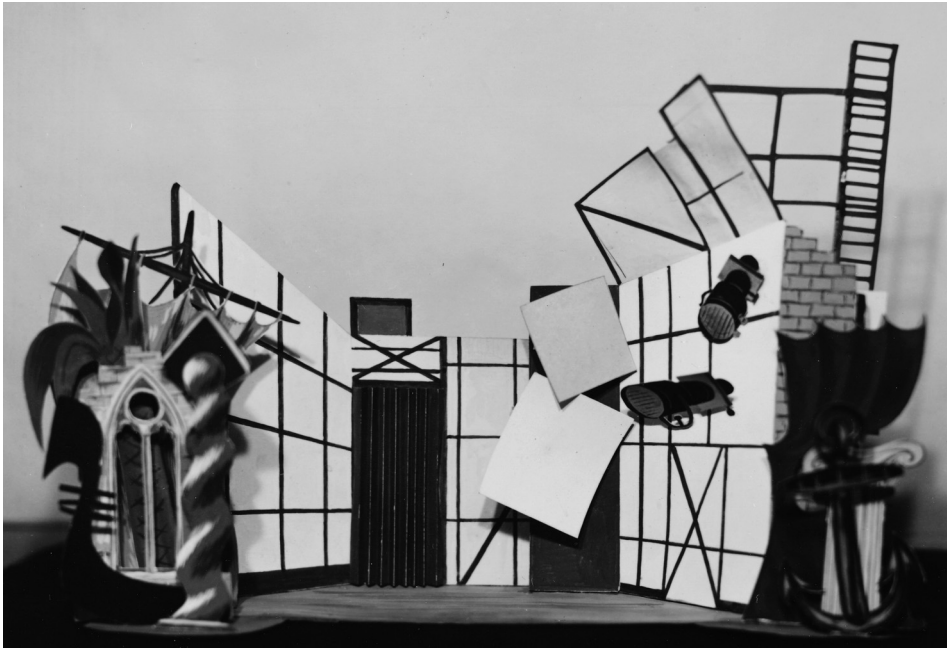


Kurt Weill's *Deadly Sins* in Copenhagen

A thistle in the Danish kitchen garden of 1936

NIELS KRABBE¹



Ill. 1. Scene image from the first performance of *Die sieben Todsünden* at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, 1936 (Photo: Holger Damgaards Teaterfotos, The Royal Library, Copenhagen).

Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Die sieben Todsünden* (The Seven Deadly Sins, in Danish *De syv Dødsynder*)² is an exile-work. It was composed while its authors were living as expatriates in Paris and the few performances that took place during Weill's lifetime were all presented *outside* Germany: in 1933, in Paris; re-staged (in an English translation) a month later in London;³ and in 1936, in Copenhagen, while

1 The article, including the quotations from Danish literature and newspapers, is translated by Dan A. Marmorstein.

2 Throughout the article the title in German and Danish, including the abbreviated form *Dødsynderne*, will be used interchangeably.

3 Behind the performances in Paris and London stood the famous dance troupe, *Les Ballets 1933*, which was primarily cultivating the avant-garde repertoire. For the London production, the libretto was translated into English, and the work's title was changed from its original religiously charged title to the more neutral *Anna-Anna*. Apart from this, the two productions were identical.

Brecht was living in exile in Svendborg. The Royal Theatre's production in Copenhagen was accordingly the last presentation before the work was taken up again in 1958, in New York City, having been prepared by George Balanchine. Not until 1960 did the work have its first German performance, in Frankfurt, in the somewhat adapted version that Lotte Lenya had carried out a few years earlier (more discussion about this matter is presented in App. 2).⁴ From this time on, the piece was included on the roster of immortal works by Brecht and Weill and today it appears to be, musically speaking, what might be the best of Weill's works from his 'German' period.

Only very infrequently (or not at all) is the staging at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen mentioned in the international Weill-literature, primarily because the show was taken off the bill after only two performances. On the other hand, the persistent assertion claiming that the work's sorry plight can be attributed to demands voiced by the German ambassador in Denmark is marketed everywhere. In what follows, there is attempt to set this myth in a broader perspective. Similarly, the whole scenario surrounding the theatre's staging of this highly controversial work will be further elucidated. Full documentation of what it was, in the final analysis, that caused the theatre to suspend any further performances after the first two evenings can hardly be presented here, but a number of factors of a (theatre-)political nature and other related factors can contribute to the work's and Weill's reception-history in Denmark.

THE PIECE

In point of fact, the collaboration between Brecht and Weill lasted only a little more than six years; after *Die sieben Todsünden*, created in 1933, it was all over.⁵ Already a few years earlier, the two creative artists had started to drift apart for political and personal reasons; that this new work could have come forth at all can presumably be chalked up to the very extraordinary and stressful circumstances in which the two collaborators found themselves at this time. It must be added that only Weill was fully committed to the work; he actually considered it one of his most important works to date. Brecht, on the other hand, was not particularly engaged with the project. He hurried to Paris, where he stayed a couple of weeks in connection with the preparations for the production, which he prosaically characterized in this levelheaded way: 'das Ballett ging ganz hübsch, war allerdings nicht so bedeutend'.⁶

4 Large portions of Anna I's part were transposed down a perfect fourth to better accommodate Lenya's deep voice (a similar transposition was effected in Jenny's part in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*).

5 The work's genesis and reception in 1933 are described in detail in the Weill-literature. Here, among the numerous accounts available, the reader is referred to Joanna Lee and Kim Kowalke (eds.), *Die 7 Todsünden. The 7 Deadly Sins. A Sourcebook* (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, 1997), containing a plentiful supply of documentary material; David Drew, *Kurt Weill. A Handbook* (Berkeley, 1987), 222–48; Kim H. Kowalke, 'Seven Degrees of Separation; Music, Text, Image, and Gesture in *The Seven deadly Sins*', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 104/1 (Winter 2005), 7–62.

6 Postcard from Brecht to Helene Weigel, dated 10 June, 1933. Published in Bertolt Brecht, *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe der Werke Brechts in 30 Bänden* (Frankfurt a.M., 1998), vol. 28, 361.

It was not until 1959 that the libretto was printed, now bearing the title, *Die sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger*.⁷

The work was originally built up around an idea conceived by Brecht with the ambiguous working title, *Ware Liebe*. The very realization of the idea was brought about through the agency of the English financier, poet and art patron, Edward James, who wanted to commission a work by Weill where his then wife, the Austrian dancer-choreographer, actress and painter, Tilly Losch, would have a prominent role. It was very likely Weill himself who wanted to create a work that would transgress the limits of the traditional ballet genre and he suggested that a text by none other than Jean Cocteau be solicited. However, the collaboration with Cocteau did not come to fruition. Instead, the task was placed on the shoulders of Weill's tried and true collaborator from the successes of the Berlin era, Bertolt Brecht, who – albeit half-heartedly – was being handed the chance to deploy his idea about Christian doctrine's Deadly Sins,⁸ embedded in a modern fable about the heart and brain and about the terms of the individual's existence within the capitalist system.

For Weill, it was a chaotic time: he had fled from Germany; he was dealing with marital troubles with Lotte Lenya (who, at this time, was living with the tenor, Otto Pasetti) and he was having problems in his collaboration with stage designer Caspar Neher (who initially found the text for *Die Sieben Todsünden* to be too trivial but subsequently agreed to design the scenography).⁹ Added to this were the business problems with his publisher, Universal Edition, as well as the already tense relationship with Brecht after *Mahagonny*. Nonetheless, Weill managed to create a work which he himself, as mentioned, regarded to be the best he had ever turned out – a work which, in stylistic terms, brings the preceding years' *song* style to a close and ushers in a new epoch in Weill's output. Finally, it marks, as mentioned above, the conclusion of the collaboration between the two artists, Brecht and Weill; moreover, this piece is unique in the overall context of the collaboration in the sense that this time around, it is *Weill* in front – and not Brecht. The piece was mounted in 1933 – both in Paris and London – with the patron's wife, Tilly Losch, in one of the main roles (the dancing Anna) and the composer's wife, Lotte Lenya, in the other (the singing Anna). In both cities, the work received a lukewarm reception – not altogether dismissive, but neither with any pronounced enthusiasm. One of the stumbling blocks was, at the time, and is, still now, the work's genre affiliation: in the many reviews, both from 1933 and later from the production in Copenhagen in 1936, we meet genre designations like cantata; short opera; ballet-chanté; ballet-pantomime; pantomime; a story acted, danced and sung; and so on. The audience was thus having a difficult time attuning its expectations in the proper direction and the traditional ballet audi-

7 Brecht, *Werke*, vol. 4, 495–98.

8 In the Christian tradition, *the deadly sins* hark back to the First John Letter 5:16–17 where a distinction is made between (venial) sins *not* leading to death, which can be forgiven, and (mortal) 'sins leading to death'. From the early Middle Ages and onward, the Seven Deadly Sins (aka Capital Vices or Cardinal Sins) include *pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth*.

9 See Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (eds.), *Speak Low (When you speak low). The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya* (London, 1996), 80.

ence, in particular, felt disoriented – in the best instances, or, in the worst instances, felt shocked by what was being presented.

WEILL AND BRECHT IN COPENHAGEN IN THE 1930S

Not surprisingly, it was *Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera) – Weill and Brecht's legendary breakthrough work from 1928 – that introduced Kurt Weill's music to the Danish public. This occurred with the performance of the piece at The New Theater (Det Ny Teater) in 1930. After this, a string of theatrical works that were the result of the fruitful collaboration between Brecht and Weill during the years just before and just after 1930: *Der Jasager* (He who Says Yes), *Der Lindberghflug* (The Flight across the Ocean), *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny) and finally, in 1936, *Die sieben Todsünden* (The Seven Deadly Sins). Accordingly, we can establish that, with the exception of *Berliner Requiem*, all of Weill's major works that accompanied texts by Brecht were performed in Copenhagen only a few years after they were composed.¹⁰ This early breakthrough for Weill's music in Denmark is thrown dramatically into relief when we consider that the first time anybody in England could actually hear a work by Weill was in June 1933 when, as previously mentioned, *Die sieben Todsünden* opened under the title *Anna-Anna*.¹¹ On the other hand, The Royal Theatre had not introduced either Brecht or Weill prior to the performance of *De syv Dødsyndere* in 1936. As far as Brecht is concerned, another seventeen years would pass before another one of his works appeared on the national stage's programme.¹² When it comes to Weill, another twenty-seven years would elapse.¹³

¹⁰ To this could be added two further works involving the use of texts by Brecht, *Happy End* and *Mann ist Mann* (Man Equals Man), though it must be pointed out that Brecht's contribution to the former includes only the songs (the libretto itself was actually written by his assistant, Elisabeth Hauptmann), while the musical score accompanying the latter appears to be lost. For an overview of the reception of Weill's work in Denmark, the reader is referred to Michael Fjeldsøe, *Den fortrængte Modernisme* (Copenhagen, 1999), 75–78. A more detailed exposition of the Danish performances of *Mahagonny* can be found in Niels Krabbe, 'Mahagonny hos Brecht og Weill', *Musik & Forskning*, 16 (1991), 69–144, esp. 126 ff., as well as in Michael Fjeldsøe, 'Syngende skuespillere eller agerende operasangere. Om den rette sangstil i operaen "Mahagonny"', in Anne Ørbæk Jensen et al. (eds.), *Musikvidenskabelige kompositioner. Festskrift til Niels Krabbe* (Copenhagen, 2006), 605–24, reprinted in a revised version as 'Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny in Copenhagen, 1933/34: An Early Debate about Performing Style', *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, 25/1 (2007), 4–8.

¹¹ The libretto was translated in 1958 into English by W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman with the full title 'The Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie'.

¹² *Mutter Courage og hendes børn* (Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder / Mother Courage and Her Children), performed in 1953. As a matter of fact, *Jeanne d'Arc fra Slagtehalerne* (Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe / Saint Joan of the Stockyards) was actually approved for being staged at The Royal Theatre in the middle of the 1930s, even though it appears that nothing ever came of any plans to mount the work. In his *Brecht, A Biography* (London, 1983), 176, Ronald Haymann claims, erroneously, that *Trommeln in der Nacht* (Drums in the Night) had already been performed at The Royal Theatre sometime prior to Brecht's arrival in Denmark; the performance took place at a small theatre in Copenhagen in 1930.

¹³ *Mahagonny*, performed in 1964 (see Krabbe, 'Mahagonny hos Brecht og Weill', 133–34).

Brecht's own works were actually very much part of the agenda in Copenhagen during these years. In 1935, RT (Revolutionært Teater, Revolutionary Theatre, i.e. Copenhagen's Worker's Theatre), spearheaded by Ruth Berlau, presented *Moderen* (The Mother) at Borups Højskole (Borup's College) and two years later, Berlau staged *Fru Carrars geværer* (Señora Carrar's Rifles) for the same ensemble. In both productions, Dagmar Andreasen appeared in the lead role and both productions were arranged as touring theatrical productions that were performed on make-shift factory-hall stages.¹⁴ The hot topic of conversation in the time around *De syv Dødssynder*, however, was the premiere only a week earlier of *Rundhoder og Spidshoder* (Round Heads and Pointed Heads) in the Riddersal Theatre in Copenhagen, in Per Knutzon's staging.

Several of these plays had been created while Brecht, from the summer of 1933 until the spring of 1939, was living at Skovbostrand near Svendborg.¹⁵ As we can see, Brecht moved to Denmark almost immediately after the performance of *Die sieben Todsünden* in Paris. Although Brecht, during these years, refrained from getting involved either personally in the Danish cultural life or as a writer in the Danish press, he was obviously both well known and notorious in wide intellectual circles for both his communist and his anti-Nazi convictions. The fact that the greatest portion of his output generated in precisely these years is targeted directly at the Nazis might have been a contributing cause to the formation of the myth surrounding the fate of *Die sieben Todsünden* at the Royal Theatre. However, it must be mentioned that Weill's ballet plays a very minor role in Brecht's life story when it comes to the playwright's sojourn in Denmark. As we shall see, if we put aside the – ostensibly erroneous – information in Harald Engberg's report, cited in the following paragraph, there are evidently no sources offering any proof that Brecht was involved, to any considerable extent, in setting up the production at the Royal Theatre.¹⁶ Similarly, it does not appear that Brecht himself had anything to say about the show. Whereas he had witnessed the rehearsals and the premiere of *Rundhoder og Spidshoder* the week before, there is nothing to suggest that Brecht was in Copenhagen in connection with *Dødssynderne*. By and large, Brecht had adopted a very distanced relation to

14 In a letter from Brecht to Hella Wuolijoki, written in 1940 or 1941, it appears that it actually was Ruth Berlau who originally came up with the idea of having *Die sieben Todsünden* / *De syv Dødssynder* produced at The Royal Theatre. See John Willett (ed.), *Bertolt Brecht Letters* (New York, 1990), letter no. 419. As is made evident by source material at The West Dean Estate, this can hardly be the case (see a discussion about these source materials in Appendix 1).

15 In addition to *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar* (Señora Carrar's Rifles / Fru Carrars Geværer) and *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (Round Heads and Pointed Heads / Rundhoder og Spidshoder), *Drei Groschen Roman* (The Threepenny Novel / Laser og pjalter), *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (Fear and Misery of the Third Reich / Det tredje Riges Frygt og Elendighed), the *Svendborg Poems* (Svendborg Gedichte), and *Leben des Galilei* (Life of Galileo / Galileis Liv) were also written in whole or in part during Brecht's stay in Denmark.

16 In Birgit Nielsen and Erwin Winter (eds.), *Bertolt Brecht i Danmark* (Brecht-Zentrum der DDR and Svendborg Kommune, 1984), not a single word about *De syv Dødssynder* appears notwithstanding that the book, in the form of a journal, presents a detailed overview of the most important events in these years.

Denmark and Danish intellectual life in these years; he was on the run and Denmark was a tolerable stopover on the expedition leading further. Famous is his laconic and somewhat condescending observation about the country:

The worst thing about these much too small islands is that there is not really anything missing; everything is here, but in terribly small proportions. Here, nothing exists that you can measure it by, because the yardstick itself is too short. A hill that is situated in Jutland, which is called *Himmelbjerget* (Heaven's Mountain), is 200 metres high.¹⁷

Even though Brecht's stay in Denmark during this period is so very well documented, it would not be at all correct to say that Weill was here, as is claimed every now and then. Harald Engberg goes so far as to describe how Otto Gelsted (who had translated Brecht's text into Danish) drove by car, along with a number of the players, to Karen Michaëlis's house on the island of Thurø and that here, they worked 'hard, together, with the Brecht-Weill pair, around a grand piano, in order to grab hold of the right style in the performances'.¹⁸ Upon examination of Weill's passport, however, it appears unmistakably that the composer never entered Denmark.¹⁹ Furthermore, at this time, Weill and Lenya had been living in New York since September 1935; they could hardly have had any clue about what was going on in Copenhagen. It might be the case that what we have here is a conflation with Brecht's second important composer, Hanns Eisler, who *did* make visits to Brecht in Svendborg several times.²⁰

THE PERFORMANCE IN COPENHAGEN IN NOVEMBER 1936

Through much of November 1936, almost all the Copenhagen newspapers ran shorter or longer articles about *Dødssynderne*. The extensive press coverage falls into three main categories: advance notices about this strange work, in what was hitherto a largely unknown genre, which the Royal Theatre was about to present; the mixed reviews of the premiere performance; and the subsequent debate circling around *Dødssynderne* as a textbook case of the theatre's alleged neglect of its obligations as a national institution and an example of the pervasive brutalization in society.

The copious amount of advance notices of the work that appeared on the days from the 9 until the 12 of November, featuring an extensive quantity of illustrative material from the rehearsals, is connected in part with the work's unusual genre designation already mentioned (variously: 'ballet', 'ballet pantomime', 'ballet with song and speech' and 'pantomime opera') and also with what was the apparently somewhat mismatched collocation with another piece being performed on the evening's bill, August Enna's opera *Den lille Pige med Svovlstikkerne* (The Little Match Girl),

17 Nielsen and Winter, *Bertolt Brecht i Danmark*, 23.

18 Harald Engberg, *Brecht på Fyn* (Odense, 1966), vol. 2, 61.

19 Ascertained upon the author's personal inspection of Kurt Weill's passport at The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in New York.

20 As a curious anecdote, it ought to be mentioned that around ten years ago, the composer, Bernhard Christensen, claimed – in a conversation with the author – to have greeted Kurt Weill on the street in Copenhagen, adding, for that matter, that he was not particularly fond of Weill's music.



Ill. 2. Illona Wieselmann and Margot Lander as Anna 1 and Anna 2 at the performance in Copenhagen in November 1936 (Photo: Holger Damgaards Teaterfotos, The Royal Library, Copenhagen).

from 1897 (“The Little Match Girl” will not fail to give rise to the effect of an old pastel rendering, while “*Die sieben Todsünden*” will just as certainly call to mind a surrealist picture of 1936’).²¹ On top of this, there was a summary of the plot and a clarification of the work’s theme as the conflict between reason and emotion (‘heart’ and ‘brain’) – all of this marked by a certain curiosity and a certain joyful anticipation.²² One of the daily notices (appearing in the newspaper, *Børsen*, 10 Nov.) reports, however, that during the rehearsals, a certain sense of dissatisfaction was smouldering beneath the surface among some of the involved performers, in the form of different kinds of protests – directed especially against some of the signboards with objectionable content. With an admixture of anticipation and aversion, attention is called to the fact that this happens to be the second premiere of a piece by the exiled German writer within a few weeks’ time (the first, as has been

²¹ *Aftenbladet*, 12 Nov. 1936.

²² ‘Frib.’ in *Ekstrabladet*, 9 Nov. 1936, draws an interesting parallel between the respective motifs in *Dødssynderne* and Svend Borberg’s play, *Cirkus Juris*, which was performed at the theatre in February 1935 – a parallel that not only encompasses the shared theme of mankind’s dual nature but also both pieces’ fable-like character unfolding inside an unreal world. The influential theatre critic, Frederik Schyberg, characterized *Cirkus Juris* with words that just as aptly could have been applied two years later to *De syv Dødssynder*: ‘... it does have, within Danish theatre’s solid block of traditionalism, its interest and its significance as an experiment in dissolution’; *Berlingske Tidende*, 9 Febr. 1935. Already on 16 Oct. 1936, *Socialdemokraten* had published a full article by Otto Gelsted about Bertolt Brecht, in connection with the impending production of *Dødssynderne*.

mentioned, being *Rundboder og Spidshoder*). As something altogether untypical for these kinds of advance notices, the coverage focuses on Svend Johansen's elegant decorations with the stationary backdrop of skyscrapers in front of which changing set pieces mark out the individual scenes. Taken together, these scenographic decorations can safely be said not only to constitute one of the high points in Svend Johansen's own output but also one of the culminating achievements in theatrical history of that time. The style embodied in these decorations – much like the style of the whole production – was influenced, to some extent, by Kjeld Abell's ballet from 1934, *Enken i Spejlet* (The Widow in the Mirror), with music by Bernhard Christensen – an observation that is also mentioned in one of the reviews. As far as the work's essential idea and content, some writers struck up an expectant and wondering attitude:

From what can be judged [i.e. upon consideration of the list of the Seven Deadly Sins], it appears that there will be quite a few acerbic and dark premonitions being articulated in this ballet pantomime (*Politiken*, 6 November 1936); Anna is an American danseuse who has to move her way through the sins before she can attain success (*Børsen*, 6 November 1936).

The premiere took place on 12 November, 1936, staged in the form of ballet master Harald Lander's direction and choreography and performed under the musical direction of Johan Hye-Knudsen – and, as has been mentioned, sharing the bill with August Enna's nearly 40-year old Hans Christian Andersen opera, *Den lille Pige med Svovlstikkerne*. Appearing in the role of the singing Anna was the young actress, Illona Wieselmann (already known to the theatre public for her interpretation of Esther in Henri Nathansen's *Indenfor Murene* (Within the Walls) but not reputed to be a particularly strong singer), while Margot Lander performed the dancing Anna's part. As has been mentioned, the scenographer Svend Johansen was responsible for the decorations. The reviews that appeared in the dailies after the premiere were indeed very mixed but the one-sided picture of a unanimous rejection of the piece, which has been proliferated in the judgment of posterity, is simply not correct; as a matter of fact, the criticism covers the full spectrum, ranging from total deprecation to wholehearted approval and enthusiasm. A modest sampling of the many and in-depth reviews that appeared after the premiere will illustrate this:

... very picturesque and often absolutely beautiful music in a jazz-sounding attire, as well as ... splendid execution. ... It appeared that the ballet caught the interest of the whole crowd of spectators. (*Børsen*, 13 November)

As far as the text is concerned, 'De syv Dødsynder' has nothing to do with art but a lot to do with communist propaganda. Leaving Kurt Weill's music aside, the pantomime is a masked propaganda stunt without any spirit or wit. (*Nationaltidende*, 13 November)

The satire sometimes seems to be strained and artificial. The librettist moves his way into peculiar serpentine paths, but he has superb helpers, first and foremost in the

composer and next in the theatre's formidable apparatus, directed by Harald Lander. ... modern stylization that trumps anything that has ever been seen before. ... as far as the manipulation of the projector goes, The Royal Theatre is soon going to be the leading venue among Europe's stages. ... This is a *tour de force*, an experiment, which will be called 'dangerous' by some and will be called a magnificent explosion by others. (*Politiken*, 13 November)

The choir was stationed down in the orchestra pit – and the next outburst may well be that the Royal Theatre Orchestra's musicians will be moved up underneath the chandelier and that the actors will be walking on their hands. (*Socialdemokraten*, 13 November)

As was the case with 'Katerina' [Shostakovich's *Katerina Ismailova*], The Royal Theatre is once again making a contribution that is remarkable, whatever one's objections to 'Dødssynderne' as a work of art might be. (Otto Mortensen in *Arbejderbladet*, 13 November)

The most vehemently bombastic tirade was spewed forth by an anonymous reviewer in the *Berlingske Aftenavis*. Under the headline 'Ballet Fiasco at The Royal [Theatre]', we can read these few excerpts:

Only a ROYAL of, if you prefer, a NATIONAL THEATRE possesses the naïveté necessary for presenting this kind of lampoon for its regular patrons, who generally reside in villas and generally eat their fill. ... When the curtain fell, the response on the part of the public can be described as follows: a grand total of one solitary person clapping; a grand total of one lone whistler; and the rest – sleeping peacefully! ... A performance that serves up old-fashioned Danish culture as the main course and symbolism for the mentally retarded as dessert does not belong on Kongens Nytorv!²³ (*Berlingske Aftenavis*, 13 November)

The Royal Theatre's own choice of genre designation (*pantomime*) induced *Berlingske Tidende's* reviewer to offer a few penetrating and critical reflections on the future of modern ballet, taking a point of departure in the daring experiment with precisely this staging, which is juxtaposed, in the review, with Kjeld Abell's *Enken i Spejlet*. After having ascertained this connection between the two productions, the reviewer (writing under the signature, 'S') continues:

The genre is an attempt at making a renewal of ballet as a branch of art; what is interesting, though, is that modern ballet-goers, who have heretofore reacted so fiercely, for example, to all the narrative aspects in the Bournonville ballets are now being faced with modern ballets – where everything is narrative. ... The next step is going to be that ballet will nullify itself as a branch of art ... We are balancing on the fringe of this branch of art. But in 'De syv Dødssynder', as in 'Enken i Spejlet', the balance is maintained. After all, it appears that *theatre* has emerged from the experiments: a very extraordinary and intransigent yet living modern theatre. ... There is really a renewal that dwells in a ballet like 'De syv Dødssynder'; – that Harald Lander has so daringly applied himself to the way of working deserves a great deal of recognition and the results he has achieved deserve its just rewards with a genuinely sympathetic backing from the interested public. (*Berlingske Tidende*, 13 November)

23 Location of The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen then and today.

Viewpoints like these – albeit with a much less nuanced form of expression – subsequently gained resonance in the international ballet literature. The relatively brief mention of Harald Lander's *Dødssynderne* that appears in Cyril W. Beaumont's ballet lexicon from 1955 is positioned as an extension of a discussion about the expressionistic style in the two ballets mentioned above:

Although this expressionist style was opposed to the tradition of academic ballet, as a ballet, it offered no unusual contrast, theatrically considered, to the older Bournonville ballet-drama; it was the nature of the theme and not its form that evoked discussion.²⁴

The daily newspapers' reception does not appear to corroborate this assumption.

In a special section, *Nationaltidende* printed an in-depth discussion about the music, written by the university's professor in musicology, Erik Abrahamsen. Here, we can read:

This time around, Kurt Weill is really just – Kurt Weill again. It is the tone from the other pieces [*The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*], now moved over into new surroundings, without advance, without energy. ... and what is more, Weill himself falls every now and then into one of the very worst mortal sins: tediousness ... A few of Anna's songs will probably be plugged as *Schlagers* and will presumably be sold in numerous copies in shops dispensing sheet music and record stores. But before a month has passed, people will get sick and tired of them. (*Nationaltidende*, 13 November)

In his prophecy about the work's future reception, the professor was wrong here! Such a thing *can* happen. By contrast, Axel Kjærulf's comments, printed in *Politiken*, were more nuanced:

As long as Weill complies with the scenic tableaux, his work is admirable, young, new and fresh. But one can hardly be as enthusiastic about the idea of letting one of the Annas, the representative of reason, sing everything that is happening in a kind of recitative style. It is – musically speaking – low-grade and insufferable jazz affectation, which has gradually degenerated into a commonplace and insipid jargon. (*Politiken*, 13 November)

Meanwhile, *Ekstrabladet's* Christen Friberg expressed his unmitigated enthusiasm:

But what would it be altogether without Kurt Weill's music? With such mysterious skill, you see, has this gifted composer understood how to paint time in music! Seemingly, so very atonal and jazz-tinged but nonetheless so sincerely melodic and saturated with timbres and sounds. (*Ekstrabladet*, 13 November)

24 Cyril W. Beaumont, *Ballets Past and Present: Being a Third Supplement to the Complete Book of Ballets* (London, 1955), 75. Ballet scholar Knud Arne Jürgensen has most amicably pointed out that Beaumont's formulation is, in all likelihood, a simplified condensation of a passage on p. 126 in Allan Fridericia's *Harald Lander og hans Balletter* (Copenhagen, 1951); Lander and Beaumont were friends and were connected to each other, professionally.



Ill. 3. The sisters' family, to whom they send back the money they earn during their tour so that they can build a small house in Louisiana (Photo: Holger Damgaards Teaterfotos, The Royal Library, Copenhagen).



Ill. 4. Street scene from the 7th tableau, with Illona Wieselmann and Margot Lander as, respectively, Anna 1 and Anna 2 in the foreground and an unknown number of Annas in the rear (Photo: Holger Damgaards Teaterfotos, The Royal Library, Copenhagen).

In summary, it can be ascertained that the premiere certainly aroused a considerable degree of interest in the Copenhagen press and that opinions, as has been made evident, were sharply divided: predictable dismissals of Brecht as a communist, a lack of understanding for what the piece signifies and also contemptuous deprecation of Weill's music as a carbon copy of the *song* style from *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny* stand side by side with acknowledgements of the theatre's courage to tread new pathways, praise of Svend Johansen's scenic decorations and Lander's staging, as well as a sense of openness about the exceptional quality of expression in Weill's music. Thus it appeared that the stage was set for a run that would extend for a number of performances that could offer a wider public the opportunity to judge for themselves.

As fate would have it, things did not pan out in this way. The second performance, presented on the day after the premiere – and, like the premiere, before a sold-out house²⁵ – unfolded without any problems, even though some of the newspapers emphasized that the audience did appear to be responding rather apathetically to the performance. However, after this second performance, the show was taken off the bill without any advance warning and the production was not resumed again – and all this despite the great deal of preparation that had been put into the production and the long sequence of rehearsals preceding the opening night. The post-war era's explanation for all this, which is recapitulated in one account after the other is that

25 According to The Royal Theatre's *Journal* for Friday, 13 Nov. 1936.

the theatre manager was supposedly subjected to some kind of pressure from either the Danish royal house or from the German ambassador in Denmark, with reference to the ballet's anti-Nazi content. This hypothesis will be elaborated further and rendered thematic in the following section.

ANDREAS MØLLER, THE NAZIS, THE FATE OF THE PERFORMANCE

The story that it was an intervention from the German quarter that stopped the production of *De syv Dødsyndere* after only two performances has laconically been expressed many places in the literature. However, there is no place that this part of the saga has been convincingly documented or further qualified. The main source of the 'story' is supposedly Harald Lander's memoirs from 1951.²⁶ Here, Lander mentions the ballet as being one of his very best works and calls it, on the one hand, an 'artistic peak' in his collaboration with Svend Johansen and, on the other hand, 'a resounding fiasco'. About the alleged German intervention, Landers has this to say:

From the German embassy, an unofficial protest against the ballet was directed to the [Danish] Foreign Ministry. Unfortunately, I have never managed to have the form in which this transpired explained to me. After the war was over, I made an inquiry 'on the highest rung of the ladder', but even though people could remember very well that there had been 'something', it was utterly impossible to find anything more out about this 'something'. Maybe people just weren't all that interested, either, in pulling up the roots of this matter.²⁷

The same rumours are also vented in the first major biography about Lander, which was written by Allan Fridericia and was published the same year as were Lander's memoirs – both books appearing at a time, furthermore, when the public outcry about Lander's personal exploits was at its most volatile point.²⁸ After having offered an account of the press's smear campaign against the ballet, which was fuelled by the work's alleged 'communistic' leanings, Fridericia adds this brief comment:

Rumours have been circulating that the German legation made a request to the foreign ministry to have the ballet closed down. Closed down it was, in any event.²⁹

In this connection, Fridericia stresses that resistance to the production was grounded in 'the communistic Brecht and the Jewish Kurt Weill – not [in] the artistic style that the work had come to acquire, even though it broke away from classical ballet in many ways'.³⁰ In point of fact, the latter circumstance – i.e. the ballet's expressionistic style and its plot-characterized content – ought to have felt less foreign to a Danish ballet public, according to Fridericia, than it would have felt to ballet-

26 Harald Lander, *Thi kendes for ret –? Erindringer* (Copenhagen, 1951), 58.

27 Ibid. 59.

28 It was in this connection that Lander was compelled to relinquish his position as ballet master after having served for nineteen years at The Royal Theatre.

29 Allan Fridericia, *Harald Lander og hans Balletter* (Copenhagen, 1951), 125.

30 Ibid.

goers in so many other places in the world, as a direct consequence of Denmark's Bournonville-tradition, which – albeit in an very different way – placed an emphasis on the mimic element.

The most recent Lander biography, which appeared in 2005, is somewhat more circumspect. In a caption to a photograph of the performance in 1936, it says, laconically: 'The Royal Theatre got scared of its own audacity. Or was it the Germans that intervened?'³¹ Later on, in the biography's main text, Aschengreen writes that it was the theatre manager who had confirmed the Germans' intervention but that he also forbade Harald Lander from pursuing the matter further. In a footnote, Aschengreen offers an account of his own vain attempts, through examining documents at various archives, to either confirm or deny the story about the German interference.³² Neither did my own investigations made at The Danish National Archives, where I was able to examine the theatre manager's personal files in the summer of 2007, unveil any kind of documentation pertinent to these circumstances.³³

The story that the Danish king might also have been implicated apparently stems from Ruth Berlau who, in her memoirs, claims that the king (King Christian X) left his loge inside the theatre in a fit of protest against the performance, uttering the words: 'No, this is not what the illustrious Danish Royal Ballet was intended for'.³⁴ About this, it can only be remarked that not even one of the many reviews makes any mention that the Danish king was present at the premiere, let alone that he would have stood up and stormed out from the show. When we consider how much attention is concentrated whenever there happens to be royalty in the house at The Royal Theatre, it seems unthinkable that such an event could have transpired without the press catching sight of it.

Both explanations about the affair – German intervention and royal indignation – have been reproduced in virtually all the Danish and foreign accounts of the piece's fate in Copenhagen in 1936.³⁵ However, there is nothing in either the sources or in

31 Erik Aschengreen, *Mester. Historien om Harald Lander* (Copenhagen, 2005), 75; an English transl. has been published as *Harald Lander. His Life and Ballets* (Alton, 2009).

32 Aschengreen, *Mester*, 454.

33 The only document in theatre manager Andreas Møller's official archives that has to do with *De syv Dødsynder* is one item of correspondence, dating from the summer of 1937, with Skandinavisk Film- og Teaterforlag (Scandinavian Film- and Theatre-Publishers) touching upon Brecht's request to be paid a commission based on the box-office receipts (Rigsarkivet, *Det kgl. Teater. Teaterchef Andreas Møller. 1931-1938. Embedsarkiv. Kasse 1143*). Nor has the closed section of Andreas Møller's archives, to which I was granted right of access after having made a formal request, proved to contain any relevant material. Erik Aschengreen has amicably informed that neither his review of the full gamut of Lander's archive at The Royal Library nor other investigations that he conducted at a number of other archives before his book was published in 2005 yielded any results that could shed any light on this question.

34 Hans Bunge (ed.), *Brechts Lai-Tu. Erindringer af Ruth Berlau* (Copenhagen, 1985), 87.

35 Among the countless examples, I can mention the few accounts appearing in Ronald Haymann, *Brecht, A Biography* (London, 1983), 198; Bertolt Brecht, *Ausgewählte Werke in sechs Bänden. Jubiläumsausgabe zum 100. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997), vol. 1, 678; Marianne Kesting, *Bertolt Brecht in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Rowolt Monographien, 37; 1970); Drew, *Kurt Weill. A Handbook*, 247.

the day's newspapers that serves to give credence to either story. More correctly, the affair has its roots in two entirely different circumstances: the one being altogether tangible, namely Illona Wiesemann's calling in sick after the second performance, where she appeared with 'feverish heat burning on her cheeks';³⁶ and the other being more diffuse as a kind of self-censorship emanating from theatre director Andreas Møller in the wake of the general criticism levelled at parts of the theatre's repertoire in November 1936.³⁷

The criticism came from several different quarters. From the press's corner, the *Nationaltidende* led the charge. Full-page wide headlines like 'The Royal National Scene – an Experimental Bolshevik Theatre', 'Opinions are not tolerated on Kongens Nytorv unless the opinions agree with the salon-communistic propaganda line' and 'The red front on Kongens Nytorv is teetering' make their point in a very clear way.³⁸ On top of this, additional reinforcements from the ecclesiastical brigade turned up the following week in the form of an assault on the theatre launched by archdeacon Fog-Petersen at a clerical meeting in Odense that was covered exhaustively in the press. The tone in the archdeacon's attack calls to mind certain aspects of the cultural debate in today's Denmark.³⁹ Listen to what it says in *Nationaltidende's* summary of an excerpt of the speech:

And a few days after [the performance of *Katerina Ismailova*], a pantomime is performed, which has been written by a German communist who is making use of his right to seek asylum here in Denmark in order to agitate on behalf of communism: an agitation that is tinged by dubiousness and cunning. This is an attack on and a ridiculing of the church and of Christianity on our national stage and it is being paid for by Danish taxpayers. ... Luther did not shrink from battle and we must not do so, either.⁴⁰

The latter assault brought about a brief reply in the form of an open letter from the theatre manager and the conflict heaved back and forth in this fashion for the rest of November, after which it appears to have subsided, although we can see that on 16 December, *Ekstrabladet* makes one last low-voiced attempt at resuscitating the hub-bub with an open letter set in large type, penned by Gudmund Roger-Henrichsen, which appears under the headline 'SEASON'S GREETINGS TO THE THEATRE

36 Press release, which simultaneously informs that the part cannot be performed by an understudy, reproduced in most of the Copenhagen newspapers on 17 Nov. 1936. Furthermore, *Ekstrabladet* announces on the following day that the production will be presented again in the new year, seeing as 'the theatre is said to have been assailed with requests to program the work from both season ticketholders and non-subscribers'.

37 The theatre manager's and the theatre's balancing act in relation to Nazi Germany have been described in detail in Hans Bay-Petersen, *En selskabelig invitation. Det Kongelige Teaters gæstespil i Nazi-Tyskland i 1930'erne* (Copenhagen, 2003).

38 *Nationaltidende*, 15, 22, and 29 Nov. 1936.

39 Elsewhere, mention is made of Brecht in this fashion: 'a communistic homeowner like Mr Brecht, who has taken asylum here in our country' and Svend Johansen is mentioned in this way: 'Svend Johansen, a Bolshevik, who frequents both Restaurant Nimb and the villas of the millionaires'; *Nationaltidende*, 15 Nov. 1936.

40 *Nationaltidende*, 26 Nov. 1936.

MANAGER. Let “De syv Dødsynder” come up again!’ After this, it seems that the peace of Christmas time descended on Kongens Nytorv.

In the theatre magazine, *Forum*, theatre manager Andreas Møller summarized the whole dilemma around the national scene in more general terms – again, in such a way that calls today’s current culture debate to mind:

If The Royal Theatre produces a piece by Nordahl Grieg, then it is orthodoxly communistic; if we put on the old play ‘Everybody’, then the angriest reaction is enthroned. When we have a month filled with new things, then we are neglecting our obligation to the established legacy that has been handed down from generation to generation. And when we, for one time’s sake, focus particularly on the classical or even the ‘standard repertoire’, then we are utterly deficient in showing any interest for what is new in our day. The Royal Theatre’s repertoire has to be viewed in a more long-term perspective.⁴¹

Because the debate about *Dødsynderne* was raised in such a way that it came to encompass The Royal Theatre as a whole, this was due especially to the fact that just a few weeks earlier, a similar debate was taking place about the theatre’s staging of Shostakovich’s opera, *Katerina Ismailova* (with the original title, *Lady Macbeth fra Mzensk-Distriktet* (Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District)). With resounding success, the opera had premiered in Leningrad and Moscow only two years before, with numerous performances. Before being presented in Copenhagen, it had also been mounted in Stockholm – albeit without arousing much enthusiasm. In Copenhagen, however, the opera made quite a splash with the public even though certain critics bridled over its fundamentally ‘politically correct’ (i.e. communistic) stance. What is paradoxical about the latter critique is, of course, that the production on Kongens Nytorv was presented less than nine months after the famous article in *Pravda* (presumably written on behalf of The Supreme Soviet and maybe even by Stalin himself) that stigmatized Shostakovich, in no uncertain terms, as a foe of the system and, in any event, warned him against moving any further along the trail he previously had been treading.⁴²

After the second performance of *Katerina Ismailova* at The Royal Theatre, the cigar-maker, Paul Wulff, and his wife wrote an open letter to the theatre manager where, in turns of speech that would come to evoke reminiscences, later on, of the Rindalism from the 1960s, Wulff protested that young people, in particular, could be endangered when they were presented with something like this on Denmark’s national stage. It was especially the ‘raw’ sexual scenes to which the cigar-maker took exception. This resulted in a protracted newspaper debate around the topic – much like the debate about Weill’s piece a few weeks later – where the lines were drawn in a very emphatic way. Also a number of rather amusing items concerning the matter turned up.⁴³

41 *Forum*, Nov. 1936, quot. Bay-Petersen, *En selskabelig invitation*, 8.

42 The article with the headline ‘Chaos instead of music’ could be read in *Pravda*, 28 Jan. 1936.

43 For example, on 13 Oct. 1936, *Ekstrabladet* printed a cartoon of an affluent married couple who are leaving the Royal Theatre after a performance of the opera – *he* with a huge cigar in his mouth, *she* with an expensive fur coat. The caption reads: ‘Art critics at Kongens Nytorv. / She: The cigar-maker is correct. That was an awful scene. / He: Yes, but she was a good little cigar, anyway!’

The debate that was carried on in the newspapers gave rise to rumours about demonstrations going on in front of the theatre but it also entailed that a number of subsequent performances were sold out – something which was unheard of before the debate! As we have noted, the debate about *Katerina Ismailova* came to bear an influence – albeit indirectly – on the calamitous fate that befell Weill's *Dødssynder*. In contrast to Weill's work, however, Shostakovich's opera was allowed to continue in the repertoire where, after fifteen performances, it was taken off the bill the following season.

CONCLUSION

The present reception-historical examination of the two performances of *Die sieben Todsünden* in Copenhagen in 1936 constitutes an attempt to map out, as far as the sources render it possible to do so, the circumstances behind the performances and the cultural and political climate surrounding The Royal Theatre that fashion the backdrop. Although the aim here has not been to debunk entirely the oft-repeated assertion that the production's ill-starred fate can be linked up with pressure from the German quarter, a question mark behind the validity of this hypothesis is introduced. Phenomena like 'public opinion', smear campaigns in the daily press and self-criticism in conjunction with an oddly incidental sick-leave sought by and granted to one of the key players in the show appear instead to have been the factors behind the cancellation of the show's run – more than any intervention from the German or from the Danish royal house; no such intervention, in any event, has been documented in any one of the contemporary sources. Such a conclusion might have some relevance to bear – provided that it is correct – because, in that event, it refutes virtually all previous accounts of this little corner of the Weill-reception in Denmark. We could move further and start to talk about narrow-mindedness and provincialism in the face of the foreign and the unknown – but this would fall outside the compass of the present exposition.

SUMMARY

Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* to a text by Bertolt Brecht from 1933 marks the end of the stormy collaboration during the six previous years between the two artists. The work was only performed a few times during Weill's lifetime, and among these the performance at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen in November 1936 was the one that was given most public attention. Both before and after the performance, the Copenhagen press focused intensively on the work, partly because of its political contents, partly because it was not possible to pigeonhole the work in any of the well known musical and dramatic genres. To this should be added the myth that German interference was the reason why the work was only given two performances in Copenhagen. The article is based on sources in The Royal Theatre and The State Archives in Copenhagen, supplemented with contemporary newspapers.

APPENDIX 1: SOURCES

In the following, a brief overview of the source material is presented for purposes of casting light on the circumstances surrounding the present reception case.

There is a plentiful supply of press material that is quoted herein from The Royal Theatre's scrapbook covering the period 1 May, 1936 – 23 January, 1937. At that time, the theatre's scrapbook was maintained so conscientiously that there are hardly any daily newspaper notices or reviews that were not pasted into its pages. When it comes to the censorship's declaration, we face a somewhat odd kind of situation. Ordinarily, in connection with any piece submitted to The Royal Theatre for consideration, there is a handwritten evaluation ('censur') with an assessment of the piece in question as well as an indication of whether or not it has been accepted for being included in the theatre's repertoire. In the evaluation for *Dødssynderne*, which was apparently drawn up after the premiere, we read this laconic entry: 'Accepted and played. No evaluation'.⁴⁴

The *stage manager's register* contains scrupulously entered specifications of the set pieces' disposition in each of the seven tableaux (in the 7th scene, even a 'set-piece from *Elverhøj*' (Elves' Hill) was employed!) and the register also contains photographs of the stationary skyscraper-set piece as well as details from the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th scene-tableaus.

The journal, which could be said to be the theatre's diary, with entries made for each and every rehearsal and each and every performance, indicates that the performance was sold out on both 12 and 13 November. Furthermore, the complete casting is specified and there is a special mention about the second performance that Enna's opera was received with applause that increased in intensity 'when the public noticed the composer in the stalls'. Nothing at all is noted about the reception of *Dødssynderne*. Finally, the journal also documents that Illona Wieselmann called in sick from Saturday, 14 November and was reported fit for standing on stage again on Wednesday, 18 November, as has been mentioned above.

The *stage management register* lists the complete cast, both for the two performances in 1936 and for the twenty-five performances presented in the 1969/70 season.

Finally, the *theatre's photographic archives* contain a good many photographs of people and decorations.

There are also parts of the performance material from 1936 that have been preserved, consisting of the full score and a few of the individual parts (fl.2, cl.2, cor.2, tr.2);⁴⁵ what we have is a professionally made copy with the marginal note, 'Transcribed from the original score on 4–12 January, 1936' (Afskrevet efter Originalpartituret 4–12 Jan 1936). The Danish text, in Otto Gelsted's translation, has been inscribed with blue-coloured crayon and there is no German text appearing on the pages of the score. What is not indicated is: who it was that executed the copies; who it was that procured the original score; and what became of the rest of the parts.⁴⁶

44 The Royal Theatre, [Evaluation] 1935–36, No. 81 1935/36.

45 The Royal Theatre's Music Archives, 998: *De syv Dødssynder. Partitur*.

46 The original performance material is registered by Drew, Kurt Weill. *A Handbook*, 245 ('Full Score').

The text exists in two versions which, first of all, deviate from one another with respect to the stage manager's comments and also deviate to some extent from the full score in the division of the scenes: as a mimeographed *ballet libretto* (15 pages) bearing the title 'Ballet in seven tableaux with prologue and epilogue' and as a type-written *manuscript* (26 pages) consisting of seven tableaux and a finale:

- 1st scene: 'Park with bench'
- 2nd scene: 'Night café with ceiling lamp and scene'
- 3rd scene: 'Film studio'
- 4th scene: 'The diva's room. Balance, dining table'
- 5th scene: 'Street scene. Sidewalk café'
- 6th scene: 'Street scene. Newsstand. Poster pillar'
- 7th scene: 'Street scene. Many Annas'
- Finale: 'Louisiana. The house in the background. The river. Moonlight'
- 'Notice boards on the stage. The family'

Unfortunately, what is presumably a very important portion of the source material has not been made available in connection with the present study. This involves a number of letters between Weill, Edward James, Skandinavisk Teaterforlag (Scandinavian Theatre Publishers) and other parties related to the performance in Copenhagen, all of which are presently in possession of The West Dean Estate in England, which was owned from 1912 by Edward James, who originally approached Weill and Brecht in 1933, in Paris, and asked the two collaborators to create *Die sieben Todsünden*. A request to review this material submitted by the author to The West Dean Estate has not yet received a response and there is no information about their documents on the Internet. The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in New York, which previously enjoyed access to these documents, has kindly informed that this body of correspondence touches upon the permission to mount the performance, upon efforts to get Weill to send the score to Copenhagen so that it could be copied out, upon certain controversies arising as a result of Brecht's attempts to obstruct the show (albeit at a time when it was already removed from the programme) and so on and so forth, but that nothing is revealed here concerning the reasons why the show was discontinued after the second performance.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ According to an e-mail sent to the author from Dr Dave Stein, former archivist at the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in New York. Later, extracts from the correspondence have been published in *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, 29/1 (Spring 2011), 7.

APPENDIX 2: VOCAL REGISTER

Upon Kurt Weill's death in 1950, Lotte Lenya took upon her shoulders the life mission of widening people's familiarity with her late husband's music, both in Europe and in the United States. On account of her energy, her artistic calibre and her role as Weill's life mate and collaborator, with all its ups and downs, in the course of all the years after 1926, her interpretation actually took on an almost canonical, school-generating status. It was not until after Lenya's death in 1981 that younger Weill singers dared to come forth with other bids on a Weill-interpretation.

However, what was conjoined with Lenya's admirable efforts dedicated to the spreading of Weill's music and the establishment of a special 'Weill style' was a specific problem that came to make a marked impact on the Weill-reception in the decades after 1950: the music had to be adapted to Lenya's voice and interpretive capabilities, and not the other way around. In order to illuminate this, we will cite three examples:

The famous 'Seeräuberjenny' (Pirate Jenny) song in *Dreigroschenoper* from Brecht's hand was intended for the innocent Polly. For a fleeting moment, in a dream, she experiences – like a play within the play – a sense of unbounded power that fortifies her with the possibility of chopping off the heads of all of her exploiters and joining up with the pirates who have arrived in the harbour. In Polly's mouth, this song appears in all its mortal danger before the spectators sitting in the theatre (read: the bourgeoisie). But when Lenya, after some years had elapsed, could no longer sing and play the role of the very young Polly – but still wanted to hold onto this bravura showstopper – the song was excised from Polly's part and transferred to the low-dive and cast-off madam Jenny, who was now being played by Lenya. While when sung in Polly's mouth, the piece is an ingeniously dramatic and political *memento* in the opera, it becomes altogether trivial in Jenny's mouth – and is reduced to nothing more than a 'number'.⁴⁸

The second example has to do with the opera, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Also here, Lenya acquired, and very early on, a kind of 'monopoly' on the role of the main female protagonist, Jenny. Due to the fact that, as the years rolled by, Lenya's voice could not tackle the high notes with finesse, certain hits like 'Denn wie man sich bettet' (As You Make Your Bed) and 'Alabama-Song' had to be transposed down, respectively, a perfect fourth and a perfect fifth: such a change obviously has an impact on the timbral picture. It knocks everything out of joint and makes matters utterly intolerable when Jenny's part is transposed down an octave in her duet with the tenor, with the result that a voice that was originally an upper part appears as the lower voice.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ On a good many CD-recordings of *Dreigroschenoper*, the song is presented twice: that is, it is sung first by Polly and later by Jenny – and thus the de-politicization has been carried off in a thorough way!

⁴⁹ This problem has been illuminated further in Krabbe, 'Mahagonny hos Brecht og Weill', esp. 108–10.

Something analogous can be spotted in the third example, *Die sieben Todsünden*. Also here, Lenya's part had to be transposed down a perfect fourth in relation to how it is notated in Weill's original score (this involves parts 1, 3, 6, 8, and 9) thus dislocating the sound picture as well as the work's overall tonal disposition.⁵⁰

This state of affairs is also reflected in the Danish source material for the performances of *Dødssynderne* at The Royal Theatre in, respectively, 1936 and 1969. The score from 1936, which is a copy of the original score, as has been mentioned, is not transposed. The material from 1969, on the other hand, which was used for the twenty-five performances on Kongens Nytorv during the 1969/70 season and also on the subsequent tour of the show, reproduces the aforementioned songs in the deeper transposed version.⁵¹

50 Lenya's transposed rendition is the basis in all the recordings of the work featuring her as the songstress, as well as in the piano score published by Edition Schott in 1960 (pl. no. 5078) which, complying with her request, reproduces the transposed version. Not until the edition from 1972 was the work restored to its original register and today, there is hardly anybody who would entertain the notion of performing *Die sieben Todsünden* in the transposed version.

51 From a perusal of the extant performance material from the tour, it comes to light that an adapted version of the original score for reduced ensemble was used, a version that was worked out by E. Lindorf-Larsen. The following instruments from the original version were omitted: fl.2, fg., tb. and banjo. In a pencilled-in note entered in the score, the arranger states: '*To whom it may concern:* I have not regarded it as my task to create a "new" instrumentation but rather the contrary: to retain, as far as it is possible to do so, the acoustic picture emanating from the original score. What this means to say, then, is that this [arrangement] is more of an adaptation of the original score than a genuine instrumentation'; The Royal Theatre's Music Archive.