

German Kabarett and Its Appropriation in Kurt Weill's "Seeräuber Jenny"

Rebecca Flore

ABSTRACT Kabarett, a short-lived countercultural movement in Germany, managed to leave a mark on the world of Western music despite its brief existence. Through simple musical structures and pointed lyrics, Kabarett music captured the attention of the German public from the 1900s to the 1930s. Following Kabarett's vogue, composers of "high art" genres such as lieder, opera, and musicals appropriated the Kabarett style into the realm of Western art music. In 1928, Kurt Weill utilized a Kabarett sound in his "play with music," *The Threepenny Opera*. This paper will analyze selected Kabarett pieces from early 20th Century Germany to establish the harmonic, textual, and formal components that constitute the basis of Kabarett style. These tenets of Kabarett style will then be compared and contrasted with Weill's "Seeräuber Jenny," an art piece influenced by the genre, in order to determine the extent of aesthetic borrowing or departure. Previous research on Kabarett has been limited mainly to its history and social implications; this writing will contribute to the academic discourse by examining Kabarett from a music analytical perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Kabarett, a short-lived countercultural movement in Germany, managed to leave a mark on the world of Western music despite its brief existence. Through simple musical structures and pointed lyrics, Kabarett music captured the attention of the German public from the 1900s to the 1930s. Following Kabarett's brief vogue with the German public, composers of "high art" genres such as lieder, opera, and musicals appropriated the Kabarett style into the realm of Western art music. In 1928, Kurt Weill utilized a Kabarett sound in his and Bertold Brecht's "play with music," *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

The music associated with Kabarett consisted of harmonically simple, strophic songs whose lyrics dealt with topical issues such as sex, fashion, and politics. The most important feature of Kabarett songs was the text, which usually satirized the state of early 20th Century German culture with witty jabs at the political and social environment of the period.

Weill, on the other hand, utilized compositional techniques incompatible with traditional Kabarett, including tonal frustrations, phrasing anomalies, and intricate harmonies which distract from the textual content. In this case, this "high art" piece represents a distortion of its "low art" Kabarett counterparts because while the lyricist Brecht does present the play as a whole as a veiled socialist critique of capitalism, Weill's sophisticated musical language makes *Die Dreigroschenoper* a social criticism for a specific market, the opera-goers, rather than for the "common man."

This writing represents a small piece of research in a larger subject that has not received much academic

attention. Very little analysis of Kabarett has been done in the field of music theory. I will analyze selected Kabarett pieces from early 20th Century Germany to establish the harmonic, textual, and formal components that form the basis of Kabarett style. Then I will contrast Weill's "Seeräuber Jenny," an art piece influenced by the genre, to the tenets of Kabarett style in order to determine the extent of aesthetic borrowing or departure from which it is derived.

ORIGINAL KABARETT

Background of the Kabarett Movement

While the terms *Cabaret* and *Kabarett* were used interchangeably up through the Weimar era, the German language now differentiates them. Cabaret is associated with strip shows, while Kabarett refers to social criticism and political satire¹. This research will focus on Kabarett from its inception in Germany in the 1900's to its decline during World War II.

In January of 1901, Bunttes Theater opened in Berlin. It became the first in a four-decade tradition which tried to marry high art with popular culture². A truly multimedia endeavor, Kabarett combined many genres, "usually songs, comic monologues, dialogues and skits, less frequently dances, pantomimes, puppet shows, or even short films."³ Kabarett was performed in various venues, from small stages with the audience seated at

1 Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.

2 Alan Lareau, "The German Cabaret Movement during the Weimar Republic," *Theatre Journal* 43.4 (1991): 471-90.

3 Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 2.

tables to large halls with row seating.⁴

The “common goal” of Kabarett music was “to bring the text alive and make it as powerful as possible by reflecting the political and social issues of the time.”⁵ Its subject matter dealt with a wide range of social topics, covering sex, fashion, cultural fads, and politics.⁶ In contrast to the highly-charged text, the music consisted of strophic pieces featuring simple rhythms and melodies, with little of the chromaticism so prevalent at the time in the world of art music.⁷

Through the first several decades of the early 20th Century, Kabarett remained a popular force in Germany, drawing inspiration from social upheaval brought on by the birth and collapse of the Weimar Republic. The movement began to deteriorate, however, with the rise of the Nazi party, as many Kabarett performers had been liberal, leftist, or Jewish.⁸ Brecht and Weill, likewise, fled Germany during this time period for similar reasons. By the end of the Second World War, Kabarett had all but disappeared because, as Lisa Appignansi observes, “the Third Reich’s repressive measures made it impossible for contemporary art, public satire, and publication of much literary work.”⁹ Despite its brief and relatively volatile history, Kabarett survived through its deep influence on popular culture.

The Kabarett Style

The music of the Kabarett carries with it a specific set of regularly utilized forms, harmonic textures, and lyrical content which define it and set it apart from art music. It should be noted however, that not all Kabarett songs possess these characteristics. Composers were not held to these standards, and in fact many did not. The musical generalizations below are simply notable commonalities that helped define the genre’s sound.

Kabarett music tends to fall into simple song forms. See Figure 1. Leo Fall’s “Und Meyer sieht mich freundlich an,” for example, consists of a two-measure introduction followed by six verses of text with the same music repeated underneath each verse. Excluding the introduction, the song exhibits strophic “A A’

4 Ibid.

5 Candice S. Burrows, “Cabaret: A Historical and Musical Perspective of a Struggling Era” (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010), 15.

6 Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret, 2.

7 Burrows, “Cabaret: A Historical and Musical Perspective of a Struggling Era,” 17.

8 Peter Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret, 228.

9 Lisa Appignansi, The Cabaret (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 205.

“Und Meyer sieht mich freundlich an”

Intro	: Verse	: Play six times
1	: 3	: 18 measures total

“Ah! Ca Ira, Dictum”

: Verse A	Verse B	: Play three times
: 1	9	: 28 measures total

“Die Dame von der alten Schule”

: Intro Verse	: Play three times
: 1 4	: 46 measures total

“Sex Appeal”

Intro	: Verse	Refrain	: Play three times
1	: 4	20	: 41 measures total

“Das Nachtgespenst”

Intro	: Verse	Refrain	: Play three times
1	: 3	27	: 61 measures

Figure 1. Form diagrams

A’...” form. Becourt’s “Ah! Ca Ira, Dictum” also adheres to strophic form, this time with only three verses. “Die Dame von der alten Schule,” a long piece composed by Rudolf Nelson, also contains three strophic verses. Friedrich Hollaender’s “Sex Appeal” and Nelson’s “Das Nachtgespenst”, two more examples of three-stanza strophic songs, both have two large sections per verse, an A verse and a B chorus, as well as a brief introduction.

Many Kabarett songs possess sudden tempo changes (Figure 2). “Die Minderwertigen” by Ralph Bermann possesses multiple sections marked *langsam* (*slowly*), in an otherwise quicker-paced song. The first, at measure 25, is accompanied by a change of meter from 2/4 to common time. The music regains its original speed at measure 31 before reverting to another *langsam* section at measure 35. Finally, the music returns to its original tempo and meter in measure 38. Ralph Benatsky’s “Ich kenne ein andres Berlin” begins in a *molto vivace* 6/8 time. The refrain, however, switches to cut time with a marking of *molto lento e con cuore*. Effectively, this means the song’s two tempos markings are in completely different speeds and meters. “Lied der Arbeitslosen (Stempellied)” by Kathe Hyan similarly contains abrupt changes in pulse. In this case, only the first and last four measures carry the marking *breit*. All

"Die Minderwertigen"				
2 Flottes tempo	4 Ziemlich langsam	Flottes im tempo	Flottes tempo	::
4 1	4 25	31	38	::
42 measures total				
"Ich kenne ein andres Berlin"				
6 Molto vivace		Molto lento e con cuore		::
8 1 Intro	5 Verse	34 Refrain		:: 58 measures total
"Lied der Arbeitslosen"				
3 Breit	::: Langsame halbe	::: Breit	:::	
4 1 Intro	::: 3 Verses 1-2	::: 33 Verse 3	56	::: 59 measures total

Figure 2. Tempo maps

three stanzas happen entirely in the tempo *langsame halbe*. While Kabarett songs do not appear to adhere to one specific form for tempo changes, changes in tempo are commonplace.

Harmonically, the bass often emphasizes scale degree 5 on weaker beats in a jump bass figuration. Strong beats often, but not always, emphasize scale degree 1, though at times they may emphasize any scale degree which fits in a chord with scale degree 5. See Figure 3. Claus Clausberg's "Bladdy Groth," which opens in the key of F# minor, emphasizes C# on the weaker beats most times tonic sounds in its opening section. Later, in the final section, the bass rhythm increases so that scale degree 5 is now emphasized on the upbeats. In the first eight measures of the verse of "Das Nachtgespenst," scale degree 5 of the key of C minor receives emphasis on beat 3 of this common time song, even when the chords change. The verse of "Ich kenne ein andres Berlin" emphasizes scale degree 5 on the second beat of tonic 6/8 measures and in the tonic chord of the first beat.

In a fair number of Kabarett songs, most harmonic motion focuses on the relationship of tonic to its pre-dominant as a way of vamping between two chordal functions (Figure 4). In "Und Meyer sieht mich freundlich an," tonic moves mostly to the predominant and back as a predominant expansion. In fact, the dominant occurs only twice in this song: once in the two-measure introduction, and once on the second beat of the first measure of the final phrase. Predominant ii is tonicized in measures 13-14 with a viio7/V7/ii to V7/ii progression that resolves to ii into the final phrase at measure 15, further signifying the importance of the tonic-pre-dominant relationship. "Bladdy Groth" emphasizes iio so much that it barely touches an incomplete V7 before cadencing to the tonic of F# minor. The dominant receives only half a beat in the harmonic rhythm while the predominant persists for nearly an entire measure.

"Bladdy Groth"

Gesang: Desio. Bladdy Groth war ein Mädchen von xar-um Ge-biet. Bladdy

Klavier: f#: i i⁶ i V

"Das Nachtgespenst"

GESANG: 3 4 5 6 7 8 Tum-po, Tum-po! Ci-ty-ty-pen chie-ben, schnau-fen im Ga-lopp. I

PIANO: c: i ii° iv i i V⁶ V⁶

"Ich kenne ein andres Berlin"

A: I I I I

Figure 3. Emphasis on scale degree 5

As shown in Figure 5, other songs focus on the harmonic relationship between tonic and dominant. One example of a Kabarett song that emphasizes the tonic to dominant relationship is Frank Wedekind's "Brigitte B." With the exception of two instances of V/V (one at measure 17 and one at measure 21), the entirety of the song is based on I-V7-I motion. "Det Scheenste sind die Beenekens" by Walter Kollo similarly focuses on the relationship of tonic to dominant. The verse moves between tonic and dominant roughly every two measures. The refrain focuses more on the dominant, but phrases resolve to tonic.

Kabarett songs tend to have one modulation at most. See Figure 6. The most common type of modulation is either from a minor key to its parallel major or from a major key to its parallel minor. Other types of modulations tend to be to closely related keys. In the

"Und Meyer sieht mich freundlich an"

Intro :: Verse :: 18 measures total

1 :: 3 9 12 13 14 15 16 ::

E: V⁷ :: I ii I⁶⁻⁴ viio⁷/V7/ii V⁷/ii ii V I ::

ii

"Bladdy Groth"

f#: i⁶⁻⁵ ii° V⁷ i

Figure 4. Tonic-predominant relationships

“Brigitte B.”

Verse

1 3 7 11 15 17 19 21 23 25 27 31

D: I V⁷ I V⁷ I V/V V V/V Y I V⁷ I

V

33 36 37 38 39 ||

V I V⁷ I V⁷ I ||

“Det Scheenste sind die Beenekens”

Intro | Verse

1 | 5 6 7 8 10 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 |

Bb: V | I V/V V I V vi I V/V V I I⁶ V V/V V |

V V V

Refrain | Instrumental

21 24 25 28 29 32 33 34 35 36 | 38 40

V I V I V I V/V/V V/V V I | V I

V

42 43 ||

V I ||

Figure 5. Tonic-dominant relationships

case of “Bladdy Groth,” the home key of F# minor is the relative minor of A, which is the dominant of the second key, D major. Also, many Kabarett songs do not modulate at all.

The music tends to fit with the rhyme scheme in Kabarett songs, with phrases and subphrases matching lines of text, which Figure 7 shows. Phrases and subphrases in the music tend to fall into even numbered groups. Hyan’s “Der Einbruch bei Tante Klara,” for example, has four-measure phrases, each of which end in a rhyme. “Die Minderwertigen” contains two-measure subphrases that complement the ABAB rhyme scheme. “Der Rauber-Hauptmann von Kopenick” by Otto Reutter has two two-measure subphrases followed by a four measure subphrase. The coinciding rhyme scheme is AAB. In each of these cases, the phrasing fits well with the rhyme scheme of the text.

Text takes foremost importance in the music of Kabarett. As Candace Burrows notes in her dissertation on the history and music of French and German cabaret, the effectiveness of a song in this genre depends on its literary content. The textual content takes such precedent that there is debate as to whether Kabarett is a musical or literary genre.¹⁰

- “Das Nachtgespenst”: C minor to C major
- “Bladdy Groth”: F# minor to D major
- “Die Kartenexe”: G major to G minor
- “Ach, wie mich das aufregt! (Die Kleptomanin)”: D minor to D major

Figure 6. Examples of Modulations

10 Burrows, “Cabaret: A Historical and Musical Perspective of a Struggling Era,” 17.

“Der Einbruch bei Tante Klara”

Phrase	Length in Measures	Rhyme Scheme
1	4	A
2	4	A
3	4	B
4	4	B

“Die Minderwertigen”

Subphrase	Length in Measures	Rhyme Scheme
1	2	A
2	2	B
3	2	A
4	2	B
5	2	C
6	2	D
7	2	C
8	2	D
9	2	E
10	2	E
11	2	F
12	2	F
13	2	G
14	2	G
15	2	G

“Der Rauber-Hauptmann von Kopenick”

Subphrase	Length in Measures	Rhyme Scheme
1	2	A
2	2	A
3	4	B
4	2	C
5	2	C
6	4	D
7	2	E
8	2	E
9	4	F

Figure 7. Phrases and subphrases matching rhyme schemes

Recording artist Ute Lemper released the album *Berlin Cabaret Songs* in 1996.¹¹ Featuring authentic works of Kabarett composers Mischa Spoliansky, Friedrich Hollaender, Rudolf Nelson, and Berthold Goldschmidt, each song is performed both in its original German and in a rough English translation. While the English translations are often not literal, they provide a fairly good overview of the lyrical content, which mainly focuses on social and political issues facing Germany during the time of pieces’ composition.

Spoliansky’s “Alles Schwindel” (“It’s All a Swindle”) provides a scathing indictment of both German culture and the German political structure (Figure 8). As the verses progress, the narrator’s accusations of fraud extend to his or her entire family, the economy, and politicians. The chorus proclaims, “Life’s a swindle. Yes, it’s all a swindle.”

Nelson’s “Mir ist heut so nach Tamerlan!” (“A Lit-

11 Berlin Cabaret Songs, performed by Ute Lemper, Decca Records, CD, 1996.

“Alles Schwindel”
Words by Marcellus Schiffer
Music by Mischa Spoliansky

Papa schwindelt,
Mama schwindelt,
tut sie auf bloß ihren Mund!
Tante Ottilie,
und die Familie
und sogar der kleine Hund!
Und besieht man's aus der Nähe:
Jedes Band und jede Ehe
jeder Kub in dem Betriebe
und sogar die grobe Liebe!
Und die ganze heut'ge Zeit ja,
sogar die Ehrlichkeit!
Alles Schwindel, alles schwindel,
überall wohin du guckst
und wohin du spuckst!
Alles ist heut ein Gesindel,
jedes Girl und jeder Boy,
's wird einem schlecht dabei!
's wird ein'm schwindlig von dem Schwindel,
alles, alles, alles Schwindel,
unberufen toi! toi! toi!
Kaufmann schwindelt
Käufer schwindelt,
mit dem höflichsten Gesicht!
Man schwebt in Ängsten,
nichts währt am Längsten,
also warum soll man nicht!
Jede freundliche Verbeugung,
jede feste Überzeugung,
Preisabbau, solide Preise,
ob zu Hause, auf der Reise!
Jeder Ausblick, wo es sei,
selbst für den, der schwindelfrei!
Alles Schwindel, alles Schwindel, usw.
Bürger schwindelt,
Staatsmann schwindelt,
Schwindel, was die Zeitung schreibt,
Moral und Sitte,
rechts, links und Mitte!
Ehrlich ist, was übrig bleibt!
Alles sucht sich zu betrügen,
na, sonst müßt'ich wirklich lügen!
Bins, das kann ich glatt beteuern:
Könn't den Schwindel man besteuern,
hätt' der Staat nicht Sorgen mehr,
denn dann wär' er Millionär!
Alles Schwindel, alles Schwindel, usw.

“It's All a Swindle”

Papa swindles
Mama swindles
Grandmama's a lying thief
We're perfectly shameless
but we're blameless
after all it's our belief
Nowadays the world is rotten
honesty has been forgotten
fall in love but after kissing --
check your purse to see what's missing
Everyone swindles some
my son's a mooch and so's the pooch
CHORUS: Life's a swindle, yes, it's all a swindle
so get what you can
from your fellow man
Girls and boys today
would rather steal than play
and we don't care
We tell them get your share
Life is short and greed's in season
all mankind has lost its reason
life is good, knock on wood, knock, knock
Shops will swindle shoppers swindle
every purchase hides a tale
The price is inflated
or regulated
to ensure the store will fail
Wheel and deal and pull a fast one
knowing you won't be the last one
get the goods while they are going
grab the cash while it is flowing
Everyone swindles some
what the heck go bounce a check
CHORUS
Politicians
are magicians
who make swindles disappear
The bribes they are taking
the deals they are making
never reach the public's ear
The left betrays, the right dismays
the country's broke and guess who pays
But tax each swindle in the making
profits will be record breaking
Everyone swindles some
so vote for who will steal for you
CHORUS

Figure 8. “Alles Schwindel” lyrics and translation. From Mischa Spoliansky, “Alles Schwindel” from Berlin Cabaret Songs, performed by Ute Lemper, Decca Records, CD, 1996.

tle Attila”) wryly longs for the leadership of a dictator (Figure 9). Written in 1922, it can be interpreted as a call for a more powerful government. When placed in historical context, the song was written during a period of hyperinflation. At the time, the German political system was a liberal democracy. The song's may be a

“Mir ist heut so nach Tamerlan!”
Words by Kurt Tucholsky
Music by Rudolf Nelson

Tamerland war Herzog der Kirgisen und jeder
Mensch in Asien wusste wohl das.
Tamerland ritt ueber gruene Wiesen und wo der
Junge einmal hintrat wuchs kein Gras.
Und alle Frauen lauschten angstvoll seinem Schritt
und fielen die Staedte, fielen die Maedchen alle mit.
Er war auch stets zu einem wilden Kampf bereit, das
war in Asien eine schoene Zeit.
Mir ist heut so nach Tamerland nach Tamerlan
zumut. Ein kleines bisschen Tamerland, ja Tamerland
waer gut.
Es waere ja, geniert mich das, geniert mich das,
gelacht. Ich glaube es passiert noch was, passiert
noch was heut nacht.
Mir ist heut so nach Tamerland nach Tamerlan
zumut. Ein kleines bisschen Tamerland ja Tamerland
waer gut.
Und sehe ich ins Publikum da liegt heut so ein
Fluidium.
Ach Mensch geh mir weg.
Es hat ja nur Zweck mit dem Tamerland.

“A Little Attila”
English translation by Inge Spiegel

Tamerland was the Duke of the Kirghizia,
famous throughout Asia.
Tamerland rode over green meadows
and where he stepped, grass no longer grew.
And all the women listened, fearful of his steps.
When the towns fell, the girls fell too.
He was always ready for a savage fight.
That meant a nice time in Asia.
I'm longing for Tamerland, for Tamerland.
A little bit of Tamerland, yes, Tamerland would be
good.
It could happen -- I'm embarrassed, I'm embarrassed,
I know it sounds ridiculous.
I believe something is going to happen tonight.
I'm longing for Tamerland, for Tamerland.
A little bit of Tamerland, yes, Tamerland would be
good.
And when I look into the audience,
there is definitely something in the air.
[to men in the audience] Stay away from me!
It only makes sense with Tamerland.

Figure 9. “Mir ist heut so nach Tamerlan!” lyrics and translation. Rudolf Nelson, “Mir ist heut so nach Tamerlan!” from Berlin Cabaret Songs, performed by Ute Lemper, Decca Records, CD, 1996.

“Raus mit den Männern!”
Words and music by Friedrich Hollaender

Es geht durch die ganze Historie
ein Ruf nach Emanzipation
vom Menschen bis zur Infusorie
überall will das Weib auf den Thron.
Vin Hawai-Neger bis zur Berliner Range
braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall daher:
Was die Männer können, können wir schon lange
und vielleicht 'ne ganze Ecke mehr.
Raus mit den Männern aus dem Reichstag,
und raus mit den Männern aus dem Landtag,
und raus mit den Männern aus dem Herrenhaus,
wir machen draus ein Frauenhaus!
Raus mit den Männern aus dem Dasein,
und raus mit den Männern aus dem Hiersein,
und raus mit den Männern aus dem Dortsein,
sie müßen schon längst fort sein.
Ja: raus mit den Männern aus dem Bau,
und rein in die Dinger mit der Frau!
Es liegen in der Wiege und brüllen
die zukünft'gen Männer ganz klein.
Die Amme, die Meistriin im Stillen,
flöt die Kraft ihnen schluckweise ein.

“Throw Out the Men!”

The battle for emancipation's been raging since
history began
Yes, feminists of every nation want to throw off the
chains made by man
Hula girls and housemaids and wives in Maribou
hear all our voices thunder in protest
Anything that men do women can do too
and more that that we women do it best
CHORUS: Throw all the men out of the Reichstag
and throw all the men out of the courthouse
Men are the problem with humanity
they're blinded by their vanity
Women have passively embraced them
when we could have easily outpaced them
Yes we should have long ago replaced them
or better yet erased them
If we haven't made our feelings clear
we women have had it up to here
As babies men all howl and bluster they cry through
the night and the day
perfecting the techniques they'll muster for the times
when they don't get their way
Nursie holds the monster and feeds him from her
breast
and baby is contented for a bit
But when he sees his nurse is trying to get some rest
the little man decides to have a fit
CHORUS
The men get their pick of professions they're
policemen or scholars or clerks
They get rich and acquire possessions like we wives
who keep house for these jerks
They're ruining the country while we mop up the
floor
They're flushing this whole nation down the drain
Sisters stand together, let's show these men the door
before they drive us totally insane
CHORUS

Figure 10. “Raus mit den Männern!” lyrics. Friedrich Hollaender, “Raus mit den Mannern!” from Berlin Cabaret Songs, performed by Ute Lemper, Decca Records, CD, 1996. and translation.

response to the weakness of the Weimar Republic.

Hollaender's “Raus mit den Männern” (“Throw out the Men”) advocates feminism (Figure 10). The song talks about a battle of the sexes which has been ongoing throughout history. The lyrics go on to lament the women's role as homemakers. The chorus suggests throwing men out of power in politics.

“Das Lila Lied” (“The Lavender Song”), another song by Spoliansky, takes jabs at homophobia and embraces gay rights (Figure 11). Sadly, the song, written in 1920, thirteen years before the Nazi party assumed power, predicts the atrocities of the Holocaust with the line “Round us all up, send us away. That's what you'd really like to do.”

The examples mentioned above provide a snapshot of lyrical content typically contained in the songs of Kabarett. The subject matter of each song deals either directly or satirically with topical issues relevant to Kabarett's early 20th Century metropolitan German audience. The lyrics are meant to come across as aggressively bold and biting. This intense, pointed, and subversive content summed up the social outlooks of Kabarett's consumers and set Kabarett apart from mainstream popular music of the period.

“Das Lila Lied”
Words by Kurt Schwabach
Music by Mischa Spoliansky

Was will man nur? Ist das Kultur,
da jeder Mensch verpöht ist,
der klug und gut, jedoch mit Blut
von eigner Art durchströmt ist,
da grade die Kategorie
vor dem Gesetz verbannt ist,
im Gefühl bei Lust und Spiel
und in der Art verwandt ist?
Und dennoch sind die meisten stolz,
da sie von andern Holz!
Wir sind nun einmal anders, als die andern,
die nur im Gleichschritt der Moral geliebt,
neugierig erst durch tausend Wunder wandern,
und für die's doch nur das Banale gibt.
Wir aber wissen nicht, wie das Gefühl ist,
denn wir sind alle andrer Welten Kind;
wir lieben nur die lila Nacht, die schwül ist,
wozu die Qual, uns die
Moral der andern aufzudrängen?
Wir, hört geshwind, sind wie wir sind,
selbst wollte man uns hängt,
den mitte man beweinen,
doch bald gebt acht, es wird über Nacht
auch unsre Sonne scheinen.
Dann haben wir das gleiche Recht erstritten,
wir leiden nicht mehr, sondern sind gelitten.

“The Lavender Song”

What makes them think they have the right to say
what God considers vice
What makes them think they have the right to keep us
out of Paradise
They make our lives hell here on Earth
poisoning us with guilt and shame
If we resist, prison awaits so our love dares not speak
its name
The crime is when love must hide
From now on we'll love with pride
We're not afraid to be queer and different
if that means hell -- well, hell we'll take the chance
they're all so straight, uptight, upright and rigid
they march in lockstep we prefer to dance
We see a world of romance and of pleasure
All they can see is sheer banality
Lavender nights are our greatest treasure
where we can be just who we want to be
Round us all up, send us away
that's what you'd really like to do
But we're too strong, proud, unafraid
in fact we almost pity you
You act from fear, why should that be
What is it that you are frightened of
The way that you dress
The way that we meet
The fact that you cannot destroy our love
We're going to win our rights
to lavender days and nights

Figure 11. “Das Lila Lied” lyrics and translation. Mischa Spoliansky, “Das Lila Lied” from Berlin Cabaret Songs, performed by Ute Lemper, Decca Records, CD, 1996

“SEERÄUBER JENNY”

History

Die Dreigroschenoper (*The Threepenny Opera*) opened at Berlin's Theater am Schiffbauerdamm on August 3 of 1928. The playbill classified the work as “a play with music in one prelude and 8 scenes.” Modeled after John Gay's ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera*, renowned dramatist Bertold Brecht penned the adaptation while composer Kurt Weill wrote the music.¹²

Die Dreigroschenoper, set in London in 1730, tells the tale of a business man, Johnathan Peachum, who discovers that his daughter Polly is romantically involved with notorious gang leader Mac the Knife. In Brecht's own narration for *Die Dreigroschenoper*, he describes the scene that sets up “Seeräuber Jenny”:

“...Mac is not happy with the work of his gang. It's the work of apprentices, not of grown men. To clear the air and liven things up a little, Polly volunteers to sing a song.”¹³

The song itself tells the story of a wash-girl at a hotel, who after enduring the abuse or indifference of customers, turns out to be the leader of a band of pirates and has her whole town massacred as revenge. The full text and translation is reprinted in Figure 12.

Analytical Comparison to Kabarett Style

In terms of lyrical content, “Seeräuber Jenny” differs from Kabarett style because it is part of a larger work, related to an overarching plot. Kabarett songs

12 Stephen Hinton, Kurt Weill: *the Threepenny Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14.

13 Hinton, Kurt Weill: *the Threepenny Opera*, 2.

Words by Bertolt Brecht
Music by Kurt Weill
English translation Hyde Flippo

1
Meine Herren, heute sehen Sie mich Gläser abwaschen
Und ich mache das Bett für jeden.
Und Sie geben mir einen Penny und ich bedanke mich schnell
Und Sie sehen meine Lumpen und dies lumpige Hotel!
Und Sie wissen nicht, mit wem Sie reden.
Und Sie wissen nicht, mit wem Sie reden.
Aber eines Abends wird ein Geschrei sein am Hafen
Und man fragt: Was ist das für ein Geschrei?
Und man wird mich lächeln sehen bei meinen Gläsern
Und man sagt: Was lächelt die dabei?
Und ein Schiff mit acht Segeln
Und mit fünfzig Kanonen
Wird liegen am Kai.

2
Man sagt: Geh, was ich deine Gläser, mein Kind
Und man reicht mir den Penny hin.
Und der Penny wird genommen, und das Bett wird gemacht!
(Es wird keine mehr drinschlafen in dieser Nacht)
Und sie wissen immer noch nicht, wer ich bin.
Und sie wissen immer noch nicht, wer ich bin.
Aber eines Abends wird ein Getös sein am Hafen
Und man fragt: Was ist das für ein Getös?
Und man wird mich stehen sehen hinterm Fenster
Und man sagt: Was lächelt die so böse?
Und das Schiff mit acht Segeln
Und mit fünfzig Kanonen
Wird beschossen die Stadt.

3
Meine Herren, da wird ihr Lachen aufhören
Denn die Mauern werden fallen hin
Und die Stadt wird gemacht dem Erdboden gleich.
Nur ein lumpiges Hotel wird verschont von dem Streich
Und man fragt: Wer wohnt Besonderer dann?
Und man fragt: Wer wohnt Besonderer dann?
Und in dieser Nacht wird ein Geschrei um das Hotel sein
Und man fragt: Warum wird das Hotel verschont?
Und man wird mich sehen treten aus der Tür am Morgen
Und man sagt: Die hat darin gewohnt?
Und das Schiff mit acht Segeln
Und mit fünfzig Kanonen
Wird beflaggen den Mast.

4
Und es werden kommen hundert gen Mittag an Land
Und werden in den Schatten treten
Und fangen einen jeglichen aus jeglicher Tür
Und legen ihn in Ketten und bringen vor mir
Und fragen: Welchen sollen wir töten?
Und an diesem Mittag wird es still sein am Hafen
Wenn man fragt, wer wohl sterben muss.
Und dann werden Sie mich sagen hören: Alle!
Und wenn dann der Kopf fällt, sag ich: Hoppla!
Und das Schiff mit acht Segeln
Und mit fünfzig Kanonen
Wird entschwinden mit mir.

1
Gentleman, today you see me washing glasses
And I make the beds for everyone.
And you give me a penny and I quickly thank you
And you see my rags and this shabby ["ragged"] hotel
And you don't know who you're talking to.
But one evening there'll be shouting at the harbor
And people will ask: What's all the shouting about?
And people will see me smiling while I do the glasses
And people will say: What's she got to smile about?
And a ship with eight sails
And with fifty cannons
Will lie at the waterfront

2
They say: Go clean your glasses, my child
And hand me the penny.
And the penny is accepted, and the bed is made!
(Nobody will sleep in it tonight.)
And they still don't know who I am.
But one evening there'll be a fuss at the harbor
And they'll ask: What's all the fuss?
And they'll see me standing behind the window
And they'll say: Why the devil smile?
And the ship with eight sails
And with fifty cannons
Will fire on the town.

3
Gentlemen, then your smile will disappear
'Cause the walls will come tumbling down
And the town will be flattened to the ground.
Only a shabby hotel will be spared from the attack
And they'll ask: Who's the special one living there?
And tonight there'll be shouting around the hotel
And they'll ask: Why was the hotel spared?
And they'll see me tap out the door in the morning
And they'll say: She was living there?
And the ship with eight sails
And with fifty cannons
Will fly flags from its masts.

4
And hundreds will come ashore around noon
And will step into the shadows
And will catch anyone in any door
And lay him in chains and bring him before me
And ask: Which ones should we kill?
And at that midday it will be quiet at the harbor
When they ask, who has to die.
And then they'll hear me say: All of them!
And when the heads roll, I'll say: Hurry!

And the ship with eight sails
And with fifty cannons
Will disappear with me.

Figure 12. “Seeräuber Jenny” lyrics and translation. “Seeräuber Jenny,” German Language, http://german.about.com/library/blmus_hknef06e.htm (accessed September 7, 2012).

tended to be stand-alone; they did not belong to a collection or a larger plot. In the case of “Seeräuber Jenny,” while the piece can exist on its own, telling a complete story, it was intended to be just one of 21 pieces in a multi-act play with music.

Die Dreigroschenoper carries with it certain topical aspects to German culture of the time. The play, which centers around a lawless gang and their ruthless leader, discusses corruption and the evilness of mankind. “Seeräuber Jenny” to a certain extent reaffirms these themes, but as part of a different story. “Seeräuber Jenny” is simply a song that Polly sings to distract Mac from his rage of his gang's ineptitude; the song has no direct bearing on the larger plot of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, functioning as a sort of story-within-a-story. Since the premiere of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, “Seeräuber Jenny” has gained popularity as an individual piece. Textually, “Seeräuber Jenny” lacks the topicality of Kabarett style.

The form of “Seeräuber Jenny” closely resembles

Intro	Verses 1 & 2						Chorus
2/4 time	A						C
Lyrics:	a	b	b'	a	b	c	a
1	3	7	13	15	19	21	23
c:				eb:			b:
Interlude	Verse 3						Chorus
	A						C
	a	b	b'	a	b'		a
28	30	34	41	43	47		51
c:				eb:			b:

Figure 13. Form diagram

that of a Kabarett song. The piece has a verse section and a chorus. As Figure 13 illustrates, the verse section is divided into two parts, A and B. A and B are differentiated by their keys; A is in C minor, while B is in Eb minor. The chorus stays entirely in the key of B minor. Of the three verses, the second is a literal repetition of the first; only the third differs with a slower tempo and a slightly different conclusion.



Figure 14. 1-5 oscillation in the bass.

Another example of Kabarett style's influence on "Seeräuber Jenny" can be found in the oscillation on scale degree 5 in the bass in measures 3-9 of section A. See Figure 14. In this case, G, scale degree 5 of C minor, sounds on every upbeat. This oscillation lasts for the first six measures of the first and second verse, creating a heavy emphasis on G in the listener's ear. For the duration of the piece, a fifth above the root of the bass sounds on the upbeats, but as clear tonal centers

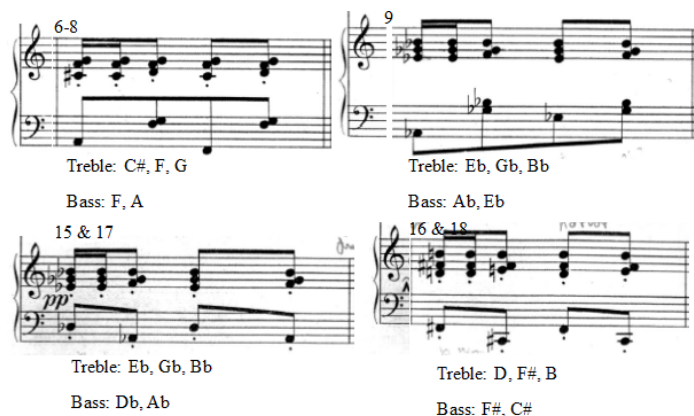


Figure 15. Opposition between accompaniment parts



Figure 16. Opposition between accompaniment and vocal parts become harder to discern, the fifth being heard is no longer scale degree 5 of the key.

While all parts work together harmoniously in Kabarett songs, in "Seeräuber Jenny" the vocal, treble accompaniment, and bass accompaniment parts all work independently of each other in a harmonic sense. The two accompaniment voices in particular more often oppose each other than complement one another (Figure 15). In each of these examples, the bass outlines one tonal center while the treble plays another. In measures 6-8, the bass tonal center is while the treble focuses around C#. Measure 9's bass has Ab as its center and the treble has Eb. The bass in measures 15 and 17 centers on Db while the treble emphasizes Eb. In measures 16 and 18, the tonal centers are F# in the bass and B in the treble. Each measure contains a polychord; the two distinctly different harmonies work together but contain dissonances.

The vocal part of the verse sections moves independently from the accompaniment. Firstly, as noted in Figure 16, the opening measure of the verse contains an A-natural. Because the key of C minor was so clearly established in the accompaniment's introduction, Weill even includes a courtesy natural sign to assuage players' concerns that this is a typo.

The melody of the A section appears to be in G minor, the dominant key of the accompaniment's C minor. Coinciding with a move in the treble accompaniment to Eb minor, the voice moves to Bb minor in measure 9. See Figure 17.

In the B section, the tonal center of the vocal part



Figure 17. Modulation at section B

changes frequently. As Figure 18 shows, lyrically, measures can be grouped in couples, and musically, every two measures complement each other. In the first and second instances, the main sonority of the first measure of the pair, Bb, gives way by half step to the main sonority of the second measure, B. In the third example, B is the main sonority. Finally, the fourth example centers on G.

Like Kabarett songs, the relation between the text and the melody is very regular with obvious correlations between rhyme scheme and phrasing. Refer to Figure 13 for the form diagram. Each phrase ends as the lyrics reach the end of a line of poetry. However, Weill uses phrases containing an inconsistent number of measures to achieve this effect. See Figure 19. The verses contain four-measure, six-measure, and two-measure phrases to accommodate the poetry. The chorus section always lasts five measures, creating a jarring effect when the

Verse Section A, Phrase a	4 measures	"Meine Herrn... das Bett für jeden"
Verse Section A, Phrase b	6 measures	"und Sie geben... mit wem Sie reden"
Verse Section A, Phrase b'	2 measures	"und sie wissen nicht, mit wem Sie reden"
Verse Section B, Phrase a	4 measures	"Aber eines Abends... das für ein Geschrei?"
Verse Section B, Phrase b	2 measures	"Und man wird mich lächeln sehn bei meinen Gläsern"
Verse Section B, Phrase c	2 measures	"und man sagt: "Was lächelt die dabei?""
Chorus Section	5 measures	"Und ein Schiff... wird leigen am Kai"

Figure 19. Phrase lengths music transitions back to the verse without completing the expected even number of measures.

In stark contrast to Kabarett’s well-defined keys and cadences, “Seeräuber Jenny” contains several tonic chords throughout the piece, but never offers a satisfying cadence in any of the keys expressed. Weill uses non-traditional harmonies and chord forms throughout to frustrate the sense of tonality. The song starts off in C minor (Figure 20). Because the C minor triad sounds for the first five measures, the listener gets a very clear sense that this sonority is tonic. However, the next chord throws in a C#, very obviously outside of C minor. By the ninth measure, the piece appears to have moved to an Eb minor triad in the right hand. See Figure 21. It is also at this point that the bass starts to very clearly work against the right hand accompaniment. In contrast to the right hand, the bass emphasizes A in measure 8 and Ab in measure 9.

While it could be argued that an F half-diminished7 establishes a predominant with Eb minor as the new key, the real move to Eb minor does not occur until



Figure 20. Establishment and frustration of C minor as the key



Figure 18. Complementary measures in section B



Figure 21. Move to Eb minor in right hand

the B section, as illustrated in Figure 22. Measures 11 through 14 act as a predominant to Eb. As an anacrusis to the B section which starts at measure 15, Bb resounds pointedly in open octaves, acting as a dominant and clearly marking a modulation. While Weill never gives the full Bb major chord, just the root is enough to satisfy the listeners' need to hear a dominant function. The Eb minor triad returns at measure 15, the opening of the B section, as a tonic over a Db bass, but in the very next measure, a B minor chord undermines the tonic. While seemingly out-of-left-field, the B minor triad soon becomes important as the key of the chorus section. In the first two verses, the note B acts as a pedal point in the right hand from measure 18 until the end of the B section at measure 22. See Figure 23.



Figure 22. Modulation to Eb minor

As Figure 24 shows, the final verse contains a slightly different conclusion of the B section. In measure 50, the final chord of the verse cannot be defined as any sort of conclusive tonal chord. With a B in the bass and a G#, C#, E, and F# in the treble, this cluster works better as a final pianissimo sigh to end the verse than as a cadential chord.

The chorus section has one unchanging tonal center, B. See Figure 25. It even cadences with a dominant chord, albeit one that is missing its third, A#. When the F# chord finally sounds, it turns out to simply be an



Figure 23. B drone in measures 18-22



Figure 24. Conclusion of third verse

open fifth. "Seeräuber Jenny" defies Kabarett style by avoiding complete cadences throughout its entirety.

Instead of building up the piece harmonically though tonic, predominant, and dominant like a Kabarett song, Weill builds up the piece through increasing and releasing dissonance. Figure 26 shows a harmonic reduction based on the treble accompaniment chords, the emphasized bass notes, and the notes of the vocal part which create structural harmonies.

Section A begins with a clear minor triad, then gradually adds notes. Dissonances build on top of each other over the course of the section. When the open octave Bb sounds in the anacrusis to the B section, its function is to clear the slate. Refer back to Figure 22 which shows the modulation to Eb minor. The effect is abrupt but effectively predicts the change of key as the dominant of Eb minor. Even the first measure of the B section is not as clear as its counterpart in the A section. While a clear Eb minor triad sounds in the treble accompaniment, the bass alternates between Db and Ab, both one scale degree down from the expected 1-5 bass motion of Eb to Bb. As before, dissonance piles up over the course of the section until the tonal relief of the chorus section.



Figure 25. Cadential material in chorus section

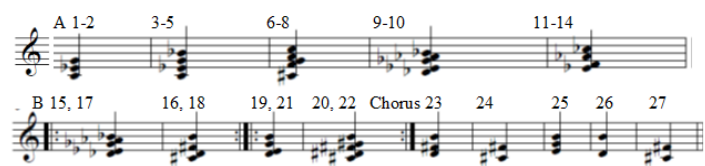


Figure 26. Harmonic reduction of structural harmonies from bass, treble, and vocal parts

CONCLUSION

Weill's Kabarett-influenced "Seeräuber Jenny" bears slight resemblance to the music from which it is derived. The differences outweigh the similarities, yet the piece still retains some essence of Kabarett style. In Kabarett style, texture is extremely important as a stylistic marker, especially the jump bass 1-5 oscillation. Weill does not always keep the oscillation to simply the tonic and fifth of the chord; he instead adds dissonances on the weak beats and/or set the oscillation in a different key than the voice or the treble accompaniment. Tonally, the voice, treble accompaniment, and bass accompaniment parts of "Seeräuber Jenny" work independently from one another in regards to harmony; on the other hand, in Kabarett, all parts work together harmoniously.

The textual content sets "Seeräuber Jenny" apart from its Kabarett counterparts. In Kabarett, the text is the fundamental part of each song, with blatantly biting lyrics dealing with social and political issues that were current to the audience. In "Seeräuber Jenny," the meaning of the text is hidden behind a thick plot set in the 1700s. The story-within-a-story aspect of the piece further obscures its textual meaning. In Kabarett, however, the meanings of the songs were transparent, driving straight to the heart of German affairs with satire and scathing criticism. Further, Die Dreigroschenoper was created as a commercial venture intended for the mainstream German stage, while Kabarett songs were meant for small, underground clubs.

With its simple, catchy melodies and abrasive content, Kabarett made its way from the underground into the mainstream consciousness. Kurt Weill, a major composer, took its constituent parts and integrated them into the art music world. While "Seeräuber Jenny" cannot truly be classified Kabarett, it brings the essence of the musical form to an audience that otherwise may not have been aware of Kabarett music.

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