fantasy-based movie, and highlight the seams where gangster film met musical.

[169] Kurt Weill, "About the Music for *You and Me*," May 24, 1937, unpublished typescript, WLRC, Series 31, Box 2, reprinted in WPD(e), 181. Weill also thought that the knocking rhythm could serve as a "leitmotif" for the entire film, at times sinister, and at times tender.

Failures to Communicate

Weill's private streams of invective towards his collaborators in his letters to Lenya are famous.[170] He complained about Ira Gershwin's laziness, Louis Nizer's duplicity, and called Lynn Fontanne a "bitch." However, he saved his fiercest insults for other émigrés. During his time in Hollywood, Weill attended parties and salons with other émigrés, but often told Lenya about the awfulness of the company, writing things things like "I went with Milly [Milestone] and his wife to [Otto] Klemperer's concert in Los Angeles (very bad). … In the greenroom with Klemperer was the wunderkind [Erich Wolfgang] Korngold grown old. I put on my haughtiest face and stayed for only two minutes. All of them are abundantly disgusting."[171] He spoke similarly of the Viertels; after his first party, he told Lenya "he's an old fool, and she's a horrible witch. They won't see me again soon."[172] (Weill actually saw the pair quite often throughout his Hollywood stays.)

Weill's utter disdain for this community may have had several roots. Weill was quite a bit younger than the major figures of the German Los Angeles enclave (twenty-six years younger than Arnold Schoenberg, fifteen than Klemperer, and ten than Fritz Lang). The artistic products of this older generation in many ways represented the art Weill rebelled against. Both Lang's and Schoenberg's works were rooted in Expressionism, and Weill represented the next generation of the avant-garde. Even the younger Hollywood émigrés such as Korngold and Waxman also wrote in a musical language Weill considered old-fashioned. As part of a younger generation, Weill may have also found it easier to adapt to the United States than his elders, and felt the fact

[170] See Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 67–69.

[171] W-LL(e), 209.

[172] W-LL(e), 205.

that they maintained their European social customs in their homes trying. Weill's letters make clear that he felt his star was on the rise, while the older émigrés' were in a steep decline, and he probably felt like he did not have to adhere to the same rules that applied in Europe.

Other possibilities have to do with the differences in experiences of Jewish identity. As Jean-Michel Palmier has observed, Jews who fled Germany for both political and racial reasons often refused to be associated with those who fled only because of their heritage.[173] Figures such as Kurt Tucholsky, Alfred Döblin, Anna Seghers, and Klaus Mann actively denounced conservative Jews who pined for their homeland while in exile during the Nazi regime. The "bei-unski" attitude that pervaded much of life in the Los Angeles émigré community may have felt, to Weill, like a betrayal given the terrible events in Germany. Weill's associations with Brecht, Georg Kaiser, and other Left-wing and avant-garde communities in Germany had more to do with his immediate flight in February 1933 than his Jewish heritage (many middle-class Jews did not try to leave until 1938). Weill's most vicious insults are directed toward assimilated Jews like Korngold who did not merit attention from the Nazis for any reasons beside his racial heritage. Weill, who throughout his career made political points with his art, probably did not want to be associated with the sort of bourgeois musicians who he may have believed would have survived—and maybe even thrived—in Germany had they not been born to Jewish parents.

Weill had other reasons to avoid associations with the Jewish element in Hollywood, both émigré and native-born. As Leonard Dinnerstein has documented, anti-Semitism in the United States spiked after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929.[174] As employment opportunities dropped for all Americans, immigrants were often blamed for taking jobs, and many of those

[173] Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*, 103–5.

[174] Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 105.

immigrants were first- and second-generation Eastern European Jews who went into the entertainment business. Along with accusations of stealing employment, many Americans became worried about Jewish control of the movie industry and its influence on politics. Radio personality Father Charles Coughlin railed against Jewish presence in the news industry. Eleven days after the Night of Broken Glass on November 9–10, 1938, Coughlin exhorted his listeners to remember the persecution of Christians around the world, despite the fact that it remained (he felt) unreported, asking about Stalin's most recent purge "why then, was there silence on the radio and in the press? Ask the gentlemen who control the three national radio chains; ask those who dominate the destinies of the financially inspired press—surely these Jewish gentlemen and others must have been ignorant of the facts or they would have had a symposium in those dark days."[175]

Coughlin's (and others') objections to Jewish participation in the media and film industries were based in their perceived connections between Jews and Communism. Weill had a well-known history of Left-wing involvement and his first major project in the United States was *The Eternal Road*, a project based in his Jewish heritage. However, as I discuss in the following chapter, he was eager to avoid associations with Communism, and because he distanced himself from the Left-wing communities in Hollywood, both German and native-born, and both of which were dominated by Jews. He may have felt that doing so was the best way to dodge anti-Semitic attacks. Since Broadway was not yet a national institution, it escaped much of the invective leveled at the movies. Still, Weill's own political instincts led him toward socially aware projects, which had the possibility of getting him in trouble. Working with Maxwell Anderson

[175] Charles Coughlin, "Persecution—Jewish and Christian," radio address delivered November 20, 1938, reprinted in Charles Coughlin, *Am I an Anti-Semite?: 9 Addresses on Various 'Isms' Answering the Question* (Detroit: Condon, 1939), 34–55, at p. 45, available online at http://ia600304.us.archive.org/33/items/AmIAnAnti-semite/FatherC_text.pdf, accessed December 4, 2012.

and the less overtly political Playwrights' Producing Company gave him a chance to incorporate his causes more with more subtlety.

There was also a lot of Jewish pressure on Hollywood to remain apolitical, pressure which Weill may have resented, particularly because it included not speaking out directly against Germany. As Felicia Herman has noted, the rising anti-Semitism in the United States put national Jewish organizations like Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress, and the Los Angeles Jewish Community Committee on the defensive.[176] To counter charges of Jewish warmongering from figures like Coughlin, these groups compelled studio executives to avoid anti-Nazi themes in their films, which frustrated many of the German-born community on the West Coast. Given the vocally anti-Nazi—and more importantly, pro–Jewish—stance that he took in the early 1940s, Weill may have decided that the pressure to be apolitical in Hollywood did not support the sort of music-theatrical experiments that he wanted to do. Despite his public statements that politics did not concern him, Weill's two film projects prominently espoused Leftist causes. Caught between the rock of political pressures on émigrés and the hard place of his associations with the Leftist groups that gave him work, Weill found himself a bind. There was much less similar pressure in the New York theatre scene. Politically aware groups like the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre had thrived in the early 1930s, and even commercially-backed ventures like the Gershwins' *Of Thee I Sing* (1933) and the Ladies International Ladies Garment Workers Union revue *Pins and Needles* ran from 1937 to 1940 with great success. Although the government had the power to shut down the Federal Theatre Project, Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* found an audience when it went commercial. Weill may have

[176] For a summary of Jewish pressure on Hollywood, see Felicia Herman, "Hollywood, Nazism, and the Jews, 1933–1941," *American Jewish History* 89 (2001): 61–89.

been frustrated with the political timidity of the Hollywood community, native-born and émigré alike.

Conclusion: Ideals versus Realities

In the end, neither of Weill's experiments in film-opera worked. Even if Clifford Odets's version of *The River is Blue* had been made, there were many problems with Weill's score. The long, lyrical melodies would have distracted from the dialogue they were supposed to underscore, and the clunky screenplay with its imbalance of romance and war would have necessitated major changes to the music once filming began. In *You and Me*, it proved too impractical to adapt the anti-operatic and didactic *Lehrstück* to a medium that audiences expected to lull them into a fantasy world for a few hours. Weill went back to Hollywood on June 6, 1939 to try to secure further film work, but spent most of his time with Maxwell Anderson working on *Ulysses Africanus*. Still, both experiments place Weill firmly within the artistic climate of the time. Like many other works that Bahr defines as "exile modernist," *The River is Blue* engages with issues of displacement in the character of Norma, who cannot work because she does not officially have a country of citizenship, a problem that many émigrés faced after Germany revoked their passports. Weill highlights the difference by drenching the domestic scenes in Marco's home with underscoring, enhancing the fantasy, while most of the Paris scenes are accompanied by an onscreen source such as the can-can on the radio or the orchestra at the engagement party, which emphasizes their stark realism.[177] As for *You and Me*, part of the reason the film fails is that it falls short of critiquing that world; the heroic climax of the movie has Joe paying for—rather

[177] The exception to this rule is the "Renoir scene" (scene 31), as it is labeled in the score, which depicts the domestic stability of the Ney family. However, that stability is undermined by Max's leering at Norma.

than stealing—a bottle of perfume for his estranged wife. The implication is that Joe is hoping that you *can* buy (back) love legally, the moral turn of the film.

Despite Weill's personal and professional failures on the West Coast, the experience did not leave him unchanged. After his Hollywood trips, Weill virtually abandoned overtly politically oriented groups, but some of the techniques he developed appeared in his later works. He revisited the idea of pairing songs with non-narrative sequences that comment on the plot in *Love Life* (1948), and in *Lady in the Dark* (1941), Weill differentiated dream from reality in the same way music differentiates the cozy domestic world from the harsh realities of Norma's life in Paris in *The River is Blue*. His contact with the Los Angeles German community also exposed him to more anti-Semitism and more anti-German sentiment than he had experienced in New York. As the situation in Europe grew more and more dire, Weill, like the others involved in the Hollywood networks, began to actively work towards bringing more Jews and political undesirables to the United States from Europe. He was instrumental in saving both Bertolt Brecht and Darius Milhaud.[178] Though brief, Weill's early Hollywood years opened many doors for his career, but it in the end, he decided to stay in the theatre.

[178] See John K. Lyons, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 23, and Darius Milhaud, *My Happy Life: An Autobiography*, trans. Donald Evans, George Hall, and Christopher Palmer (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1994), 200–1.

CHAPTER THREE
"HOW CAN YOU TELL AN AMERICAN?": MODELLING ASSIMILATION IN *KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY*

I am an adherent of the ideal of democracy, although I well know the weaknesses of the democratic form of government. Social equality and economic protection of the individual appeared to me always as the important communal aims of the state. Although I am a typical loner in daily life, my consciousness of belonging to the invisible community of those who strive for truth, beauty, and justice has preserved me from feeling isolated.

Albert Einstein, speech to the German League of Human Rights (1932)

Democracy is beautiful in theory; in practice it is a fallacy. You in America will see that someday.

Benito Mussolini, *New York Times* (1928)

"I'd like to write a play with you," were Kurt Weill's first words to playwright Maxwell Anderson, at least according to the souvenir program for *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the pair's 1938 musical about the early Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam.[1] Weill and Anderson met at a party sometime in the middle of 1936. On June 5, 1936, Lenya wrote to her sister-in-law Rita Weill, "Yesterday we were invited to the countryside by Maxwell Anderson … he is crazy about Kurt, and wants him to write music for his plays."[2] They were probably introduced by their mutual friend Burgess Meredith, who knew the composer through the Federal Theatre Project (see Chapter 1).[3] By October 1938, their first musical opened on Broadway. The partnership became

[1] The program survives in WLRC, no folder.

[2] W-Fam, 346.

[3] Burgess Meredith, *So Far, So Good: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 60.

one of the most important of Weill's U.S. career; he and Anderson wrote two full shows together (*Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Lost in the Stars* in 1949) and began two more (*Ulysses Africanus* in 1939 discussed in Chapter 4, and *Raft on the River*, a show based on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which was interrupted by Weill's death in 1950), as well as the short radio cantata *The Ballad of the Magna Carta* (1940). Weill and Anderson cultivated a mutually beneficial relationship. Anderson introduced Weill into the new, more commercially viable theatrical circles of the Playwrights' Producing Company (PPC, formed in 1938), and Weill presented Anderson with an opportunity to expand into musical theatre.

Knickerbocker Holiday set the stage for their future working relationship. The surviving documents show that although Weill had final say over musical decisions and Anderson had similar control over the libretto, the pair collaborated closely on the style, subject, and moral of the show despite their opposing political views, which clashed nearly immediately. Weill generally supported President Roosevelt, but while Anderson originally approved of the New Deal, as time went on he began to see the President's reforms as an attempt to consolidate power in the executive office, FDR's attempts to stack the Supreme Court in 1937 likely did not help matters.[4] In general, Anderson's plays focus on characters overcoming authority, and his contemporary critic Vincent Wall called him "the last champion of what almost amounts to a laissez-faire and rugged individualism."[5]

Anderson's original script, completed in mid-June, 1938, was a scathing critique of Roosevelt and the New Deal, which equated the President with Hitler, but on advice from Weill and the rest of the PPC, Anderson toned down the politics and played up the comedy and the

[4] Alfred S. Shivers, *The Life of Maxwell Anderson* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 172.

[5] Vincent Wall, "Maxwell Anderson: The Last Anarchist," *Sewanee Review* 49 (1941): 339–69, at p. 339.

importance of national spirit. Weill, in turn, took Anderson's W.S. Gilbert-style lyrics and provided appropriately Sullivan-esque music, giving the project the satirical air that the playwright desired. Anderson, who had no experience with musical comedy, used Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885) as a model for *Knickerbocker Holiday*, including the ceremonial execution of an innocent man to please a tyrannical ruler within a society with a series of nonsensical laws. Before Anderson, Weill had yet to find a similar spirit of cooperation with any of his previous collaborators, and although *Knickerbocker Holiday* was only a modest success financially, it played for 168 performances, fifteen more than *The Eternal Road*, and one hundred more than *Johnny Johnson*. Part of the success may have stemmed from the fact that the pair wrote *Knickerbocker Holiday* for an entirely different audience. Rather than trying to speak to the political Left or the émigré community, *Knickerbocker Holiday* was meant for the average spectator, a public that found themselves amenable to Weill's new, more popular style.

Although more popular than *Johnny Johnson* and *The Eternal Road*, *Knickerbocker Holiday* did not amount to a true Broadway success in an era when it took about two hundred performances to constitute a hit. Audiences felt that by 1938, the trend of musicals satirizing the New Deal had run its course. In 1932, the Gershwins' New Deal satire *Of Thee I Sing* had become the first musical to win the Pulitzer prize for drama, and they followed up in 1933 with the sequel *Let 'em Eat Cake*. At the time *Knickerbocker Holiday* opened, Rodgers and Hart's *I'd Rather Be Right* starring George M. Cohan as FDR had closed just over three months prior. Even though drafts of the libretto show that Weill and Anderson toned down their criticism of FDR and played up the patriotism, the satirical aspects still overshadowed everything else about the production in the eyes of the reviewers.

However, the creative team had more to say, even if audiences failed to recognize the subtler messages. Weill saw in the project an opportunity to tell a different story, one about immigrants becoming American, as well as the chance to comment on questions lingering in the minds of many émigrés regarding the rise of totalitarianism. Although the characters of *Knickerbocker Holiday* are ostensibly from the Netherlands, since the advent of vaudeville the idea of the "Dutch" was associated with everything German. In the early twentieth century, many German-American performers made their name on vaudeville stages in "Dutch" acts, in which "Dutch" was an American mispronunciation of "Deutsch."[6] Many aspects of *Knickerbocker Holiday* echo these Dutch acts, which would have linked the characters with German immigrants in the minds of the audience. *Knickerbocker Holiday*'s Dutchmen spend the show trying to determine what sort of government is best, democracy or tyranny, eventually deciding on the former. As Weill and Anderson revised the libretto, they decided to link tyranny to the old Dutch (or Deutsch) way, and democracy with the New World. In other words, instead of just a New Deal satire, by the final libretto, *Knickerbocker Holiday* also told the story of immigrants throwing off the yoke of Old Word totalitarianism and choosing American democracy.

Weill's interest in telling a story of becoming American by embracing democracy echoed larger trends among German immigrants at the time. In particular, the story of the immigrants of New Amsterdam resembles the conversion of Thomas Mann, the most famous literary German émigré of the era, who went from writing *Reflections of a Non-political Man* in 1918 to lecturing on "The Coming Victory of Democracy" in 1938. Questions of government were close to the hearts of many exiled Germans, who gave a significant amount of thought to how the disaster that was National Socialism had come about. They asked themselves if there was something

[6] John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theatre: New York City, 1840–1940* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 180.

inherently problematic about the German heart and mind, or if a subset of evil Germans had merely seized control of the good ones. Weill and other émigrés had a vested interest in propagating the latter view. Even though no one had officially declared war, the prospect loomed on the horizon, enough so that the rest of the PPC also urged Anderson to remove most of the references to New Amsterdam's battle with the Algonquin Indians in *Knickerbocker Holiday*. The production showed that Germans could become loyal Americans who detested tyranny as much as native-born citizens.

Weill and the Playwrights' Producing Company

On April 12, 1938, Maxwell Anderson, S.N. Behrman, Robert Sherwood, Elmer Rice, Sidney Howard, and their legal advisor John Wharton signed the basic agreement that formed the Playwrights' Producing Company, and formalized the corporation the following July.[7] The five playwrights would pool their resources to put on any play it found worthy and could be produced for less than $25,000, the normal budget for a drama in 1938. Each member would submit their work to the others for review, and the best would be produced, although the PPC remained open to mounting productions by outside authors. The goal of the venture was access to professional critique and the possibility of a first-class production without the interference of an outside producer, who would otherwise have the final say on artistic and financial decisions.[8] The idea of a company attempting to free themselves from the restraints of commercial interests was not

[7] Albert Claude Gordon, "A Critical Study of the History and Development of the Playwrights Producing Company" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1965), 49. In his dissertation, Elmar Juchem thoroughly describes the genesis, production, and reception history of *Knickerbocker Holiday*; see his *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson: Neue Wege zu einem amerikanischen Musiktheater, 1938–1950* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 1999), 67–129. My account provides more details regarding the formation of the PPC and the assembling of the cast and crew.

[8] John F. Wharton, *Life Among the Playwrights: Being Mostly the Story of the Playwrights Producing Company* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1974), 27.

new in the 1930s. The notion appealed to Weill, but in his time with organizations like the Federal Theatre and Group Theatre, he found that even though many of these organization professed lofty goals outside forces inevitably interfered. Perhaps Weill eventually felt that the PPC, free from governmental purse-strings and ideological agendas, had a better shot at succeeding.

At the time, Hollywood had left Weill disillusioned, and he had begun to search for opportunities to re-enter live theatre. Weill did have two theatrical projects in the pipeline, *The Common Glory* and *One Man from Tennessee*, but the former was looking less and less likely, and Weill had finished the music for the latter, as discussed in Chapter 1. He had already expressed admiration for Anderson, who won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award two years in a row for *Winterset* (1935) and *High Tor* (1936), beating runner-up *Johnny Johnson*. After working with the best playwrights that the Weimar Republic had to offer and suffering disappointment from his collaborators in the United States thus far (Paul Green, H.R. Hays), Weill looked to move up in the world, and Anderson's star was on the rise. Anderson's previous work may also have endeared him to Weill. Anderson showed himself sympathetic to recent immigrants in *Winterset*, a parable about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial which revolves around a first generation Italian-American in a life-long quest to prove his father innocent of a crime that had incurred the death penalty. Anderson's screenplay adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) also propounded an anti-war message similar to that of *Johnny Johnson*, albeit from a far more serious perspective.

The match would prove prudent for the PPC as well. Other theatrical organizations dedicated to reforming and improving Broadway aimed at mounting musical productions beyond the usual commercial fair. The Theatre Guild and its offshoot the Group Theatre had already

begun to consider musical theatre the way of the future; the Guild's production of the Gershswins' *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and the Group's *Johnny Johnson* (1936) had opened to critical, though not necessarily popular, acclaim, and Weill had already (in February–May 1937) proposed to the Guild a musical reworking of Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom*, and he would return to making similar proposals on other adaptations in the first half of 1939. The PPC also grew out of the Guild, and when they formed they made it their mission to produce high-quality theatre without the pressures of commercial concerns, and Weill likely appealed to them as an émigré who had participated in previous music-theatrical experiments.[9] The new company was looking to make a name for itself, and musical theatre looked to be the way to do it. Anderson also later admitted that his interest in musical theatre sprang from a desire to make money. In 1954 he wrote an article describing his entire career as a search for financial stability. "I went really commercial and wrote a musical *Knickerbocker Holiday* with Kurt Weill," he said. "'September Song' is still sung and because of it, *Knickerbocker* has brought me the most income."[10]

The two ideas are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Although in 1954, *Knickerbocker Holiday* may have seemed "really commercial," in 1938 the work's integration of song and story struck many critics as novel. Jack Gould wrote of *Knickerbocker Holiday* in the *New York Times*:

> Unhampered by any fealty to musical comedy experience, Mr. Anderson wrote the lyrics for the music just as he came to them in the book. The lyrics are an integral part of the story—no tangents about the moon and croon and love and heaven above—and Mr. Anderson saw no reason for doing the book first and then going back to the songs, as is customary. When Mr. Weill was ready to go to work he found a completed script and wrote the music to fit the words.[11]

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[9] Tim Carter, *Oklahoma!: The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 3.

[10] Maxwell Anderson, "A Confession: Veteran Dramatist Reveals he Began Writing Plays Mostly for Money," *New York Times*, December 5, 1954, p. X7.

[11] Jack Gould, "Dutch in the Forties," *New York Times*, September 25, 1938, section 9, pp. 1–2.

Weill made a career out of trying to turn modernist, avant-garde art into a commercial property without compromising his integrity, even if some efforts were more successful than others.

In April 1938, probably within only a week or two of the first official meeting of the PPC, Anderson suggested to Weill that they make a musical out of Washington Irving's *Dietrich Knickerbocker's History of New-York*, a satirical account of the early Dutch settlers of Manhattan, a story Weill likely did not know before beginning the project.[12] They resolved to write the lead for Burgess Meredith. Meredith and Anderson had forged a close working relationship as the former starred in the writer's previous three Broadway offerings *Winterset*, *High Tor*, and *The Star-Wagon* (1937), and the composer had also written for Meredith in *One Man from Tennessee*. They announced their project to the press on May 31.[13] Weill was slated to go back to the West Coast to supervise the recording sessions of the score for *You and Me*, so Anderson promised he would have the libretto ready when the composer returned in the late spring.[14] Although a continent away, Weill still offered suggestions and revisions (mostly urging Anderson to keep the Stuyvesant character closer to Hitler than FDR), but the early drafts of the script show no evidence that Anderson paid any attention to them until, as required by the bylaws of the organization, he sent the script out to the rest of the PPC for comments in late June

[12] This was not Anderson's first encounter with Washington Irving's Dutchmen; in *High Tor*, the ghosts of the Dutch sailors of the Half Moon—the same ghosts that waylay Irving's Rip Van Winkle in the short story of the same name—wander the wilderness making trouble for the contemporary residents of the titular mountain. Although Irving used the pen name Geoffrey Crayon when he wrote the book of short stories that contains *Rip Van Winkle*, "Crayon" tells his readers that he learned the story from Dietrich Knickerbocker, the pen name Irving used to write the source material for *Knickerbocker Holiday*, further connecting the two works. Esther M. Jackson even goes so far as to say that *High Tor* is "a preliminary treatment of the original characters and themes which were to find more satisfactory development in *Knickerbocker Holiday*"; aee her "Maxwell Anderson: Poetry and Morality in the American Drama," *Educational Theatre Journal* 25 (1973): 15–33, at p. 21.

[13] Leonard Lyons, "The Post's New Yorker," *Washington Post*, May 31, 1938, pg. X14.

[14] Letter from Maxwell Anderson to Weill, April 22, 1938, WLA, Box 48, Folder 19.

or July.[15] Weill, for his part, turned down a second film offer (he does not provide any more specifics about it) in order to concentrate on his new musical, and finished his work on *You and Me* by the middle of May in order to return to the East Coast.[16] He also used his trip to Hollywood to recruit others onto the project; he promised Anderson that he had convinced Guthrie McClintic, who had directed *Winterset*, *High Tor* and *The Star-Wagon*, to take charge of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, and that he would try to find someone to play Stuyvesant.[17]

After July, Anderson began to make changes to the script with the advice of his colleagues and of the composer in mind. However, before serious work could begin, the project suffered a setback: Meredith and McClintic backed out in late June and July. Although in his memoirs, Meredith suggests that dwindling size of his intended role (the young hero Brom Broeck) led him to leave the project, in reality during the summer of 1938, Meredith suffered an emotional breakdown.[18] In the middle of bitter divorce proceedings with his second wife Margaret Perry (the daughter of Broadway producer Antoinette "Tony" Perry, the namesake of the Tony awards), and under the stress of untreated bipolar disorder, he abruptly left the United States for Europe. In a long, rambling letter to Anderson dated July 20, 1938, he confessed that he was not emotionally able to return:

> I only know two things. First that I cannot come back so soon—not for a couple of months, perhaps a year, whatever I thought for a few moments when I last talked because I have far from caught my breath—far from gotten a sense of direction. Physically I am not well—and mentally I am just catching up I think. Also, every time I think of going back to anything connected with anything I have done—I get depressed. I apparently half

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[15] The first response came from Elmer Rice on July 11, 1938, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Rice, Elmer [L] 6TLs 1TccL 1 TccL/copy 1ANS 3 Telegrams to Anderson Maxwell 1935–1956."

[16] See the letters from Weill to Maxwell Anderson, April 28 and May 14, 1938; MAC Series "Misc.," Folder "Weill, Kurt 4 ALS 3TLS 1 Telegram to Anderson, Maxwell 1- nd 7 1937–1947."

[17] Letter from Weill to Maxwell Anderson, April 22, 1938.

[18] Meredith, *So Far, So Good*, 55, 61.

> realized it when I left—because I was morbid at the thought of returning even when I said I would. … I have continuously felt bad about telling you I would return—and I kept hoping that the following day would find me eager to do so—but I don't think it will.[19]

According to John Wharton, Meredith's departure was the beginning of *Knickerbocker Holiday*'s dramaturgical problems. With no star to play the young lead, someone (no one seems to remember who) suggested making the play more about the older Stuyvesant, and ultimately Wharton believed, "the original idea was thrown completely off-balance, and the play never really got back on an even keel."[20] Around the same time, McClintic also left the project. Meredith claimed that this was because he "didn't like the way the project was heading," but did not elaborate.[21] Given the rest of the PPC's and Weill's discomfort with Anderson's harsh—and at that point in the process, overly pedantic—criticism of the President, McClintic might very well have left over political differences, but no evidence survives to confirm this beyond Meredith's relatively unreliable account.

In early July, the PPC brought on Joshua Logan, the twenty-nine-year-old rising star of musical comedy who had staged the previous season's Rodgers and Hart hit *I Married an Angel*.[22] Whereas McClintic made his name directing dramas and classics, Logan was known for more light-hearted fare, and his reputation may have been the reason that the PPC urged Anderson to consider him. Given that even one of Anderson's sons, Quentin, admitted that "the evidence is thin that my father had a sense of humor," and that his youngest, Alan, believed his father "did not have a strong sense of musical-theatre structure or of the connection between

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[19] Burgess Meredith to Maxwell Anderson, July 20, 1938, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Meredith, Burgess ALS TLS 2 Telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell 1937–1941." fr

[20] Wharton, *Life Among the Playwrights*, 40.

[21] Meredith, *So Far, So Good*, 61.

[22] "News of the Stage," *New York Times*, July 1, 1938, p. 22.

lyrics and notes," the presence of Logan likely helped to keep the project light.[23] Logan, who had visited Berlin during Weill's prime and knew *Die Dreigroschenoper*, remembered that the score convinced him to take the project. In his memoirs, he wrote that the music "wasn't Dick Rodgers, and Max wasn't Larry Hart, but everything about Kurt Weill was talent and enthusiasm. And Max's lyrics were poetic and funny. I knew I wanted to do the show and told them so."[24]After the initial high of finding his new project, however, Logan "was swept with a malaise of doubt" because he had agreed to the project without seeing the book.[25] Like the rest of the PPC, Logan wanted to cut down on the critique and beef up the comedy. He suggested that they hire a "great star" for the part of Stuyvesant, and someone (again, no one remembers who) came up with Walter Huston. With Weill and Anderson's approval, Logan flew out to visit the actor in California to present him with the script. Huston seemed amenable, but thought the character too unlikable, even for a villain, and requested that "just for a moment the old son-of-a-bitch be charming."[26] Logan relayed the request to Weill and Anderson, who after hearing Huston sing on the *Bing Crosby Show*, composed what would become *Knickerbocker Holiday*'s biggest hit, "September Song" for the actor's unique, gravelly voice, adapting material from *Der Kuhhandel* (1933) for the melody. Huston proved to be the making of the show. In the end, the only person to object was Wharton, who believed that the actor's "kindly, lovable qualities" hindered his portrayal of "Hitlerian authority."[27]

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[23] Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2002), 167.

[24] Joshua Logan, *Josh: My Up and Down, In and Out Life* (New York: Delacorte, 1976), 109.

[25] Logan, *Josh*, 109.

[26] Logan, *Josh*, 110.

[27] Wharton, *Life Among the Playwrights*, 40.

With the creative team assembled and their star secured, all eyes turned to auditions and rehearsals in July. Ray Middleton was cast as the author-narrator Washington Irving, and the team turned to Broadway novices Richard Kollmar and Jeanne Madden for the young lovers Brom Broeck and Tina Tienhoven. Rehearsals began in August. Although the cast was strong, Wharton relates that the process was somewhat rocky because all involved had very different visions of the project. Anderson had very little experience with comedy, and wanted a hard-nosed satire. Weill agreed in principle, but as I discuss below, while Anderson's quarrels with the President lay primarily in his economic policies, the composer was more interested in foreign affairs. The rest of the PPC felt that the satire in general needed toning down. To make matters worse, only Logan and Weill had any experience with musical comedy, which Wharton later recognized as requiring a different touch:

> If you strengthen one act of a drama, the whole play usually benefits. If you strengthen one act of a musical, you may make the other acts look very much poorer. If you then begin tinkering too much with the other acts, you may wreck the whole show. The playwrights came perilously near to taking this course, but Weill and Logan restrained them.[28]

Because so many voices had a say in the production, the story, book, and score took longer to complete than was typical for a show at the time. Predictably, the show changed during the out-of-town tryouts in Hartford and Boston during September, and then more in the Washington D.C. tryouts that were added when Anderson decided the book needed more fine tuning.[29] The New York previews saw more revisions. Over the course of the tryouts and previews, a song for Brom's friend Tenpin called "The Bachelor Song" was dropped, as well as "Clump, Clump, Swish," the original opening of Act II, scene 2. In addition, the opening night program shows "I

[28] Wharton, *Life Among the Playwrights*, 42.

[29] "Helen Hayes Show Reopening Tonight," *New York Times*, October 3, 1938, p. 11.

Do Business in My Hat" in a position occupied in later programs by "Nowhere to Go but Up." In the tryout programs, "One Indispensable Man," "One Touch of Alchemy," "Young People Think About Love," all change position. Finally, "The Ballad of the Robbers," sung by Washington Irving in the final version, during the Boston production was sung by Tenpin.[30] Generally speaking, shows at the time were generally "frozen"—no further cuts or additions made—on opening night, but that turned out not to be the case with *Knickerbocker Holiday*.[31] The song "It's a Law" appears in the opening night program, but not in the program from December 12, where it is replaced by "Hush Hush." "I Will Remember You," also does not appear in the December 12 program (although the 1940 St. Louis production reinstated it). At some point, "Sitting in Jail" was added to give Stuyvesant a presence in Act II, scene 2. Such alternations after opening night, though not completely unprecedented, were rare, and speak to the difficulties that faced the PPC, Weill, and Logan during the process of putting on a musical.

When the play opened at the Ethyl Barrymore Theatre on October 19, the critical reception reflected some of this confusion. The general consensus held that the show possessed a weak book, interesting and at times sublime music, a marvelous star in the person of Huston, and some pointed (if tired) political themes. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* represents a typical view; he thought that "Mr. Anderson's style of writing leans toward the pedantic in a brisk musical setting. He cannot trip it quite gaily enough for the company he is keeping," and that "as a book-maker, Mr. Anderson's touch is a heavy one. He is at his best in his collaboration with Mr. Weill, whose music is lively and theatre-wise." He also described the choice of Walter

[30] A program of this production resides in WLRC, Series "Knickerbocker Holiday," Folder "Knickerbocker Holiday tryouts (1938) playbills."

[31] For a full summary of the addition and removal of songs over this process, see Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 76–77, 99–100.

Huston as "genius."[32] The reviewer J.D.K. for the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that Anderson's operetta-style lyrics seem "to lend a heaviness rather than anything else to numbers." However, he wrote that Weill "has written a tuneful score, and several of the numbers were more than worthy of mention. 'How Can You Tell an American,' 'The One Indispensible Man,' and 'September Song' were in this category." Finally, he noted that Huston was "an admirable actor" who "brings a zest and reality to the part which raises the tempo of the entire play."[33] Charles Angoff of the *North American Review*, said that the book

> suffers from a vast lack of comedy and a super-abundance, even for Mr. Anderson, of banalities. The impression one gets from it is that of a very intellectual British movie, fancy and boring. Such ponderous lyrics and so dull a tale have almost never before reached Broadway. Not even the able Mr. Walter Huston, who plays the part of Peter Stuyvesant, and Mr. Kurt Weill, an accomplished composer, can save *Knickerbocker Holiday* from embarrassing its author.

Still, Angoff said that Weill "plainly knows his orchestra, and he plainly has a fine feeling for popular tunes." [34]

After moving to the 46th Street Theatre on February 13, 1939, *Knickerbocker Holiday* had its last Broadway performance on March 11 without turning a profit, so the PPC arranged for a tour immediately following the final curtain. Very few changes were made for the road; only one role was recast (Councilman Tienhoven), and Weill made some minor changes in the orchestration in order to accommodate different houses. The tour opened in Philadelphia on March 13, and played in Chicago, Columbus, and Cincinnati until May 27. Weill and Anderson returned to the show once more in 1944 when they made the movie, with Nelson Eddy starring as Stuyvesant. Weill did not have much involvement in this version, and in the end, only four

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[32] Brooks Atkinson, "The Play: Walter Huston in Maxwell Anderson's Musical Comedy *Knickerbocker Holiday*," *New York Times*, October 20, 1938, p. 26.

[33] J.D.K. "The Theatre: Knickerbocker New Deal," *Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 1938, p. 11.

[34] Charles Angoff, "Drama," *North American Review* 246/2 (1938/1939 Winter), 371–79. at p. 375.

songs from his original score ended up in the film, "September Song," "Nowhere to Go but Up," "It Never Was You," and "One Indispensable Man." The rest of the score was made up by songs from a number of other composers and lyricists, including Jule Styne.[35]

The Evolution of the Libretto

Anderson's libretto went through numerous revisions, many of which survive in manuscript. Juchem provides a mostly complete account of all the sources in his dissertation, which I will only briefly summarize here, using his designations.[36] The first version to survive is Anderson's handwritten libretto (LM).[37] Two versions were deposited in the Library of Congress for copyright purposes (L18JUN, which is currently lost, and L16JUL).[38] The costume designer Frank Bevan's version of the libretto also survives (LFB). The Kurt Weill Foundation acquired another libretto after Juchem completed his dissertation. Its provenance is unclear beyond the fact that it came from an estate sale of one Henry Lea, so I will refer to it as LHL.[39] Juchem has subsequently dated it to around the time of the Bevin script.[40] Two rehearsal scripts also survive in the NYPL also survive (L#3602 and L#3601)[41] and two publisher's exemplars are extant (LKA and LAA).

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[35] "Soundtrack for *Knickerbocker Holiday*," Internet Movie Database, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036988/soundtrack, accessed June 25, 2012.

[36] Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 76–77, 328–29.

[37] A copy survives in WLRC, Series 30, Box K7, Folder 1938c.

[38] Copy in WLRC, Series 20, Box K7, Folder 1938b.

[39] Copy in WLRC Series 20, Box K7, Folder 1938f.

[40] Personal conversation with Elmar Juchem.

[41] Copies in WLRC, Series 20, Box K7, Folder 1938d and Folder 1938e.

As per the practice of the PPC, Anderson sent drafts of the libretto to the other four writers in the group for comment. One theme emerged from all those who saw the drafts: the need to tone down the criticism of Roosevelt and the New Deal. Elmer Rice said it best in his critique of Anderson's script from July 11, 1938 in which he wrote that

> My personal misgiving is about your treatment of Stuyvesant. I like your handling of him as a kind of Hitler or Mussolini and your cracks at totalitarian government. But what I am afraid of is that in places it's going to sound as if you are talking cracks at the New Deal, too, and lumping FDR with the European dictators. ... I think a lot of that is going to give aid and comfort to the boiled shirts, out front, who are ready to cheer and attack on Roosevelt.[42]

Sherwood wanted make the character more likable by bringing him in on Brom and Irving's number "How Can You Tell an American?" On August 27, he suggested using comedy, proposing that Brom and Irving should be "using the song to sell their idea to Pete, and he can have funny reactions to it."[43]

Anderson responded to these criticisms in a variety of ways. His various drafts of the libretto show three major trends of revisions: to the characters of the Councilman Roosevelt, Stuyvesant, and Brom. Councilman Roosevelt evolves from a rather vicious little crook, to a silly but harmless politician, to the most heroic member of the council. In the version of the opening scene in L16JUL, as the council discusses who to hang for the governor (and how the hanging should be accomplished), it is Councilman Roosevelt who asks "Vich man ve gonto hang and how ve gonto hang him so it hurts more?" In the same scene, the Councilman also proposes using the Governor's arrival as an excuse to levy an unnecessary tax:

ROOSEVELT: Vait! Ve forgot something, py golly.

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[42] Letter from Elmer Rice to Maxwell Anderson, July 11, 1938, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Rice, Elmer [L] 6 TLS 1 Tccl 1 Tccl/copy 1 ANS 3 Telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell 1935–1956."

[43] Letter from Robert Sherwood to Maxwell Anderson, August 27, 1938, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Sherwood, Robert E[mmet] 11 ALS 1 A&TLS 11TLS 8 telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell 1935–1954"

TIENHOVEN: Vot did ve forgot?
ROOSEVELT: Ve could put on a tax to pay for the celebration.
VANDERBILT: Vill der celebration cost anything?
ROOSEVELT: No, but it's a good chance to put on a tax.[44]

By the final libretto, this exchange was deleted altogether, and during rehearsals someone (probably Logan) reassigned the line asking "Who ve going to hang?" to Tienhoven.[45] These and other changes were made to make Councilman Roosevelt generally less distasteful. Stuyvesant became a little less like the real Roosevelt as well. One version of his entrance scene had him declaring "My citizens, there is to be a complete reshuffling of the cards," a direct reference to Roosevelt's "New Deal" (of a hand of cards). During rehearsals, someone (again, probably Logan) replaced the line with "there is to be no more official nonsense."[46]

Anderson made other changes that not only made the Roosevelt character less unpleasant, but also made him the most compassionate member of the council. In the final version of the opening scene, Councilman Roosevelt is the first to question the tradition of hanging day (although the others simply ignore him), and he is also unsusceptible to bribes:

ROOSEVELT: Vy is it got to be a hanging for der celebration? Could I find oud or couldn't I found oud?
TIENHOVEN: Give.
(*VAN CORTLANDT gives ROOSEVELT money*.)
ROOSEVELT: I got money but I don't got no answer.
DE PEYSTER (*coming forward*): You know vot's a hanging?
ROOSEVELT: Ja, I know dot.
DE PEYSTER: You know vot's a investigation?
ROOSEVELT: Ja, I know dot.
DE PEYSTER: Vell, hangings keeps away investigations.
ROOSEVELT: Vot is it ve did so ve vouldn't vant to be investigated?
THE COUNCIL: Hush.

[44] L16JUL, 1-22.

[45] L#3602, 1-22.

[46] L#3601, 1-44.

> ROOSEVELT: I said vot is it ve did, and I make a pause for answer? Honest men vouldn't be scared for investigations! I vould not be quiet! I vould not be silent! I vould vant to know who done something![47]

Although Councilman Roosevelt appears somewhat stupid and naïve, he is still the most honorable man on the stage. In the final version of the last scene, Anderson eventually made it so that Councilmen Roosevelt was the first to rebel against Stuyvesant's order to hang Brom. By having the character Roosevelt channel his real-life counterpart at the moment of his most rebellious and humane, Anderson actually seems to put a positive spin on his President.

The other set of changes concerned Stuyvesant. As the fictional Roosevelt became more humane, Stuyvesant became more authoritarian, and in the process became more like Hitler than FDR. In early versions of "One Touch of Alchemy," Stuyvesant exhorted the crowd with "All hail, the bright and good / The more abundant life!"[48] By opening night, Anderson had changed the last line to "the regimented life!" Furthermore, the original lyrics of "All Hail the Political Honeymoon," read "Then hail the political honeymoon / And the honeymoon of time, / To each individual man his boon / In a plenitude sublime," echoed by the chorus.[49] By the later version of the rehearsal libretto, the chorus sings the entire passage, but changes the words to "Then hail the political honeymoon / Sing the news to hoi polloi / Of each individual man his boon / In an age of strength through joy!"[50] The last line represents an allusion to the Nazi leisure organization "Kraft durch Freude," and the fact that the chorus first sings these words indicates that they

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[47] Maxwell Anderson, *Knickerbocker Holiday* (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1938), 6–7.

[48] LM, 38

[49] LM, 38.

[50] L#3601, 1-52.

capitulate easily to Stuyvesant's rule.[51] Americans may not have been aware of the organization, but they would certainly associate the phrase with the Nazis given that on July 3, 1938 (about a month before the phrase made it into the libretto), the *New York Times* announced a new German car on the market called the "Strength Through Joy," which the *Times* called "Baby Hitlers."[52] In later versions, Stuyvesant himself first sings this verse, and is then echoed by the chorus. By having the character actually quote a Nazi slogan, Anderson left little doubt as to who he meant Stuyvesant to represent. The original Stuyvesant also concerned himself mostly with economic matters, while the final version also made sure that the audience knew the character wanted to control every aspect of his subjects' lives. Stuyvesant's rules for "the guidance of the wives of New Amsterdam" did not appear until very late in the rehearsal process.[53]

Unfortunately, in the end, the Stuyvesant character retained both Hitlerian and Rooseveltian traits, which made many of the reviewers and the creative team uncomfortable. Even as the character became more and more like Hitler, Anderson still kept some of his most trenchant criticisms of the New Deal, including the scene in which Stuyvesant explains how his strategy of doubling prices, profits, and wages will save New Amsterdam (according to Stuyvesant, it will cause the total collapse of the economy, forcing a government takeover, is undoubtedly what Anderson feared would be the endgame of the New Deal). However, even at his most Rooseveltian, Stuyvesant still expounds policies that would have made Weill, as a German immigrant, very nervous. Stuyvesant's plan smacks of the inflation in Germany that

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[51] Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 286.

[52] "German Car for the Masses," *New York Times*, July 3, 1938, p. 6.

[53] Their first appearance is in L#3601.

paved the way for Hitler's coup.[54] But though Anderson may have seen a connection between Hitler and Roosevelt, the rest of the world did not. Ruth McKenney of the *New Masses* wrote, "I think calling the New Deal fascist is a poor sort of joke, and I consider labeling Roosevelt the American Hitler a vicious perversion."[55] Logan, Weill, and the rest of the PPC agreed, but Anderson likely stood his ground and prevented further cuts. In early November 1940, shortly after the election, Logan wrote to Anderson:

> Please don't be too depressed by the success of Roosevelt and the state of the world. He's not interested in being a dictator, no matter how it may seem to you. If you had gone to the Whitehouse with us and heard him talk about *Knickerbocker Holiday*, you would know that, as I do—and Bob Sherwood does—and Kurt.[56]

In the end, conflicting politics combined with inexperience in the world of musical comedy probably doomed the satire. Wharton remembers that at the end of the first run-through, Anderson "stood shaking his head and saying 'My, my, we certainly do go to pieces in the last act.'" Wharton agreed, adding, "He was right; we did. The script had been twisted too far."[57]

As Anderson, Logan, and the PPC sorted out the politics of who was who, the question of alternatives to dictatorships became less and less important to the play, and the question of what

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[54] The thought of something similar happening in the United States was very much on the minds of European émigrés in the late 1930s. Arthur Feiler of the University in Exile at the New School for Social Research aggressively argued that price diminution held key to bringing the economy out of the Depression. His explanation of the causes of the 1937 recession eerily echoes Stuyvesant's plan given on Anderson, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, 84–86, even without governmental intervention: "Corporate price policy raised the prices of steel, of cement, of capital goods as a whole, which had already been maintained at a much higher level than other prices. A wave of strikes raised wages in specific industries while other wages too (for example, those of railroad employees) were maintained at a much higher level than the rest. A wave of speculation in commodity markets … raised the prices of raw materials. … But disproportionately high prices in some fields exercise only a downward pressure on prices in other fields. Producers, especially the producers of finished goods, are held back if their material and other production costs rise while they are unable to obtain equivalent prices for their products;" see "Adjustment of Prices and Costs as a Means of Stabilization," *Social Research* 6 (1939): 207–21, at pp. 216–17. Feiler also warns that "dictatorial economies are war economies," which also echoes Stuyvesant's policies (p. 218).

[55] Quoted in Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 108.

[56] Letter from Joshua Logan to Maxwell Anderson, November 3, 1940, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Logan, Joshua 5ALS 2 TLS APCS Telegram to Anderson, Maxwell 3 - n.d. 2 - inc. dates 4 - 1940–1946."

[57] Wharton, *Life Among the Playwrights*, 42.

constituted an American grew in prominence. Many of Anderson's discourses on the nature of democracy came in the form of Brechtian interruptions from narrator Washington Irving that never made it into the final script, including this lengthy passage that occurs after Brom realizes that its inherent inefficiency makes democracy the best form of government. Irving stops the action and accuses his hero of acting out of character, and demands to know where he got such notions. Brom replies:

> I came across an ancient volume of Plutarch's Lives in Rotterdam. You've read it?
> IRVING: Not thoroughly.
> BROM: Read it. You'll find that nothing now has happened in the way of government since Pericles. Absolutely nothing. They had half-democracies, whole democracies, dictatorships, dictator communisms, kings, parliaments, demagogues, the whole works. Nothing's been invented since I doubt that anything ever will be. And the only kind of government that doesn't end up in a first-class tyranny, deadly to the brain, is plain democracy. Poor, old, feeble, stupid, blundering democracy. It's still the best there is.[58]

This exchange led into "The Ballad of Democracy." The song was a counterpart to the Brechtian "The Ballad of the Robbers," a number which—at least in early stages of the libretto—Tenpin sings at the beginning of Act II in jail (eventually, Irving sang it as the prologue to Act II). In "The Ballad of Democracy," Brom explains to Irving the origins of government for, of, and by the people:

> When men first gathered into towns
> For banking and for trade,
> The roads were thick with highwaymen
> Who lay in wait and preyed.
>
> The banker-men were much depressed,
> The tradesmen racked their brains;
> No matter what their bargains were
> The robbers took the gains.
>
> So then the business-men rose up,
> What few of them were left,
> And gave one robber gang complete

[58] LM, 76–77.

Monopoly of theft.

And in return this robber gang,
In that far-distant time,
Agreed it would abolish all
Competitors in crime.

Then out to death or exile drear
The other robbers went,
And one monopoly of thieves
Became the government.

But when this government found out
There was no limit set,
It preyed upon the populace
For all that it could get.

And so the common man rose up,
Who much and long endures,
And put a robber-gang in power
Composed of amateurs.

But when these amateurs have learned
To rob efficiently,
We turn them out, and put in fresh,
And that's democracy.[59]

Although trenchant, this version of political history seems somewhat long-winded for an otherwise light-hearted musical, and during rehearsals, it was cut, possibly on the recommendation of Weill, who knew that such pedantic political sermons could doom shows, as they had *Happy End* in 1929.

Convention at the time dictated that musicals could end with a reprise of a number that the creators hoped would become popular or that summarized the message of the show. In early versions of the project, "The Ballad of the Democracy" served that purpose since it took exactly the same form and tune as "The Ballad of the Robbers" (both sets of lyrics appear on the same

[59] LM, 77–78.

staff in Weill's drafts of the vocal score).[60] When the former was cut, Anderson and Weill decided they still needed a song to reprise at the end, and instead chose wrote a new number "Why Should We Want a Democracy?"—an early version of "How Can You Tell an American?" (the indented words indicate that Anderson jotted these down as notes as to what these lines would express, but they do not belong in lyrics):

> Why should we want a democracy?
> Was there any point in its invention?
> Is it better than the-European land of kings
> Or than Arabic rajahs, and similar things
> Who keep their slaves and rob them systematically
> Without hiding their intention?
>
> Before there were governments at all,
> There were robbers to circumvent,
> And so were very cleverly proceeded to install
> A gang as the government.
>
> Now on this robber gang devolved the duty and the pleasure
> Of keeping all competitors, and nothing at its leisure,
> And since it has experience at taxing mine and yours,
> It's robbed us to the limit of what moral man endures.
> For government by nature's a monopoly in crime
> Has been, and will be till the end of time
>
> Throwing out the robbers periodically
> Replacing the professionals with amateurs
>
> And that's a democracy![61]

The poetic structure matches that of "How Can You Tell an American?" which does not appear in the librettos until the first rehearsal version. In L#3602, both "How Can You Tell an American?" and "The Ballad of Democracy" appear, but the latter has vanished by L#3201,

[60] WLA, Box 14, Folder 232.

[61] Maxwell Anderson, "Why Should We Want a Democracy?" MAC, Series "Works," Folder "[Knickerbocker Holiday]: 'Why Should We Want a Democracy?' Ams with A revisions (2pp) n.d."

replaced by a reprise of the former at the very end. Two possibilities exist for the chronology of "Why Should We Want a Democracy?" Either the song is an early version of "How Can You Tell an American?" and was written before L#3602, or at some point between the two rehearsal versions the creative team tried "Why Should We Want a Democracy?" in place of the "The Ballad of Democracy" at the end of the Act II, with the result that both "How Can You Tell an American?" and "Why Should We Want a Democracy?" (with the same music) were in the show, linking the ideas of democracy and America.

However it came into being, "How Can You Tell an American?" shifted the complexion of the show. Instead of tale about the founding of democratic government from the ashes of tyranny, *Knickerbocker Holiday* now told the story of how to become an American, even if you were not born on American soil. Other small shifts in the libretto accompanied the addition of "How Can you Tell an American?" that seem to indicate that the creators of the show wanted to emphasize national, rather than political values. As late as LHL, Brom's inability to take orders had a different explanation; he tells Tina "It's a strange sort of malady. Almost a congenital defect. … I left Holland thinking I could escape it in a new, free country, but it's worse here, much worse."[62] In other versions, Brom tells Tina that all Broecks have suffered from this condition. However, in the final version, Brom's state is unique to him, and only manifested itself in New Amsterdam. He explains, "I was never bothered this way in Holland. I used to take orders perfectly well. No, it started in this country that winter I was out in the woods living on wild turkey and Indian Corn. … As long as you stay here in New Amsterdam and eat imported stuff you're all right, but as soon as you start eating this native food, you're a menace to your

[62] LHL, 1-14.

superiors."[63] Although a small change, the fact that Anderson and the rest of the creative team decided to switch the source of Brom's problems from genetics to food helped to make the show more about the relationship between immigrants and natives than forms of government. In the earlier version, Brom's issues make him an American even before he arrives there: his condition is innate, genetic, and cannot be learned. This implies that being an American is in the blood. However, in the later version, becoming an American is a choice immigrants can make once they arrive. Brom does not feel the stirrings of rebellion until he sets foot on U.S. soil and absorbs some of the culture (through the food), implying that what makes an American is not innate, and that it can be experienced only in the New World.

Knickerbocker Holiday *and the Changing Face of the Left*

The constantly shifting politics of *Knickerbocker Holiday* likely owed something to the various legal and political battles of 1937–38. As Roosevelt's popularity continued to decline, and the radical Left came under fire from both Congress and the larger population, Weill may have seen an opportunity to distance himself from an increasingly unpopular political movement. However, Weill's advice to Anderson reveals that he did not want to take his criticism of Roosevelt too far. He seemed willing to criticize Roosevelt's business policies, but little else. Indeed, in some subtle ways, *Knickerbocker Holiday* advocates for Leftist causes, particularly as it related to issues of race and immigration. Anderson, for his part, may have recognized that Roosevelt's declining popularity during these two years made him less of a threat to the kind of democracy he (Anderson) envisioned, and perhaps agreed to attenuate the politics in light of the changing nature of the presidency.

[63] Anderson, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, 18.

Many commentators have wondered why Weill would seek out Anderson, whose politics ran far to the Right of any of the composer's previous collaborators. The fact that their project attacked President Roosevelt, a favorite of the émigré population, has further baffled critics. Most writers attribute it to Weill's newfound adoration of U.S. history, and a desire to work with the famous playwright. Ronald Taylor writes that "Weill, the new American in love with his adopted country, could not resist such a blend of history and folklore, reality and poetry. Nor could he feel other than flattered that it was to him that the most prominent dramatist of the moment had put his question."[64] Ronald Sanders similarly writes that Weill accepted Anderson's project because "it was coming from the man who was perhaps Broadway's 'hottest' playwright of the moment. But there also were attractions in the subject matter. Weill was now passionately fond of history and folklore."[65] Given his choice of projects between his arrival and *Lady in the Dark*, Weill obviously had an interest in U.S. history and folklore, but to end the conversation there neglects the historical context of Weill's decision. By late 1937, Weill was particularly vulnerable to accusations of Communist ties, accusations that could get him deported back to Nazi Germany. An association with Anderson would have done much to dispel such speculation. The ideas explored in *Knickerbocker Holiday* also allowed Weill to participate in conversations that were happening within the émigré community in the late 1930s. Even if the play was primarily intended for a commercial audience, the questions that *Knickerbocker Holiday* poses regarding the relationship between economics and governmental power, and what makes an American, were on the minds of many refugees from Nazi Germany, not to mention many Americans themselves.

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[64] Ronald Taylor, *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 240.

[65] Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), 271.

The period of 1937–38 constituted some of the most difficult years for Roosevelt's tenure as President.[66] Although he accumulated a good deal of political capital in the 1936 elections, by the end of 1937, an unpopular battle with the supreme court and an economic downturn had wiped away the goodwill of the previous year. He signed the final piece of New Deal legislation in April 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act, which angered both the Left, who perceived the legislation as undermining unions, and the Right, because it established a state minimum wage. The President spent most of 1938 unsuccessfully campaigning in the South against anti-New Deal Democrats, who swept the midterm elections that year, and which further damaged his reputation. Furthermore, the Left in general suffered several crises during the same period. In the early 1930s, the slogan of Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) was "Communism is twentieth century Americanism," and Leftist intellectuals like Sidney Hook attempted to Americanize Marxist ideology.[67] The House Un-American Activities Committee originally existed to fight the twin "alien" ideologies of Fascism and Communism alike, but focused primarily on the former; the Committee began when The Friends of New Germany, a Nazi-sympathizing group based in the United States caused enough alarm that Congressman Samuel Dickstein established the Rules Committee (also called the McCormack-Dickstein Committee) to investigate un-American Nazi activities in the country in 1934. However, news of the Moscow trials reached the United States in 1936, and a series of violent clashes between Labor and the police began in the summer of 1937, beginning with the Memorial Day Massacre in south Chicago, as members of the union, at a protest against the local Republic Steel Company

[66] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 323–62.

[67] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), 129; John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York and London: Norton, 1992), 159–64.

plant, confronted the police, resulting in ten deaths and thirty wounded.[68] These events, and others, led to a backlash of public opinion against the Left. Congressman Martin Dies took control of the Rules Committee and wielded his power against both Fascists and Communists alike, which he deemed equally un-American.[69]

Any prospective immigrant with connections to the Communist party, no matter how thin, was almost always denied entry into the United States by 1937, and Weill's work with Brecht was already well-known in certain circles—the Group Theatre, the League of Composers, and the Hollywood Left—when he crossed the Atlantic. [70] Weill may have felt his ties to the Leftist Group Theatre and similar circles made him a political target at a time when he was applying for citizenship. Since Weill originally came to the United States on a visitor's visa at the invitation of eminent director Max Reinhardt in 1935, he did not have problems entering the country. However, he was still very careful to disavow any connection to the Communist Party, particularly after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. On June 16, 1941, Weill wrote to a Miss Lennihan he had encountered socially and who apparently accused him of Communist activity, which he vehemently denied, saying that "it is just as bad to be a communist as it is to be a Nazi."[71] He apparently sent a similar letter to one Winifred L. Wheeler, who wrote back on July 17, 1941, "I have never to anyone made the statement that you were a communist, much less

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[68] Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 178; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 317–19.

[69] Alex Goodall, "Diverging Paths: Nazism, The National Civic Federation, and American Anti-Communism, 1933–9," *Journal of Contemporary History* 44 (2009): 49–69, at pp. 60–62, 66–67

[70] Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*: *The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, trans. David Ferbach (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 466–68.

[71] Letter from Weill to Miss Lennihan, June 16, 1941, WLA, Box 47, Folder 9. The letter was likely to Winifred Lenihan, a member of Equity who fought to bar Communists from being elected to leadership positions within the organization. See "Rule Enforcement Sought for Equity," *New York Times*, October 2, 1940, p. 19.

'circulated a report.'"[72] Although Weill's work with Anderson began quite a bit earlier than these exchanges, the national mood, which had never been particularly welcoming of Communist and Socialist ideas, began to become downright intolerant around the time their partnership began. Weill's fear of being associated with Communism may explain why he agreed to work with Anderson on a New Deal satire: the project helped to protect his reputation in the United States.

Nevertheless, Weill's reasons for working on a musical that severely attacked Roosevelt (even in its attenuated final form) seem mysterious, particularly because Weill, like the majority of émigrés, counted the President as a political ally.[73] On August 18, 1937, Weill and his then-collaborator Paul Green heard a broadcast of a speech by Roosevelt as he attended a performance of Green's pageant *The Lost Colony* in Manteo, NC. The next day, Weill wrote to Green:

> I was very impressed by Roosevelt's speech on Roanoke Island. I think a few things he said could give exactly the idea for our play [*The Common Glory*]. You remember that I said in Chapel Hill, I have the feeling that most people who ever came to this country, came for the same reasons which brought me here: fleeing from the hate, the oppression, and the restlessness and troubles of the Old World to find freedom and happiness in the New World. It is exactly this idea which the president expressed in his speech: 'Most of them—the men, the women and the children, come hither seeking something very different—seeing an opportunity which they could not find in their homes of the old world.'[74]

If Weill believed in FDR's stance on immigration, he would likely not have approved of the idea of savagely satirizing his contemporary policies. In *Knickerbocker Holiday*, as I discuss below, Weill tried to prove Roosevelt right, showing that immigrants came to the United States in order to shake off the tyranny of the Old World, and that a democratic spirit defined the American

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[72] Letter from Winifred L. Wheeler to Weill, July 17, 1941, WLA, Box 48, Folder 44.

[73] Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930's to the Present* (New York: Viking, 1983), 196.

[74] Letter from Weill to Paul Green, August 19, 1937, WLA, Box 47, Folder 6. Weill accurately quotes Roosevelt's speech.

character. The figure of Stuyvesant also may have appealed to Weill as a German Jewish immigrant. The real Governor Stuyvesant had a place in the culture of German-Jewish-Americans as the first Gentile to welcome them (albeit grudgingly) to the country, and his name was often invoked in German-Jewish narratives of immigration.[75]

Still, in August 1937, Roosevelt maintained some measure of his political popularity; it was not until the following September that the economy truly spiraled out of control, and the President lost most of his support.[76] By the time Anderson and Weill began working on *Knickerbocker Holiday*, in order to appease certain factions of the democratic party, Roosevelt had abandoned many of the social policies of his first term. In July 1938, Roosevelt brokered an international conference on refugees at Évian in France. Although initially hopeful, many refugees were exceedingly disappointed in the outcome, as the United States refused to alter its quota system (discussed below), and other nations similarly did not agree to accept more refugees.[77] *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the story of immigrants becoming American, can be read as a response to Évian, reminding the nation of its immigrant beginnings, and modeling how immigrants can contribute to society.

Even so, Weill continued to admire Roosevelt, and found himself in a somewhat awkward position, wondering how to help steer Anderson away from his staunch disapproval of the New Deal. He cast about for ways to criticize the President, and finally settled on the idea of warning the President about the dangers of inaction in the face of conflict. For an early version of

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[75] Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915–1935* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 13.

[76] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 350.

[77] Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*, 270–71.

the script in which Weill and Anderson contemplated having the citizens of New Amsterdam comes under attack by the British, Weill wrote to Anderson

> Here may be your chance to draw a parallel between Stuyvesant and Roosevelt: the rich man is the one who wants to surrender the town to the English (because he expects better profits from them), he asks Stuyvesant to show them the letter from the English Admiral, and now Stuyvesant who always went with the crooks finally turns to the people in the street, but it is too late, he should have done it earlier, and the English are already marching into the town and overthrow him as well as the leader in the street.

In Weill's version of the story, the problem with Roosevelt/Stuyvesant is not that he is too dictatorial, but rather he is too slow to act because he is too concerned with his own profit margin.

Weill steered the Stuyvesant character toward a combination of governmental figures in addition to Roosevelt, and urged Anderson to bring out those alternate qualities. In the same letter, he described Stuyvesant as "the father of all ambitious governments who try to help the country but cannot get along without the help of the crooks,"[78] which could also describe the politicians of the Weimar Republic or (if you took away the part about helping the country) Hitler. Weill's idea of having Stuyvesant's failure to act in the face of the English could be an extension of his Weimar Republic metaphor, with the Stuyvesant's connections to the crooks and their profits blinding him to the danger of the Nazi party, but it could also serve as a warning to Roosevelt that the situation in Europe posed a threat, and that he should take action before it was too late. In either case, Roosevelt/Stuyvesant never oversteps his constitutional powers, but, rather, fails to use those powers correctly.

For his part, Anderson may have read the changing political situation somewhat differently. In special session of congress in November 1937, Senator Josiah Baily of Virginia

[78] Weill to Maxwell Anderson, April 17, 1938, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Weill, Kurt 4 ALS 3 TLS 1 telegram to Anderson, Maxwell 1 – nd 7 – 1937–1947."

drafted a "Conservative Manifesto," calling for lower taxes, a balanced budget, and the rights of business against the government, essentially founding modern Conservatism.[79] Baily's charter served as a rallying cry for various anti-New Dealers across the nation, including laissez-faire capitalists like Anderson, who may have felt that the resurgent conservatism signaled that an anti-Rooseveltian satire could find an audience, whereas before, Roosevelt's popularity would have interfered with ticket sales. However, as 1938 went on, Roosevelt backed away from his previous economic policies, and began to make concessions to the Conservative movement, such as reducing his stimulus spending, and curtailing his regulatory legislative agenda, which may have made Anderson more inclined to accept the suggestions to soften the character.

In the end, two views of Roosevelt emerged from *Knickerbocker Holiday* in the form of Stuyvesant and the President's onstage namesake. The first embodied all of Anderson's fears about the President's interference in the economy, which the playwright worried would result in a government takeover of private enterprise. The second reflected more of Weill's concerns. The character Roosevelt begins the story somewhat weak and naïve, but in the end refuses to hang (in other words, lynch) Brom, and stands up to the tyrant. The character modeled a Progressive program for the President advocated by many on the Left, namely, addressing racial injustice and confronting Fascism. *Knickerbocker Holiday* allowed Weill to continue to address these concerns, and others (as I discuss below), while disassociating himself from an increasingly unpopular political movement.

[79] Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 340.

"Good" and "Bad" Germans

The New Deal has dominated both popular and critical reception of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, but the political message has overshadowed its cultural lessons. Weill likely had other motives besides disassociating himself from the fading Left. In *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Weill got a chance to remind his audience of the immigrant beginnings of the United States at a time when anti-immigrant sentiment ran high. Some in the United States decried the arrival of so many of Germany's cultural and intellectual elite, fearing that the injection of Teutonic influence would stifle native-born artistic efforts.[80] Those immigrants without cultural capital fared even worse. Despite the rising tide of Fascism in Europe, Congress refused to alter the quota system set it place by the Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act). Those provisions only allotted 25,957 spaces per year for German immigrants, and between 1933 and 1940, authorities only filled the quota in 1939.[81] Even though around 30,000 more immigrants were issued emergency visas, the United States still denied entry to thousands of German refugees.[82] If less prominent refugees did manage to obtain a visa, they still faced increasing obstacles. Although technically protected under the Fourteenth Amendment's provision that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws," states still passed laws banning

[80] Alan Lessem, "The Émigré Experience: Schoenberg in America," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 58–67, at p. 61.

[81] Roger Daniels, "American Refugee Policy in Historical Perspective," in *The Muses Flee Hitler: Cultural Transfer and Adaptation 1930–1945*, ed. Jarrell C. Jackman and Carla M. Borden (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 61–78, at p. 66.

[82] Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*, 466.

immigrants from using national resources, and professional organizations sought to bar immigrants from obtaining licenses to work.[83]

The setting and story of *Knickerbocker Holiday* reminded the audience of the fact that the U.S. government and society was founded by immigrants. The entire production retells the story of the origins of the United States in colonists "fleeing from the hate, the oppression, and the restlessness and troubles of the Old World to find freedom and happiness in the New World," to use FDR's words. Weill and Anderson did not need to emphasize the original inhabitants of New Amsterdam's reasons for leaving Holland given that many audience members would likely assume they were fleeing tyranny since that was the version of U.S. history taught to most school children. In *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the hate and oppression of the Old World try to follow the immigrants across the ocean just as the English tried to keep control of the original thirteen colonies, but the newly American burghers manage to resist the take-over and preserve their freedom. At its core, *Knickerbocker Holiday* tells the story of how immigrants can become loyal U.S. citizens. Obviously, Weill had a vested interest in promoting this idea. Although anti-German sentiment in the United States during the 1930s did not rise to levels it did during World War I, suspicion of immigrants, particularly German immigrants, ran high throughout the decade. Put simply, the question facing the colonists of New Amsterdam in *Knickerbocker Holiday* gave Weill the chance to tell his own story of the origins of U.S democracy, and to point out that European immigrants could become truly American.

When *Knickerbocker Holiday* opened, audiences in the United States still considered Weill a German exile. His studio biography for Paramount, dated March 8, 1938 begins with "He looks like a very young assistant professor at an European college," and continues, "As a matter

[83] Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 3–4.

of fact he is the most sensational opera composer in Europe since Wagner and Richard Strauss, but the librettos on which he worked himself were too 'contemporary' to suit the German government."[84] In a feature for the *New York Times* on *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Jack Gould wrote that "for all the imagination apparent in the score Mr. Weill's Teutonic preciseness constantly expressed itself. Walking with military carriage he slowly paced the aisles. Quickly he would come to a halt, rush to one musician out of the many in the orchestra and counsel softly 'Change that G to F sharp.' Then he would resume his silent patrol."[85] Gould sets up "imagination"—a valued American commodity—as antithetical to Weill's "Teutonic preciseness." However, even if his public saw him as a typically over-regimented foreigner, he was portrayed as a friendly alien. In the words of Andy Hamilton of the *Los Angeles Times*, Weill was one of a group who was exiled for the crime of "political beliefs [that] do not dovetail with those of the dictators" and who contributed to "cultural windfall" that hit the United States in the late 1930s.[86] But even if some segments of the public appreciated the influx of refugees as a cultural boon, they still saw them as inherently German.

This double standard sprang in part from a fear of a "Fifth Column." The term originated in the Spanish Civil War with the Nationalists, who claimed that as four columns of troupes marched toward the Madrid, a fifth column of loyal subjects had already infiltrated the city. In 1938, U.S. citizens became increasingly disturbed by the Nazi regime and their annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, which they blamed in part on similarly hidden Nazi elements embedded in those societies. The newsreel series *The March of Time* released a twenty-minute

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[84] Bruno David Ussher, "Kurt Weill," MHL/CC, Folder, "Kurt Weill."

[85] Gould, "Dutch in the Forties."

[86] Andy Hamilton, "Thanks to the Dictators," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1938, pp. 7, 14, at p. 7.

segment called "Inside Nazi Germany," which warned Americans that Nazi Germany had one goal: world domination.[87] This newsreel included a section warning its viewers that "propaganda extends far beyond Fascist frontiers, and today Hitler expects every German everywhere to help spread the Nazi creed," and warned citizens against the German-American Bund (GAB), calling it "the loudest mouthpiece of this Nazi propaganda drive." The segment includes footage from the GAB's summer camps and drill centers of German-American youths parading around a swastika on American soil, and advised the public that Fritz Kuhn, the leader of the Bund, claimed to have already recruited 200,000 German-Americans into the society. The GAB was indeed the loudest voice in the country advocating National Socialism, although by 1938 the German government had distanced itself from the organization.[88] Still, U.S. citizens did see them as a threat. On April 2, 1938, the *Baltimore Sun* worried that "German blood is calling to German blood all the way across the Atlantic."[89] To make matters worse, in an echo of the CPUSA's strategy, in 1938 Fritz Kuhn and the GAB decided that the best way to recruit was to portray Nazism as the new Americanism, one specifically targeted at the nation's White populations. On September 17, 1938, the *New York Amsterdam News* reported that Kuhn claimed that the GAB stood for "the Constitution, the American flag, and the lofty ideals of the founding fathers," and demanded "a socially just, white, gentile-ruled United States."[90] However, the

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[87] "Inside Nazi Germany," *The March of Time* 4/6 (1938). The production is available online in two parts at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJPZ-QsNk9g and http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=k-pNum5j3EM&NR=1, accessed July 17, 2012.

[88] Eric J. Sanjeen, "Anti-Nazi Sentiment in Film: *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and the German-American Bund," *American Studies* 20 (Fall 1979): 69–81, at p. 78.

[89] "Blood Call," *Baltimore Sun*, April 2, 1938, p. 8.

[90] "Stop the Bums," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 17, 1938, p. 10.

strategy backfired, and the United States just became even more suspicious—clearly, the public saw, these German immigrants did not understand what it meant to be an American.

The discovery of a Nazi ring of spies in New York in 1938 also fanned the flames of American suspicion of German immigrants, and the investigation and trial continued parallel to the creation of *Knickerbocker Holiday*. On February 27, the *New York Times* announced that the FBI had arrested Guenther Gustave Rumrich, an army deserter born in the United States but who had grown up in Germany, as the leader of a Nazi spy ring, along with the German-born Private Erich Glaser, and Johanna Hofmann, a hairdresser aboard the ocean liner SS Europa.[91] The details of their various plots ran from truly dangerous to comic. Although they did manage to steal the secret codes of the Air Service, they also dreamed up an elaborate scheme to kidnap Colonel H.W.T. Eglin, the commander of Fort Totten, an official who was not privy to any secret documents, and to pose as state department officials in order to procure blank passports for other agents. The story continued to make the papers throughout the year as the case became more serious. By June, eighteen people (two of whom escaped, and nine of whom were believed to be living in Germany), including two officials in the German War ministry, had been indicted in what the *Los Angeles Times* called "a gigantic plot against America."[92] The trial began in early October, and the final sentences were handed down in November; it captured public attention and inspired many reporters to advise their readers on how to recognize spies in their midst. Spies "should be the sort who slaps you on the back and finds out all about you and your business without alarming you in the process," warned Hanson W. Baldwin of the *New York*

[91] "Leader Confesses," *New York Times*, February 27, 1938, pp. 1, 30.

[92] "Hitler Aides Indicted in American Spy Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1938, pp. 1–2.

Times Magazine.[93] The entire affair was made into a movie in 1939, called *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, which, although it was made primarily by émigrés, portrayed most German-American citizens as little more than dupes of a foreign government, and implicated the GAB in the plot.[94]

In this climate, Weill made several efforts on behalf of himself and other émigrés. On June 17, 1940, Weill sent largely identical letters to two prominent literary émigrés, Bruno Frank (who was also close friends with Behrman) and Erika Mann, in which he proposed taking a public stance as a German loyal to the United States and democracy:

> I guess I am not the only one who is trying to figure out what our, the refugees', position will be in this country in the next months and years. What can we do to help America in her inevitable fight against Nazism? What can we do to avoid being mixed up with Fifth Column elements when the anti-alien feeling is growing stronger? What can we do to prove to our American friends that we are loyal citizens of this country? ...
>
> My idea is to form immediately an organization called something like "Alliance of Loyal Alien Americans" with the purpose of convincing the authorities and the public opinion in this country that we are strongly anti-Nazi, that they can count on us in every effort to save American democracy and that they can consider us in every way as faithful American citizens. This organization could render good services to the authorities in the investigations of the Fifth Column activities of all our members. We also could provide the press with material about the contributions of our friends to the economical, cultural and educational life in the U.S.A. The organization could protect possible victims of unjust accusations which might come up in the next months. We also could be helpful to those unfortunate friends who remained in the countries now conquered by Germany. (You know that the new immigration regulations provide exemptions for those "who could be helpful to the United States" and our knowledge of "good and bad elements" might be used by the immigration officers.)[95]

He also suggested that Thomas Mann assume leadership of this organization. Erika Mann responded on July 2, promising that she would discuss the idea with Frank, as well as with Max Reinhardt and Bruno Walter, although she also apologized for not giving the idea her full

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[93] Hanson W. Baldwin, "The Spy Flourishes in an Era of Rearmament," *New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 1938, p. 4.

[94] See Sanjeen, "Anti-Nazi Sentiment in Film."

[95] Letter from Weill to Erika Mann, June 17, 1940, WLA Box 47, Folder 11. The letter to Frank resides in WLA Box 47, Folder 4.

attention, and the project never moved beyond the idea stage.[96] Weill's "Alliance of Loyal Alien Americans" seems like a response to the GAB. He wanted to assure both the public and law enforcement that not all German immigrants were Nazi supporters, and that many were loyal to the true U.S. ideals of democracy. His concern with cooperating with the authorities was probably caused by the Alien Registration Act of 1940, which passed Congress less than two weeks after Weill to wrote Frank and Mann. Weill seems to be particularly concerned that the authorities can tell those "good" German immigrants from the potential members of the Nazi Fifth Column.

Although Weill's suggestion came two years after work started on *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the issues that inspired the idea had already captured the public mind, and the final version of the show responds to the problem of differentiating the good Germans from the bad. As discussed above, the idea of "Dutchmen" was heavily coded as "German" in the middle of the twentieth century due to the presence of Germans on vaudeville stages in "Dutch" ("Deutsch") acts. Parts of *Knickerbocker Holiday* have characters speaking in a comic mixture of German and English in an accent very similar to the "Germanican" accents of vaudeville[97] (for example: "Zhentlemen of der council, ve haf seen dot ship and der new Governor gomes in maybe a half-a-hour"[98]). Only the council uses this dialect; neither Stuyvesant nor any of the younger generation speak with any identifiable accent at all. When the council makes their tyrannical pronouncements in their broken dialect, they not only seem funnier, but also more European.

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[96] Letter from Erika Mann to Weill, July 2, 1940, WLA, Box 48, Folder 46

[97] Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater*, 180–81.

[98] Anderson, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, 5.

To these Old World Germans, Weill gives Old World music.[99] Many have noted the resemblance between *Knickerbocker Holiday* and Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas. Anderson openly admitted to Logan that, having never written a musical before, "I had to follow *The Mikado* as I would a cookbook to find any kind of form."[100] Many contemporary reviewers also compared the team to the famous British pair, including Nelson B. Bell of the *Washington Post*, who wrote that in *Knickerbocker Holiday*, there "may be discerned the possible genesis of an American authorial counterpart of Gilbert and Sullivan. This, of course, involves Mr. Weill."[101] "Young People Think About Love," "One Indispensable Man," "To War," and "The Scars," "May and January," all have a Gilbert and Sullivan flair. Brom's character defining numbers "Nowhere to Go but Up" and "How Can You Tell an American," on the other hand, have a more syncopated, jazzy sound more reminiscent of contemporaneous American popular music. The Gilbert and Sullivan—the more European—style numbers are associated with the Old World and more "Dutch" characters. With the exception of "September Song," which was composed late in the process at Huston's request—the songs which Weill and Anderson hoped would become popular are associated with the character who would become the first American. This was not always the case; in the early stages of the show, several of the songs meant for Brom more resembled English operetta than American popular song. "I Do Business in my Hat," Brom and Tenpin's original entrance number (later replaced with "Nowhere to Go but Up,") is reminiscent of a typical Gilbert and Sullivan patter song, complete with echoes by the chorus (see example

[99] Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater*, 286.

[100] Logan, *Josh*, 109.

[101] Nelson B. Bell, "The Playwrights' Company Proves Power in the Theater," *Washington Post*, October 9, 1938, p. TS3.

3.1). “Brom’s Complaint” (cut in the final version) in which Brom tells the cast about his malady, also resembles the music of the famous pair (see example 3.2).

Example 3.1 *Knickerbocker Holiday* (cut), “I Do Business in my Hat,” mm. 19–48.

Allegro giocoso
Brom
Hal - lo, hal-lee, hal - lo! I shar-pen the knives of New
Tenpin
Am-ster-dam wives for a - ny odd bit of change. I put a new edge on chi - sel or wedge or im - ple-ments new and strange. I do
Brom
bu-si - ness in my hat and con - se - quent - ly at the bot-tom of the mo - ne - ta - ry range.
Tenpin
I do bu - si - ness in my hat and con - se - quent-ly at the bot-tom of the mo-ne-ta-ry range.
Chorus
He does bu-si-ness in his hat and con-se-quent-ly at the bot-tom of the mo-ne - ta - ry range.
He does bu-si-ness in his hat and con-se-quent-ly at the bot-tom of the mo-ne - ta - ry range.

Example 3.2 *Knickerbocker Holiday* (cut), "Brom's Complaint," mm. 6–39.

Allegro moderato

Brom

From a child I've been dogged by mis - for - tune and loa-ded with care at my hands: I'm meek when I hear folk im-

12

por-tune but fur - i - ous un - der com - mands. My past has been lit-tered with deeds which all must con-si - der de-

18

Chorus

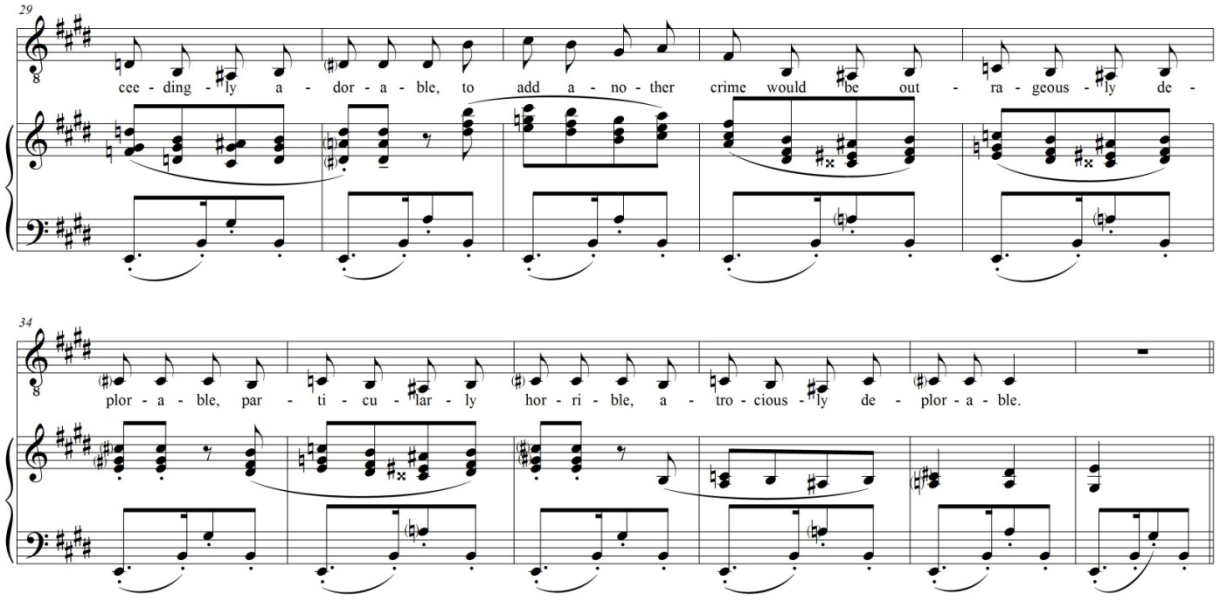
Brom

plo-ra-ble. Oh, if your reek your redes, you'll par-don him who pleads. Or per - haps I'll add a crime which is par - tic - u - lar - ly hor-ri - ble, par-

23

ti - cu - lar - ly,+ ho - ri - ble par - ti - cu - lar - ly ho - ri - ble. Oh sirs, I love a maid who is ex -

Example 3.2 (cont.)

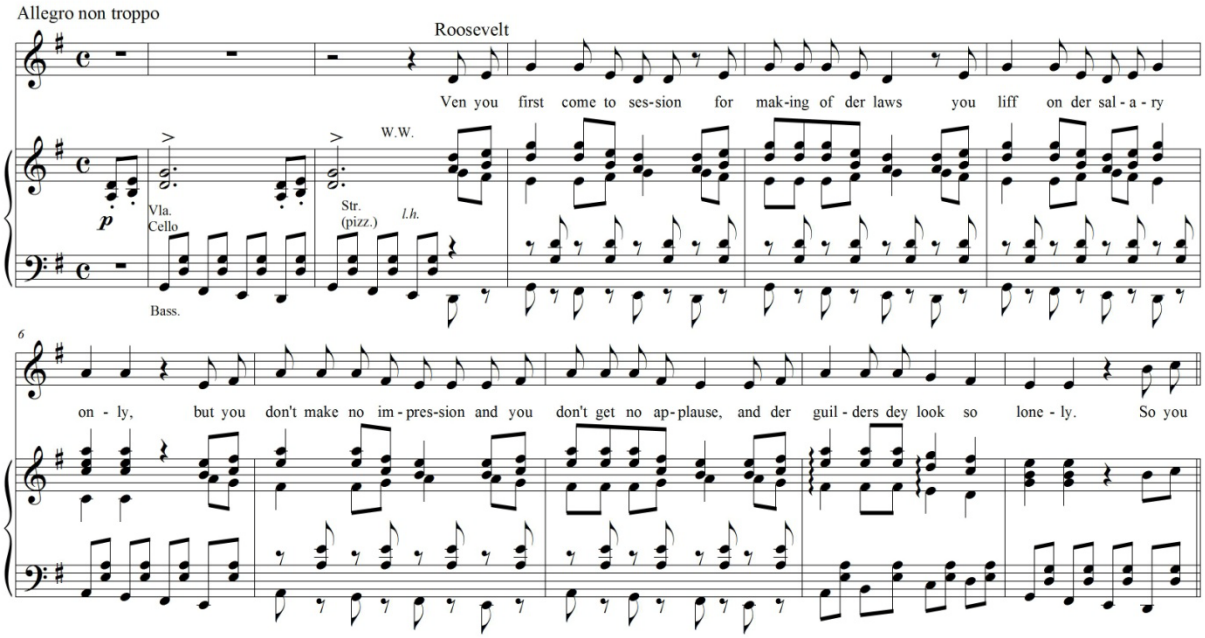


As typical for Weill, he also differentiated the "good" from the "bad" using dance forms and rhythms. The council's introductory song "Hush Hush" is based on a fast polka rhythm (example 3.3), even though Weill cast the song in common time and polkas are generally in 2/4. Although he does not speak with an accent, much of Stuyvesant's music also identifies him with the Old World, introducing him with a slow, German-like march. The souvenir program makes a point of the Governor's association with Germany: "since Stuyvesant was coming to New Amsterdam from Europe and since that time (1647) Europe was becoming strongly Prussianized, the music that Weill provided to herald the stage entrance of Walter Huston as the turbulent Dutchman is a take-off on an old Prussian military march."[102] The same can be said of "The Scars." "Sitting in Jail," a habañera (example 3.4), also links Stuyvesant to the Spanish Fascists.

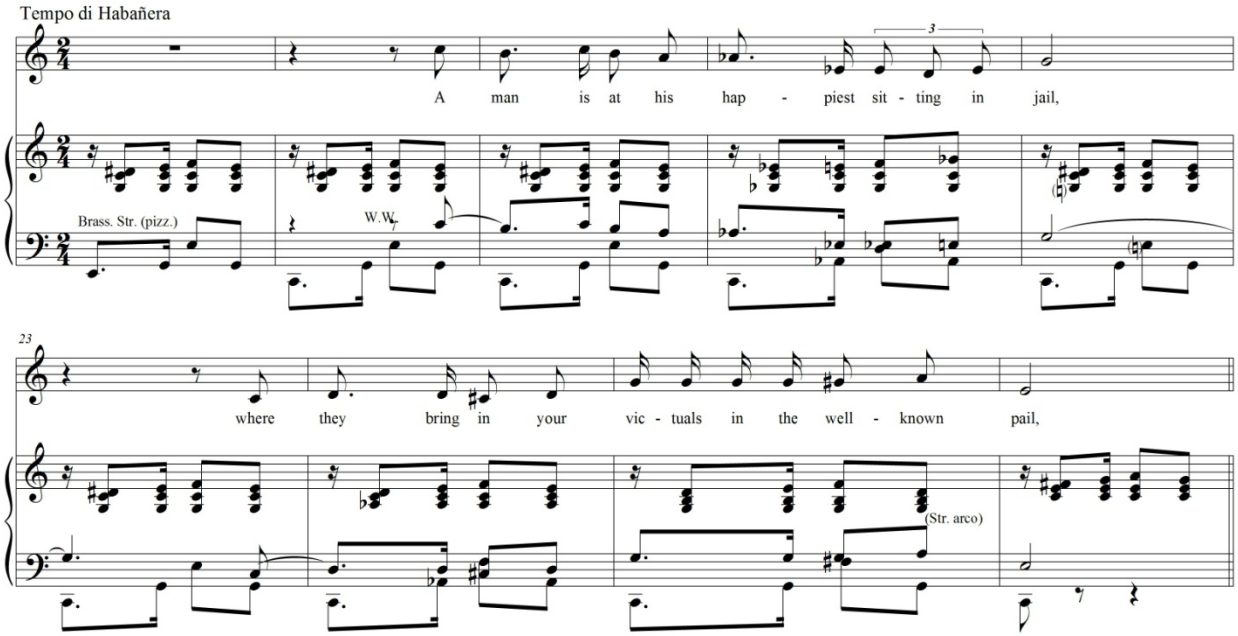
[102] Souvenir Program.

For the younger generation (Brom, Tina, Tenpin) and the one native-born American (Irving), Weill writes in quintessentially American genres (although Brom and Tina's love duets are fairly

Example 3.3 *Knickerbocker Holiday*, "Hush Hush," mm. 1–10.



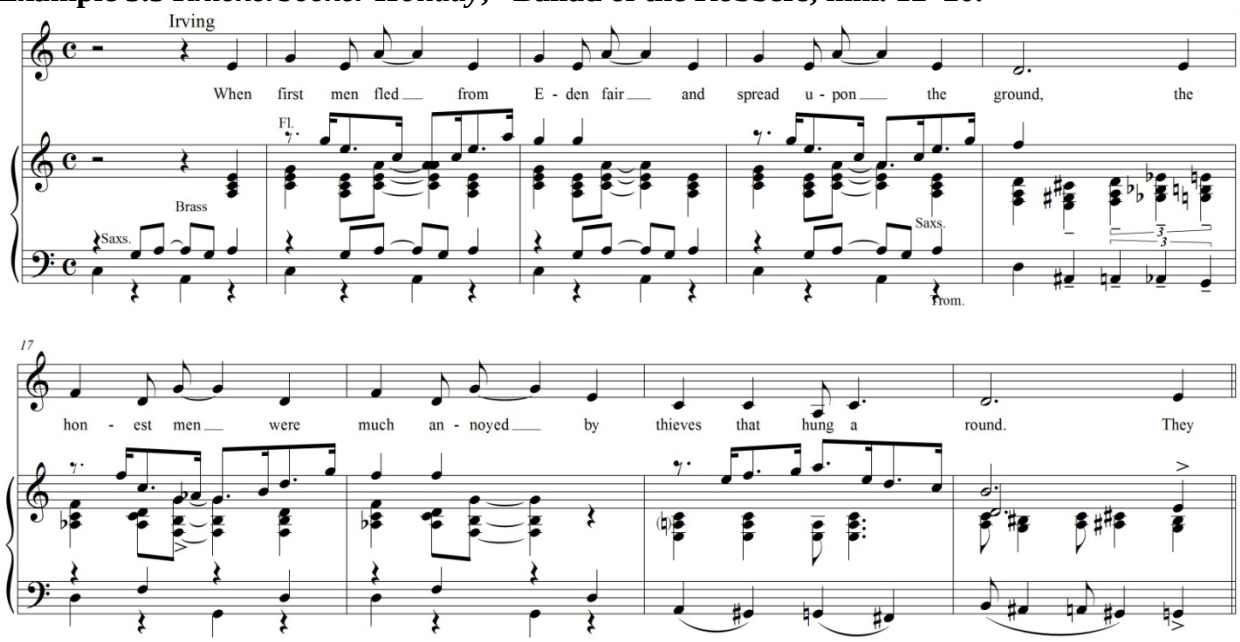
Example 3.4 *Knickerbocker Holiday*, "Sitting in Jail," mm. 17–26.



1938 (Renewed) Hampshire House Publishing Corp., New York, NY and Warner Chappell Music, Inc., Los Angeles, CA.

standard operetta fair). “Nowhere to Go but Up” and “How Can You Tell an American” both feature jazzy orchestration and syncopated rhythms. Irving’s “The Ballad of the Robbers,” resembles a ragtime, an indigenous American song type (example 3.5). Its position adjacent to “Sitting in Jail” in the score makes the contrast particularly plain considering the cakewalk rhythm closely resembles the habañera one—they are differentiated by orchestration and tempo (the same applies to the chorus of “Brom’s Complaint,” which has the same rhythm).

Example 3.5 *Knickerbocker Holiday*, “Ballad of the Robbers, mm. 12–20.



KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY, Words by Maxwell Anderson; Music by Kurt Weill, TRO-© Copyright 1938 (Renewed) Hampshire House Publishing Corp., New York, NY and Warner Chappell Music, Inc., Los Angeles, CA

Stuyvesant and the council represent the “bad” Germans, fictional counterparts to Kuhn and the GAB, seeking to bring German order to the chaotic New Amsterdam (although interestingly missing from the Governor’s program is any sense of racial animosity). Stuyvesant’s lack of an accent reflects the GAB’s policy of disguising Nazi ideology as

patriotism. Like the GAB, Stuyvesant at first seems almost reasonable—he praises Brom's ingenuity, and he promises relief from the council's buffoonery, but he turns out to be a wolf very obviously in sheep's clothing when he reveals his demands for complete obedience, and the rest of his totalitarian policies. "Bad" Germans, the show implies, can pretend to be Americans, but they have not left behind the trappings of European language, culture, or politics. Making the older characters the "bad" Germans may have been a calculated move; the "Inside Nazi Germany" newsreel shows a town meeting in which a citizen stands up and declares "we have no quarrel with what we term the older order of German people, but we do object, and we do protest against the insidious, treacherous activities of Nazi agents masquerading as American citizens," implying that more recent immigrants—like Weill—were to blame for the infiltration. Brom and Tina represent "good" Germans, the "loyal aliens" who can and eventually do become Americans. Their jazzy music and their youthful energy combine for two strong markers of the New World.

In this environment, "How Can You Tell an American?" becomes a very important question, alongside its implied cousin in this play "how do you become an American?" Weill and Anderson's suggestion that attitude rather than blood determines nationality runs entirely counter to Nazi and GAB ideology. It also implies that nationality can be fluid, at least on the American side. Indeed, by the end of the show, even the "bad" Germans come to understand what it means to be an American: the council defies Stuyvesant's order to hang Brom, and Irving bestows American status on Stuyvesant when the latter reveals that, like Brom, he was never able to take orders. However, the show does seem to imply that one cannot become an American away from American soil, that there is something transformative about the culture or land of the country. The show's particular answer to both questions—the sign of being an American is

rebelliousness, and anyone (even "bad" Germans) can become one—resonates with Weill's concern expressed in his letter to Mann that he and other faithful new Americans help make visible the loyalty of other, less prominent immigrants. If anyone can become an American, the show seems to be saying, then even Germans can be rehabilitated.

Becoming American

Knickerbocker Holiday echoes many issues that concerned immigrants as well as native-born Americans. Both Brom's transformation into an American and Stuyvesant's realization that he has been one all along were standard stories many prominent émigrés gave upon arriving on U.S. soil. In particular, elements of Brom's story echo that of Thomas Mann, arguably the most well-known of all of Hitler's exiles, and someone whom both Weill and Anderson greatly respected. Anderson had in his files a copy of Mann's November 1938 manifesto "To the Civilized World," in which Mann decried the perversion of language by dictators and the cowardice of those democratic countries who refused to take action.[103] He also became involved with Erika Mann's efforts with the BBC to broadcast allied propaganda.[104] Weill and Anderson likely drew on Mann's example, as well as stories from other immigrants, who purported to take on an entirely new identity when they crossed the Atlantic.

Weill's suggestion that Mann be the face of his Alliance is telling. Along with Albert Einstein, Mann was probably the most visible face of the German intellectual immigration. He

[103] It resides in MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Mann, Thomas To the civilized world, a manifesto Tms/mimeo." Although written after *Knickerbocker Holiday* opened, the essay paints a picture of a dictator similar to Stuyvesant in that he promises freedom and prosperity but actually rules with an iron fist. Mann asks "shall we listen only to those who say 'peace,' when they mean war, 'order' when they mean 'anarchy,' 'resurrection,' when they think of bottomless abasement, 'freedom,' when slavery without hop is their goal, 'manliness,' when they mean bestiality, 'culture' when they speak in the name of the vengeful terrorism of stupidity?"

[104] Letters from Erika Mann to Maxwell Anderson, January 30 and May 13, 1942, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "Mann, Erika 2 TLS to Anderson, Maxwell, 1942 January 30 1942 May 13."

first visited the United States on a lecture tour in 1934 and many times thereafter, until he accepted a position at Princeton University in June 1938, just as Anderson finished the first draft of the libretto. Even before he settled in the United States, the nation greeted the Nobel Prize winner with open arms. When Mann came to the United States in 1937 on the invitation of the New School for Social Research, prominent immigrant supporter Dorothy Thompson welcomed him in the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Baltimore Sun*:

> We are glad that you are here, Thomas Mann. No nation can exile you. Yours is a larger citizenship, in no mean country. Wherever men love reason, hate obscurantism, shun darkness, turn toward light, know gratitude, praise virtue, despise meanness, kindle to sheer beauty; wherever minds are sensitive, hearts generous and spirits free—there is your home. In welcoming you, a country but honors itself.[105]

His many interviews and articles in U.S. periodicals attest to his stature. Like Weill, Mann sought to use his prominence to express gratitude towards and admiration for the United States as a nation of immigrants, and to excoriate Fascism. Upon receiving an honorary degree from Princeton in May 1939, he told the *New York Times Magazine* that "America is the classical instance of a country built up by immigration and racial mixture. Her power of absorption is without limits; at the same time she displays the clearest and best national character. She is a peculiar combination of strength and tolerance. She is at once a people and a world." He also noted that "no one who has not been born a Frenchman or an Englishman can hope to become one. … On the other hand, you can become an American."[106] He explained the German situation by saying that it "invariably happens when a dictator obtains control. As soon as he achieves power he strives to degrade and corrupt humanity so that he may enforce his will. He destroys by

[105] Dorothy Thompson, "On the Record: To Thomas Mann," *Baltimore Sun*, April 14, 1937, p. 13, and *Atlanta Constitution*, April 18, 1937, p. 4K.

[106] "Thomas Mann Gets Degree at Princeton," *New York Times*, May 19, 1939, p. 22.

terror, not confining that terror within the boundaries of his own country but endeavoring to spread it through the rest of the world. It is only be spreading terror that he can survive."[107]

However, Mann's democratic proclivities only dated from the early 1930s. Before the rise of Fascism in Europe, Mann was well known for his disinterest in politics. During World War I, Mann claimed that politics and art could not productively occupy the same mind, and that to be German was to concern oneself only with the latter. "I am deeply convinced," he wrote in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), "that the German people will never be able to love political Democracy simply because they cannot love politics itself, and that the much decried 'authoritarian state' is and remains one that is proper and becoming to the German people."[108] The authoritarian state, he argues, frees citizens from earthly political concerns, and allows greater intellectual and creative development: "it is the 'politicization of the intellect," the distortion of the concept of intellect into that of reforming enlightenment, of revolutionary humanitarianism, that works like poison and orpiment on me; and I know that my disgust and protest is not something insignificantly personal and temporary, but that here, the national character is speaking through me." Anderson's Stuyvesant would have approved. However, even as early as 1922, Mann began to reform his beliefs, and eventually became a great supporter of the democratic Weimar Republic, which earned him the enmity of the National Socialists. By 1937, Mann had almost completely reversed his views, telling the New School of Social Research:

> It is easy enough to say the imaginative writer has nothing to do with politics; that he can entirely dissociate himself from them, and that he actually derogates from his high calling

[107] S.J. Woolf, "Thomas Mann Scores Pact with Fascism: Noted German Exile Warns Democracies to Stand Fast," *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 1938, p. 5, continued on p. 22, at p. 5.

[108] Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), 16–17.

> by paying attention to political developments. That is nonsense. For firstly—as if any imaginative writer would interfere in politics today wantonly or for his own pleasure. As if it were not a matter of direct necessity a despairing protest against the wicked aggressions carried out by politics upon his most sacred self, upon spiritual freedom, upon mankind itself.[109]

The narrative of the transformed immigrant that Mann presented to the public has a direct analog in *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Like Mann, Brom has no trouble with authority in Europe, but time in New Amsterdam gives him a rebellious American streak. While Mann's comments in 1918 have to be taken in the context of the destruction of World War I, and his change of heart was more likely a result of developments in Germany rather than spending time in the United States, it flattered the American ego to believe that their culture engendered such transformations. By echoing Mann's narrative in *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Weill accomplishes one of his stated objectives, to "make out our young man a leader on account of his unability [*sic*] to take orders."[110] Brom leads his community in some of the ways Mann led his community of émigrés, and that Weill hoped he would lead the Alliance of Loyal Aliens. By propagating an already well-known conversion narrative in *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Weill helped to portray the good side of German immigrants to the American public.

Mann was not the only immigrant to publically change his views upon arrival. In February 1939, the Jewish-Italian anti-Fascist Max Ascoli, a professor at the University in Exile at the New School for Social Research, proudly published his story of becoming a U.S. citizen in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He wrote "I could not become a Fascist. I became an American. Therefore Italy is my former country. The Italian culture is my former culture. These are the facts. … One cannot change his country as he changes his shirt. It is a great privilege to become an American."

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[109] Thomas Mann, "Thomas Mann and Politics," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1937, p. 6.

[110] Quoted in Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 71.

He peppered his account with American tropes, writing that "It did not cause me any trouble to become an Italian, but my becoming an American is my own work," and "I have remade myself here." [111] Historian Anthony Heilbut quotes an unnamed émigré professor as saying "how wonderful it was [after emigrating] to simplify things. We Germans have this horrible trait of making green appear gold. This damnable love of paradox. It's just intellectual trickery, and you Americans cured us of it."[112]

Even if an émigré did not publically admit to having been changed by the United States, the press often subtly implied that being on American soil had changed them for the better. This was particularly true for composers. Although he had been writing for Hollywood since 1935, Erich Wolfgang Korngold settled permanently in the United States only in 1938, when the Nazis seized his property while he was composing the score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. After he officially announced the move, the *New York Times* reported that he had "shaken the Nazis out of his system."[113] Arnold Schoenberg also promoted his earlier, tonal works when he arrived, in an effort to, in the words of musicologist Sabine Feisst, "revise his image as musical bogeyman."[114] In return, he was awarded the title "music rebel" by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, a far cry from his previous appellations: "arch cacophonist," "anarchist," and purveyor of "musical occultism" and "aural chaos." The cases of Schoenberg, Korngold, and others show that the narrative of the "bad" German reformed by emigration was a standard way that Americans

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[111] Max Ascoli, "No. 38 Becomes an American," *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1939): 168–74, at p. 170.

[112] Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise*, 76.

[113] Thornton Delehanty, "A Score for Robin Hood," *New York Times*, May 22, 1938, p. X4.

[114] Sabine Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World: The American Years* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 158.

understood the story of the refugees. Through Brom, Stuyvesant, and the rest of the council, Weill and Anderson put this story onstage for all to see.

Other Projects with the Playwrights' Producing Company

Knickerbocker Holiday did not give Weill the commercial hit musical he wanted (although "September Song" became very successful on its own), but in the process he finally managed to form permanent professional and personal bonds. During one particularly jolly meeting of the board of the PPC at Sherwood's home on February 8, 1940, the minutes cheekily record that, "Mr. Sherwood then displayed his collection of music boxes. It was unanimously decided that these music boxes be eviscerated and new mechanisms installed that would play tunes by Mr. Kurt Weill."[115] Between *Knickerbocker Holiday* in 1938 and Weill's next musical *Lady in the Dark*, which opened in January 1941, Weill worked almost exclusively with the members of PPC (with the exception of the second *Railroads on Parade*)—although they were not slated to produce all of those productions—including two more projects with Anderson, *Ulysses Africanus*, and the radio cantata *The Ballad of the Magna Carta* which aired in 1940. He also wrote incidental music for two PPC productions: Sidney Howard's *Madam, Will You Walk?* (1939) and Elmer Rice's *Two on an Island* (1940), although music survives only for the former. He also talked about a working on a play called *The Pirate* with S.N. Behrman for Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne for the Theatre Guild, although whether he was to write incidental music or a

[115] "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the Playwrights' Producing Company," February 8, 1940, MAC, Series "Misc.," Folder "The Playwrights' Producing Co., Inc. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors 66 Tcc,s and Tcc ms S 1938–1940." All minutes cited later reside in this folder.

full-fledged musical play is unclear. Both *Madam Will You Walk?* and *The Pirate* demonstrate that Weill continued to work on the themes that dominated his earlier works of the decade.

Madam, Will You Walk? turned out to be Sidney Howard's final play after the author died suddenly in a tractor accident on his farm in Tyringham, Massachusetts. Although the production starred George M. Cohan and opened on November 20, 1939 to good notices at Ford's theatre in Washington, D.C., it never made it to Broadway because of legal issues with Howard's estate.[116] *Madam* retells the Faust legend, substituting Mary Coyle, the daughter of a recently deceased corrupt member of Tammany Hall, for the famous doctor. She makes a pact with a "Dr. Brightlee" (played by Cohan) in order to undo some of the damage of her immoral father by reviving the vaudeville circuit. In this version of the story, the devil is a force older than the Judeo-Christian tradition, and intimately bound up with the spirit of both liberty and theater, which he sees as related concepts. He tells Mary that the Greeks "called me Dionysos the nature god of fruitfulness and wine and the theater in general," and after the Jews ("a stern, moral race") and Christians began to look unkindly upon him, "my director cast me out of heaven saying 'You are to be the animating force. You are to be the one to put the spirit of independence, of individual ambition, into those little crawling things down there.'" He also admits that "I've been especially active in Europe—and it's been the greatest failure of my life."[117]

Madam, Will You Walk? took on subjects and issues that were already familiar to Weill. The plot shares some themes with *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Howard's mischievous Dr. Brightlee resembles Anderson's Stuyvesant; both are older male figures from outside the community who come in and incite characters to "rise up and assert themselves." The emphasis on individual

[116] "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the Playwrights Producing Company," October 19, 1939.

[117] Sidney Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* WLA, Box 33, Folder 466, pp. 1–34.

responsibility and revolution also echoes *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Furthermore, *Madam, Will You Walk?* also embodied many of Weill's ideas on music, art, and culture in society. The composer famously lamented that he lived in "an age in which opera lost contact with the theatre," which he believed led people to view classical art as "a museum piece, toilsomely preserved by its devotees."[118] In *Madam, Will You Walk?* Mary's late father has set up a series of free classical music concerts in the park in order to salvage what is left of his reputation. However, Mary finds that she is not interested in these concerts. "Don't *you* think I could do better by my poor father's memory than just concerts?" she wonders. "If *you* were setting out to bring some happiness into people's lives, and make New York a pleasanter place in summer, would *you* put your money in concerts?"[119] Dr. Brightlee taps into this seed of doubt to convince Mary to revive vaudeville. He engineers a meeting between Mary and Mr. Scupper, a tap-dancing cab driver. "Lady," he tells her, "the vaudeville theatre provided the young with more inspiration than any institution of modern times!" Mary then begins to think about reviving vaudeville because "there's no inspiration left in the world!"[120] Dr. Brightlee explicitly equates the theater with democracy when he brings news of the European reaction to Mary's plan. He holds up a German paper, saying "You don't read German? Well, it's only Goebbels to the effect that I'd be possible only in a democracy." He goes on to remind the company that his only goal is "to save men from slavery. … I have stimulated men to revolt against the gangster chieftains and the kings who were crushing them, destroying their faith. And always, when that spirit of rebellion has appeared in any oppressed man, his fearful overlords have said, 'The devil is in him.' That is

[118] Kurt Weill, "The Future of Opera in America," trans. Joel Lifflander, *Modern Music* 14/4 (1937): pp. 183–88, available online at http://kwf.org/grants-a-prizes/33-foundation/kwp/331-the-future-of-opera-in-america, accessed June 25, 2012.

[119] Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* 1-22, emphasis in the original.

[120] Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* 2-2-22.

how I obtained my bad name."[121] He also tells Mary that her children, "with your spirit, and their father's aptitude for the dance, can *really*, at and last, make the world safe for democracy."[122] Howard's devil incites rebellion against tyranny, and in 1930s America, his devil thinks that a theater for the edification of everyone, not just the elite, will prevent the United States from descending into totalitarianism. However, it turns out that Mary's new vaudeville will have something of the Old World in it as well; the first act she sponsors is her cab-driver tap dancing to the waltz from Gounod's *Faust*. This fits nicely with Weill's life-long attempt to find a middle ground between commercial and elite theatrical practice, and his belief that theater should be for all, should be of high artistic quality, and that it should have a social impact. By the end of the play, even the representative of "museum" music, the conductor Mr. Dockwiler, is converted. He has spent his life devoted to Wagner and Richard Strauss, but when Mary asks about his fate, Brightlee reveals that "at age forty-three—that's only eleven years [from now]—he's written so many successful musical shows that he's generally known as the second Victor Herbert."[123] One might wonder if Weill, who was thirty-eight at the time, hoped something similar might happen to him.

Weill composed approximately five minutes of music for *Madam, Will You Walk?* which survives only in orchestral parts.[124] Although the production employed two copyists, one to copy the first seventy-four measures of each part and a second to do the final seventy-seven, the first section seems to flow logically into the second, which indicates the two parts constitute one

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[121] Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* 3-2-27–28.

[122] Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* 3-2-20, emphasis in the original.

[123] Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?* 3-2-29.

[124] Kurt Weill, "Incidental Music for *Madam, Will You Walk?*" WLA Box 33, Folder 465.

piece and that the music was either an overture or an entr'acte.[125] Weill scored the piece for two clarinets each doubling on alto sax, tenor sax, two trumpets, trombone, piano, novachord, bass, and percussion. The piece falls into an ABA structure around two melodies, a jazzy swing tune in the surrounding A sections (see example 3.6) and the opening from the waltz from Charles Gounod's *Faust*, a tune that serves as a kind of theme song for Dr. Brightlee sandwiched in between. Weill re-barred the waltz so that it fit into the 4/4 time signature, which makes the tune feel like it does not belong in the world of the otherwise very modern music, particularly since the ensemble lacks the full complement of string typically employed for waltzes. In the B section accompanying the waltz, Weill also used many familiar tropes from contemporary scores for horror movies, including the novachord (a very new close cousin of the Hammond organ used in many of Hitchcock's films between 1939 and 1945), ringing triangles, and oscillating thirds in the saxophones (example 3.7). These tropes lend the B section an otherworldly quality that fits in nicely with the supernatural and diabolical aspects of the play.

Weill also started a project with S.N. Behrman in 1939, a musical adaptation of Ludwig Fulda's play *Der Seeräuber* (1912) for the Theatre Guild, which they called *The Pirate*. The project began as part of Theresa Helburn's efforts to have Weill compose music for a play by the Theatre Guild.[126] Alfred Lunt approached Helburn with the material, and—after negotiations for Weill to set *Liliom* (discussed in the Introduction), Eugene O'Neill's *Marco Millions*, and Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* for the Guild—suggested Weill for the music, along with Behrman

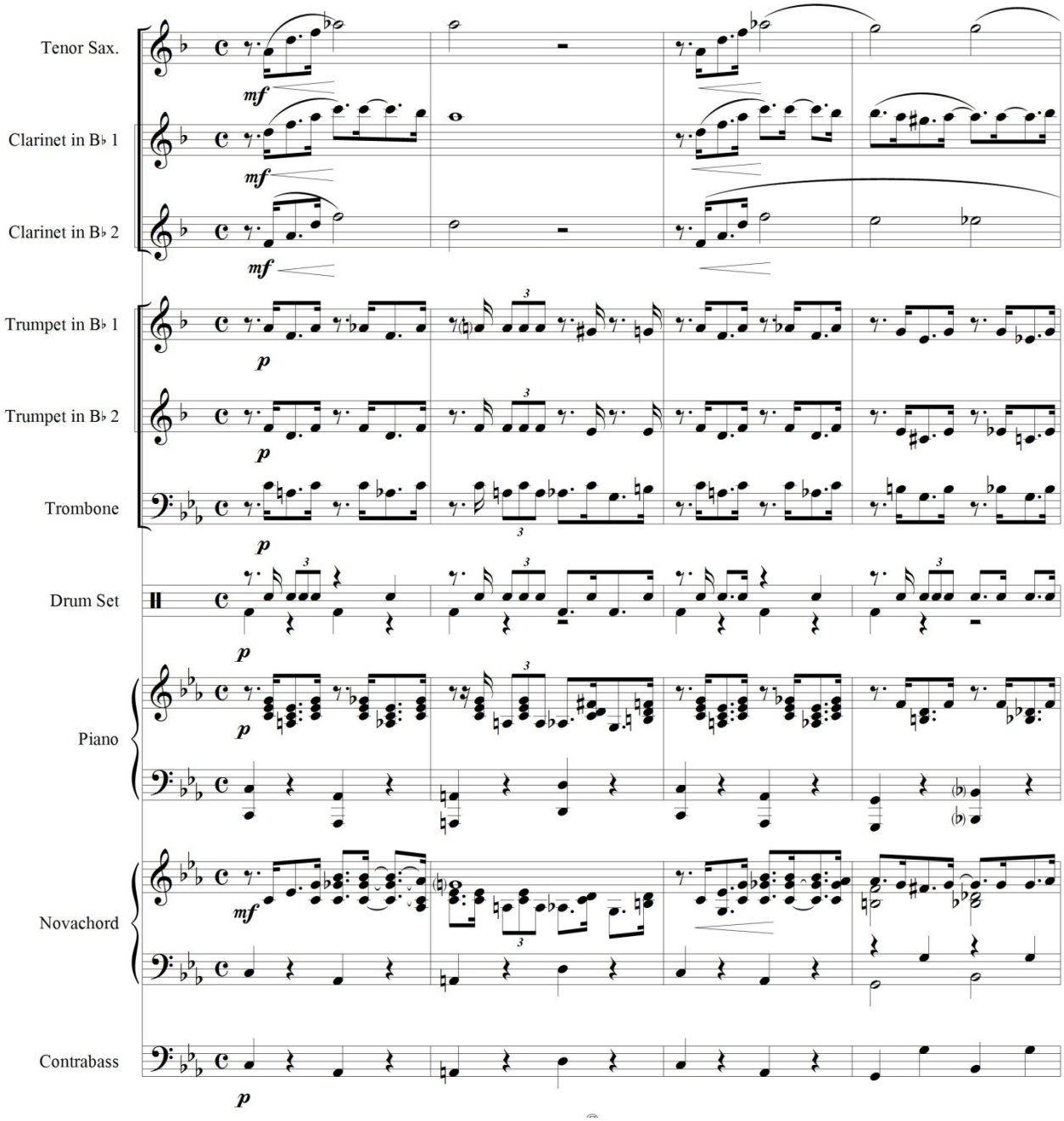
[125] David Drew believed that Weill meant this music to be a jazzy accompaniment to the "Night Court" scene in which Mary, Dr. Brightlee and Mr. Scupper appear before a magistrate for disturbing the peace; see David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 311–12. But the ABA structure does not follow the drama, and the length of the music (which is much shorter than the scene) points to it being an overture or entr'acte.

[126] See David Mark D'Andre, "The Theatre Guild, *Carousel*, and the Cultural Field of American Musical Theatre" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University 2000), 1–42, for a full account of Weill's dealings with Helburn and the Theatre Guild, including a detailed discussion of the *Marco Millions* and Shaw projects.

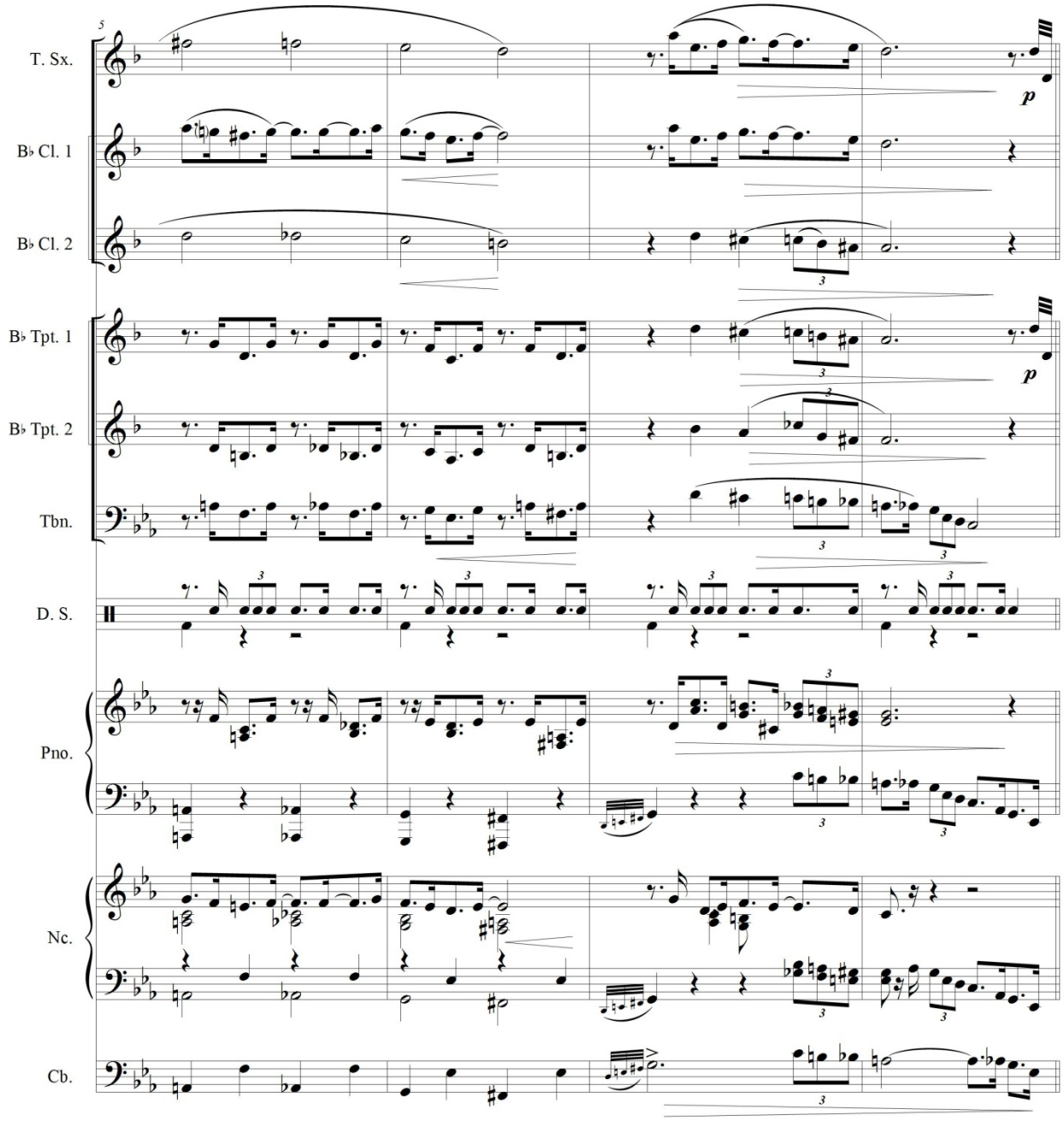
as playwright. Although Weill dropped out, a straight version of the play made it to Broadway in 1942 with its original presumed stars, Lunt (who would also direct) and Lynn Fontanne, produced by both the PPC and the Guild with incidental music by Herbert Kingsley.[127] Fontanne

[127] Carter, *Oklahoma!* 29; "The Pirate" *The Internet Broadway Database*, http://ibdb.com/production.php?id=1245, accessed July 31, 2012. In 1948, the play was made into a movie starring Judy Garland and Gene Kelly.

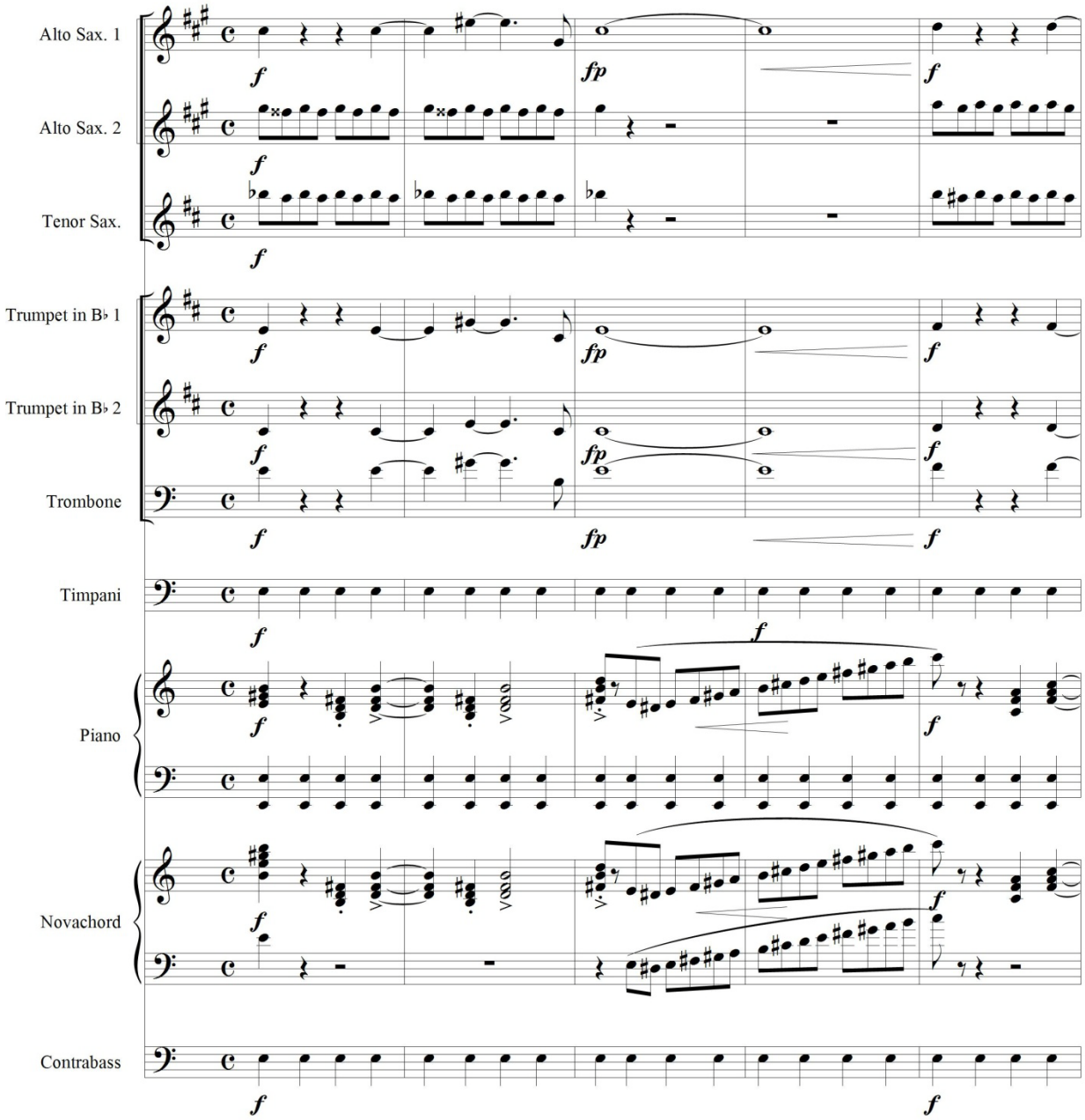
Example 3.6 Incidental music, *Madam Will You Walk?* mm. 3–10.



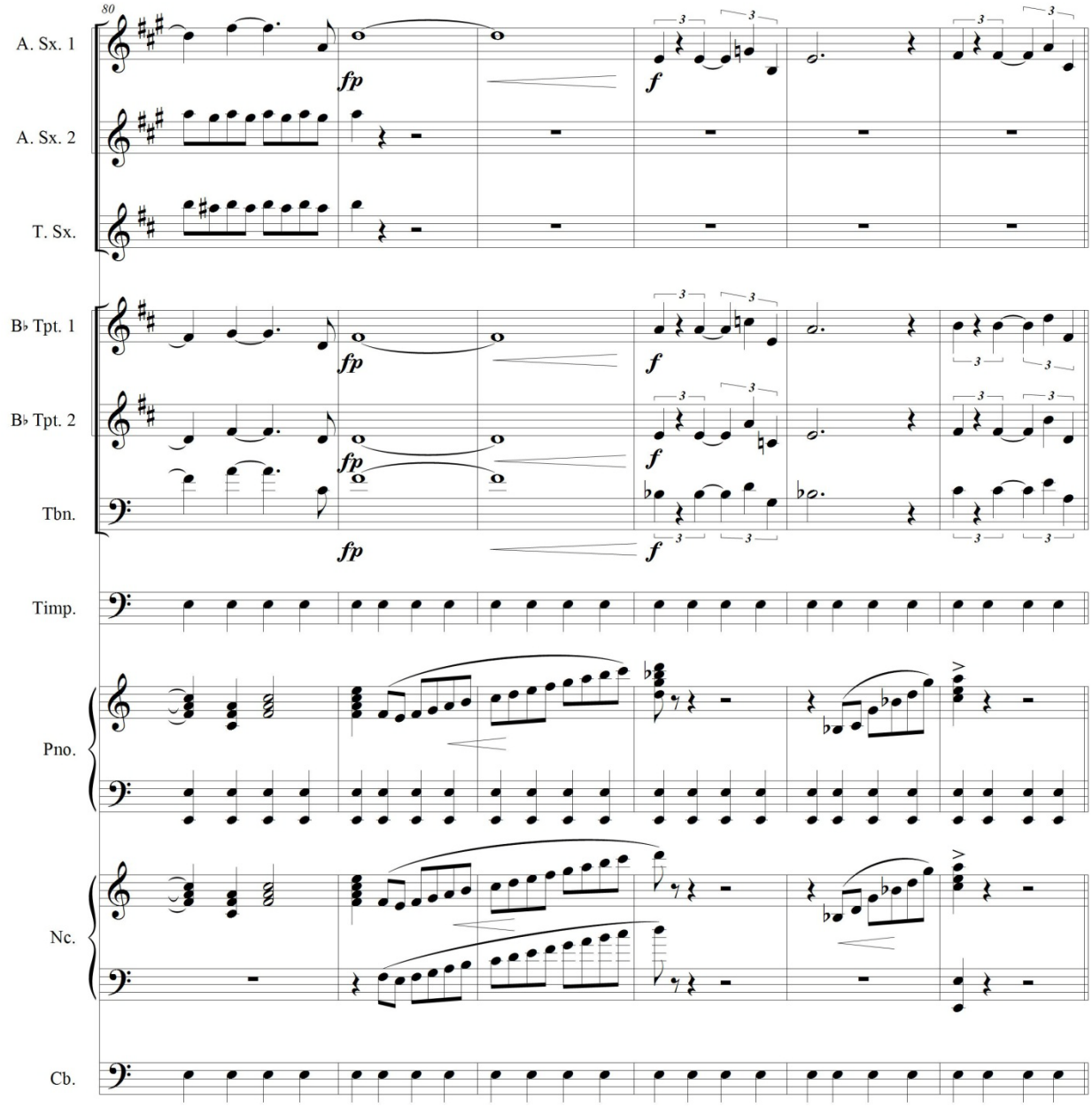
Example 3.6 (cont.)



Example 3.7 Incidental music, *Madam Will You Walk?* mm. 75–85.



Example 3.7 (cont.)



starred as Manuela, the beautiful wife of the town censor Pedro Vargas, formerly (unknown to his wife) known as the vicious pirate Estramundo. Into the small West Indian town comes Serafin (Lunt) and his troupe of actors. Serafin immediately falls in love with Manuela, and pretends to be Estramundo in order to convince her that he can take her away from her humdrum life. As was his practice, Weill researched the local music, and envisioned a musical band

playing "all through" and hoped that "a negro band of Calypso singers should be used extensively." However, the project began to fall apart in October because both Lunt and Behrman seemed lukewarm. Weill told Behrman that "if you would rather do the play without my ideas, as a straight play with some incidental music, you can tell me so quite frankly. … I don't want to impose myself or music on your play."[128] To Lunt, he wrote on October 7, "I was sure that my ideas about musical theatre are very near to your own ideas and that the musicality of your acting and your direction would be wonderful for a 'musical comedy' as I see it."[129] Fontanne encouraged Weill in the belief that, in her husband's brash insecurity, he had bullied Behrman into giving up. Soon after Weill wrote to Lunt on October 17, she told him that

> I knew when Alfred was talking to Berry [Behrman] on the telephone that Berry would instantly give up the ghost. … Alfred is always perfectly sure that anything he has to do with is not very good, and as he has had so much to do with this play, he feels he is criticizing himself more than Berry, and was therefore freer about it even than usual. He expected Berry, after his searing remarks to go to work and write the first half just a little more freely, whereas I expected Berry to go and jump in the river.[130]

So with Fontanne's reassurance, the project proceeded, but Lunt remained unenthusiastic. By November 29, Weill apparently had had enough of Lunt and Fontanne, and suggested to Behrman that they be replaced with Walter Huston—who Weill felt "could play it as a ham who is getting old and wants to settle down"—and Ina Clair.[131] The project seems to have fizzled

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[128] Letter from Weill to S.N. Behrman, undated, WLA Box 41, Folder 2.

[129] Letter from Weill to Alfred Lunt, October 7, 1939, WLA Box 41, Folder 9. The fact that Lunt and Fontanne agreed to a musical comedy at all seems odd given that at no time in their career did they end up starring in one. Perhaps, like so many in the late 1930s, they were eager to work in musical theatre because they saw possibilities for artistic innovation.

[130] Letter from Lynn Fontanne to Weill, October 17, 1939, WLA, Box 48, Folder 31.

[131] Letter from Weill to S.N. Behrman, November 29, 1939, WLA, Box 41, Folder 2.

soon after, although Behrman did try to rekindle Weill's interest in 1941, but the composer refused the project.[132]

Although Weill never composed any music for *The Pirate*, his involvement is nonetheless telling. His initial interest may have been sparked by the original subject material, Fulda's *Der Seeräuber*. Like Weill, Fulda was a refugee from Nazi Germany, but unlike Weill, he was denied entry into the United States, and committed suicide on March 7, 1939. Weill may have been attracted to the project as a fellow émigré, albeit a luckier one. The composer had also been disappointed by his experiences with American playwrights and American material. His attempts to turn shows like Ferenc Molnár *Liliom* into a musical play with the Theatre Guild in 1937 further indicate a frustration with his options among purely American playwrights.[133] Weill's idea of a "a negro band of calypso singers" which should be "used extensively" bears some resemblance to Weill's use of choruses in the 1930s with projects like *One Man from Tennessee*, and into the 1940s like *Lost in the Stars* and *Down in the Valley*. During his research for the project, he came across an article in the *New Yorker* about calypso singers in Trinidad, who would perform singing "wars" with improvised music and verse. Weill's idea was that Pedro had to assume the role of the pirate to save face in a calypso battle, and that eventually another singer would unmask him in a similar sung battle. This idea echoes much of Weill's thoughts on film music, where he wanted music to participate in the story-telling, rather than simply run parallel with the plot.

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[132] Letters from S.N. Behrman to Weill, May 2, 1941 and July 4, 1941, WLA, Box 42, Folder 20.

[133] Carter, *Oklahoma!* 5.

Conclusion: Questions and Answers

In the end, *Knickerbocker Holiday* had the potential to speak to both immigrants and native-born Americans by trying to answer several crucial questions. For U.S. citizens confronted with the possibility of Nazi infiltration, *Knickerbocker Holiday* reminded them that love of liberty that one a loyal member of the nation, not ethnic origin. By stressing that attitude rather than blood constitutes true American behavior, Weill and Anderson helped the cause of immigrants in a time when suspicion of foreigners prevented many refugees from entering or thriving in the United States. *Knickerbocker Holiday* also addressed questions on the minds of émigrés, albeit somewhat less obviously. By the late 1930s, like Weill, some émigrés had settled into life in their new country. As they overcame the initial trials and tribulations of navigating a new language and culture, many began to think about the events that led up to their initial flight from Germany.[134] Numerous questions occupied their minds, including the most prominent: "what went wrong?" and its corollary, "how can we prevent it from happening again?" These two questions seem simple on the surface, but to many émigrés the answers required careful examination of both culture and politics. Émigré academics, particularly in the University in Exile at the New School for Social Research, tried to unpack the complex relationship between government and economics, and how the former had the potential to drive either a democratic rule or totalitarian one. Some of their thoughts are published in *Political and Economic Democracy*, the record of the General Seminar at the University in Exile for the 1935–36 academic year, a book New School founder Alvin Johnson described as "a collective effort to understand the problems of democracy by a group of men who have experienced at personal cost what the eclipse of democracy means." Many of the authors begin their contributions with

[134] Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 129–39.

questions relevant to *Knickerbocker Holiday* and to the situation in Europe.[135] Gerhard Colm titled his piece "Is Economic Planning Compatible with Democracy?" (*Knickerbocker Holiday*'s answer seems to be an unequivocal no; Colm's answer is that it is, as long as it does not go too far).[136] Similarly, Max Ascoli asks "How much political regulation does social life allow in a given country? What is the social recoil of political of political intervention?"[137]

Knickerbocker Holiday, tackles all these questions in some form. The show puts the blame for totalitarianism on the incompetent incumbents who allow Stuyvesant to come into power as long as they receive fancy titles ("One Indispensable Man"). Ultimately, the show submits little in the way of a solution once the tyrant claims power—the way out offered by Irving's appeal to posterity provides an appropriately absurd and unprepared Gilbertian ending—but *Knickerbocker Holiday* does emphasize the power of individual action against tyranny, which appears to answer the question of prevention. Throughout the show, the people of New Amsterdam struggle to figure out and define their roles as businessmen, politicians, and (most importantly) citizens, all with the goal of eventually forming a free and prosperous society. Weill and those who fled Europe in the 1930s would find themselves laboring over the same questions as the situation in Europe grew more and more ominous.

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[135] Alvin Johnson, forward to *Political and Economic Democracy*, eds. Max Ascoli and Fritz Lehmann (New York: W.W. Norton, 1937), 8–9.

[136] Ascoli and Lehrmann, eds., *Political and Economic Democracy*, 21–41.

[137] Max Ascoli, "Political Parties," in Ascoli and Lehrman, eds., *Political and Economic Democracy*, 205–216, at p. 205.

CHAPTER FOUR
"WHEN ISRAEL WAS IN EGYPT'S LAND": RACE AND CULTURAL MOBILITY IN *ULYSSES AFRICANUS*

It was my philosophy teacher from the Antilles who reminded me one day: "When you hear someone insulting the Jews, pay attention; he is talking about you." And I believed at the time he was universally right, meaning that I was responsible in my body and soul for the fate reserved for my brother. Since then, I have understood that what he meant quite simply was that the anti-Semite is inevitably a negrophobe.

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (1952)

After taking on Roosevelt and the New Deal, Weill and Anderson decided in their next project to tackle the state of U.S. race relations. In January 1939, they went down to Florida and began discussing a musical adaptation of Henry Stillwell Edwards's epistolary novella *Eneas Africanus*, which they turned into the musical *Ulysses Africanus*.[1] Anderson completed a libretto, and Weill sketched material for nine numbers, although some of the music for the center-piece of the show, a minstrel version of Homer's *Odyssey*, is lost, if it was ever completed at all.[2] The project eventually fizzled when they could not find a leading man, but the idea remained with both the composer and librettist. In 1949, they came back to the musical material and adapted it for *Lost in the Stars*, their "musical tragedy" based on Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Scholars have commented on Weill's efforts to speak out against racism in the United States in the context of the later project, but the composer's ideas and sensibilities about race relations

[1] W-Fam, 316 n1.

[2] The libretto survives in MAC, Series "Works," Folder "Ulysses Africanus; a musical play; Tms with A title page." The music is in WLA, Box 32, Folders 441–44.

owe much to his experiences as a German-Jewish émigré during the Great Depression. The problems that surrounded *Ulysses Africanus* reveal Weill's complex assumptions and perceptions about U.S. race relations, as well as a host of other issues.

When scholars look at *Ulysses Africanus* at all, they often speak of the failed musical as an embarrassment for Weill and Anderson. Prevailing opinion characterizes the work as a misguided and paternalistic (if sincere) attempt to condemn race relations in the United States. Scholars tend to put the blame for the problematic elements squarely on Anderson's shoulders; Ronald Sanders writes that the story was "marred by an attitude of chuckling condescension that does not seem to have troubled Anderson," while Weill merely naively "looked forward with relish to doing this bit of Americana."[3] Similarly, Foster Hirsch notes that "Anderson rests his book on a startlingly reactionary longing for the Old South, a world in which masters and slaves observed their places in a chain of being," and that his script "seemed to affirm the kindly master–loyal slave coupling as a social and racial ideal, the way things ought to be, and to present racial stereotypes not to contest but the reinforce them."[4] These views are not wholly unwarranted. *Ulysses Africanus* is often patronizing and even demeaning in places, and Weill and Anderson made use of some uncomfortable stereotypes, particularly the loyal slave searching for his kind master that traces its history back to the title character of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's antebellum exposé on the horrors of slavery. Evidence in Anderson's handwritten draft of the libretto shows the playwright's efforts to differentiate his

[3] Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), 285–86.

[4] Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 2002), 177.

White and Black[5] characters through language on a second pass through the script; the word "I" is often crossed out and replaced with "Ah," and Anderson dropped words, like making Ulysses's line "what do you mean?" into "what you mean?"[6] These changes and other similar ones serve to make the Black characters sound less intelligent and more stereotypical.

However, these scholarly assessments obscure the complicated cultural and historical contexts that surrounded the composer throughout work on the project. Pinning the use of insulting stereotypes and elements of questionable taste on Anderson does the playwright an injustice and denies Weill's voice in the project. Both Weill and Anderson meant well, but Weill, as an émigré, misunderstood the specific cultural trauma of race relations in the United States. Read through the eyes of a German émigré, what Americans perceive as unflattering stereotypes become harmless at worst, and sympathetic at best. As Lydia Goehr has noted, exile life exists in a condition of "doubleness," which "exists in practices of thought and activity that invoke two-sided, mediating, or conflicting ideals, productions and conditions," and that is characterized by "an experience of being both insiders and outsiders."[7] Weill recognized that exiles were not the only community in the United States that struggled with doubleness as a fact of life.

In particular, the piece exposes Weill's impressions of the relationship between Blacks and Jews in the United States. During the 1930s, two communities that certainly understood what it meant to be both an insider and an outsider simultaneously in the American community. In

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[5] I use Black rather than "African American" to describe the community because, by the 1930s, many of the Black community felt little connection to Africa, and many were of mixed descent, and could lay claim to White, African, Native American, and even Jewish heritage.

[6] Maxwell Anderson, Handwritten draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, MAC, Series "Works," Folder "Ulysses Africanus [play] Composite A and Tccms," I-2-2.

[7] Lydia Goehr, "Music and Musicians in Exile: The Romantic Legacy of a Double Life," in Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Woff, eds., *Driven Into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, 66–91 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 68, 84.

fact, Goehr has noted that, rather than exiles looking for inspiration in the more overtly European cultural sectors, they turned to the "alienated 'black' America, because there they found similarities with their experiences of being alienated at home."[8] Goehr's notion of doubleness certainly owes a debt to W.E.B. Du Bois description of the "double consciousness" of Blacks, who always have a sense of "looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[9] Both states involve a split between inner and outer identity, which may have been what attracted so many émigrés to Black culture. Both also suppose a cultural audience or authority outside of one's own community which judges and places value on certain personal characteristics and cultural products that minorities produce.

However, despite perceived similarities, the doubleness of émigrés and the double-consciousness of Black Americans have many differences. The émigré community, being mostly composed of prominent artists and intellectuals, had a certain cultural cachet which freed them from the "amused contempt" that many Blacks experienced. American-born Jews also had more opportunities for social and economic mobility than their Black counterparts. Consequently, the relationship between Jewish, émigré, and Black communities was immensely complex and fraught with tension. Each group felt a certain kinship based on both biblical and contemporary connections, yet they also remained suspicious of one another. Their interactions were characterized by a mix of resentment, admiration, and compassion. Yet both Blacks and Jews felt the sting of discrimination in U.S. society in the 1930s, particularly those Jews who had recently arrived from Eastern Europe, and many from both communities drew parallels between historical

[8] Goehr, "Music and Musicians in Exile," 85.

[9] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1903), 3.

and contemporary treatment of Jews in Europe (particularly Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union) and Blacks in the United States They were united against the common enemy of the Ku Klux Klan, which re-emerged in the 1920s in response to the influx of immigrants (among other things), and developed a strong northern and western presence, alongside its continued presence in the South.[10] They also had a common enemy in the German American Bund, an American Nazi surrogate organization which demanded a "white, gentile-ruled America."[11] However, many urban Blacks were at the mercy of Jewish merchants and landlords, and believed (often rightly) that these authority figures took advantage of them, a belief which sometimes led to violence. Jews, conversely, were often exploitative employers and in some cases as racist as their unequivocally "White" neighbors.

Weill, a recent immigrant who had always been interested in exposing injustice, brought his own uniquely German outlook on the relations of Jews and Blacks in the United States. *Ulysses Africanus* shows that he, along with many contemporaries on both sides, saw similarities between the Jews in Nazi Germany and Blacks, both as slaves and as a contemporary oppressed segment of the population. However limited experience with the African American community meant that while he was aware of the commonalities, some of which he and Anderson wove into their hero, but the differences likely escaped his notice. Weill misunderstood some of the disparities in the two community's historical troubles, and brought a distinctly European set of stereotypes to the project, many of which would have offended U.S. Blacks. In particular, the limits of the cultural mobility of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* inflect much of *Ulysses Africanus*. While

[10] Rory McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements in National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 13; David H. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1981), 305–6.

[11] "Stop the Bums," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 17, 1938, p. 10.

American Blacks spent decades trying to escape the stereotype of the simple and loyal slave, in a peculiar instance of cultural mobility, the story of Uncle Tom and his fellow slaves represented to many contemporary Germans "a universal tale of oppression and deliverance" without any negative connotations.[12] These differing views led to the problems and incongruities surrounding the project. In their attempt to condemn American racism, Weill and Anderson proved Stephen Greenblatt's assertion that cultural mobility is in part based on misunderstanding.[13]

Chronology

Weill and Anderson began discussion turning *Eneas Africanus* into a musical early in 1939. Edwards's story begins with Major George E. Tommey advertising in a Georgia paper for news of his former slave, Eneas, to whom he gave the family silver to keep safe from the marauding Union Army at the end of the Civil War. Responses come from all over Dixie from people who have seen and given shelter to Eneas and his growing family. At the end of the novel, the former slave eventually arrives back at the Tommey plantation. The name Eneas, an Anglicization of the Roman hero Aeneas, is especially evocative; like his namesake, the former slave finds himself on the losing side of a war and must take on a perilous journey, although unlike Aeneas, he is allowed to return home at the end. The idea of an epistolary novella may have appealed to Anderson and Weill as its episodic format is particularly conducive to theatrical treatment. Unlike a conventional novel, epistolary works (and Edwards's in particular) lack the descriptive passages and multiple story lines that often hamper adaptation. The story also seemed a

[12] Heike Paul, "Cultural Mobility Between Boston and Berlin: How Germans have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 122–71, at p. 128.

[13] Stephen Greenblatt, "Theatrical Mobility," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Greenblatt, 75–95, at p. 95.

charming, even perhaps comic, pastoral about a loveable, loyal, but shrewd protagonist, which also offered multiple occasions for songs. There are scenes at the race track and camp meetings, which provide opportunities for choral numbers, and since Eneas courts and marries over the course of the book, Weill and Anderson could easily have written a love duet, although no documentary evidence suggests that they ever planned one.

In March 1939, Weill and Anderson wanted Paul Robeson for the title role, but he turned it down for reasons discussed below. Undeterred, by June Weill and Anderson had revamped the plot for song-and-dance man Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, who was at the time starring in *Hot Mikado*, an updated version of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic. At first, they continued to use the name Aeneas for the title character, but early on in the drafting process, changed it to Ulysses; by page thirteen of Anderson's handwritten libretto, the playwright had settled on the latter name.[14] The change may have been made to avoid copyright infringement, just as Anderson changed the name of the family from Tommey to Beauregard (probably drawing on the name of Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard for inspiration). Just to be sure not to step on any toes, he also changed the name of Beauregard's daughter Melissa's fiancé from Tommie to Graham around the same time as he changed Aeneas to Ulysses. At this point, they also decided to model some aspects of the plot on Homer's *Odyssey*. They gave their protagonist a long-suffering faithful wife named Pennie (analogous to Homer's Penelope) and added a temptress to the story in the character of Judy, who echoes the function of Circe in Homer's tale.[15] Anderson drafted the libretto, but did not include lyrics for the songs, even though he left space on the page for them,

[14] Anderson, Handwritten draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-13.

[15] For a summary of the parallels between *Ulysses Africanus* and Homer's *Odyssey*, see Robert J. Rabel, "Odysseus Almost Makes It to Broadway: The *Ulysses Africanus* of Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13 (2007): 550–70. Some of Rabel's attempts to make Anderson's story fit into Homer's are quite awkward, such as his equation of Nicodemus, another freed slave Ulysses meets on his journey, with the blind prophet Tiresias.

indicating that he and Weill had created an outline which included musical numbers sometime before writing began. Anderson also completed a number of unused lyrics that are included in his draft among several songs that did make it into the show, such as:

> On the first morning I remember
> Cotton all gone ~~and in come~~ must be September,
> I says to my Mama, talking on the run
> "Ain't you never gon-to git the work all done?"
> And she say "When the blinding sun go down"
>
> When the sun git low, and his face turn red,
> And he pull the high mountain over his head.[16]

This may have been an early version of what became the minstrel number "In an Old Land Far Away and Long Ago" but the lyrics were eventually dropped, perhaps because the "remember / September" rhyme was too reminiscent of "September Song."

The other members of the Playwrights' Producing Company (PPC) liked the show and heartily endorsed the idea of writing for Robinson. On June 3, 1939, Sidney Howard wrote to Anderson, "I saw Bill Robinson the other night, sitting in the first row with my chin in the footlights, and his feet gave me more pleasure than I have had in years except for that chimpanzee who rides a bicycle at the Fair," and he encouraged his colleague to continue on the project, which he felt suited Robinson very well.[17] After he finished the libretto, Anderson sent a draft around the rest of the PPC, as required according to their agreement in forming the company. Generally, the draft was well received. Robert Sherwood wrote Anderson that *Ulysses Africanus* was "a superb show and one which seems to me to have far more chance of commercial success than *Knickerbocker Holiday*. The latter was, in a way, more brilliant—more

[16] Anderson, Handwritten draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, between I-4 and I-5.

[17] Letter from Sidney Howard to Maxwell Anderson, June 3, 1939, MAC, Series "Misc," Folder "Author: Howard, Sidney; Description: ALS, 4 TLS, 2 Telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell, 1– inc date, 6 – 1933–1939."

of an intellectual tear"—"but this one has an inestimable wallop."[18] With that, the PPC began to make arrangements to produce the show. On June 26, Victor Samrock, the business manager of the PPC wrote Anderson, saying Robinson's manager Marty Forkins had reported that the star would be available in the fall. Samrock offered Joshua Logan the director's job the next day after Weill and Anderson, who had both left for California on June 6, showed him the script and some of the music.[19]

However, as *Hot Mikado* continued to sell tickets and Robinson went on tour after tour, Forkins stalled the PPC. In an undated letter (probably from July), Harold Freedman of Brandt & Brandt, the agency that represented both Weill and Anderson, sent a telegram to the playwright, saying that Forkins "seems very cooperative but says business at fair so good probabilities are management will do tour at least until beginning January [1940] and possibly until the end of March. … Says he will know definitely by August first as to whether he will go on tour or not but believe sound probability their doing the show." In August, the PPC still hoped to mount a production with Robinson; Sherwood wrote to Anderson on August 7, advising that "heaven and earth should be moved to get Bill Robinson, and that Bill himself will attend to the moving as soon as he hears Kurt's marvelous music. … Bill is an Olympian, and Ulysses should be that." Logan was still keen as well, according to a telegram sent the same month.[20] However, even though the Company remained enthusiastic in principle, financial difficulties compounded the

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[18] Letter from Robert Sherwood to Maxwell Anderson, August 7, 1939, MAC, Series "Misc," Folder, "Author: Sherwood, Robert E.; Description: ALS, A&TLS, TLS, Telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell, 1935–1954."

[19] Telegram from Victor Samrock to Maxwell Anderson, June 26, 1939, MAC, Series "Misc," Folder "Author: Samrock, Victor; Description: 27 TLS, 3 Telegrams to Anderson, Maxwell, 1 – inc. date, 29 – 1939–1949"; Telegram from Victor Samrock to Joshua Logan, June 27, 1939, MAC, Series "Misc," Folder "Author: Samrock, Victor; Description: TLS to Maxwell Anderson 1939 June 28, Enclosure: [Samrock], Vic[tor], Tcc of draft of telegram to Logan, [Josh], 1939 June 27."

[20] Telegram from Joshua Logan to Weill, August 7, 1939, MAC, Series, "Misc," Folder, "Author: [Logan], Josh[ua]; Description: 2 Telegrams to Weill, Kurt, 1929 July 29, 1939 August 7."

difficulty caused by Robinson's unavailability. The minutes of the August 31 meeting of the Playwright's Producing Company report that

> The question of *Ulysses Africanus* was then brought up. Mr. [John] Wharton stated that it was the feeling of those who had discussed this matter that there was some doubt as to whether the Playwrights' Company could raise the necessary sum to produce this play and that he felt it would be advisable for Mr. Anderson to discuss production with another manager better equipped to raise money for musicals. He stated that he thought the Playwrights' Company should take some financial interest and everyone agreed with this policy. A discussion of script and casting followed.[21]

Although he agreed to shop the play around, it appears that Anderson never made any attempt to do so. By this time, Weill was well into negotiations for *Lady in the Dark*, and the project fizzled.

Still, the idea of *Ulysses Africanus* remained in the backs everyone's minds, and in 1949, they reused some of the songs designed for *Ulysses Africanus*, including "The Place I'm Referring to is Home," retitled "Little Grey House"; "Lover Man," retitled "Trouble Man"; and the title song of *Lost in the Stars*.[22] When *Lost in the Stars* premiered, Logan congratulated Anderson on the production, and wrote of his regret that *Ulysses* never happened, saying

> I just wrote Kurt how jealous and mean I felt the other night when I saw that someone else had staged the songs I had always felt were part mine! How beautiful they are!! And I love your new lyrics except for the revisions of "Little Grey House" which I had loved so much the other way. I of course saw why it was changed. I guess the main thing I felt was the agony a lover feels when his girl goes off with someone else. Some how [*sic*] I had always dreamed that we would all do *Knickerbocker Holiday* all over again with *Ulysses Africanus* and I realized the other night that this was a dream that was over for good.[23]

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[21] "Notes of the Business Meeting of the Playwrights' Producing Group, August 31, 1939," MAC, Series "Misc," Folder, "Author: The Playwrights' Producing Co., Inc.; Description: Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors 66 Tcc,s and Tcc ms S 1938–1940."

[22] David Kilroy, "Kurt Weill on Broadway: The Post-war Years, 1945–1950" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992), 348.

[23] Letter from Joshua Logan to Maxwell Anderson, undated [1949], Series "Misc," Folder "Logan, Joshua, 5 ALS; 2 TLS; APCS; Telegram to Anderson, Maxwell, 3 – nd, 2 – inc. dates, 4 – 1940–1946."

All that survives of the production are two librettos, one handwritten and one typescript, and sketches for the music.

Jews and Blacks in the Depression

During the first part of the twentieth century, the United States experienced a shift in racial thinking. In the nineteenth century, many of what now are considered ethnic groups such as the Irish, Italians, Jews, Finns, Greeks, Poles, and other Eastern Europeans were considered races in their own right, and judged inferior to old Anglo-Saxon and Nordic stock. This view persisted into the twentieth century; in 1922, an Alabama court failed to convict Jim Rollins, a Black man, of the crime of miscegenation because the court was not convinced that his partner Edith Labue, a Sicilian immigrant, was White.[24] However, beginning in the middle 1920s, more states began to confront the idea of race as a generation of Blacks moved into northern cities looking for work, which forced many in the country to rethink their views of race. As more states confronted the legacy of slavery, individual races, including Jews, began to redefine themselves as White "ethnics," and a single, monolithic White race began to develop, a transition that was not complete until 1950s.[25] As Anderson and Weill composed *Ulysses Africanus* in the late 1930s, the idea of race was in a state of flux. Weill came from a place that unequivocally considered "Jew" as a racial rather than ethnic category, and so had a unique view of race in the United States. But the fundamentally instability of cultural categories in the 1930s turned out to be a disadvantage, as he misjudged the relationship between Jews, who were beginning to consider

[24] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4, 41.

[25] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color,* 91; Jeffrey Paul Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Songs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Press, 1999), 62.

themselves a White ethnic group, and Blacks, whose status as a "lesser" race had not changed since emancipation.

The defining event in the relationship between Blacks and Jews in the twentieth century came in 1915, just before this shift, with the Leo Frank case.[26] Frank, a Jew who lived in Marietta, Georgia, was accused of killing (and possibly raping) Mary Phagan, a teenager who worked at his pencil factory. During the trial, the court witnessed some of the most vicious anti-Semitism the United States had ever seen, as mobs shouted into the courtroom calling for a guilty verdict, with cries of "crack the Jew's neck!" and "lynch him!" drifting through the windows.[27] The town was swept by a wave of anti-Semitism. In one of Frank's appeals, one S.L. Asher reported that he had overheard while waiting for a bus a man say "They ought to take that damn Jew out and hang him anyway."[28] Although Frank was originally convicted and sentenced to death, Governor John Slaton eventually commuted his sentence to life in prison in 1915. A few days after the ruling came down, a mob broke into the jail where Frank was held, kidnapped him, and lynched him.[29] Although over twenty years old, the case was still fresh in the minds of Americans when, in 1937, Warner Bros. released *They Won't Forget*, which depicted a fictionalized version of the affair

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[26] For a more detailed examination of the effects of the case, see Jeffrey Paul Melnick, *Black–Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000). Melnick analyses the complicated capitalist–agrarian divide that Frank and Conley, representing the North and South, reflect, that I do not address here, but nonetheless played a significant role in the conflict.

[27]Leonard Dinnerstein, "Leo M. Frank and the Jewish Community," (1968) , reprinted in *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations between Jews and Blacks in the United States*, ed. Maurianne Adams and John Bracey (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 271–82, at p. 273.

[28] Brief of Evidence for Frank vs. State of Georgia in *"The Making of Modern Law: Trials, 1600-1926*." Gale 2011. Gale, Cengage Learning, 242, accessed December 28, 2011.

[29] The incident played a major role in the revival of the Klan; see McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 20.

This high-profile lynching of a Jew acted as a catalyst in the Jewish community, which was horrified by everything about the event. For many American Jews, Frank's lynching destroyed their hard-won sense of safety in America and ignited a strong sympathy for Blacks, who as a race had suffered countless lynchings from the time of Reconstruction. When Jews realized that they shared a common enemy with Blacks in the Ku Klux Klan, more began to speak out against the rash of violence against Blacks. Recent immigrants in particular condemned lynching, and drew parallels between lynch mobs in America and pogroms in Eastern Europe. After a 1917 race riot in St. Louis, the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a Yiddish newspaper, compared the city with Kishinev, the site of a deadly Russian Pogrom in 1903, noting that "in Kishinev, they ripped open peoples' bellies and stuffed them with feathers; here in St. Louis, houses were set on fire and women and children were allowed to burn alive. Which is better? It is a matter of taste."[30]

Frank's lynching created a sense among the entire Jewish community that Blacks held a position in America analogous to the one Jews held in Europe. Both American Blacks and European Jews (particularly Russian Jews) faced the daily possibility of extreme violence and discrimination. After the Frank trial, the two major Jewish populations in the United States—the Eastern Europeans and the Germans—both took it upon themselves to speak out against the injustices of racially motivated violence, reasoning that it was only a short leap in the minds of White Protestant America from discriminating against Blacks to discriminating against Jews. However, each side had different methods of fighting the tide of racism. The Eastern European Jews were a mostly Orthodox community of poor villagers fleeing persecution and Russian pogroms, and whose firsthand experience with violence engendered a feeling of kinship with

[30] Quoted in Hasia Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Backs, 1915–1935* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1977), 75.

southern Blacks. This resulted in many comparisons in Yiddish newspapers of the political atmosphere of the United States, both in northern urban centers as well as the Deep South with the pogroms of Russia and the rise of National Socialism in Germany. In 1917, a columnist for the *Yiddishe Tageblatt*, a New York publication, also commented on the St. Louis riots:

> Who but a Jew can taste oppression? Who but a Jew know so well what it means to be dealt out segregation laws and pogroms? Jews who have liked through all these things in the Old Word can well empathize with those who walked in the procession, can feel the oppression which the silent march protested.[31]

Eastern European immigrants more generally were often made to stand for African Americans in the popular culture of the time. In Archie Mayo's film *Black Legion* (1937), Humphrey Bogart plays a factory worker who joins the titular organization, a smaller domestic terrorist group with ideals similar to the KKK, which terrorizes "foreigners"—a manufacturing foreman named Dombrowski (probably Polish) whose intellectual prowess puts him ahead of Bogart's character for a promotion, as well as an elderly Irishman named Grogan—in an effort to uphold true American ideals.

As much as the Frank case frightened recent immigrants, however, the German Jews were even more affected. Frank, like many German Jews, was an assimilated native-born American by several generations. If he was still marked as racially other, reasoned his contemporaries, then all Jews, no matter how Americanized, were in danger. Most German Jews had arrived in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, and by the twentieth century were often comfortably ensconced in the middle class, and generally practiced Reform Judaism if they practiced at all. They felt themselves to be part of the larger White community, but after the Frank affair, they sensed that their position in society was not so secure. Consequently, they championed Black causes to create for themselves, as historian Hasia Diner

[31] Quoted in Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, 77.

has noted, "a meaningful role so as to prove themselves to an inhospitable [society]."[32] The case of the Scottsboro Boys, in which two white girls wrongfully accused nine Black teenagers of rape in Alabama in 1931, especially captured German-Jewish attention. The *Opinion*, a New York paper edited by the liberal Rabbi Stephen Wise, took particular pride in the fact that the lead attorney for the defense was Jewish, writing that "Both as a member of such a group and as an inheritor of his own tradition, it is inevitable that the Jew should take active and leading parts in all such struggles as that at present being waged around the Scottsboro injustice."[33]

Weill fell between these two major categories. He had grown up in a fairly religious household, and he had been steeped in the Jewish musical tradition from a very early age, playing the organ in synagogue and learning the music of the various Jewish services, enough so that in his early years in Berlin he served as the choirmaster Jewish community center in Berlin-Friedenau, where he was horrified to find out that he was the only one fasting on Yom Kippur.[34] However, by 1924, he wrote to his mother that he found himself drifting away from his faith.[35] His willingness to work on *The Eternal Road* may indicate another attitude shift around 1934, after his heritage (and his associations) resulted in persecution. When he arrived in the United States and began promoting *The Eternal Road*, he highlighted his heritage in the promotional material:

> I proceeded to put down all the Hebraic melodies I had learned from childhood on. I had an abundance of material. For my father, who is a cantor and composer, had set great

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[32] Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, 114.

[33] Quoted in Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, 114.

[34] Jurgen Schebera in Kim H. Kowalke, *et al*., "*The Eternal Road* and Kurt Weill's German, Jewish, and American Identity: A Discussion with Kim H. Kowalke, Jurgen Schebera, Christian Kuhnt, and Alexander Ringer," *Theater* 3 (2000): 83–95, at p. 88.

[35] A translation of the letter appears in "*The Eternal Road* and Kurt Weill's German, Jewish, and American Identity," 89.

> store upon my learning this heritage. With about 200 songs, which I had written in several days' memory seeking, I began work at the Bibliothèque Nationale to trace their sources as far as possible. Many I discovered had been written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some borrowed from the most surprising sources--from opera, 'hit-songs' of the time, street tunes, concert music, symphonies. Those I dismissed, retaining only the traditional music.[36]

However, the experience of *The Eternal Road* may have made him wary of overtly Jewish material; on February 10, 1937, Louis Nizer, who was in charge of the finances of *The Eternal Road*, explained to Weill why he believed returns were not as good as expected, writing "The large Jewish masses do not find the expensive seats within their horizon and find a good many of the cheaper seats unsatisfying for sight reasons; the large Christian masses, particularly in sophisticated New York, are not excited about spectacles and, indeed, are frightened by the words 'religious' and 'biblical.' The fact that the spectacle is Jewish does not help either."[37] Weill probably realized that if he wanted to express his Jewish identity in the theatre, he would have to do it with a bit more subtlety. Still, he did pursue other Jewish projects, albeit for a more limited audience, including a series of radio plays based on bible stories, and two arrangements of Hebrew folk songs in May 1938 for the "Songs for a New Palestine" project, for which musicologist Hans Nathan contacted several Jewish composers, including Aaron Copland, Stefan Wolpe, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Paul Dessau, and Ernst Toch.[38] Weill arranged "Havu l'venim" and "Baa m'nucha."

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[36] The quote appears verbatim in two articles about *The Eternal Road*: "Protagonist of Music Theatre," *American Hebrew*, January, 8, 1937, pp. 756–57, 760, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/366-protagonist-of-music-in-the-theatre, "Score for 'The Eternal Road," *New York Times* December 27, 1936, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/349-score-for-the-eternal-road, both accessed February 1, 2013.

[37] WLA, Box 49, Folder 56.

[38] Kuhnt, *Kurt Weill und das Judentum*, 128–31. See also Letter from Weill to Hans Nathan, May 30, 1938, in WPD(e), 185.

As an educated man from the German middle class, Weill had little in common with the poor Eastern European immigrants who lived in New York's Lower East Side. He had been raised in a Conservative Jewish household, but by the time he arrived in the United States—like other German Jews who had been observant in Europe but gave up many aspects of their religion when they emigrated—Weill had stopped practicing almost entirely. On his 1937 citizenship application, he listed his race as "White," rather than "Jewish," which would have been a more typically Eastern European answer.[39] His idea of enlisting Broadway in the fight against racism seems aimed more at German Jews, who were often better able to afford tickets than their Eastern European co-religionists. Weill also never spoke out for legislative and legal reform, preferring to work within the system in the German-Jewish style, as opposed to the Eastern Europeans who advocated for a radical political overhaul. Perhaps Weill, still on a fixed-term visa and acutely conscious of the watchful eye of Congressional entities like the Dies Committee (a precursor to the House Un-American Activities Committee), publically shied away from anything the government might deem threatening so as not to outstay his welcome in the United States. In other ways, however, Weill's racial sensibilities more resembled the Eastern European stance. Like them, Weill was a recent arrival who had come to the United States to escape horrific violence. This comes out in *Ulysses Africanus* in the immediacy of the Civil War in the early part of the story. Weill and Anderson's close identification of Black slaves with European Jews (discussed below) also has its roots in the ideas of recent Eastern European immigrants, who felt a close kinship with the oppressed. Middle-class German Jews, in contrast, did not

[39] The application survives in WLA, Box 47, Folder 15.

empathize so strongly with the U.S. poor, but rather sought to help the Black community through philanthropy and other more apolitical efforts.[40]

Some in the Black community embraced this Jewish attention. Even before the two peoples had any substantial social, economic, or political contact with one another, Blacks felt an affinity for the Hebrew slaves in the Old Testament, and images from the Book of Exodus permeated their religious lives. When they arrived in the New World, Africans were forcibly converted to Christianity, and within a few generations, they began to find biblical parallels with the ancient Israelites held in bondage by the Egyptians.[41] Slaves incorporated the story of the Jews' journey from bondage to freedom into their religious culture; many of the most famous spirituals to come out of the antebellum era draw on the imagery of Exodus, including "When Israel Was in Egypt's Land," and "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel."[42] Harriet Tubman, a woman who escaped slavery and used her freedom to lead others out of the South, became known as "Grandma Moses" after the figure who eventually freed the Hebrew slaves in the bible. The story of the exodus from Egypt also holds a prominent place in Jewish tradition. Every year, the story is retold at the Passover Seder, and Jews are commanded not only to honor their history, but to proclaim that they themselves were and are slaves as well. Growing up in a Jewish household, every year Weill would have declared that he had been a slave, which may have disposed him

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[40] Weill was one of several émigrés that equated racist thinking with Fascism, including his erstwhile collaborator émigré director Fritz Lang, who worked with Weill on the film *You and Me* (Paramount, 1938). In Lang's first American film *Fury* (MGM, 1936), the hapless traveler Joe Wilson (played by Spencer Tracy) is arrested for a crime he did not commit, and subsequently the target of a lynch mob in a fictional American small town. In the ensuing trial, although race is not mentioned, lynch mobs are painted as an epidemic in the United States, and linked with the rise of fascism in Europe. See Anton Kaes, "A Stranger in the House: Fritz Lang's *Fury* and the Cinema of Exile," *New German Critique* 89 (2003): 33–58.

[41] See Albert J. Raboteau, "African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel" (1994), reprinted in *Strangers and Neighbors*, ed. Adams and Bracey, 57–63.

[42] The former retells the story of Moses demanding that Pharaoh let his people go; the latter retells the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. For examples of many of these lyrics, see Thomas Wentworth Higgonson, "Negro Spirituals" *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1867): 685–94.

(and other Jews) to feel a connection with African Americans who took up the same story, albeit somewhat more literally.

In the early twentieth century, this biblical link combined with reports of the violence against Jews in Europe caused many Blacks to see a connection between their two communities. These included Zora Neale Hurston, who in *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), used the story of the Exodus as an analogy for both Blacks in the South and Jews in Nazi Germany. Others saw a more contemporary connection. In *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright's seminal novel on American racism, the author tapped into this sense of kinship by making Bigger Thomas's lawyer Mr. Max a Jew. When Bigger, the Black double-murderer, has sudden eruption of conscience and tries to dissuade Max from defending him, Max replies, "oh they'll hate me, yes … but I can take it. That's the difference. I'm a Jew and they hate me but I know why and I can fight. … The fear of hate keeps many Whites from trying to help you and your kind. Before I can fight your battle, I've got to fight a battle with them."[43] Soon after this exchange, the sociopathic Bigger realizes that he feels "more deeply than ever what Max had grown to mean to him."[44] In his essay *How "Bigger" Was Born* (1940), Wright revealed that much of his inspiration for the character came from studying Nazi Germany:

> From the moment Hitler took power in Germany and began to oppress the Jews, I tried to keep track of what was happening. And on innumerable occasions I was startled to detect, either from the side of the Fascists or from the side of the oppressed, reactions, moods, phrases, attitudes that reminded me strongly of Bigger, that helped bring out more clearly the shadowy outlines of the negative that lay in the back of my mind. I read every account of the Fascist movement in Germany I could lay my hands on, and from page to page I encountered and recognized familiar emotional patterns.[45]

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[43] Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940) (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 359.

[44] Wright, *Native Son*, 381.

[45] Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," (1940), reprinted in Wright, *Native Son*, 444.

By tapping into shared narratives of historical and contemporary oppression, Blacks and Jews formed a political alliance within the Cultural Front which strove for racial equality, both domestically and abroad.

However, even as the Frank affair brought Jews and Blacks together, it also revealed deep divisions between the two communities, divisions that Weill never quite understood. The chief witness for the prosecution was Jim Conley, the black janitor at Frank's factory, who claimed that he helped his boss hide the body. Part of Frank's defense hinged on undermining Conley's credibility on racial grounds. Miss Iora Small, a character witness for Frank, told the court "I don't know of any nigger on earth that I would believe on oath."[46] Frank himself participated in the smear campaign against Conley, and upon hearing his sentence, he made a statement to the court:

> But this I know: my execution will mark the advent of a new era in Georgia, where a good name and stainless honor count for naught against the word of a vile criminal; where the testimony of Southern White women of impeachable character is branded as false by the prosecution, disregarded by the jury, and the perjured vaporings of a black brute alone are accepted as the whole truth.[47]

This statement was widely circulated in newspapers throughout the country, including those in Baltimore, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Houston, and Raleigh.[48] The larger Jewish community echoed these sentiments throughout the affair; editorials in Jewish newspapers were peppered with phrases like "black human animal," "depraved negro," "treacherous negro," and "negro dope fiend."[49] The Black press responded indignantly, generally characterizing Frank as White rather

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[46] Brief of the Evidence, Frank vs. The State of Georgia, 120

[47] Quoted in "Frank to Hang Jan. 22" *Baltimore Sun*, December 10, 1914, p. 3.

[48] Eugene Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?': Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913–1915" (1974), reprinted in *Strangers and Neighbors*, ed. Adams and Bracey, 261–70, at pp. 262, 269 n7.

[49] Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?'" 266.

than Jewish. *The Crisis* called Frank a "White degenerate," and the *Chicago Defender* attacked "Frank's race-hating friends."[50] The Black press became even angrier after the uproar that followed Frank's death; many Blacks were frustrated by the fact that after decades of living in fear of lynch mobs with little coverage in the news, the country had exploded over the lynching of an apparently White man. "It seems that after all," opined the editor of the *Chicago Broad-Ax*, "it depends upon whose ox is gored." In general, the Black community felt that their Jewish counterparts exploited Southern racism in order to try to save one of their own.

This sense of being exploited extended to economic and cultural matters as well, and permeated Black–Jewish interactions for the first half of the twentieth century. While exceptions exist, most of the tensions between the two groups were based on race rather than religion, as in the Frank trial. In other words, most Blacks did not speak out against Jews as Jews, but rather as the shade of "White" with whom they had the most contact. As more Blacks migrated to the cities of the North, they settled in the poorest neighborhoods, often those already settled by poor Jewish immigrants. Seeing their neighborhoods disappear, Jews, who by this point had gained some economic and political clout, began to move out. However, numerous independent merchants stayed, and many of the buildings remained under the control of Jewish landlords. Blacks accused their local Jewish storekeepers and landlords of charging them more for inferior goods. In 1935, these tensions erupted in Harlem, the largest black neighborhood in New York City. On March 16, a Black teenager named Lino Rivera shoplifted a pocket knife from Kress's store on 125th Street. The owners caught him and called the police, Rivera was taken away. Over the next few hours, rumors that Rivera had either been beaten to death by the owner of the store, or that the police had killed him in custody, circulated throughout the area, and protesters

[50] Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?'" 264.

gathered in front of the store. Eventually, the protest turned into a riot. By the end of the night, hundreds of Jewish-owned stores lay in ruins.[51]

Since Jews often employed Black domestic workers, the employer/employee relationship also dominated Black–Jewish relations in the first half of the twentieth century. While some Jews treated and paid their servants fairly, many did not. One of the most egregious examples of exploitation was the so-called "Bronx Slave Market," in which Black women waited in the park for employers to hire them for one-time menial tasks for a pittance, which they often were not paid at the end of the day. In 1935, Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke spent a day at the market and wrote an exposé on the practice which made it clear that the primary patrons were both Jewish and stingy. The third subtitle reads "In the Bronx, northern borough of New York City known for its heavy Jewish population, exists a street corner market for domestic servants where Negro women are 'rented' at unbelievably low rates for housework." The article goes on to describe a typical work day for these women:

> She who is fortunate (?) enough to please Mrs. Simon Legree is led away to perform hours of multifarious household drudgeries. Under a rigid watch, she is permitted to scrub floors on her bended knees, to hang precariously from window sills, cleaning window after window, or to strain and sweat over steaming tubs of heavy blankets, spreads, and furniture covers. Fortunate, indeed, is she who gets the full hourly rate promised. Often, her day's slavery is rewarded with a single dollar bill or whatever her unscrupulous employer pleases to pay. More often, the clock is set back for an hour or more. Too often, she is sent away without any pay at all.[52]

Cook and Baker talk to one a woman who left her former work situation in an Orthodox Jewish household because "after I had been working for about five weeks, I asked for a Sunday off. My boy friend from Washington was coming up on an excursion and coming to spend the day with

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[51] Hasia R. Diner, "Between Words and Deeds: Jews and Blacks in America, 1880–1935," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black–Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 87–106, at pp. 87–8.

[52] Ella Baker and Marvel Cook, "The Bronx Slave Market," *Crisis*, November 1935, pp. 330–331, 340, at p. 331.

me. She told me if I didn't come in on Sunday, I needn't come back at all. Well, I didn't go back."[53] The authors' reference to Simon Legree, the villainous slave owner of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was not a particularly Jewish slur, and suggests a strand of Black anti-Semitism in their article. Indeed, the woman interviewed complains about the added work of keeping a kosher kitchen, which hints at great cultural misunderstandings in these arrangements.

Within the Black community, opinion about the Jews split along class lines. The so-called "talented tenth"—the Black intelligentsia such as Wright and Hurston—sought out alliances with the Jewish community. The NAACP in particular welcomed Jewish members and their legal support in situations like the Scottsboro case. Lower-class Blacks however, found themselves bound to Jewish merchants, landlords, and employers, and often resented the Jewish presence in their lives. On some level, most of the friction between Blacks and Jews from Leo Frank to the 1960s resulted from an expectation on both sides that the other should know better.[54] While they perceived a shared historical and contemporary experience of suffering and prejudice, they were dismayed not to find more common ground. The ability of Jews, particularly wealthier German Jews, to pass as White was an opportunity not available to Blacks, and caused a permanent wedge between the two groups.

As Leo Frank, and later the Scottsboro Boys dominated the political and legal world of American Jews and Blacks, a major shift occurred in the contemporary entertainment business as Jewish performers took over blackface performance from the Irish. The complex racial implications of blackface have been well explored in the literature, particularly the idea that, in the words of Michael Rogin, blackface performance "passed immigrants into Americans by

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[53] Baker and Cook, "The Bronx Slave Market," 340.

[54] Cheryl Greenberg, "Negotiation Coalition: Black and Jewish Civil Rights Agencies in the Twentieth Century," in *Struggles in the Promised Land*, ed. Salzman and West, 153–76, at p. 168.

differentiating them from the black Americans through whom they spoke."[55] Most famously, Al Jolson's character in *The Jazz Singer* (1927) breaks free from his Orthodox Jewish upbringing by learning how to sing popular music and color his face, signifying his assimilation into U.S. culture. By establishing that they had to pretend in order to successfully ape Blackness, Jews in essence proved their Whiteness. Beginning in the twentieth century, many Jews entered into the practice of painting their faces with burnt cork and performed pejorative black stereotypes in minstrel shows, most of which contained songs written by other Jews. In many of these vaudeville productions, blacks were portrayed as over-sexualized and simple-minded. The practice, which dated back to the Civil War era, became widespread in the American entertainment business. Although by the 1930s, vaudeville blackface was dying out, Hollywood films continued to employ minstrelsy as a marker of American-ness. From Al Jolson's transformation from a Jew into an American through blackface in *The Jazz Singer* (1927) to Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, and Busby Berkeley's stylized nostalgia in the show-within-a-show in *Babes in Arms* (1939), burnt cork remained a staple of early twentieth-century entertainment.

Even when they did not paint their faces, the prominence of Jews on Tin Pan Alley made many Blacks uncomfortable because they made money by using a Black voice. Songwriters like George Gershwin and Irving Berlin had been writing in traditionally Black genres like jazz and ragtime with great success, which lead to charges of cultural theft. Many in the Black community felt that this was little more than blackface by proxy, as White (Jewish) songwriters put their

[55] Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 47. For studies of blackface and racial fluidity, see also Susan Gubar, *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Jeffrey Paul Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, and Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

words in the mouths of Black, or even White, performers. Until the 1950s, a popular rumor circulated that Berlin stole all of his material from "a little colored boy" that he kept in his closet.[56] The idea that Tin Pan Alley peddled a bowdlerized "whitened" Jazz made many people uncomfortable. Paul Whiteman's desire to "make a lady out of Jazz" eventually led to the Russian Jew Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* which combined bluesy tonality and rhythms and classical forms and techniques with more success than any other Black composer at the time, even as Gershwin himself considered Black Jazz as "crude" and "vulgar."[57] When *Porgy and Bess* premiered in 1935, Gershwin's Black critics accused him of minstrelsy and, in words generally attributed to Duke Ellington, "lampblack Negroisms."[58] Still, other Black Americans embraced the Jewish presence on Tin Pan Alley: in the preface to *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, a collection which appears in Weill's notes for *Ulysses Africanus*, James Weldon Johnson wrote that "it is interesting, if not curious, that among white Americans those who have mastered [African] rhythms most completely are the Jewish-Americans. Indeed, Jewish musicians and composers are they who have carried them to their highest achievement in written form."[59]

As a recent immigrant struggling with what it meant to be an American, Weill may have been attracted to the racial cross-identifications. As Andrea Most has observed, "the musicals of the 1920s and 30s, many of them written and performed by Jews from immigrant backgrounds

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[56] Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues*, 117–18.

[57] Ray Allen, "An American Folk Opera? Triangulating Folkness, Blackness, and Americaness in Gerswhin and Heyward's *Porgy and Bess*," *Journal of American Folklore* 117 (2004): 243–61, at p. 245.

[58] Allen, "An American Folk Opera?" 252; Jonathan Gill, "Hollywood Has Taken on a New Color: The Yiddish Blackface of Samuel Goldwyn's *Porgy and Bess*," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 347–71, at p. 355.

[59] James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, (New York: Viking, 1925), 28.

… suggest a vehement opposition to rigid racial categorizations, advocating instead a more fluid concept of identity."[60] She notes that in the Gershwins' *Girl Crazy* (1930) and in the Ziegfield extravaganza *Whoopee* (1938), Jewish comics Eddie Cantor and Willie Howard adopt multiple racial identities, most prominently Black and Native American, in order to escape the local authorities. Playing on racial perception in popular culture was not limited to the United States; Bruce Torrid has noted that in Europe prior to 1933, the "notion of black music and musicality, produced primarily around minstrel figures of nineteenth-century American stage and parlour music, bears an uncanny resemblance to Central Europe's gypsies in operetta and salon."[61] The famous poster for the traveling German *Entartete Musik* ("Degenerate Music") exhibit in 1938 featured a blackface man with a Jewish star on his lapel. If both Jews and Gypsies (another group pursued by the Nazis) could be coded Black or racially Other, then it would only have been a short leap in the mind of a European such as Weill to have the idea of coding a Black man as Jewish.

From his earliest days in the United States, Weill was eager to weigh in on the subject of race relations. Barely one month after arriving in New York, the composer attended a rehearsal of *Porgy and Bess* and proclaimed it "a remarkable work, and very close to me."[62] Among his lists of proposed projects during this period, there are many suggestions for plays with racial themes, including one on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[63] In August 1937 in the midst of working on *The*

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[60] Andrea Most, "'Big Chief Izzy Horowitz': Theatricality and Jewish Identity in the Wild West," *American Jewish History* 87 (1999): 313–41, at p. 314.

[61] Bruce Torrid, "'Gypsy Violins' and 'Hot Rhythms': Race, Popular Music and Governmentality," in Julie Brown, ed., *Western Music and Race* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37–48, at p. 40.

[62] Douglas Gilbert, "German Refuge [*sic*] Discovers Romantic America, Lives up to Operetta he Wrote, Sight Unseen in 1927" *New York World-Telegram*, October 17, 1935, available online at http://kwf.org/german-refugee-discovers-romantic-america.html, accessed January 13, 2012.

[63] David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 390.

Common Glory, Weill urged Paul Green to see William Dieterle's *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), a film in part about the anti-Semitic Dreyfus affair in France. The film interested Weill because it depicted Zola as "a young idealist who has more and more success until he finally forgets all his ideals. He has not the slightest interest for Dreyfus. But suddenly he is taken by the idea and how he has to fight it through to the end. Don't you think that could be the kind of story we need?"[64] As a European, Weill would have considered "Jewish" a racial rather than ethnic marker, and in fact, his reading of Zola resembles the final version of *Ulysses Africanus*, which features a black man becoming successful by abandoning his ideals, but returning to them in the end when he realizes he has become morally bankrupt. As work on *Ulysses Africanus* was at its height, Weill pursued an all-Black production of the *Threepenny Opera* with Louis Simon (the intended producer of *One Man from Tennessee*) in New York. Weill wanted to expose the various injustices he saw in American race-relations, which was not an uncommon stance for a Jew. But while his particular position as a German Jewish refugee shaped the ways in which *Ulysses Africanus* protested injustice, it also blinded him to his own position of power over the Black community. The result was a well-meaning, sometimes trenchant, but often patronizing piece.

Paul and Eslanda Robeson

Weill and Anderson's efforts to involve Paul Robeson in *Ulysses Africanus* present a microcosm of the tensions and alliances that characterized Black–Jewish relations in the 1930s. Robeson was a natural choice for the leading role in the project, particularly for Weill, who also tried to get him involved in one of the all-Black *Threepenny Opera* productions in 1942.[65] His

[64] Letter from Weill to Paul Green, August 19, 1937; a copy survives in the Ronald Sanders Papers, NYPL, Box 21, Folder 5.

[65] Letter from Clarence Muse to Weill, March 17, 1942, WLA, Box 47, Folder 11.

performance of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's "Ol' Man River" from their 1927 musical *Show Boat* captured the imagination of radio and audiences across the country, and his portrayal of the same character in the 1936 movie won him great acclaim. But aside from being a popular performer, Robeson was an outspoken proponent of the Cultural Front. He was involved in several WPA programs such as the *Sing for Your Supper* radio show that produced the "Ballad for Americans" in 1939, and he was a strong voice for the Left, particularly regarding racial issues.

In his activism, Robeson, a member of the "talented tenth," sought out alliances with the Jewish community. Like many of his generation, as he spoke out against the evils of domestic racism, he compared it to the situation of the Jews across the Atlantic and in the diaspora. Robeson drew historical and contemporary comparisons between the two communities, and felt that the Jews could be a model for racial advancement. In 1934, he wrote that Jews,

> like the vast proportion of Negroes, are a race without a nation, but, far from Palestine, they are indissolubly bound by their ancient religious practices—*which they recognize as such*. I emphasize this in contradistinction to the religious practices of the American Negro, which, from the snake-worship practiced in the deep South to the Christianity of the revival meeting, are patently survivals of the earliest African religions; *and he does not recognize them as such*. Their acknowledgement of common origin, species, interest, and attitudes binds Jew to Jew; a similar acknowledgement will bind Negro and Negro.[66]

He felt a particularly musical connection to Jewish life, telling the *New York World-Telegram* in the same year that he would no longer sing in French, German, or Italian, saying "I do not understand the psychology of the Frenchman, the German or the Italian. Their history has nothing in common with the history of my slave ancestors. So I will not sing their music or the songs of their ancestors. But I know the wail of the Hebrew."[67] He recorded and performed in

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[66] Paul Robeson, "I Want to Be African" (1934), reprinted in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918–1974*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 88–91 (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1978), 90 (emphasis in the original).

[67] "Robeson Spurns Music He 'Doesn't Understand,'" (1933), reprinted in *Paul Robeson Speaks*, ed. Foner, 85.

Hebrew, becoming particularly intrigued by what he called his "Hassidic Chant," a version of the *Kaddish* by the eighteenth-century Rabbi Levi Berdichev. His first known performance of the piece was in Neath, Wales, but he performed the piece in the United States as well, including at his famous 1958 Carnegie Hall concert.[68] Robeson felt so connected to Jewish tradition that, according to his son, he studied biblical Hebrew wearing a kippah, a traditional Jewish cap worn as a sign of respect for God.[69] His fascination with Judaism may have especially appealed to Weill, who had just escaped Europe himself, and who in numerous (possibly unconscious) ways fashioned *Ulysses Africanus* to be about both Black and Jewish narratives of searching for home.

On March 3, 1939, Anderson sent a letter to Robeson offering him the title role. Anderson writes of his intentions to adapt Henry Stilwell Edwards's novella, but says that he had yet to work out the details of the plot. Still, he presents a workable skeleton of the show he and Weill intend to produce. It was to be "the story of a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his own rules of conduct."[70] The story followed the Black man Aeneas,

> who was born a slave and has never been obliged or encouraged to make an ethical decision for himself. Finding himself free but entrusted with valuable property which was placed in his hands for safe-keeping by a master to whom he owes no duty save that imposed by loyalty and friendship, he is tempted to consider the property his own. After a long, unrewarded search for the man who was his master, he finally decides to hunt no further and makes himself respected in his own world as a free man, even acquiring a competence by his management of a stable of horses built up from the progeny of the racing mare with which he was entrusted. At this point he encounters again the man who was his master, but fails to reveal himself, justifying his conduct by reflecting on the years of labor for which he was never paid. Too late Aeneas discovers that the man and his family are now in want and that there is nothing left of their old fortune except what he, Aeneas, saved for them. He sets out on his search again, having discovered that

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[68] Jonathan Carp, "Performing Black–Jewish Symbiosis: The "Hassidic Chant" of Paul Robeson," *American Jewish History* 91 (2003): 53–81, at pp. 53, 68 n51.

[69] George Bornstein, *The Colors of Zion: Blacks, Jews, and Irish from 1845–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2011), 74.

[70] Quoted in Elmar Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson: Neue weg zum amerikansiche Musiktheater, 1938–1950* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000), 132.

> freedom brings with it responsibilities as a person which he never had to worry about before.[71]

Anderson also promised a love story involving Aeneas searching for his wife and levity in the form of Weill's music. He also sent along a copy of Edwards's novella for reference.

Robeson, through his wife, politely refused. Eslanda ("Essie") Goode Robeson, her husband's agent, wrote that Paul was too prominent a figure to play so stereotypical a part:

> You may perhaps know, that the general public has taken it for granted that Mr. Robeson REPRESENTS, to some extent, the Negro race, the Negro thought, and the Negro behavior. This is extremely inconvenient for us, as it limits our scope a great deal. It is also very unfair and unreasonable and irritating. If he plays a drunk, the Negros are drunkards; if [he] plays Ol' Uncle Tom, then all Negros are 'handkercheif [*sic*] heads' and don't want to be free. It is ridiculous, of course, but there it is. … Mr. Robeson feels that one of the reasons for the almost universal prejudice against our race is the fact that very few people know anything about us (as a race). The ignorance is largely deliberate, we feel. The general public's idea of a Negro is an Uncle Tom, an Aunt Jemima, Ol' Mammy, and [the boxer] Jack Johnson. These types have been sold to the public deliberately. Well, now that they don't exist any more except in the sentimental minds of credulous people, we certainly must not do anything in any way, to prolong their non-existent lives!!![72]

According to David Kilroy, Robeson refused because he did not think his audience "could sufficiently overlook the derogatory inflections of character inherent in Edwards' obsequious ex-slave." Similarly, Sanders writes that Robeson "recognized the innate condescension in the story." However, Kilroy and Sanders, like other scholars, fail to take into account Essie Robeson's relationship with her husband. The actual reasons for the refusal are much more complicated.

Essie had her own agenda concerning her husband's public image. Paul generally left business matters to Essie and his (Jewish) manager Robert Rockmore, and notoriously often let

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[71] Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 132–33.

[72] Letter from Eslanda Goode Robeson to Maxwe3/29/38ll Anderson, March 29, 1939, MAC, Series "Misc," Folder "Brandt and Brandt Dramatic Dept., Inc., 92 TLS. 9TL, 2ALS, 7 telegrams, 1 telegram/draft to Anderson, Maxwell; 3 – nd,1933–1939 In 2 folders; Memorandum of agreement of letters with some of these" (emphasis in the original).

his mail go unopened for long stretches of time, until Essie took care of it, so it is possible that Paul never actually saw Anderson's offer.[73] Essie Robeson had very definite ideas about how her husband should appear to the public, and Anderson's proposed plot would not have appealed to her. In 1930, she published *Paul Robeson, Negro*, a biography of her (at the time, estranged) husband that highlighted his high-society credentials, such as his academic aptitude and his penchant for choosing erudite subject material in his professional life. She made sure to relate that her husband received his Phi Beta Kappa key in his junior year of college, whereas most who earned the honor at all did not do so until their final year, and that while preparing to play the lead in *Othello*, "days, weeks, months slipped by with Paul spending long hours shut up with his gramophone, playing the fine records over and over, soaking himself in good music; reading books, buying new books and devouring them."[74] The biography incensed Paul (primarily because it also portrayed him as hopelessly lazy and dependent on her), but her account appeared just before the opening of his *Othello* in London, and helped to enhance his image as an intellectual actor and concert artist. She discouraged people from thinking of her husband as an average Black man.

Essie's work as an anthropologist also likely persuaded her to refuse on Paul's behalf. Essie spent most of 1936 traveling around Africa with her son, Paul Jr. While she did not publish her observations until 1945, with *African Journey*, the trip nevertheless had an immediate effect on her. Her book emphasizes the connections, both political and cultural, between all those of African descent. In her introduction, she writes that she was astonished to discover that "the Negro problem was not only the problem of the 13 million Negroes in America, but was and is

[73] Sheila Tully Boyle and Andrew Bunie, *Paul Robeson: The Years of Promise and Achievement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 259.

[74] Eslanda Goode Robeson, *Paul Robeson: Negro* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 19, 164–5.

the far greater problem of the 150 million Negroes in Africa, plus the problem of the 10 million Negroes in the West Indies."[75] Throughout the book, she frequently compared life in colonial Africa to America. In South Africa, she observed that "in Africa, as in America, the White folks want the Negroes to work for them. While they proclaim a fear and horror of Negroes in general living near by [*sic*], they seem quite comfortable when the *Negroes who work for them* live within their call—or indeed live right in their homes."[76] After 1936, she displayed a pan-African consciousness and participated in many international efforts to fight for the rights of the African diaspora, including lecturing, producing pamphlets, and publishing her book. This newly awakened feeling of connection across national borders made her particularly sensitive to issues of how Blacks were portrayed in popular culture; she wrote *African Journey* specifically to counter the prevailing anthropological narrative of the inhabitants of the so-called "dark continent" as strange and primitive by portraying the population as participants in an international society who managed to hold on to cultural traditions in spite of the yoke of colonialism.[77] Her newly awakened concern for the popular representation of the African diaspora almost certainly affected her opinion of Anderson's proposal.[78]

Even if he never saw Anderson's letter, Paul Robeson likely would not have taken the project, although some of his potential reasons probably did not match his wife's. Although estranged in the late 1920s, by 1932 Essie and Paul reached an amicable détente, even if they

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[75] Eslanda Goode Robeson, *African Journey* (New York: John Day, 1945), 13–14.

[76] Robeson, *African Journey*, 38 (emphasis in the original).

[77] For more on Essie's involvement with the pan-African movement, see Maureen Mahon, "Eslanda Goode Robeson's African Journey: The Politics of Representation and Identification in the African Diaspora," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 8 (2006): 101–18.

[78] She did, however, love the idea of her husband starring in *The Threepenny Opera*, suggesting that she did not mind Paul taking on villainous roles, as long as they were unique; see the letter from Eslanda Goode Robeson to Weill, July 15, 1942, WLA, Box 49, Folder 62.

were not entirely reconciled. At the same time, Paul became increasingly interested in racial politics. After a decade of playing the striving but never ungracious or threatening Black man, he began to fight the injustices of Jim Crow America. However, despite his personal and political struggles against racism in his political and concert life, in plays and movies he often found himself playing the same old stereotypes. With the exception of the slow-moving but ultimately good-hearted Joe in *Show Boat* (1927), most of Paul's movie roles were some variation on the "bad nigger" in films like *Body and Soul* (1925) and even to some extent *The Emperor Jones* (1933), or on the "noble savage" as in *Song of Freedom* (1936) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1937). He became increasingly frustrated in these stereotypical roles, and shared Essie's distaste for being typecast. He particularly disliked the idea of the Uncle Tom. In his 1958 manifesto *Here I Stand* (which he dedicated to his wife), he wrote of his father, an escaped slave that, "just as in his youth he had refused to remain a slave, so in his manhood he disdained to be an Uncle Tom," and he railed against the "dwindling group of Uncle Toms who shamelessly serve even Eastland [Northerners]."[79] This makes it unlikely that the role of Aeneas/Ulyssses would have appealed to him.

Even if the Uncle Tom-ishness of the story did not immediately strike him, Paul may have been suspicious of an apparently enlightened project. He often did not realize just how problematic his roles were until the final cut of the film, as in the case of *Sanders of the River* (1935). The brothers Alexander and Zoltan Korda came to Paul in 1934 with hours of footage shot in Africa, and offered him the role of Bosambo, the noble African chief in their film. Paul enthusiastically signed up, expecting a film that revealed the beauty and intricacy of African culture. Instead, *Sanders* turned out to be a colonialist tale of a British officer who was the only

[79] Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1958), 9, 111.

thing that prevented chaos and war among the tribes.[80] After his experience with the Korda brothers, he was much more careful in choosing roles, even if it did not always pay off. By 1939, he had nearly abandoned hope of a commercial venture that fit his racial ideals.

Although Weill and Robeson had a common goal, cultural misunderstanding got in the way. Robeson had been fooled once too many times by exploitative film makers, and Weill (and Anderson, it seems) did not understand the harmful image of Blacks that their proposed story contained. Like many Blacks and Jews during this period, they had similar goals, but different ideas on how to go about achieving them. By 1939, Robeson had taken a more militant stance on racial issues than *Ulysses Africanus* advocated, and Weill and Anderson were either unable or unwilling to make the project more palatable for him. Perhaps Weill still worried about appearing ungrateful to the country that had sheltered him from the Nazis, or he (like many Jews) did not understand how patronizing his efforts truly were.

Cultural Mobility in the Shadow of Uncle Tom

Critics often read Robeson's refusal to participate in the project as evidence that Weill and Anderson were out of touch with the Black community. The consensus is that the pair went wrong from the very beginning by choosing a source (Edwards's novella) that was irredeemably racist. Edwards's *Eneas Africanus* is indeed a paternalistic account of the journey of a Black man through the South just after the Civil War. Edwards wrote the novella in 1920 as a defense of Southern culture during a period when many in the South felt wrongly accused of racism and barbarism. In the preface, he asserts that the simplicity of former slaves engenders only compassion in his fellow countrymen, a feeling absent in the rest of the country:

[80] On Paul Robeson's experience during the *Sanders of the River* project, see Boyle and Bunie, *Paul Robeson*, 292–98.

> Dear to the hearts of Southerners, young and old, is the vanishing type, conspicuous in the Eneas of this record; and as in a sidelight herein are seen the Southerners themselves, kind of heart, tolerant and appreciative of the humor and pathos of a negro's life. Eneas would have been arrested in any country other than the South. In the South he could have traveled his life out as a guest of his 'white folks.'[81]

What follows is a spirited defense of White Southern antebellum life; the story of Eneas's journey is recounted almost entirely by his White hosts, who all send letters to Major Tommey (Eneas's former owner) informing him of Eneas's fate.

Eneas himself only "speaks" once, begging for directions in a letter reading, "Marse George: I am loss in er distric called Yellerhama, by a town o' name Burningham. Ef you knows whar Burningham is, fer God's sake come ter me fer I can't git ter you!" He then comically shows his simplicity by recounting his confusion over the geography of the South, writing, "Marse George, I been ter firs one an' den ernuther Thomasville [his hometown], year in an' out, tell thar ain't no sense in hit. An' I ain't hit der right one yit. Ev'ry yuther place is name Thomasville er Macon er Washington er Jefferson. … Der firs Thomasville I got back to fo' times. Hit was harder to loose hit than hit was ter find it!" Eneas also makes a point of reiterating his status as property, saying "I got ernuther wife down in de third Washington an' am bringin' her erlong. She weighs on hundred and sixty, an' picks four hundred pounds er cotton er day. She b'longs ter you, same as me an' [the horse] Lady Chain an' de colt."[82] In general, Eneas represents most of the damaging perceptions Robeson fought against in the 1930s: he is simple-minded to the point of being helpless, he is promiscuous (he acquires several more wives along the way), and he has a gambling problem.

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[81] Harry Stilwell Edwards, *Eneas Africanus* (1920) (Macon, GA: J.W. Burke, 1930), 6.

[82] Edwards, *Eneas Africanus*, 28–30.

To be fair, Eneas is not all bad in the story. In many ways, his other qualities may have appealed to Weill and Anderson. Although a gambler, he becomes successful and therefore gains legitimacy as a race-horse breeder, showing an entrepreneurial, rags-to-riches streak that would have appealed to Anderson's belief in capitalism and Weill's hope that, as an immigrant with nothing, he could thrive in the United States. Edwards's Eneas also becomes a preacher, and when he gets home at the end of the story, an unnamed correspondent for the *Macon* [*Georgia*] *Telegraph and Messenger* relates that upon his arrival, the former slave "stood up and began to shout about Moses and the Hebrew children being led out of Egypt into the promised land."[83] This connection to the story of the Exodus—we have seen it in other guises above—might have spoken to Weill as a cantor's son lost in what had to be a strange land. The idea of a man trying to return home after a long war might also have appealed to Weill as an immigrant as well as his burgeoning connection with Zionist movements. Since the mid-1930s, Palestine had provided refuge to Weill's sister, brother-in-law, and parents, and in the 1940s, the composer teamed up with Ben Hecht to produce the Zionist pageant *We Will Never Die*. The contemporary search for a homeland met the Jewish yearning to return to the Land of Israel, a central element of the faith. Despite his bad qualities, Eneas comes off in the end as endearing and loyal.

This loyalty, however, was one of the main reasons the Robesons objected to the character. Eneas embodies one of the most pernicious stereotypes in U.S. culture: the Uncle Tom, or the loyal slave who wishes only to return to his kind master. The type first appeared in Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist epic *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, a novel which, as Sophia Cantave notes, subsequently "provided the framework for the United States and European nations to discuss the 'peculiar institution [of slavery]' and their positions within that

[83] Edwards, *Eneas Africanus*, 42.

institution."[84] Soon after publication, Stowe's bestseller was adapted into other media, including minstrel shows, where many of her characters became familiar types, including the mischievous Topsy, and the steadfastly loyal, yet naïve Uncle Tom. The popularity of both the book and the character continued into the twentieth century as Hollywood adapted the story numerous times in the 1910s and 1920s. Actual depictions of the character himself existed alongside adaptations of the stereotype, including his female incarnation: Scarlett's Mammy in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, whom, as Leslie Fiedler has observed, "no betrayal can alienate, [and] no Emancipation Proclamation force from the eternal bondage of love."[85]

The ghost of Uncle Tom has largely been left out of discussions of Robeson's refusal to take the leading role in *Ulysses Africanus*. The single exception is Elmar Juchem, who does mention that the "somewhat naïve 'Uncle Tom'-tone of *Eneas Africanus* perpetuates a picture of the 'Old South' that films such as *The Birth of a Nation* propounded," a picture that Robeson had specifically condemned.[86] However, even Juchem does not explore the larger cultural implications of Weill and Anderson's attraction to so problematic a character, and still places the blame squarely on Edwards. Essie Robeson's mention of Uncle Tom, Aunt Jemima, and Mammy—all popular images of happy, loyal slaves—reveals that she and perhaps her husband objected to more than just the source material. While Anderson's proposed scenario erased much of the racism in the novella, Uncle Tom is still a prominent part of the title character. Instead of being dependent on Whites for support, Anderson's Aeneas creates a successful living for

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[84] Sophia Cantave, "Who Gets to Create the Lasting Images? The Problem of Black Representation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," (2000), reprinted In *Harriet Beecher Stowe's* Uncle Tom's Cabin*: A Casebook*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 293–205, at p. 203.

[85] Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Inadvertent Epic: From* Uncle Tom's Cabin *to* Roots (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1979), 61.

[86] Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 133–34.

himself breeding horses (a reference to Lady Chain's colt in the novella); he also spends the play searching for his original spouse rather than acquiring multiple wives along his travels. Rather than blindly accepting that he is property, Anderson's Aeneas takes his payment for years of forced labor out of his owner's fortune. Finally, the scenario has Aeneas demonstrating a strong moral compass in the end. The one stereotype that Anderson failed to excise was Aeneas's desire to return to his master, even if it springs from noble impulses.

The Uncle Tom stereotype that pervades both Edwards's Eneas and Anderson's Aeneas goes deeper than simply the desire of the slave to return to his master. Both characters strikingly resemble the original Uncle Tom of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which Weill almost certainly read given that it appears twice among his lists of potential projects, once in 1932 (while he was still in Germany) and again in 1942.[87] In Stowe's book, the title character is not only unerringly loyal, but uncommonly honest as well. His initial owner Mr. Shelby declares that since he introduced Tom to Christianity, "I've trusted him … with everything I have—money, house, horse—and let him come and go round the country, and I always found him true and square and everything."[88] Shelby further proves his statement saying "Why, last fall, I let him go to Cincinnati [a free territory] alone, to do business for me, and bring home five hundred dollars. … Some low fellows, they say, said to him, 'Tom, why don't you make tracks for Canada?' 'Ah, master trusted me, and I couldn't.'" These qualities—honesty and loyalty—define Tom throughout the book. In the beginning of both the Eneas story and the Aeneas one, the title character is put in the exact same situation. Major Tommey entrusts Eneas/Aeneas with valuables for safekeeping and sends his now-freed bondsman away, trusting

[87] See Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 390, 405.

[88] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) (New York: Airmont, 1967), 14.

that he will return. As in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the protagonist tries to earn or bargain his way back to the Shelby farm after his initial sale, the plot of *Eneas/Aeneas Africanus* hinges on the title character's efforts to return to the kind master put his faith in him. These blatant parallels probably made the Robesons uncomfortable and may even have been the primary factors in their decision to turn down the role.

Weill and Anderson's second choice for the leading man, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, also betrays the pair's interest in rewriting Uncle Tom. Robinson, a dancer, made his name in Hollywood in the 1930s in part by partnering with the child star Shirley Temple. They starred in four films together, two of which were set in Old South: *The Little Colonel* and *The Littlest Rebel*, both made in 1935 (the other two were *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and *Just Around the Corner*, both 1938). In these southern dramas, Robinson plays a former slave who refuses to leave his master's side even after emancipation, a direct descendent of Stowe's Uncle Tom. The name of his character in *The Littlest Rebel* is Uncle Billy, which seems to be a reference to the novel. Even though the names are changed, in all of their films together, Temple and Robinson reenacted to loyal slave–angelic child relationship at the center of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

When Anderson and Weill revised their scenario for Robinson, they added a minstrel show (which would have been hugely problematic for the racially conscious Robeson) the aspects that linked Aeneas, whom they renamed Ulysses, to Uncle Tom became even more pronounced. In the revised version, which survives as a libretto in the MAC (see table 4.1), Anderson and Weill removed the episode in which Ulysses meets his former master and consciously decides to withhold payment. Instead, Ulysses is tricked into joining a minstrel troupe by the duplicitous Markham, and sells the valuables in order to buy out the man who swindled him. When he hears that the family is in dire financial straits, he makes a superhuman

effort to recover their property and return home in time to prevent disaster. By removing Ulysses's first refusal to help his erstwhile owner, Ulysses regressed back toward to the distasteful Uncle Tom stereotype.

Table 4.1 Summary of *Ulysses Africanus* by Maxwell Anderson

Scene	Action	Music
Act I		
scene 1: On the lawn of the Beauregard Plantation	Young women and one young man are dancing while a small band of slaves provide the music. In the distance, guns sound. One slave (Ulysses) parodies the White dancers, but his mistress Melissa Beauregard asks him not to make fun since everyone is so sad because her fiancé Strickland must leave for war soon. Out of sight of their masters, more slaves parody the waltz (1). One young slave arrives with a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the slaves celebrate their new freedom (2). Colonel Beauregard arrives to tell the household that the war will pass through their land. The family decides to stay. Meanwhile, Ulysses and his wife Pennie argue over the former's wandering eye. Colonel Beauregard takes Ulysses aside and asks him to keep the family silver safe by running south of the war. Melissa and Strickland say good-bye to each other (3) as Ulysses and Penny do the same (4)	1. "White Folks" 2. "Law'se me"[a] 3. "Forget"[a] 4. "Here's How it is When You're Going Away[a]
scene 2: The woods	There is distant gunfire. A very haggard Ulysses enters and encounters a sentry. Ulysses tells the sentry that he is trying to stay south of the war, and the sentry informs him that this is the middle of the battle. He lets Ulysses pass on, but several soldiers attack and steal his wagon and other belongings. Ulysses saves the silver.	
scene 3: A road	Ulysses enters, singing and dancing (5). He meets Judy, who points him toward the post office. There, Ulysses realizes he is not in Beauregard, but in Beauchamps, Louisiana. Ulysses gets even more worried when he finds out that there are seventeen Beauregards in the South. Judy offers to show Ulysses the way to his Beauregard, and Ulysses tells her to stay away, since he has a weakness for pretty girls (6).	5. "Dance, Little Doggies" 6. "Lady, You Drop Your Feminine Wiles."
scene 4: A road	Ulysses arrives in Beauregard, but soon discovers it is not his home. He resolves to find the right place, but the townspeople urge him to stay, arguing that the Emancipation Proclamation freed him of any obligation to his master. Ulysses leaves anyway (7), and Judy threatens to tell the KKK where Ulysses is.	7. "Little Grey House"
scene 5: The road at night.	Ulysses sits down and rests by Nicodemus, who is running away from the KKK because he hit a White man. The Klan tracks them down, but Ulysses and Nicodemus escape (8). Nicodemus tells Ulysses that he feels there is	8. "Ku Klux" 9. "Lost in the Stars"

	no one watching out for him (9).	
scene 6: Seven years later at the Beauregard mansion	An auctioneer is selling the Beauregard mansion to Judge White, a Northerner, as the music of "Forget" plays in the background (10). Mary, the granddaughter of Beauregard, and her fiancé Harry are angry with the situation. Pennie insists that Ulysses will return, but Harry does not believe it. Pennie wonders where Ulysses is (11)	10. "Forget (reprise)" 11. "Lover Man"
scene 7: The street	Ulysses is begging in the street, dancing for money (12). A man (Markham) comes upon him and sees him dancing and offers him a dollar for his clothes. Ulysses agrees, but says that he must have them back by the evening since someone has offered to show him the way home on a steamboat.	12. "Dance, Little Doggies (reprise)"
scene 8: Backstage	Ulysses begs for his clothes so he can make the boat, but Markham refuses and has a stage-hand knock Ulysses out.	
scene 9: The minstrel show	The minstrel show opens with a Tambo and Bones routine. A song (13) and a soft-shoe number follows. Then Tambo and Bones introduce their new act, and Markham enters, impersonating Ulysses (14). Ulysses wanders onstage, and sees Markham performing his steps incorrectly. He demonstrates the correct version and brings the house down, just as the steamboat whistle blows. Markham hires Ulysses, and the latter sadly dances, fearing he'll never get home.	13. "In an Old Land Far Away and Long Ago" 14. "Dance, Little Doggies."
Act II		
scene 1: A stage	Ulysses, now the director and star, is rehearsing a version of the *Odyssey* (15). Judy, also in the show, refuses to go on unless she's allowed to play both Circe and Penelope, and Ulysses eventually gives in. Markham objects, and Ulysses reveals that he has bought Markham out.	15. "Sailor Ahoy"[a]
scene 2: The Beauregard mansion	Some Black men are gambling on the front steps, but flee when Judge White, who now owns the house, arrives, complaining that the house is too full of the ghosts of the past. He resolves the sell the place. Mary arrives, protesting the sentencing of Harry, who has refused to apologize for insulting the Judge. Harry has come back, trying to make amends, but cannot be sincere, and the Judge does not relent and sentences Harry to twenty years in prison. Mary laments her fate (16).	16. "Forget (reprise)"
scene 3: Off-stage during a performance	Ulysses and Nicodemus (now also involved in the troupe) congratulate Judy as she comes off-stage, when Pennie suddenly arrives. She tries to convince Ulysses to come home, but is disgusted with his current situation (especially Judy). Ulysses reveals that he sold the silver to buy out Markham, and says since he is a free man, he does not have to bring it back. Nicodemus escorts Pennie to the Audience and the show starts up again.	
scene 4: The performance	Penelope (played by Judy) plays hard to get with her suitors (17). Ulysses (played by Ulysses) arrives, and Penelope does not recognize him. Ulysses begins to	17. "Women on Porches"

	gamble with the suitors and Penelope chases them off-stage. Meanwhile, Homer and the Chorus argue about the progress of man (18). Eumaeus comes on and recognizes Ulysses, and tells him that liking yourself is the best part of life (19). At this point, Pennie stands up in the audience and declares that she has had enough. Ulysses (as himself) protests, but she leaves anyway. The show ends (20).	18. "Discernible Today" 19. "Little Tin God" 20. "Women on Porches (reprise)"
scene 5: Backstage	The cast celebrates the success of the show, but Ulysses is unhappy. He has learned the lesson of the show, that the secret of happiness is loving yourself. He hands the show over to Nicodemus and resolves to find the silver and return to his former master.	
scene 6: The road	On the way home, Ulysses encounters the postmistress of Act I, scene 5 and the townspeople of Act I, scene 6 (21).	21. "Dance, Little Doggies (reprise)"
scene 7: The Beauregard mansion	It is Harry and Mary's wedding. Harry has been allowed out of jail to get married, but must return at noon. Just as an officer is about to escort him back to prison, Ulysses arrives, and the silver is enough to pay Harry's bond. Old Beauregard acknowledges Ulysses's sacrifice, and shakes his hand. Pennie is reticent, but everyone tries to convince her to forgive Ulysses, which she eventually does (22).	22. "The Place I'm Referring to is Home (reprise)"

[a] No music composed for this number (or its reprises, if applicable).

However, Weill and Anderson may have become somewhat sensitive to the problem. They eventually removed one of the most fawning, uncomfortable passages from the script, in which Beauregard tells Ulysses how much he trusts him and Ulysses expresses his undying loyalty to his master:

> BEAUREGARD: Of all the boys on the place, Ulysses, I trust you the most of all. They're all good boys, but you've never once misbehaved, never once failed me when I needed you.
> ULYSSES: Massa Beauregard, I ain't never gonta fail you any time. Not if I can help it.
> BEAUREGARD: The truth is, Ulysses, I trust you more than banks, and more than the government, and more than the general scheme of things. I just depend on you the way I would myself. And I don't know as I can say that of anybody else except Mrs. Beauregard.
> ULYSSES: Yes, suh.
> BEAUREGARD: And the worst of it is we've come to a time of crisis when I need somebody I can trust—and it looks as if you're elected.
> ULYSSES: Yes, suh.
> BEAUREGARD: Will you do something for me that may turn out to be difficult and dangerous, something that might take a long time, something so important that all our

> fortunes depend on it, and yet something you can't talk about—that has to be done without a word to anybody.
> ULYSSES: Massa Beauregard, you been such a right kind of man—you've been so kind and so good to me—you just tell me what it is.
> BEAUREGARD: It won't be easy, you know. It may mean more trouble than anything you've ever been asked to put your hand to. And if you fail it means calamity for us.
> ULYSSES: I won't fail, Massa Beauregard. Anything you say, I'll do it forever and ever.[89]

They also renamed a character in the script referred to only as "nigger" to "black boy" and gave the name "Jack" to a character only called "a negro," which helps to humanize the Black characters.[90] But perhaps Essie's reference to Uncle Tom made Weill or Anderson realize that Ulysses's fawning persona in the above passage was too much. Although these small-scale changes do nothing to correct the larger thematic racial issues, they do suggest an effort to make the play less demeaning.

For Weill, however, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may have meant something entirely different. In Germany, the book was considered a depiction of universal suffering. By 1910, there were at least seventy-five different translations of Stowe's novel available to German-speakers, including eleven abridgements for children.[91] As in the United States, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* performed "cultural work," to use Jane P. Tompkins's term, in Germany, giving its readers a frame of reference in which to interpret their place in society's hierarchies.[92] However, while in the United States, the archetype of the happy, loyal slave on the plantation had long haunted African Americans, many Germans agreed that the book, in the words of one nineteenth century English-language reviewer, "awakens [the reader's] attention, rouses their curiosity, arrests their

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[89] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-11.

[90] Anderson, Handwritten draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-4–5.

[91] Grace Edith Maclean, "Uncle Tom's Cabin in Germany," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1910), 23.

[92] Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1985).

thoughts, touches their sympathies. … If it were the story of a Russian Serf, an evicted Milesian [Irishman], a Manchester weaver, or an Italian prisoner, the result would be the same."[93] As literary historian Heike Paul has demonstrated, many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germans equated the suffering of the slaves in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with the plight of the working-class. Taking their cue from the idyllic beginning of the novel, Germans often saw the slave's situation as preferable to their own. One German reviewer wrote that "A slave in America is often treated more humanely and benignly than a poor maid is treated in Germany."[94] In his 1854 novel *Europäisches Sklavenleben*, itself a response to Stowe's work, Friedrich Wilhelm von Hackländer has a scene in which an old man translating *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fantasizes about slave life in the Old South. He thinks "the interior of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is described as quite comfortable, and nothing so bad happens there; it is a decent, strong building with a small garden in the front. A fire blazes in the hearth, and the room is comfortably warm."[95] In her 1910 dissertation, Gracie Edith Maclean identified a German tradition of adapting and re-writing *Uncle Tom' Cabin* in ways that represent topical events and problems.[96] Within this tradition, Paul has discerned a tendency for German authors to adapt the "rhetoric of 'slavery,' 'emancipation' and 'humanity' to a specifically German social and political situation," particularly in the mid-nineteenth century.[97]

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[93] Quoted in Paul, "Cultural Mobility Between Boston and Berlin," 128.

[94] Quoted in Paul, "Cultural Mobility between Boston and Berlin," 130.

[95] "Dieses Innere von *Onkel Toms Hütte* ist als recht komfortable geschildert und kommt einem gar nicht so unrecht vor; es ist in anständiges, festes Gebäude, mit einem kleinen Garten davor; auf dem Herde lodert ein Feuer und verbreitet in dem Zimmer eine behagliche Wärme." Quoted in Maclean, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Germany," 55.

[96] Maclean, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Germany," 52–82.

[97] Heike Paul, "Schwarze Sklaven, Weisse Sklaven," in *Amerikanische Populärkultur in Deutschland: Case Studies in Cultural Transfer Past and Present*, ed. Heike Paul and Katja Kanzler (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 21–40, at p. 22.

So far as Weill was concerned, then, *Ulysses Africanus* would have fit into the German tradition of re-reading and re-writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The long first scene on the Beauregard plantation represent an idyllic pastoral setting (something that may have attracted Weill to the story in the first place) similar to the one described in Hackländer's novel, and the Black slave is made to stand for the displaced Jew throughout the rest of the story. The libretto contains biblical references that may indicate that Weill felt that Ulysses stood for German-Jewish émigrés. Anderson placed the biblical invocations near the beginning of the story, when Ulysses is on the run, which helps the audience connect the idea of a Black slave on the run with the biblical Hebrews wandering in the desert. The first thing he says in the scene after leaving the plantation, running from pursuing soldiers, is "Lord God of Abraham, save me from dese here army men!"[98] In the next scene he similarly asks for answers from "Lord God of Jonah and the prophets."[99] All of these early references help to establish Ulysses double identity immediately, and predispose the audience to make later connections.

Although his skin is black and he never leaves the United States, Ulysses's travels are similar to common elements of the German-Jewish émigré experience in the 1930s. Like many Jews of his generation, perhaps Weill considered the plight of the Jew in Europe similar to the plight of Blacks in his new home. Indeed, aspects of Ulysses's flight resemble Weill's own escape from Nazi Germany. Ulysses gets no warning, but is told simply that he must go. He takes only what he can carry, including valuables, and intends only to go far enough to keep away from the war. However, he believes that will not be gone long. When his wife Pennie (after Penelope in the *Odyssey*) despairs that the war will never end and she will never see him again,

[98] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-2-19

[99] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-3-22.

he replies “Shucks, chile. It’s gonta be over before Sunday.” He also does not believe he will have to travel very far, assuring Pennie that “you cross the river and no more war. Five, ten, [*sic*] miles.”[100] The song “Here’s How it is When You’re Going Away,” which would have come after this exchange but was eventually cut, was originally titled “Keep South of the War,” further suggesting the idea of someone fleeing the rising tide of violence, just as Weill and his companions tried to do. As soon as Ulysses begins his journey, however, he finds that it will not be so easy. He discovers that the war is not only behind him, but in front of him as well; he loses his way trying to get around the battle, and Confederate soldiers steal both his horse and wagon, leaving him in the middle of the fighting with no way out. He then meets Judy (Circe, although her betrayal also suggests “Judas”), who tells the Ku Klux Klan that he stole from the Beauregards when he refuses to sleep with her. After narrowly escaping the KKK, Ulysses finds himself completely destitute, and forced to beg for money and to take work with people who exploit him. Eventually, it takes him eight full years to make his way back to the Beauregard plantation, but not before he builds a second career for himself in show business.

Like Ulysses, Weill got almost no warning; he fled Germany barely a month after the Reichstag burned down. Ulysses’s belief that he will not be gone very long reflects the conviction held by many German Jews during the 1930s that Hitler’s regime was only temporary. Bertolt Brecht captured the idea best in his poem “Thoughts on the Duration of Exile.” Writing from Denmark in 1938, Brecht advised émigrés:

> Don’t knock any nails in the wall ,
> Just throw your coat on the chair.
> Why plan for four days?
> Tomorrow you’ll go back home.
> Leave a little tree without water.
> Why plant a tree now?

[100] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-16.

> You'll pack your bags and be away
> Before it's as high as a doorstep.
> Pull your cap over your eyes when people pass.
> What use thumbing through a foreign grammar?
> The message that calls you home
> Is written in a language you know.
> As whitewash peels from the ceiling (Do nothing to stop it!)
> So the block of force will crumble
> That has been set up at the frontier
> To keep out justice.[101]

Those fleeing the Third Reich also found that the specter of the Nazis followed them like the Civil War follows Ulysses. Both Weill and Arnold Schoenberg fled to first to France and Brecht to Scandinavia before realizing that nowhere in Europe was safe. Often, they had to bribe officials and or had belongings stolen by corrupt officials the same way Ulysses loses his horse and cart. He also had to be careful moving throughout Europe, anyone could give him up to the Nazis, analogous to the KKK. Weill and Anderson emphasize the shared enemy by including an otherwise unnecessary episode in which he and another escaped slave named Nicodemus are chased by the "White Sheets." The Klan never reappears and does not appreciably affect Ulysses. Finally, émigrés of Weill's generation often found themselves stripped of any influence or reputation when they finally felt safe, and took work where they could find it. Weill famously compared his relationship with the movie industry to that of a John and his prostitute, writing Crawford in 1937 that "a whore never loves the man who pays her … that is my relationship with Hollywood (I am the whore)."[102] In an earlier version of the libretto, now lost, the dangerous allure of easy money that Hollywood represented was made even more explicit; when Robert Sherwood offered his opinion of the show to Weill and Anderson, he told them that they

[101] Bertolt Brecht, "Thoughts on the Duration of Exile," in *Bertolt Brecht, Poems 1913–1956*, ed. and trans. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1987), 301–2.

[102] W-LL(e), 221 n3.

"need a bridge to get Ulysses into an enthusiastic show-man (the temptation of the devil, which he speaks of later)," implying that the protagonist sees show business as something problematic.[103] Anderson's handwritten draft of the libretto shows that some of these elements were added after he had completed the scene (or at least the page). The line "Five, ten, miles" which brings out Ulysses naïveté regarding the seriousness of the conflict is obviously inserted after the first draft was completed, as are both the references to Abraham and Jonah, and later the Temple of Solomon and Samson and Delilah, suggesting that Anderson and Weill went back and decided to highlight still further the elements that suggest a Jewish flight from Germany.[104]

Like many Germans before him, Weill may have seen in Stilwell's novel an opportunity to retell the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a way that reflected his own experiences as a maligned class. Weill may even have seen the minstrel episodes as a chance to comment publically on his attempts to break into American musical theater. Perhaps encouraged by contemporaries who compared the plight of Blacks in the south to Jews in Germany, he (and Anderson) misjudged the relative cultural positions of the two communities in United States. In 1939, as both an émigré and a Jew, Weill certainly experienced discrimination in the United States, but likely not nearly to the extent that Blacks did. The Uncle Tom stereotype did not survive the trip from Germany back to the United States.

[103] Quoted in Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 139.

[104] Anderson, Handwritten Draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-23, I-2-1, I-3-2, I-3-5.

Reclaiming the Minstrel Show

Before beginning work on *Ulysses Africanus*, Weill conducted research on both the music and the history of the minstrel show in the United States, and his notes survive in the WLA.[105] Weill looked at two books, Carl Frederick Wittke's *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (1930) and Newman Ivey White's *American Negro Folk-songs* (1928), and two magazine articles, Laurence Hutton's "The Negro on the Stage," (1889) from *Harper's Monthly Magazine* and "The Rise and Fall of Negro Minstrelsy" (1915) by Brander Matthews in *Scribners.*[106] He explored the music of minstrel shows in *Negro Minstrel Melodies* (1909), edited by Harry T. Burleigh, which includes songs by Stephen Foster and many other common minstrel composers, and *Plantation Melodies Old and New* (1901), in which Burleigh arranged well-known melodies.[107] He also looked at William A. Fisher's *Seventy Negro Spirituals* (1926) and James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* and *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925 and 1926).[108] This kind of research, likely conducted in the Music branch of the New York Public Library at 127 East 58th Street (close by his apartment), was typical; Weill did the same for music of the Revolutionary period when working with Paul

[105] The notes survive in WLA, Box 68, Folder 18.

[106] Laurence Hutton, "The Negro on the Stage," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 79 (June 1889): 131–46; Brander Matthews, "The Rise and Fall of Negro Minstrelsy," *Scribner's Magazine* 57 (January–June 1915): 754–59; Carl Newman Ivey White, (1928) *American Negro Folk-songs* (Hatboro,PA: Folklore Associates, 1965); Frederick Wittke, *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1930).

[107] H.T. Burleigh, ed. *Plantation Melodies Old and New* (New York: Schirmer, 1901), and H.T. Burleigh, ed., *Negro Minstrel Melodies* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1909). Burleigh was one of the most famous Black musicians of his day, and his interest in spirituals dates back to his time as Antonín Dvořák's assistant at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. He made a career out of singing and arranging spirituals for performers like Paul Robeson and Marion Cook; see Joseph Horowitz, *Artists in Exile: How Refugees from American War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts* (New York: Harper, 2008), 6.

[108] William A Fisher, *Seventy Negro Spirituals* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1926); James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* and *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (New York: Viking, 1926).

Green on *The Common Glory*.[109] It shaped his view of American minstrelsy and its history of entertainment and exploitation, which he made certain came across in *Ulysses Africanus*.

The minstrel show and its development in *Ulysses Africanus* parallels what Weill wanted to do with the American musical. Ulysses revolutionizes the minstrel show in the same way Weill wanted to revolutionize musical theatre generally. He called for greater integration of elements, telling David Ewen and *Cue* magazine in 1937 that in *The Eternal Road*, "It was our common task to bind speech and music together into perfect fusion. I sought to make the musical score an integral part of the action. I wished to extend the movement of a word and its operation so that the values of speech might find their complement in the values of music."[110] This is precisely what the title character does with the minstrel show when he puts the disparate elements of dance, song, and speech all in service of the plot of the *Odyssey*.

The minstrel show represents all of show business in *Ulysses Africanus*. The libretto contains two such shows, one at the end of the first act put on by the treacherous Markham and his troupe, and a one in the second authored by Ulysses and other Blacks he has met along his journey. The second minstrel show corrects the problems inherent in the first. Markham's show is derivative and insulting, but when Weill and Anderson give Ulysses the reins to the art form, the Black man revolutionizes it by integrating music and plot. With this set-up, Weill and Anderson showed creative possibilities inherent in a low-brow form of entertainment, as well as advancing the notion that Black people have something to contribute to musical theatre. Unfortunately, the fact that Weill, a White Jew, wrote all the music somewhat undermines this

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[109] Tim Carter, "Celebrating the Nation: Kurt Weill, Paul Green, and the Federal Theatre Project (1937)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 5 (2011): 297–334, at p. 319.

[110] David Ewen, "Musical Modernist," *Cue* 5/13 (January 1937): 6–7, 44–45, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/351-musical-modernist, accessed April 18, 2012.

second point; the fact that Weill used a Black character as a stand-in for other émigrés (and even himself and his goal of transforming musical theatre) undermined his efforts to speak out for Black creativity.

During the course of his research, Weill noticed that minstrelsy was largely a White creation, and that all-Black minstrel shows were rare, a fact that seemed to disturb him. After taking down the names and performance histories of several White minstrel troupes from Wittke, Weill wondered "What happened when real Negros ran Minstrel shows?" His subsequent two note-cards have the answers: "colored performers were quite in demand in the 70s. … The Fisk Jubilee Singers toured American and Europe. Managers assembled troupes of plantation Negros in slave costumes in Cleveland. Others. Colored Minstrels."[111] The next card notes that "Many 'original' Negro songs are minstrel songs which were heard by Negros and became their own." An earlier card notes that "colored troupes … enjoy popularity in south for many years. Negro companies almost always black up for their minstrel arts!!" As I discuss later, in *Ulysses Africanus*, he attempted to write in what he believed were "authentic" Black musical genres, rather than using song styles ascribed to the Black community by White composers. However, he was not interested in reproducing an "authentic" Black sound, but rather set of stylized numbers that suggested aspects of those genres. Weill's interest in Black (as opposed to blackface) minstrelsy informs the construction of *Ulysses Africanus*, which present an alternative history of the minstrel show, one in which Blacks successfully cultivated the art on their own terms.

Weill took well-known stories he found in the course of his research and turned them on their head. In Wittke's book, he learned that according to legend, one of the most famous

[111] The Fisk Jubilee Singers came out of Fisk University (the first in the United States to conduct race-blind admissions) in Nashville, Tennessee in 1871. The group sang primarily spirituals, and by the turn of the century, had great success both in Europe and the United States.

minstrel songs, "Jump Jim Crow," came from an encounter between Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice, whom Wittke calls the "father of American minstrelsy," and an old Black man.[112] Wittke relates the story of how Rice

> encountered an old slave crooning an odd melody and doing a curious shuffling step each time he reached the chorus of his little song. According to one account, the Negro was cleaning and rubbing horses in the stable-yard near the Louisville [KY] theatre where Rice was then playing. The original Jim Crow must have been a curious and interesting figure, a strange mixture of pathos and humor … obviously painful and yet laughable. As he worked, he sang a rather mournful tune and, at the end of each stanza, gave a queer little jump, setting his "heel-a-rick" as he alighted. …
>
> Rice copied the walk and dress of his Negro model, memorized the stanzas of his curious song and improvised many others. … The "Jim Crow" song accordingly was interpolated in the local drama, and it proved to be popular immediately. Though its stanzas were senseless and their meter atrocious … the song and dance became a minstrel sensation.[113]

A slightly different version of the story, with a nautical twist, appears in Weill's notes:

> T.D. Rice, original Jim Crow 1831? Heard "Jim Crow" song in street, took old nigger Cuff (porter at steamboat, children throwing coins in his mouth) to the theatre, took his clothes, started performance. During song boat coming in, Cuff wants his clothes, yells, finally comes on stage "Massa Rice, must have my clo'se, steamboat's coming![114]

Some aspects of Wittke's version story may have brought to mind *Eneas Africanus*, particularly the old man's position as a stable-worker, as the original Eneas worked with horses for a living. The idea of the character missing the boat comes up in *Ulysses Africanus*, as described below.

In this story, Anderson and Weill found some opportunities to expose the racial injustice of blackface performance and to bring out the doubled worldview of the Black community. Weill and Anderson strengthened the connection by establishing Ulysses as a dancer early in the story. In the first scene, his mistress reprimands him for burlesquing the White waltz.

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[112] Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 20.

[113] Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 25–6.

[114] See also Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 136.

Nevertheless, she does note that he dances well, in some respects overshadowing his masters, which foreshadows his upstaging of Markham at the end of the act. As Annegret Fauser has observed, moments of racial mockery such as this one play with "the performativity of racial identity in a complex chain of doublings."[115] Indeed, here, Anderson and Weill reverse Du Bois's idea of double-consciousness; instead of the slaves having the White view of their community forced on them (as in a blackface performance), their owners are uncomfortably confronted with Black racial ridicule. Another similar moment occurs when Ulysses and another freed slave named Nicodemus disguise themselves in white sheets in order to escape the KKK, and his dance gives him away. The stage directions read "two more White Sheets join the dance from the left, and the audience recognizes one of them as Ulysses by the little jump he puts into his dance." This "little jump" is reminiscent of the "queer little jump" described by Wittke. Here again, Black characters imitate and in some sense mock the rigidity of the White dance structures, first the waltz, then the march of the Klan. All of this lets Weill and Anderson set up a revision of Wittke's legend.

There is a version of the beginning of this encounter between a minstrel and a poor Black man in *Ulysses Africanus*. In Act I, scene 7 as Ulysses is panhandling to raise money to fund his passage home on a steamboat, a minstrel named Markham, here identified only as "The Man," comes by, and the following scene ensues:

> THE MAN: Come on! Dance! (*ULYSSES does his step to "Dance, Little Doggies." THE MAN walks all around him, studying his step. ULYSSES does the dance for a while, then suddenly collapses.*) What's the matter with you?
> ULYSSES: Massa, I guess I'se hungry. I didn't have no supper last night.
> THE MAN: Hungry, huh? Can you walk to food?
> ULYSSES: I can try, massa.
> THE MAN: Do you want to make a dollar?

[115] Annegret Fauser, "'Dixie *Carmen*': War, Race, and Identity in Oscar Hammerstein's *Carmen Jones* (1943)," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 4 (2010): 127–74, at p. 136.

> ULYSSES: You ain't goin' to give Ulysses no dollar.
> THE MAN: Why not, Jumping Jack? Come along with me, and you can earn a dollar and you can eat beans. All you want.[116]

Ulysses follows him, and the encounter continues in the subsequent scene:

> (*THE MAN who watched ULYSSES dance on the street has blacked his face and is putting on ULYSSES' clothes while he waits in the wings for his cue to go on. … ULYSSES is trying to hang on to his trousers*.)
> ULYSSES: Why you got to have my clothes, Mr. Markham?
> MARKHAM: Because I'm pretending I'm Ulysses out there on the stage! I'm doing your step and wearing your knapsack and sing your song—
> ULYSSES: Not my knapsack!
> MARKHAM: Yes, your knapsack, too. Good God, you're going to get a dollar, aren't you?
> ULYSSES: Ain't you even gonto give me my dollar before you goes out there with my clothes, Mr. Markham?
> MARKHAM: I'm giving you half a dollar now and there'll be half a dollar in your pants pocket when you get your pants back.
> ULYSSES: Only I got to get on that down river boat at nine o'clock, and if I don't have my pants and my dollar I can't get on that boat, and there's a man going on that boat that knows where to find Colonel Beauregard, and if I misses that man I'll never find him—
> […]
> MARKHAM (*to a STAGE-HAND*): Take care of this lunatic! (*The STAGE-HAND clouts ULYSSES on the head. ULYSSES goes down and the STAGE-HAND is about to hit him again. MARKHAM turns to the stage*.) Don't kill him. There's a law against killing them in this state. (*Curtain.*)[117]

Weill and Anderson include many parallels to the T.D. Rice legend. Ulysses, like Wittke's old slave is a figure "both painful and laughable," and like Wittke's "curious figure," Ulysses, is recognizable by his jump. These two scenes present a different version of the T.D. Rice legend in which the White man, rather than innocently watching then imitating the old man onstage, actively harms the Black man by stealing his clothes and having him beaten. In doing so, Weill and Anderson reveal the cultural violence behind the legend that Wittke conceals in his more benign account.

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[116] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-7-43–44.

[117] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-8-44–45.

But Weill and Anderson added a twist. Markham cannot compete with the original in the eyes of the audience. He enters the stage dressed in Ulysses's clothes, doing a degrading impersonation of the former slave, but the real Ulysses interrupts:

> MARKHAM: Get off here! Get off the stage! You'll get your half dollar when you've earned it. (*There is applause from the Civil War people in the boxes.*)
> ULYSSES: I honestly has to have my pants, Mr. Markham. (*More applause*) Besides which you ain't dancing it right. There's my little jump, like this here. (*He demonstrates.*) Dance, little doggies! You got the time wrong, Mr. Markham! (*He does the step and brings the house down.*)

Weill and Anderson turn the legend on its head. In their version of the story, a White imitation cannot match the Black original. Only a Black man can perform a Black dance with any success. Thus Weill and Anderson help to reveal the exploitation inherent in minstrelsy and the theatre. They further emphasize the point in the next few lines, when Markham hires Ulysses against the latter's will in order to have a more successful show.

Not only does Ulysses draw a crowd, he also revolutionizes the entire production. When Markham first dragoons Ulysses into show business, the former slave finds himself involved in a third-rate performance. Markham, in blackface, and his fellow performers crack tired old jokes in a typical Tambo and Bones patter, and acts follow one after another with no rhyme or reason. The show, which appears in Act I, scene 9, opens thus:

> INTERLOCUTER: Who is the present president of the United States, Mr. Bones?
> BONES: President Grant is the President, suh!
> INTERLOCUTER: Go way! Where you git that? Ef he was present he would be here! (*They all laugh.*)
> TAMBO: Could I ask a question Mr. Bones?
> BONES: Is it a government question, Mr. Tambo?
> TAMBO: No, it's intelligent.
> BONES: Then ask it.
> TAMBO: What is the regulation time for burying an Indian, Mr. Bones?
> BONES: When he's dead, Mr. Tambo. (*All laugh.*)[118]

[118] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-9-47–50.

This is followed by a Stephen Foster-like vocal octette, and then a tap-dance. The entire scene is trite, contrived and disjointed, a far cry from the show that Ulysses devises in the following act.

The second act opens with Ulysses now in charge of the troupe, and buying out Markham. Instead of a string of bad jokes interrupted by singing and dancing, Ulysses has made a show out of Homer's *Odyssey*, which is far more interesting than Markham's. The performance has a coherent plot and narrative direction, and Anderson made sure that the dialogue was much more sophisticated than the generic jokes in the first act. For example, when Ulysses appears disguised before Penelope, he says "Excuse me, lady, I know it's a sin / But I was lookin' where I shouldn't have been. / And speaking as one who has run though a million / I say you're shaped like Helen of Ilion."[119] While somewhat less skillful, Anderson's polysyllabic rhymes echo the lyrics of Lorenz Hart, P.G. Wodehouse, Ira Gershwin, and other contemporary songwriters. The handwritten draft shows that the playwright worked hard to make this section particularly clever, replacing simple rhymes with more complex ones. The "million" / "Ilion" lines, for example, originally read "Oh my, oh my, oh boy, oh boy / You are most exactly like Helen of Troy," a far less interesting phrase.[120] Anderson and Weill also have Ulysses make fun of the earlier incarnation of the show as he talks to the swineherd Eumaeus. In a parody of the earlier-style minstrel show, Ulysses asks "what's the matter with you? Can't you quit making bad jokes every time I asks you a question?" Eumaeus replies "I tried, but I used to be an end man in one of your shows, Prince."[121] Despite his extreme reluctance to join the troupe, Ulysses revolutionizes the art of the minstrel show.

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[119] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, II-4-74–75.

[120] Anderson, Handwritten draft of *Ulysses Africanus*, II-4-4.

[121] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, II-4-78–79.

Ulysses's contributions to the minstrel show are similar to the ones Weill hoped to make to American musical theatre. In 1936, Weill wrote that musical comedy consisted of "a handful topical events surrounding a group of hit songs," in effect, condemning its lack of what we now call "integration."[122] In *Ulysses Africanus*, the title character takes a genre made up of a series of unrelated sketches, songs, and dances and turns it into a spectacular production with choruses, dancing girls, and a coherent story line within the typical play-within-play that was common in contemporary shows, in effect, "integrating" the minstrel show. Weill himself had worked toward this goal with his previous collaboration with Anderson, *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Ulysses's subject, the *Odyssey*, is also important; as discussed in Chapter 1, Weill often called for a return to Greek practices of theatre in his writings. By having his hero elevate and revolutionize the minstrel show using by drawing on Greek material, Weill further strengthened the connection between himself and his Black protagonist.

Weill also made the differences between the two minstrel shows clear in the music. Weill wrote "In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago," an insipid parody of Stephen Foster, for Markham's minstrels, but he provided much more sophisticated music for the second minstrel show in "Discernible Today" and "Little Tin God." Another theme that pervades Weill's records on minstrelsy is the Whiteness of the music. One note-card somewhat indignantly notes that "[Stephen] Foster was a few days in Kentucky after most of his songs had appeared," and that was the composer's only visit to the South, and that "less than 10% of minstrel songs were genuinely Negro." He writes on a subsequent card that there was "only slight relation between Minstrel songs and Negro folk music. Most minstrels were northern born or foreigners. Only

[122] Kurt Weill, "The Alchemy of Music: Music May be the Ingredient which Transmutes the Play into Living Theatre," *Stage* 14/2 (1936): 63–64, available online at http://kwf.org/the-alchemy-of-music.html, accessed April 18, 2012.

early songs based on Negro music." (The reference to foreigners did not appear to have dissuaded Weill, who might have felt his status as a Jew made him sufficiently sympathetic to the Black race.)

For "In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago" (see example 4.1[123]), Weill and Anderson drew on the nostalgia associated with minstrelsy. The chorus describes a typical idyllic and pastoral vision of the Old South gone forever:

> Down where the broad savannahs meet the ocean,
> And the oleanders bloom and grow,
> In a fairy-tale land like the country of Goshen,
> In an old time far away and long ago![124]

These lyrics resemble in structure and sentiment one of Stephen Foster's most famous songs, "The Old Folks at Home":

> Way down upon the Swanee ribber,
> Far, far away,
> Dere's wha' my heart am turning ebber,
> Dere's wha' de old folks stay.
> All up and down de whole creation,
> Sadly I roam.
> Still longing for de old plantation,
> And for de old folks at home.[125]

Both sets of lyrics begin by evoking a specific place with the same grammatical structure. The sadness that is explicit in Foster's lyrics is implied by the reference to Goshen, the biblical name of the portion of Egypt given by Pharaoh to Joseph and his brothers to settle in the Book of Genesis, a place often associated with the happy life the ancient Israelites before they were enslaved. It also has some Zionist connotations, and strengthens the connection between Blacks

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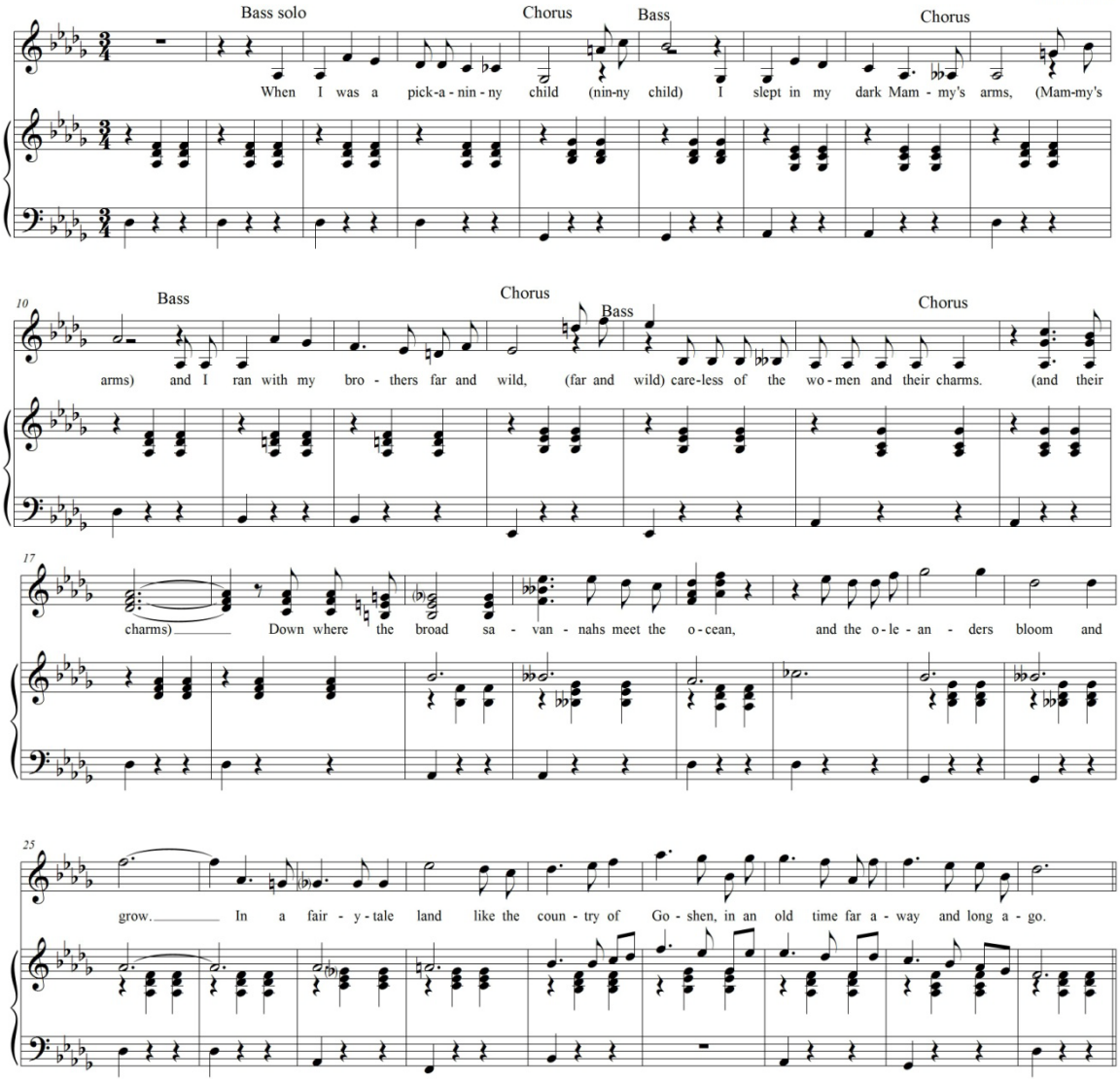
[123] All musical examples from *Ulysses Africanus* have been reconstructed from sketches.

[124] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-9-48.

[125] Foster, "The Old Folks at Home," in *Negro Minstrel Melodies*, ed. H.T. Burleigh, 2–3.

and Jews in the story. Both sets of lyrics are drenched in a wistful longing for a South that never actually existed, but that persisted in the imagery of the Great Depression in works like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and the aforementioned Bill Robinson–Shirley Temple collaborations (*The Littlest Rebel* uses Foster's song to establish the peacefulness of the Cary plantation at the start of the film). Other songs in Burleigh's collection evoke the same mythical past, including Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home," "Old Black Joe," C.A. White's "I'se Gwine Back to Dixie," and the anonymous "The Old Cabin Home."

Example 4.1 *Ulysses Africanus*, "In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago," mm. 1–33.



"In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago" goes on to describe another situation typical of a minstrel number: lost love. The second and third verse read:

> When I was about twenty-two
> I met with a brown gal at a dance,
> Her name, as I recall, was Mary Lou
> She was my first romance.
>
> When I saw myself in her eyes
> I thought we would be happy for years.
> But by the green savannah now she lies
> And the salt river drinks my tears.[126]

Many songs in Burleigh's collection tell similar stories. The chorus of Foster's "Nellie was a Lady" reads "Nellie was a lady / Last night she died / Toll de bell for lubly Nell / My dark Virginny bride."[127] Songs like B.R. Hanby's "Darling Nellie Gray," in the same collection tell a similar story. The story of the dead lover further also plays into the nostalgia of the minstrel genre, with the woman as a metaphor for the lost grandeur of the Old South. By combining these two types of minstrel songs, Anderson ensured that his pastiche evoked the genre at its most nostalgic.

Weill's setting of "In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago" also draws on elements of the music in *Negro Minstrel Melodies*, particular from those songs which have the same themes of nostalgia and loss. Weill eschews his normal complex sonorities and progressions for an almost painfully simple harmony in line with the songs in the book. The oom-pah-pah texture of the accompaniment also resembles a standard pattern found in Burleigh's collection, such as "Massa's in de Col' Col' Ground," and "Old Black Joe." He also uses a variation on a prominent cadential melodic figuration in the collection going from scale degree 3 to 1. The

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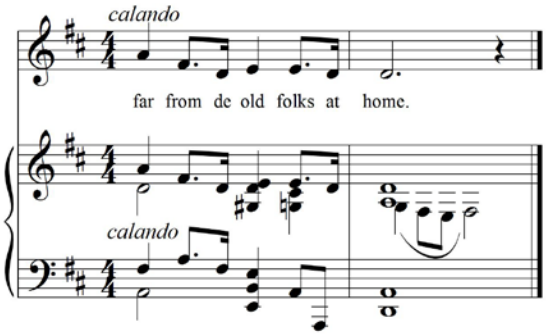
[126] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-9-49–50.

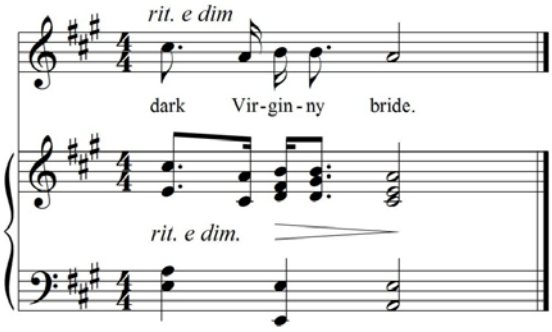
[127] Stephen Foster, "Nellie Was a Lady," in *Negro Minstrel Melodies*, ed. Burleigh, 5.

figuration, or a variation on it appears in “The Old Folks at Home,” and “Nellie was a Lady,” and others (example 4.2). The chromatic passing tones such as those in mm. 18–19, and 26–27 also appear in many of these songs, including “Nelly was a Lady,” and “The Old Cabin Home” (example 4.3). Weill puts the figure in the voice, while Foster and company often put it in the accompaniment, but that may be because Weill could count on professional Broadway performers and Foster’s music was designed for amateurs in the home. Like Anderson, Weill overloaded “In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago,” with the clichés of minstrelsy, ensuring that the audience would recognize it as trite and sentimental, overusing Foster’s sound for satirical effect.

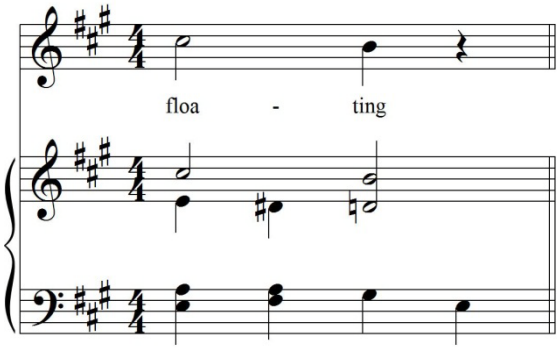
Example 4.2a Stephen Foster, “The Old Folks at Home,” mm. 27–28.



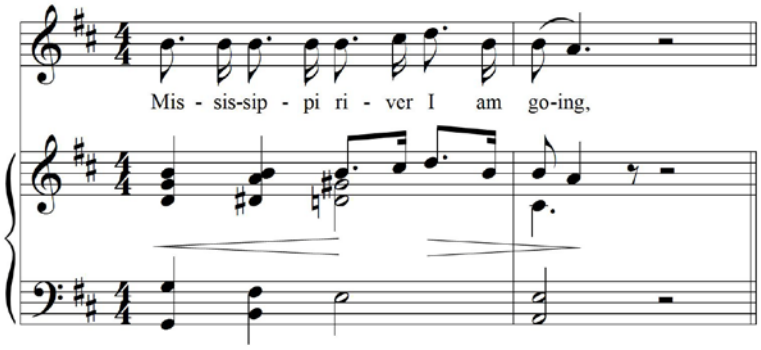
Example 4.2b Stephen Foster, “Nelly was a Lady,” m. 12.



Example 4.3a Stephen Foster, "Nelly was a Lady," m. 2.



Example 4.3b "The Old Cabin Home," author unknown, mm. 3–4.



This second show includes two songs, "Discernible Today," sung by Homer (the show's narrator) and the chorus, and "Little Tin God," for Eumaeus and the chorus. The first is the most interesting. "Discernible Today," comes just after the onstage Penelope exhorts the onstage Ulysses to play craps. Ulysses chases the dice offstage and the chorus and narrator follow with the song, which comments on the plot, and turns into a ballet. Homer and the ensemble pooh-pooh those who unnecessarily hold on to tradition:

> HOMER (*sings*): Has it come to your attention how the race of man
> Has been climbing upward since time began,
> How it's been climbing stead, and it's climbing there still,
> But every time you notice it it's going down hill [*sic*]?
>
> CHORUS: Going down hill is the natural way,
> For the old folks work, and the young folks play,
> And the pioneer morals universally decay,
> Yet a definite improvement is discernible today!

Hi-yo, hi-yo, discernible today![128]

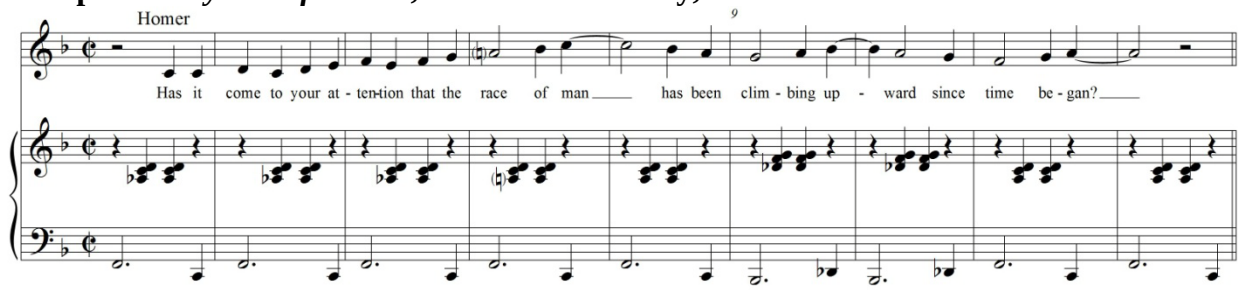
In this set of lyrics, Homer stands in for those mired in the past, while the chorus repeatedly praises the course of the present as "the natural way," apparently without irony. Homer longs for the land of "In an Old Land Far Away and Long Ago," a world defined by "pioneer morals," "old-time religion" and "virtues and morals." In the final verse, the chorus reminds the audience that Homer is nostalgic for a world that never existed, claiming that the old (Homer) are clinging to their "illusions," while the next generation has moved on. The lyrics of "Discernible Today" directly contradict and ridicule the Foster parody.

Weill's musical accompaniment enhances the message. He employs one of his favorite sonorities, the added-sixth chord, here built on an F minor triad with an added D (example 4.4) in contrast to the simple D-flat major of "In an Old Time Far Away and Long Ago." The impression is that of a much jazzier, musically progressive world than the previous minstrel music. This particular set of pitches is especially modern given that, rather than Weill's typical combination of major and minor sonorities in added sixth chords, he stacks a diminished triad (DFA-flat) with a minor one (FA-flatC). The chromatic accompaniment against the diatonic melodies recalls some of Weill's European compositions, particularly in *Der Jasager*. Weill then reverses the chromatic and diatonic as soon as the chorus enters in m. 21 (example 4.5); the formerly diatonic melody slips easily down a chromatic scale and Weill immediately dispels the harmonic confusion by writing a IVI progression in F major. This reversal not only enhances the feeling of "naturalness" in the music as the lyrics insist that "going downhill is the natural way," but is also easier on the ear since the harmony provides a stable foundation. Here, Weill uses the chromatic passing tone and extends it. The entire passage descends down the chromatic scale

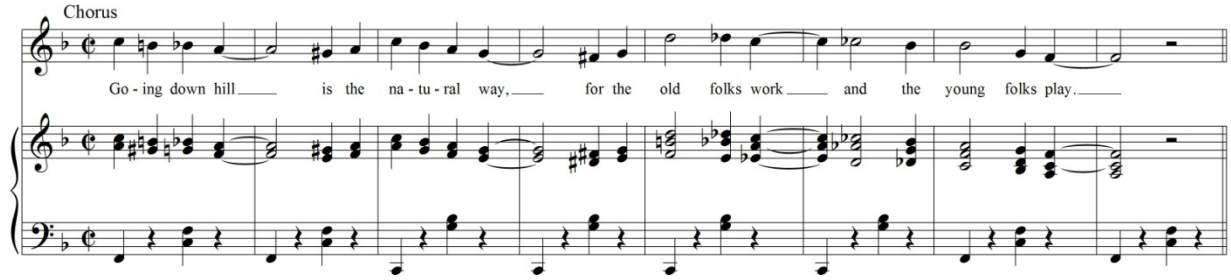
[128] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, II-4-76.

building off of an idea that he introduced in “In an Old Time Long Ago and Far Away.” The entire effect lets the audience know that the Fosterian world of the previous minstrel show is not operating.

Example 4.4 *Ulysses Africanus*, “Discernible Today,” mm. 4–12.



Example 4.5 *Ulysses Africanus*, “Discernible Today,” mm. 21–28.



Celebrating Black Music

Although the White characters of *Ulysses Africanus* play a major role in the story—a secondary plot revolves around carpet-baggers taking over and then abandoning the Beauregard property—Weill and Anderson made the Black characters the focal point of the production by giving them the majority of music. Outside of the first minstrel show, only two White characters sing: Melissa, Colonel Beauregard’s daughter, and Mary, his granddaughter. Each have the same song, “Forget,” Melissa in Act I, scene 1 when her betrothed Graham Strickland leaves to rejoin the Confederate army and Mary in Act II, scene 2 when her fiancé is escorted back to jail.[129] Weill

[129] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-15 and II-2-66.

and Anderson probably meant this song to be the break-out number given its repetitions, but no music was ever composed. The KKK also gets one number, "Ku Klux" in Act I, scene 5, but they explicitly chant on unpitched syllables rather than singing.[130] No sketches for "Forget" survive, so we cannot compare the sound of the two races. For the Black characters, Weill composed music for six songs ("White Folks," "Dance Little Doggies," "Lady, You Drop Your Feminine Wiles," "Lost in the Stars," "The Place I'm Referring to Is Home," and "Lover Man") as well as the two minstrel numbers discussed in the previous section, and Anderson wrote lyrics for three more, "Law'se Me" and "Here's How It Is When You're Going Away," in Act I, scene 1 and "Sailor Ahoy!" for the siren scene in the second minstrel show. Weill and Anderson may also have intended parts of the *Odyssey* play-within-in-a-play to have music considering most of the show is written in verse, but there is no other evidence either way. When composing the music, Weill drew on genres his research led him to believe authentically represented Black culture, although as always, he added his own personal touch.

The song "White Folks" introduces the audience to the slaves in Act I, scene 1. Melissa and Strickland are dancing a waltz, which Ulysses' dance mocks. While Ulysses gets reprimanded for making fun, the rest of the slaves make up words to the dance out of earshot of their masters. Their music follows the waltz almost entirely (example 4.6). Weill likely would have found this act of slaves parodying their masters historically authentic. For much of his information on Black musical practice, the composer relied on Newman I. White's *American Negro Folk-songs*. White continually stresses that Black music arose out of slaves imitating their masters:

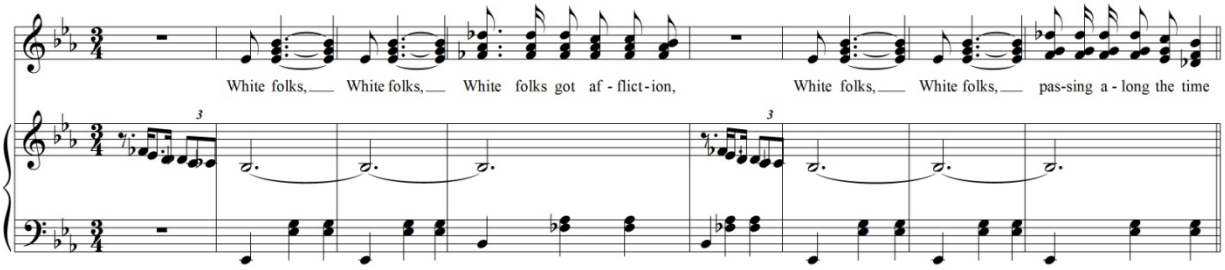
> The American Negro song was not at first original with the Negro. It originated in an imitation frustrated by imperfect comprehension and memory, and by a fundamentally

[130] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-5-36–37.

> different idea of music. One of means by which new Negro folk-songs are being created to-day … is by variational imitation of the popular songs of the White man.[131]

Weill's music shows that he did not buy into White's theory. While he shows Black characters taking White music and making it their own in the beginning, as the story continued, Weill demonstrates that these same character could be highly original and creative within their own genres. "White Folks" proves to be just the starting point of Ulysses' musical odyssey.

Example 4.6 *Ulysses Africanus*, "White Folks," mm. 1–8.



After the opening scene, Weill based all of the remaining numbers on standard Black genres that have little to do with minstrelsy. Most of these numbers bear trace elements of the spirituals and other folk genres that Weill studied. Regarding spirituals, the composer probably believed James Weldon Johnson, who claimed that they were a uniquely Black art form. Johnson directly contradicts White:

> There have been one or two critics who have denied that [spirituals] were original either with the Negro or in themselves, and a considerable number of people have eagerly accepted this view. The opinion of these critics is not sound. It is not based upon scientific or historical inquiry. Indeed, it can be traced ultimately to a prejudiced attitude of mind, to an unwillingness to concede the creation of so much pure beauty to a people they wish to feel is absolutely inferior. … These critics point to certain similarities in structure between the Spirituals and the folk music of other peoples, ignoring the fact that there are such similarities between all folksongs.[132]

[131] White, *American Negro Folk-songs*, 25.

[132] Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, 14.

The musical score of *Ulysses Africanus*, after "White Folks," generally supports Johnson's point. All of the Black music in the score comes solely from Black characters without any apparent White influence. Starting with "Dance Little Doggies," and continuing to the final number, a reprise of "The Place I'm Referring to Is Home," Weill uses ragtime, the blues, work-songs, and spirituals to establish the variety and richness of Black musical tradition apart from its allegedly White roots.

Weill set the next song, "Dance Little Doggies," as a ragtime number (example.4.7).[133] In the course of his research, Weill uncovered disparate views about the place of ragtime in Black culture. W.J. Henderson, who wrote the preface to *Negro Minstrel Melodies*, traced the roots of ragtime to an overuse of the scotch snap, which he defines as "a transfer of the normal accent at the opening of the measure"; this, he claimed, was the defining feature of ragtime, which he assumed slaves picked up from their masters.[134] Johnson, however, characterized ragtime as an essentially Black genre, writing that "the first so-called Ragtime songs to be published were actually Negro secular folk songs that were set down by white men, who affixed their own names as composers."[135] Johnson also repeatedly stresses the importance and uniqueness of the rhythm in Black music, observing that "the European concept of music is melody and the African concept is rhythm. … in rhythms African music is beyond comparison with any other music in the world."[136] Many of Johnson's spirituals open with Henderson's so called "scotch snap" including "Heav'n Boun' Soldier," and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"

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[133] Although not explicitly labeled in the sketches, Juchem has identified this page as "Dance Little Doggies" based on the rhythm of the words elsewhere in the music; see *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 346.

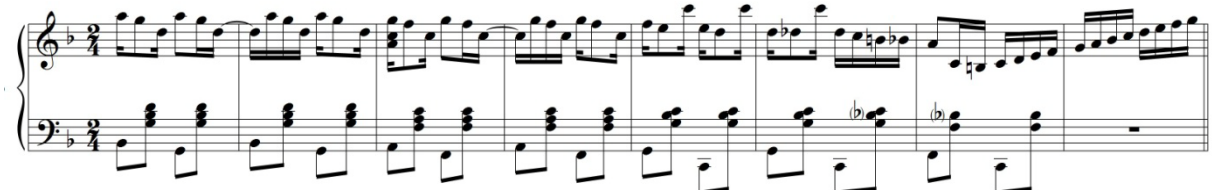
[134] W.J. Henderson, preface to *Negro Minstrel Melodies*, ed. Burleigh, p. vi.

[135] Johnson, *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals*, 16.

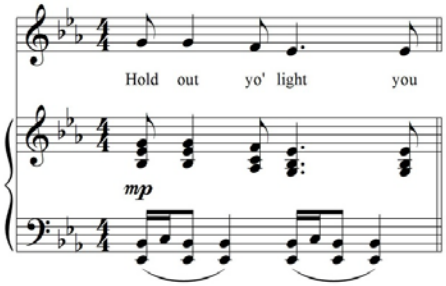
[136] Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, 18.

(example 4.8). If Weill believed Johnson's version of the history of Black music (which is probable given the treatment of the song throughout the show), he would have taken Henderson's "scotch snap" analysis as one of those "certain similarities in structure between the Spirituals and the folk music of other peoples" that prejudiced critics read into Black music rather than acknowledging Black creativity. Tellingly, Ulysses' sense of ragtime apparently comes out of nowhere, and later, when Markham attempts to imitate Ulysses by singing "Dance Little Doggies," he fails. In the world of *Ulysses Africanus*, if ragtime were a syncretic genre, then Markham should be able to successfully perform it, but he cannot.

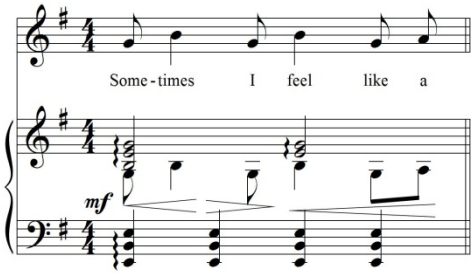
Example 4.7 *Ulysses Africanus*, "Dance Little Doggies," mm. 1–8.



Example 4.8a "Heav'n Bound Soldier," arranged by J. Rosamund Johnson, m. 3.

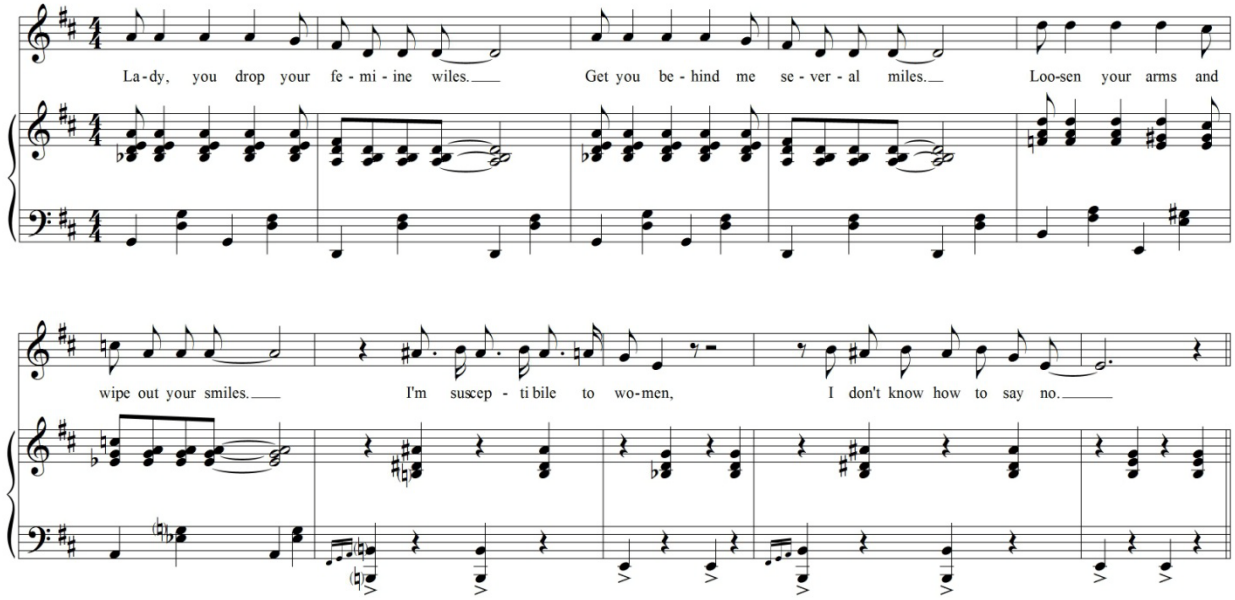


Example 4.8b "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," arranged by J. Rosamund Johnson, m. 3.



After ragtime, Weill turned to the blues for Ulysses' duet with the seductress Judy. Although Weill did not write down the names of his sources, he made an effort to get to know the genre. As he composed the music for *Ulysses Africanus*, Weill also transcribed parts of six popular blues songs, "John Law Blues" (Juchem misidentifies it as "John Haw Blues," but it's probably a version of "John Law Robbed the Liquor Store"), "Tru the Wagon Comes," "Penitentiary," "Death Valley," "No No Blues," and "Get Your Mind on Mama."[137] Ulysses and Judy's "Lady, You Drop Your Feminine Wiles" (example 4.9) is a standard seduction duet in which Judy tries to tempt Ulysses away from his vow to be faithful to Pennie. For the music, Weill drew on some of the elements of the blues numbers he had transcribed. Although the melody plays with sharp scale-degree 5 (A-sharp), Weill makes use of the standard flat scale-degrees 3 and 7 (F-natural and C-natural, respectively) throughout the harmony. He also made the eighth notes "swing." Compare the passage "I'm susceptible to woman" with this passage

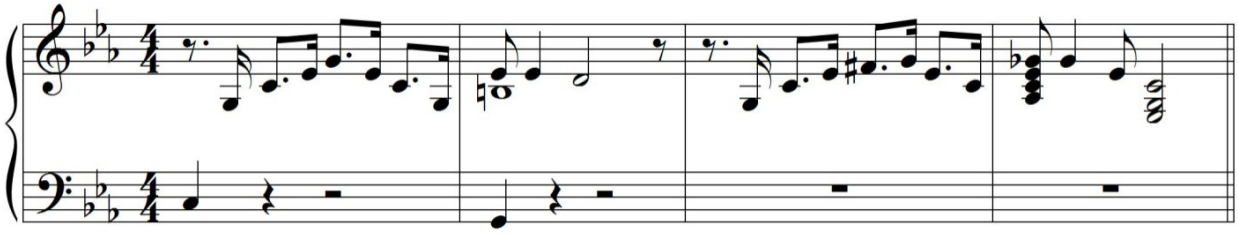
Example 4.9 *Ulysses Africanus*, "Lady, You Drop Your Feminine Wiles," mm. 1–10.



[137] See Juchem, *Kurt Weill und Maxwell Anderson*, 345.

from the tune Weill transcribed as “Death Valley” (example 4.10). Johnson identified this “swing” as a defining characteristic of Black music, writing that this particular characteristic gave White composers the most trouble. However, Johnson acknowledged that one White ethnic group managed a fair approximation, the Jews, as noted above.

Example 4.10 Weill’s transcription of “Death Valley.”

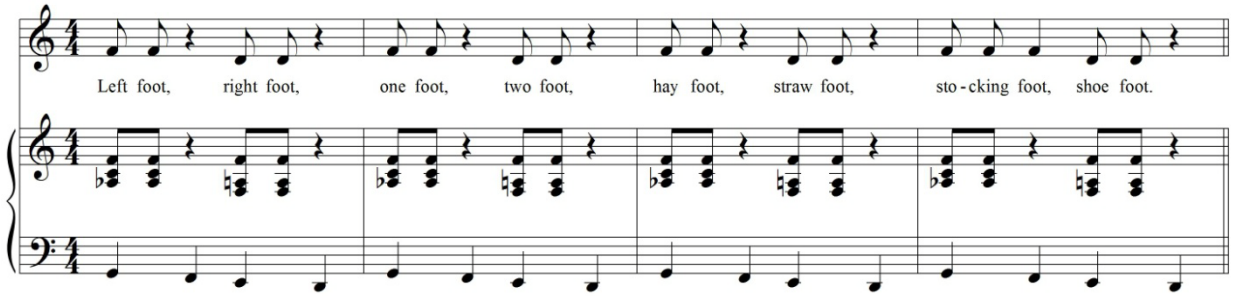


For “The Place I’m Referring to Is Home,” Weill chose to set the beginning as a work-song. The song begins with a nonsense introduction that has short lines, short phrases that do not form sentences, and an unrelentingly steady rhythm that would guide a long day of labor (example 4.11). White identifies all of these things as aspects of work-songs, writing of his collection that in most work-songs are “actually timed to the work in hand and [set] a rhythm for it” and “most of [the songs collected] are short and are so constructed as not to interfere with the rhythm of work.”[138] While White often claims that Black folk music has a White origin, the work-songs he claims as an exception, writing that “the negro sang work-songs long before he came to America, and in America he sang work-songs long before there was any widespread interest in what he sang. Travelers in Africa frequently commented upon the songs sung by the natives at work.”[139] This acknowledgement of the work-song’s African roots may have attracted Weill to the genre.

[138] White, *American Negro Folk-songs*, 250, 290.

[139] White, *American Negro Folk-songs*, 250.

Example 4.11 *Ulysses Africanus* "The Place I'm Referring to is Home," m. 1–4.



"Lost in the Stars" does not have as strong a musical connection to Black vernacular genres, but dramatically and thematically it echoes the spiritual. The song comes in Act I, scene 5, just after Ulysses and Nicodemus narrowly escape the KKK. They sit down and discuss their newfound freedom. Nicodemus laments that it has left him lonely and unprotected from the likes of the Klan. When Ulysses suggests taking up the issue with the Almighty, Nicodemus replies "I does. I been doing that. Only I happen to look up once when I was praying, and I look out in the moonlight and I noticed God wasn't listening. It was completely empty out there where I was praying to."[140] A few lines later, Nicodemus launches into "Lost in the Stars." One could easily imagine this scene playing out slightly differently, with Ulysses and Nicodemus either singing their thanks to God for their escape or sorrowfully intoning one of the more somber spirituals as they mourned their situation. However, neither idea would have stood well with Anderson, a militant atheist, even though according to most of Weill's sources, the spiritual was the most unique and interesting genre to come out of Black America. Spirituals had also captured the public imagination in the 1930s, and many shows about Blacks included secular spiritual-like numbers, such as "Summertime" from *Porgy and Bess* and "Ol' Man River," the latter a thirty-two bar song with the aura of a spiritual from *Show Boat*, which Paul Robeson made famous. "Lost in the Stars" fulfills the same function as these sorts of numbers, which allow Black

[140] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-5-37.

characters eloquently to describe their tragic circumstances as they commit to persevering in the face of adversity.[141] This strategy often backfired because it portrayed Blacks as reconciled to their fate as a lower caste. Robeson particularly disliked this practice, and often changed the last line of "Ol' Man River" from "Ah gets weary an sick of tryin' / Ah'm tired of livin an' scared of dyin'" to "But I keep laughin' instead of cryin' / I must keep fightin' until I'm dyin'" to give the song a more militant and aggressive message. The loneliness and hopelessness expressed in "Lost in the Stars" reflects more somber spirituals like "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" (which Gershwin nearly quotes in "Summertime" from *Porgy and Bess*) and "Black Sheep, Where You Lef' Your Lamb." Weill's setting is as harmonically interesting as some of the settings in *Seventy Negro Spirituals*, in which Fisher and others arranged a few of the more well-known examples of the genre as art songs appropriate for concert performance, although there does not appear to be any direct connection. The melody, however, is chromatic and has a wide range, and bears no resemblance to most other spirituals, which largely employ pentatonic or other gapped scales. The song's fundamentally atheist message also stands in stark contrast to the accounts of the richness of Black religious life in Weill's research. This may have been Anderson's way of showing an intellectual progression in his characters. In the first scene, the slave Blackie describes scene of the messenger delivering the emancipation proclamation as "a man came ridin' through, ridin' a white horse, going like going to Jesus."[142] Ulysses, until this point, has called upon the God of the Old Testament for guidance and help. Nicodemus however, free from the bonds of slavery, is now also free to question the existence of a higher power, which in Anderson's mind would have been a sign of intelligence. After this point, Ulysses never

[141] Boyle and Bunie, *Paul Robeson*, 381.

[142] Anderson, Typescript of *Ulysses Africanus*, I-1-4.

prays onstage again.[143] Weill's chromatic melody may be the composer's musical take on the idea of intellectual progression in the song.

Conclusion: Towards a Common Ground

In *Ulysses Africanus*, Weill found a way to express his Jewish identity as both a European and a budding American. The idea of using *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or even a story that resembles it, betrays a particularly European sensibility given that the book held such a problematic place in the United States. The fact that Ulysses' early journey in the play has so many parallels with the Jewish refugee experience indicates that in 1939, Europe still constituted a part of Weill's personal identity (as it did for the rest of his life). However, the idea of a Jew writing in Black genres for Black characters is a peculiarly American practice. Whether writing in an ostensibly Black style like songwriters Gershwin and Berlin or literally speaking through the mouth of a Black character like Jolsen, Jews in the United States had a unique, if problematic, relationship to Black culture. *Ulysses Africanus* was Weill's first effort in that genre, and many of the lessons he learned during the process he applied to *Lost in the Stars*. Like many of his contemporaries, in the end Weill speaks through Ulysses the same way Jackie Rabinowitz speaks through Jack Robin in *The Jazz Singer*, as both try to reconcile their Jewish identity with their career in the American entertainment industry by appropriating Black faces and music.

[143] Rabel, "Odysseus Almost Makes it to Broadway," 565.

CONCLUSION

Assimilation, that much abused word.

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963)

This search for community is in no way to be confused with submission to the taste of any audience.

Kurt Weill, *Shifts in Musical Composition* (1927)

Weill's actions during his first few years in the United States show that he had no desire to work on the Broadway of Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, or Lorenz Hart. Rather, he was attracted to the more experimental side of the Great White Way as it existed in the 1930s and into the early 1940s, the side that put on productions such as Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), George and Ira Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935), Harold Rome's labor revue *Pins and Needles* (1937), Gian Carlo Menotti's double-bill *The Telephone/The Medium* (1947), and Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* (1949). Weill sought to expand the language of American musical theatre along with putting together commercial properties for the Broadway stage. His initial projects in the United States constitute a set of formally innovative and socially engaged shows and films. That all (with the possible exception of *Knickerbocker Holiday*) failed to generate any income or audience speaks to the composer's difficulties adapting to the strange world of American show business in the 1930s.

Failures to Collaborate

In order to work within the experimental Broadway community, Weill perceived that he needed to convince a major playwright (rather than a Broadway book-writer) to collaborate with him, as he had done with Bertolt Brecht and Georg Kaiser in Germany. However, he had trouble finding collaborators interested in his conceptions of music theatre. Although the more experimental avenue of Broadway seemed open to him in theory, most composers either wrote their own librettos (Blitzstein and Menotti), or partnered with longtime collaborators (Thomson met Stein in Paris in 1926, and had set a great deal of her poetry by 1934). When he did find collaborators, they seemed unequal to the task of integrating music and drama in a way that satisfied him. Weill felt that he had to do an inordinate amount of work shaping the libretto in the case of *Johnny Johnson*, and he abandoned *The Common Glory*, and *One Man from Tennessee* because in neither case did he find the text satisfactory. S.N. Behrman proved an unsatisfactory writing partner in part because he refused to stand up to the proposed stars of the production of *The Pirate*. Weill's collaboration with Clifford Odets and Norma Krasna on *The River is Blue* and *You and Me* remain somewhat mysterious, but Weill's dissatisfaction with the way both projects turned out point to further problems in communication and collaboration. Even with Anderson, Weill realized that his partner had no feel for either the music or comedy of musical comedy, and he had to enlist director Joshua Logan's help with *Knickerbocker Holiday* in getting Anderson to move away from the darker side of drama that had made him famous. Although Weill personally liked Anderson, he did not find him an ideal collaborator for musical theatre. Later in his career, he had better success with book writers more experienced in the musical comedy world such as Ira Gershwin and Moss Hart (*Lady in the Dark*, 1941), S.J. Perelman (*One Touch of Venus*,

1943), and Alan Jay Lerner (*Love Life*, 1948), but only with lyricists who had lost their typical writing partner; George Gerswhin had died in 1937, and when Weill worked with Lerner, the latter had consciously decided to take a break from writing with his usual partner Fritz Loewe. Even so, Weill always frequently sought out playwrights more accustomed to spoken drama even after he had established himself in the musical comedy world.

Weill's "project memos" (so named by David Drew) reveal that the composer leaned toward European playwrights in his first years in the United States despite the fact that, aside from *The Eternal Road*, he worked on American subjects.[1] European authors like Kaiser, Mirabeau, Gogol, Katayev, Zuckmayer, and Voltaire dominate. Even when he considered working with U.S. playwrights, he generally wanted their help adapting European authors, although by late 1937, more American themes and authors began to appear on the lists. On a memo dated July 14, 1937 regarding a prospective project involving a series of one-act radio operas "based on famous short stories of world literature" with Howard Dietz, the author of the memo (probably not Weill, given that the composer's name appears in the prose) lists Edgar Allen Poe, Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and O. Henry alongside Guy de Maupassant, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens, Gustave Flaubert, G.K. Chesterson, Cervantes, Emil Zola, Honoré de Balzac, Kleist, and the Bible.[2] Performing European works, or adapting them, was not unusual on Broadway in the 1930s—such as Rodgers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938)—though some organizations (such as the Theatre Guild) argued against them in favor of autochthonous drama. But the prominence of European playwrights and subjects constitute further evidence that Weill remained somewhat uncomfortable with American playwrights

[1] See David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 397–402 for some transcriptions of Weill's project memos from this period.

[2] WPD(e), 182.

throughout his first four years in the United States. He likely needed time to familiarize himself with the new cultural landscape of U.S. theatre. His apparent predilection for Americana during this period may have been as much a function of the types of projects that interested potential collaborators as something Weill intended.

Part of the trouble stemmed from the absence of a tradition of "American" operetta or related genres, and part arose from cultural differences. In the 1947 liner notes for the original cast recording of *Street Scene*, Weill wrote that "a vast, unexploited field lay between grand opera and musical comedy," that he had hoped to exploit when he arrived in the United States.[3] By the time of *Street Scene*, the composer put the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess* (1935), Oscar Hammerstein II's *Carmen Jones* (1943), and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* (1945) in that in-between space, but when he arrived, *Porgy and Bess* had not been a success (it later became one in 1942), and most operetta on Broadway came from abroad. It took over ten years between when he arrived and when he composed *Street Scene* to find a space for himself in the field between musical comedy and opera. Unlike in Germany, musical theatre librettists had no interest in Weill's politically engaged ideas, and those who wanted to put on politically relevant theatre were usually not interested in music. Although political musicals did appear during the decade, like Gershwins' *Of Thee I Sing* (1932) and Rodgers and Hart's *I'd Rather be Right* (1937), most of the politics on or off Broadway came from straight plays or revues like *Pins and Needles*, and Weill had no interest in contributing to the latter. Musical theatre in the United States was also a far more commercial endeavor; the festival culture that had seen the premiere of the *Mahagonny-Songspiel* and similar pieces did not exist, and unlike in Germany, the only

[3] Kurt Weill, *Street Scene* original cast recording (released 1947), Columbia Masterworks set M-MM-683 (six 78 rpm discs), available online at http://kwf.org/liner-notes-for-the-original-cast-recording-of-qstreet-sceneq, accessed February 7, 2013.

government sponsored avenue was the FTP, which by late 1937 was in dire straits. For the most part, audiences during the Depression went to musicals to escape reality, and to straight plays for a more thought-provoking experience. Outside of the Leftist groups that were collapsing just as Weill was finding his feet, the United States theatrical world presented very few opportunities for the composer to pursue something in between standard musical comedy and highbrow opera. That Weill eventually succeeded, even making as many mistakes as he did, is a testament to both his skill and luck.

War on the Horizon

Throughout his first years in the United States, Weill found himself in a precarious position. Artistically and professionally, he wished to continue writing socially relevant music theatre, generally from a Leftist perspective, but he was also very aware of his status as an immigrant, and that expressing dissenting political opinions might turn public opinion against him. In his early U.S. interviews, Weill was fairly clear that his music expressed "human sentiments" rather than political points, telling an interviewer for the *New York Times* in 1935 that "No music of any value can be written on a purely political basis, as some of the moderns in Russia and Germany would have us believe. Nor would I ever compose a single bar for esthetic reasons in order to try to create a new style. I write to express human emotions, solely."[4] But this curious attempt to establish a position between the extremes of, say, Eisler and Schoenberg threatened to create a no-man's-land that also did not square with the reputation that had preceded Weill. Moreover, his choice of projects contradicts this statement: *The Eternal Road* was Meyer

[4] N.S., "Music for 'Road of Promise' Written in Modern Contemporary Style," *New York Times*, October 27, 1935, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/346-kurt-weills-new-score, accessed January 22, 2013.

Weisgal's "answer to Hitler"; *Johnny Johnson* took a pacifist point of view (although even as early as 1936, Weill believed another war was necessary to "make the world safe for democracy," as he told Ralph Winett of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*); [5] *The River is Blue* advocated for the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War; *You and Me* examined the lives of people caught on the wrong end of the justice system; *One Man from Tennessee* depicts people made homeless by the banks; *Knickerbocker Holiday* demonstrated that immigrants could become loyal Americans; and *Ulysses Africanus* took on possibly the most contentious subject of all by taking on race relations. Nor were his choices simply a function of who would work with him. His reputation as a radical gave him an entrée into organizations like the Group Theatre, but his Hollywood contacts and the Playwrights' Producing Company had no stake in politically motivated art. The apparent contradiction between Weill's words and actions likely led to some of the mixed political messages of Weill's works from this era. Shortly, after Helen's scathing critique of the capitalist enterprise in *You and Me* to show that crime quite literally does not pay, Joe buys and pays for a bottle of perfume for Helen as the music swells in the background. While the screenplay sends the message that the workers at the bottom of the capitalist system are being exploited, the music and the visuals (both controlled by émigrés) depict participation in the same system as something noble. Weill's hesitation regarding *The Common Glory* may have sprung from the fact that Paul Green originally chose such a relatively recent subject: the Gastonia and Burlington strikes. He preferred something more generically historical with an epic sweep, and then the less controversial plot revolving around Sam Adams and the American Revolution.

[5] Ralph Winett, "Composer of the Hour: Interview with Kurt Weill," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 20, 1936, pp. 10, 12, available online at http://kwf.org/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/33-foundation/kwp/348-composer-of-the-hour, accessed January 22, 2013.

Similarly, the confusion in *Knickerbocker Holiday* over whether Stuyvesant represented Hitler or FDR may have been a result of Weill's unwillingness to criticize the administration.

Considering Weill's careful balancing act of these years, it is not surprising that his first real success in American came from a work almost completely devoid of political messages. After Weill realized that Bill Robinson was unlikely to be available for *Ulysses Africanus*, he struck up a collaboration with Ira Gershwin and Moss Hart to write a musical play about psychoanalysis.[6] Hart and Weill met in the fall of 1939, and soon after brought Gershwin aboard. Weill spent the majority of 1940 working on *Lady in the Dark*, which opened on January 23, 1941, and almost immediately became a hit. Though not without its controversial elements, the story of the magazine editor Liza Elliot learning to embrace her femininity did not address the same type of societal issues related to labor, war, and homelessness of Weill's previous shows. The subject gave Weill a little more breathing room in terms of his creative options; gender relations were not as controversial an issue at the time as other political reforms (although Feminism made great strides during the decade), and *Lady in the Dark* took a relatively conservative point of view. Weill may have felt it better to play it slightly safer, given that the United States going to war with Germany was quickly becoming more and more of a possibility, and the fear of Nazi spies was growing daily. The issues of "good" and "bad" Germans that play out the story of *Knickerbocker Holiday* were rapidly becoming a top national security concern.

The success of *Lady in the Dark* also owed something to the changing sensibilities of the American public. The defining issues of the Great Depression became less important in the public mind as the country debated whether or not to join the war. Just as he realized that his German style of music would not find an audience in the United States, he knew that the sort of

[6] bruce d. mcclung, *Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39.

theatrical pieces he wrote in the 1930s would not please the public a few years later. Similarly, artistic styles had begun to shift away from the documentary realism of the previous decade, although the fascination with the history remained with the artistic community throughout the war, as evidenced by works like Aaron Copland's *Rodeo* (1942) Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943). However, both of these works modeled ways to bring people into a national community. *Lady in the Dark*, while not historically minded, similarly presented an individual alienated from society learning to conform. In *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *One Man from Tennessee*, *The River is Blue*, and *Johnny Johnson*, the protagonists all try to shape the world better to fit themselves, with greater or lesser degrees of success. In *Lady in the Dark*, Liza, like many similar heroes of the 1940s, learns to become part of a team. Similarly, in Weill's other full-scale wartime show *One Touch of Venus*, when Venus finds she cannot conform to the communal ideals of sexuality, she leaves Ozone Heights, and a more appropriate version replaces her to cement the happy ending.

After the war, Weill returned to more troubling subjects and experimental procedures in his shows; issues of urban poverty (*Street Scene*) and race relations (*Lost in the Stars*) come up in Weill's post-war *oeuvre* in a fashion similar to his works of the 1930s, and the structural elements that define documentary theatre—meta-theatrical frames and insets, non-narrative commentary—return as well. The non-narrative montages that are interspersed throughout *You and Me* serve a similar function to the vaudeville acts in *Love Life*. The idea of the narrative chorus made up of the displaced "other" that structures much of *Lost in the Stars* has its origins in *One Man from Tennessee*.

Beyond the "Two Weills" Question

These parallels reveal that the 1930s was a crucial decade in Weill's creative development, even if no so-called "masterpiece" came out that period. He has long suffered from the perception in scholarly literature that there are "two Weills," the Berlin activist and the American populist. The idea of Weill as "chameleon" is so ingrained in scholarly discourse on the composer's life and career that one forgets that Weill had to confront the same trials and tribulations of emigration as Schoenberg, Eisler, Toch, Waxman, Korngold, Hindemith, or any of his other colleagues in his situation. Weill did not immediately adopt a popular, American style, but rather had to learn the (t)ropes like any other composer.

Although during the 1940s, Weill quite prominently declared himself to be was a loyal American, and probably thought of himself as one, he rarely conceived of his work in terms of a single national style. The most obvious exception is *Street Scene*, which is frequently called "an American Opera," but that piece is one of Weill's only American works to have found an international audience.[7] Rather, he saw music theatre as an international genre that could borrow techniques across national and temporal lines in order to reach audiences of different backgrounds. On June 4, 1936, not long after he arrived in America, he explained his international vision of music theatre to his publisher Heugel: "Right now, I am trying to create a place for myself in American theatrical life. That will be very difficult, and I will need all of my patience and all of my energy. Once I have found my place here, I will be able to return to the kind of work which corresponds to my talents and ambitions, and that would be the time to offer you operatic works of international caliber."[8] Here, Weill frankly admits that his works from this

[7] Kim H. Kowalke, "Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture: *Offentlichkeit als Stil*," *Modernism/Modernity* 2 (1995): 27–69, at pp. 36–37.

[8] WPD(e), 164.

period were meant for American audiences (and also accounts for why he discouraged performances of his European works during the late 1930s), but that his goals were, and had always been, international. He felt he had achieved those goals by July 28, 1927, when he wrote to Alfred Kalmus of Universal Edition "As far as recognition of me here in America is concerned, I have by now established myself to the point that I can be thinking about making my earlier works better known over here than they are now."[9]

Still, even in the 1930s Weill drew on music theatre genres from around the globe. Throughout his English-language writings, Weill refers to contemporary Russian, German, and American practices, as well as ancient Greek and Japanese, Medieval English, and nineteenth-century French and Italian genres and techniques as a healthy way to propagate a culturally relevant and socially responsible music theatre. Even in his European works, he draws on a wide range of national traditions both contemporary and historical, including eighteenth-century English ballad opera, *commedia dell'arte*, Hollywood gangster film, Japanese Noh play, Viennese operetta, and many more. This polyglot conception of the musical theatre accompanied him across the Atlantic, where he added a similarly international mix of styles and genres like American folk ballad, Gilbert and Sullivan, *verismo*, Jewish synagogue music, and African American spirituals.

To split Weill into the "German" and "American" composer then, is to deny his essentially cosmopolitan conception of music theatre and the vernacular modernisms that it embodies. More recent scholarship on Weill and his life and music has tried to unite the two halves of his career based on issues of style and the drastically different cultural contexts of his

[9] WPD(e), 182.

various shows.[10] But such attempts, however worthy, reinforce the idea that two Weills ever existed at all. Addressing continuities of style within dissimilar cultures does nothing to address the underlying misreadings that have plagued scholarship on Weill's career, that is, that Weill easily assimilated into the culture of the United States. Attempts merely to undercut the question's Eurocentrism ultimately miss the larger issues facing any project of studying the migrant musicians who fled Europe in the 1930s. Musicologists who study this period tend to try to place these figures somewhere on the spectrum of assimilation and resistance to U.S. culture. Those who assimilate change their style to suite U.S. tastes, while those who resist continue to write music in their European idiom. Both sides of this spectrum are ideologically loaded: assimilation is often equated with pandering and "selling out," while resistance is read as heroic cultural preservation in the face of philistine audiences. The reverse is also sometimes true. Resisters can be read as "bad immigrants" who ungratefully refuse to adjust, and those who assimilated are also seen as great adapters who are able to find something "universal" in their

[10] Kim Kowalke has catalogued a number of stylistic traits that occur in both the European and American works in "Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture," 37. David Kilroy points out that all of Weill's works, European and American alike, are "culture-specific" and that one needs to examine them contextually, taking into account the massive societal changes that occurred in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; David Kilroy, "Kurt Weill on Broadway: The Post-War Years (1945–1950)" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992), 11, 24. However, a great deal of Kilroy's argument stems from finding stylistic continuities, highlighting composer's predilection for metadrama, i.e., the idea that throughout his career Weill wrote music for theatre about theatre, employing metadramatic devices such as plays within plays, narrators, onstage ceremonies, and public events (such as trials), etc., which call attention to the fact that the audience is sitting in an auditorium, and encourages critical engagement with the material. Alternatively, Stephen Hinton suggests that a re-thinking of the idea of "style" would reveal hidden continuities in Weill's music: "One place to do this would be in the aesthetics of 'stage style.' Another would be in the area of orchestration or 'sound image,' as Weill called it. Yet another is in the habitually reappearing figures and patterns that occur across his oeuvre. These things are not so much to do with what we usually call style, but rather with what one might call "signature"; they are also what makes Weill Weill. After all, a defining feature of the 'stage style' that Weill cultivated is irony, a category predicated less on stylistic unity than on incongruity"; Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theatre: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 33. In yet another solution, Hermann Danuser suggests that Weill's affiliation with "the younger generation of composers striving for artful functional music provided an artistic basis for continued identity"; Hermann Danuser, "Composers in Exile: The Question of Musical Identity," in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany*, ed. Rheinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Woff (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 155–71, at p. 160.

music. In *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California*, Dorothy Crawford Lamb writes:

> The failures of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Weill and Ernst Krenek to secure continuing film-scoring opportunities indicate that the conditions of studio work demanded a great degree of adaptability. One must ask, given the humiliations and frustrations they experienced: how did those composers who stayed to earn their livings manage to save their artistic identities and achieve their own goals?[11]

Crawford equates assimilation with humiliation and an inability to control one's artistic identity. Failure, conversely, becomes something heroic, an individual's strength to pursue one's own goals without succumbing to the lure of material concerns. Claudia Mauer Zenck similarly writes that while one genuine masterpiece, *Lamentations*, did come out of the isolation of Ernst Krenek's experiences in the United States, "in his symphonic music, however, he seems to have succumbed to the temptation of making concessions to the general public."[12]

But ideas of assimilation and resistance often fail to take in to account the differing circumstances faced by individual émigrés. Those who are often put on the resistance side of the spectrum, like Arnold Schoenberg and Paul Hindemith, secured teaching posts within the academy. Safely ensconced in a tenured position, they may have felt more freedom to ignore U.S. popular culture, particularly in the company of other, native-born or foreign, academics, who also often complained about the ignorance of the masses and rising tide of U.S. commercialism. Figures such as Weill and the many composers who found work in Hollywood made a living within the culture industry, even as they attempted to revolutionize it. Had they

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[11] Dorothy Lamb Crawford, *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 166.

[12] Claudia Mauer Zenck, "Challenges and Opportunities of Acculturation: Schoenberg, Krenek and Stravinsky in Exile," in *Driven into Paradise*, ed. Brinkmann and Wolff, pp. 172–93, at p. 180.

publically expressed negative opinions of popular culture, they would have alienated audiences and employers.

Rather than attempting to "unite" the German Weill with his American counterpart by revealing stylistic or aesthetic continuities in his career, I have treated Weill as a transnational figure whose migration enabled him to view the political, social, and artistic spheres from multiple perspectives simultaneously. During the second half of the 1930s, Weill drew on his multiple worldviews—German, Jewish, migrant, and budding American—to produce unique readings of American history and folklore. The transnational character of these works and their generic fluidity reveals a composer whose style neither changed completely nor continued without alteration, but one who had multiple musical and cultural tools at his disposal (expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, cabaret, American jazz) and who could deploy them as he felt the dramatic situation required. Migration merely added to the toolbox ideas of New Deal realism, documentary theatre, U.S. folk music, and many more.

As Edward Said declared, "our age—with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-ideological ambitions of totalitarian rulers—is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass migration"[13] Much of twentieth-century art is the work of exiles forced to reckon with the separation from their homeland. Within the framework of the nation, assimilation and resistance are the only possible responses to migration, but the range of artistic voices emanating from exiles indicates a need for a broader, more nuanced methodology. One such approach is suggested by Rogers Brubecker and Frederick Cooper who propose that scholars abandon the idea of "national identity" altogether. Instead, they propose three different levels of collective identification: "commonality," defined as "sharing of some common attribute"; "connectedness,"

[13] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, ed. Edward Said (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173–88, at p. 174.

indicating "relational ties"; and "groupness" which "may rest on categorical commonality and an associated feeling of belonging together with minimal or no relational connectedness."[14] Brubecker and Cooper's separation of different varieties of "identity" helps to diffuse the idea that a German or American Weill is an either/or prospect.

Examining a composer's life and career in the light of specific "connectedness" with other artists within imagined webs of "commonality" and "groupness" in various transnational communities provides an alternative to thinking about careers in terms of assimilation and resistance to national culture. Examining the networks of artistic communities in the context of their times and places engenders a more nuanced picture of migrant strategies of managing the rupture that inevitably accompanies emigration and exile. In this paradigm, migrants are simultaneously assimilating within some communities and resisting others; assimilation and resistance is not a spectrum, but rather a set of non-mutually exclusive options for an individual within vast networks of artistic and other possibilities. Weill did not assimilate any more than Schoenberg or Stravinsky resisted, they all took opportunities to work within a network of avante-garde communities with allegiances to varying artistic ideals.

Raymond Williams's work in the historiography of modernism also suggests ways to think about artistic production beyond an expression of national identity. Williams urges scholars to focus on the modern metropolis as a site of cultural collision. He argues that

> the preoccupying visual images and styles of particular cultures did not disappear, any more than the native languages, native tales, and native styles of music and dance, but all were now passed through this crucible of the metropolis, which was in the important cases no mere melting-pot, but an intense and visually and linguistically exciting process in its own right, from which remarkable new forms emerged.[15]

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[14] Rogers Brubecker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47, at p. 20.

[15] Raymond Williams, "The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism," (1985), reprinted in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, ed. Peter Brooker (New York: Longman,1992), 82–94, at p. 92.

The mass urbanization and waves of immigration that accompanied modernity produced new, culturally syncretic forms of art, as well as movements that demanded ethnic and national purity. These same phenomenon yielded new forms of mass culture, which allowed artists new access to the public. Others, conversely, consciously withdrew into abstraction and complexity as a reaction to commercialism. Williams's notion of the urban crucible provides a framework in which to discuss these reactions to modernity without recourse to the purely national.

Williams's idealism, however, needs tempering. Elsewhere, he speaks of the metropolises of the modern world as "transnational capitals of art without frontiers" which "took on a new silhouette as the eponymous City of Strangers, the most appropriate locale for art made by the restlessly mobile émigré or exile."[16] But at least for Weill, this Utopian vision proved to be problematic. In both New York and Los Angeles, two "transnational capitals of art," Weill found himself hemmed in by commercial, political, and interpersonal concerns, and experienced difficulties breaking into already existing artistic networks. Furthermore, his German background caused multiple misapprehensions about the business world of U.S. musical theatre. Weill's early American years reveal the dirty underside of Williams's crucible, where artistic idealism fails in the face of financial concerns, political pressure, petty infighting, individual ego, cultural misunderstandings, and societal prejudices. In order to construct a fuller picture of the lives of exiles, scholars need to take both aspects of the modern metropolis into consideration.

With that in mind, there remain many aspects of Weill's life and work that have yet to be explored, particularly in the American years. Just during the period under consideration in this dissertation, Weill also composed two versions of a pageant for the World's Fair called *Railroads on Parade* (1939–1940), a fifteen minute radio cantata called *The Ballad of The*

[16] Raymond Williams, "When Was Modernism?" *New Left Review* 175 (1989): 48–52, at p. 50.

Magna Carta with Maxwell Anderson (1940), and two songs for the collection *Folksongs of the New Palestine* (1938). Although *Lady in the Dark* has received one book-length study in bruce mcclung's *Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical*, no similarly in-depth examination exists for any of Weill's other American works (although critical editions of *Johnny Johnson* and *The Firebrand of Florence*, 1944, have appeared). *Street Scene* (1946) is fairly prominent in literature on twentieth-century and American opera, and Elmar Juchem has a lengthy study of *Lost in the Stars* (1949) in his book on the Weill-Anderson collaborations. But *One Touch of Venus* (1943) and particularly *Love Life* (1948) have received almost no scholarly attention. Even less work has been done on Weill's other film scores: the Ira Gershwin collaboration *Where Do We Go From Here?* (1944) and *Salute to France* (1944). Annegret Fauser's monograph on American composers during World War II contains an account of Weill's activities during that era is in press as I finish this dissertation, which will chronicle for the composer's varied activities, including as part of the *Lunchtime Follies* and his work for the Office of War Information, but more work remains to be done on Weill's other non-dramatic projects, including some of his Jewish music.

Assigning labels to migrant composers denies their unique struggles and successes in the extraordinarily difficult task of learning to live in a new culture. So far, the fascination with nation and national style has blinded musicologists to the significant contributions of composers like Weill to the Popular Front in the 1930s. Composers on the West Coast became involved in so-called "social problem" films (a more politically engaged pre-cursor of *film noir*), such as Franz Waxman's score for Fritz Lang's *Fury* (1936), and anti-Fascist epics such as Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score for William Dieterle's *Juarez* (1937). Broadway at the time similarly was home to an enclave of experimental organizations, including the Theatre Union,

the Group Theatre, Workers Laboratory Theatre, Theatre Guild, and the Federal Theatre Project, many of which welcomed émigré musicians. In 1935, Hanns Eisler composed the music for the Theatre Union's production of Bertolt Brecht's *Die Mutter*, and the Group gave Kurt Weill his first Broadway production with *Johnny Johnson* in 1936. Eisler worked with *One Man From Tennessee*'s librettist H.R. Hays on a Living Newspaper called *Medicine Show* (1940). In this dissertation, I hope to have provided a template for how to discuss all of these Modernist creations in the tumultuous context of the 1930s. Both Weill's missteps and his successes are a testament to his resilience as a composer. His experiments in the vernacular modernist communities of the 1930s reveal a composer dedicated to socially engaged music theatre, and who spent his career fighting against injustice, homelessness, racism, and prejudice.

APPENDIX
TRANSCRIPTION OF "SYNOPSIS OF *THE BALLAD OF DAVY CROCKETT*" BY H.R. HAYS AND KURT WEILL[1]

Introduction

The play is built on an original ballad describing episodes in the life of Davy Crockett. Each pair of stanzas of the ballad is followed by a scene dramatizing the episode. The ballad is to be sung by a group of poverty stricken hilly billys who play folk instruments and sometimes act bits which help the transitions, meaning, of development of the story. At the beginning they come on and briefly indicate that they have lost their land, are on the road and have stopped to spend the night in the open air. Most of them are beaten and disheartened, but one young man is rebellious. It is he who recalls the story of Davy Crockett, hero of the poor frontier farmers, and it is he who plays him in the scenes that follow. The group sings the first pair of stanzas: Davy's parentage.

Scene I

The story opens about 1815 when Davy Crockett is a very young man still trying to get a little schooling, but spending more of his time in the woods learning to be a hunter. His family are poor squatters continually being forced to move by government surveyors. ([In] this period, speculators could obtain large tracts through crooked deals, the actual pioneers seldom [were] able to afford to pay the price). Crockett's father is a shiftless, complaining sort of man who wants his boy to be educated and who longs for the time when Kentucky will be settled. There is an antagonism between the two, the father trying to make the boy over, the boy preferring a free life in the woods. Davy's Uncle Josh is closer to him, a real frontiersman, always ready to try a new territory. Ma Crockett understands Davy and treats Pa with humorous disrespect. The

[1] H.R. Hays and Kurt Weill, "Synopsis of *The Ballad of Davy Crockett*," WLRC, Series 20, Folder D2.

conflict comes to a head when the surveyor once more comes to evict them. Pa puts up a bluff and threatens to shoot, but soon gives in. On this very day, Davy has unfortunately played hookey from school. Uncle Josh decides to go to Texas where he hopes to get land on easier terms. He promises Davy's mother to prevent the boy from following him. Pa, irritated by everything, is driven frantic by Davy's enthusiastic entrance with his first panther. He takes it all out on the boy, lack of interest in the farm, lack of interest in books, and especially for the hunting excursion. Davy, having lost his idolized Uncle Josh and flushed with his first kill, rebels. He feels himself a grown man, too big to be licked. The father, infuriated, attacks him with the strap. Davy throws him off; he is stronger than his father. Shocked at his own rebellion and sensing that the break has come at last, he runs away from home to the woods.

Scene II

Crockett's flight from home is an escape from the situation, an instinctive search for freedom. While sitting by the fire that same night, he is filled with a wild mood of kinship with nature, with the animals and the woods. To his campfire comes Job Spindle, a young Yankee peddler, lost and very much out of his element. Job is a shrewd, unscrupulous, cowardly, but salty person who lives by his wits. He combines thimble-rigging ("The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye") with peddling the proverbial wooden nutmegs. He sees everything in terms of profit and personal advancement. The trees are so much lumber, the land is to be exploited, the sooner the wild critters are gotten rid of, the better. His values are the opposite of Crockett's. Davy reasserts his own mood with tall stories about the woods. His notion of a free America. Job shivers but says: that's a lot of gammon. I'm the real thing, I win in the end. His hard-bitten commercialism is a menace to Crockett's idea of freedom. Crockett frightens Job away by his wild behavior, but

doubt has once more entered his mind. His mental conflict is externalized in fantastic form by the entrance of three Indian-like figures in loin clothes and ceremonial masks who speak lyrically in answer to Davy's questions. They explain that freedom is not easily found, that the ties which bind Crockett to his kinfolk will force him to seek it in society and not outside it. The woods are only a temporary escape. He must return to his people, live with them, work for them.

Scene III

The next episode takes place sometime later. The parents of Sarah are in debt and afraid of losing their land. The mother is a shrew, soured by the hardships of a frontier life. She has already chosen Job Spindle, now a rising merchant, as her favorite suitor for Sarah. But Sarah wants a man of spirit, a man like Davy. Davy enters, makes love to her with robust directness. He manhandles her and says she walks like a panther stepping on leaves. He tells her love makes him so hungry that when he first saw her he went out and et a whole hog. The matter comes to a climax when Davy asks for her hand. At first the mother throws him out, but he comes back through the window, shrewdly flatters the old woman, plays the banjo, sings, and wheedles her into dancing with him while Job looks on and bites his nails. Job counters with his offerings, his security, his property, his future. Davy answers with his prowess as a woodsman, his exploits as a crack shot. Davy's energy and enthusiasm, his boasting and his tall stories almost turn the tide. Finally the old woman points out that Job will lift the mortgage. Will Crockett bind himself to work for her for nothing until the debt is paid in order to win Sarah? Davy rejects this with contempt. It is the old story, settling down and be a slave to the speculators, and bankers, the men of commerce. The old woman tells him to go. Sarah's Pa feebly protests. Davy calls on Sarah to choose—the woods with him, or Job. Torn by indecision, she wavers, but Davy picks

her up and runs off with her. The mother vents her fury on Job. Between this and the following scene Job has a song "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye," cataloging his exploits as compensation for failure in love.

Scene IV

Some years later, 1827, Jackson is running for president. There is also a congressional election going on. Conditions are no better and both parties would like to sidestep the land issue. At the backwoods Kentucky town where Davy is now living, Alexander, the Federalist candidate, is preparing to make a speech. The poor farmers have come to town for the event. They are drinking, gambling, and making a carnival out of the affair. The Federalist candidate bustles about pompously, bribing here and there. But the sentiment is divided, for many feel that Jackson and the Democrats are men of the people and will put a bill through lowering the price of government land. Job Spindle, now an important man and a land speculator himself, is on hand watching which way the cat will jump. He is approached by Alexander for financial backing, but remains noncommittal. Job approaches the Democrat and suggests Crockett as a candidate, slyly offering to back him. He makes it clear that Crockett's popularity is to be used, but that Crockett himself is naïve enough to be handled if he gets to Washington. Davy, entering, is cornered by the Democrat while Sarah goes off to do her shopping. Although flattered, he does not at once fall for the nomination. He realizes his own lack of education and for once in his life feels small. When Sarah returns, she relishes the idea. She, after all, has suffered from the hardships of pioneering and is dazzled by the thought of life in Washington. Davy admits that the woods are not enough, that he has an urge to do something about the land situation instead of running away from it, but is not persuaded until Sarah gives him a letter which tells of the death of Uncle Josh

in Texas. Josh, involved in the Fredonia uprising against Mexico, was killed in the fighting. Davy feels that Josh was killed fighting for his land, that this is a sign to go in and fight for the folks in the election, a new path on the search for freedom. Once convinced, he starts like a whirlwind, heckles Alexander, finally speaks against him, tells stories, gets the crowd with him, and promises to fight for a land bill, disregarding the instructions of his manager. The scene ends with wild excitement, the crowd singing and carrying Davy into the tavern, but Job is smiling up his sleeve, for he intends to pull the strings.

Scene V

The episode takes place in the home of one of the leading Democratic congressmen while Davy is serving his term. A group of Washington people are gathered together after a dinner party. Job is among them. Most of them are interested in land speculation. Job explains that he has arranged for Crockett to drop in about his land bill. Davy is coming to ask the help of the party whip in getting it put through. Of course, all are against it. Job's plan is to flatter Crockett socially. He wants the party whip to divert Davy from the bill without antagonizing him completely. Crockett and Sarah enter, ill at ease in their fine clothes. Sarah looks dowdy and is snubbed by the women. Davy makes his plea, is put off, makes it stronger, till finally the party whip gets annoyed and flatly turns him down. Crockett appeals to Job but the latter tries to ease out of the situation and Davy realizes he has been betrayed. He breaks out into a tirade, lashing the group mercilessly as parasites and enemies of the frontier people. He leaves with the intention of going directly to Jackson whom he still trusts.

Scene VI

Crockett comes to the President for support on his bill. He finds a sick, confused old man, still capable of bursts of fierce temper, but actually ruled by others. Jackson, who had started his life as a frontiers man, wanting the same free America as Davy, is now out of touch with the people and involved in political intrigue. Sorrowfully, Davy tries to reason with him, tries to recall his youth, but gets no response. Instead, Jackson reproaches him for treachery and threatens to prevent his re-election. Into the midst of the conflict comes Captain Morgan from Texas with news of the siege of the Alamo and a call for help. Jackson refuses. His advisors say: no war with Mexico. Crockett pleads for the boys in the Alamo. He recalls his Uncle Josh; it is all a part of the struggle for land. Jackson begins to weaken, for a moment he is the soldier once more. Then Martin van Buren enters, just in time, and sweeps Jackson into the other room. The answer is no. Crockett, staggered, doesn't understand his failure. In a burst of anger, humiliation, and defiance, he announces that he alone will raise the siege of the Alamo.

Crossing before the curtain, Crockett has a brief scene with Sarah. He tells her they are going home. She is glad. She now realizes it was all a mistake. But, says Davy, I have a job to do first. I must go to the Alamo. Sarah, frightened, begs him not to go. She has a premonition of evil. Davy says, I have to do something to free somebody or I won't be able to look for the folks in the face. But I'm sure to come back. Sarah promises to wait for him. They part.

Scene VII

The defenders of the Alamo are almost worn out. At dawn the red flag is raised by the Mexicans indicating an attack. Sitting, waiting for the end, Davy is at pretty low ebb. He is in a mood to question his whole life. Was it all wasted? Was there no point to the search for freedom? He tries to hearten himself with the old boasting egotism but it sounds a bit hollow. Barret Travis, the

commandant enters with a secret emissary from Washington who has sneaked through the lines. Travis and some of the men are hopeful of a new plan to save them. The emissary is no other than Job Spindle. He comes as a savior, ready to patronize Crockett. He has the solution, after all. The Government will consider buying a large tract of Texas and he has information that Mexico will accept if the Alamo surrenders. Crockett, bitterly suspicious, asks who is back of all this, where the money come from? A group of bankers, says Job, I own a bank now. And what do they get out of it. Well, certain options, Job admits. Crockett rises in fury. Then these folks will lose the very land they're fighting for. Once again you'll rob us! Never! Better die fighting. He appeals to the men. Travis, ready to crack, hysterically opposes him. He does not want to feel responsible for the death of all his men. Crockett sobers him. The men agree, better die fighting for freedom than compromise. Job starts to protest and Crockett is at his throat when the attack starts. All rush to defend the gate, leaving Job on stage, green with fright. He reverts back to his earlier self, the poor shriveling rascal. Crockett comes back to make a last stand. is killed defying Santa Anna. He says, you can't shoot me, you can't shoot a streak of lightning. The spirit of freedom lives. Job, in terror, collapses in front of Santa Anna with the thimble game, mixing "The Hand is Quicker Than the Eye" with appeals for mercy and genuine grief for Crockett. The chorus, meanwhile, from whom Davy appeared in the beginning of the play, come into the scene and gently, as they sing, carry of his body.

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