Weill on stage: The musical evolution of a theatrical visionary
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From a stage directing perspective, the variety of Kurt Weill’s works offers a unique opportunity to explore facets of both the musical theatre and operatic traditions. In order to effectively direct in either genre, a number of musical and nonmusical aspects must be explored. Understanding the historical context within which the work was created along with the history of the composition itself enables the director to create an accurate reinterpretation for today’s audiences. Intimate knowledge of compositional elements contained in the score allows for effective communication between director and musician. Music theatre is inherently a collaborative effort; a director must be familiar with the point of view represented by the librettist, lyricist, and creator of the original source material. Study of traditional performance practice is crucial to understanding the work as it was initially conceived; there is a balance that must be struck between original intent and modern interpretation. Though geared here to a specific composer, this methodical approach to stage direction can be gainfully applied to any piece of music theatre. As a fledgling stage director, I have studied each of these elements individually as they apply to four of Weill’s stage works, as well as each work as a cohesive whole. These studies have given me valuable insight into the life and works of an influential music theatre composer.