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## The Odyssey of Kurt Weill's "Ulysses Africanus"

### Introduction

Among the extant works of Kurt Weill (1900-1950), the unfinished "Ulysses Africanus" (1939) remains a tantalizing fragment. Threads from other pieces may be traced to this musical, and the impulse to complete the play provided Weill with inspiration for further works. Weill derived from this torso several songs that his wife Lotte Lenya (1898-1981) recorded in the early 1940s. With his collaborator, the playwright Maxwell Anderson, he returned to "Ulysses Africanus" in the mid-1940s, but went no further with it. Finally, Weill and Anderson used some of the material already completed for "Ulysses Africanus" in the musical tragedy *Lost in the Stars* in 1949. Because of the connections that exist between "Ulysses Africanus" and his other music, the unfinished musical may be seen as an important undertaking for Weill, rather than an isolated event. An examination of these relationships provides a key for understanding some of the works he later took to completion.

### Plans for "Ulysses Africanus"

After Weill emigrated to the United States in 1935, he began to compose for the American theater. He wrote *Johnny Johnson* in 1936 and followed it with *Knickerbocker Holiday* in 1938. The latter was his first collaboration with the dramatist Maxwell Anderson, and the two soon began to work on another musical, "Aeneas Africanus." Plans for this work emerged in early 1939. In March 1939 Anderson wrote to the actor Paul Robeson about the possibility of taking part in the new show. Anderson promised to send Robeson a copy of the script when it was ready, but used the letter to describe the story to Robeson:

Although I haven't worked out a plot in detail, it's my intention to make it the story of a man who was born a slave and had never been obliged or encouraged to make an ethical decision for himself. Finding himself free but entrusted with valuable property which was placed in his hands for safe-keeping by a master to whom he owes no duty save that imposed by loyalty and friendship, he is tempted to consider the property his own. After a long, unrewarded search for the man who was his master, he finally decides to hunt no further and makes himself respected in his own world as a free man, even acquiring a competence by his management of a stable of horses built up from the progeny of the original racing mare with which he was

entrusted. At this point he encounters the man who was his master, but fails to reveal himself, justifying his conduct by reflecting on years of labor for which he was never paid. Too late Aeneas discovers that the man and his family are now in want and that there is nothing left out of their fortune except what he, Aeneas, has saved for them. He sets out in his search again, having discovered that his freedom brings with it responsibilities as a person which he never had to worry about before.

Essentially it is the story of a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his own rules of conduct, but I mean to tell it, of course, somewhat lightheartedly with whatever humor and grace I can muster and with Kurt's music.<sup>1</sup>

The source for the musical, which Anderson had sent to Robeson at that time, is the story *Eneas Africanus* by Harry Stillwell Edwards.<sup>2</sup> Edwards' work is set in the South at the time of the American Civil War, and cast as a series of letters in response to the plantation owner George E. Tommey's published request for information about his former slave, Eneas. Tommey certainly wants to hear about his former slave, but he seems more anxious to locate a treasured silver cup that he has entrusted to Eneas. (Tommey wants to present the cup—a seventeenth-century heirloom—to his daughter at her wedding.) Various individuals who have encountered Eneas report anecdotes and vignettes about him in the course of the work. The story unfolds between the letters, as it were, and the letter-writers, from their many perspectives, gradually reveal Eneas's tale.

In *Eneas Africanus* Edwards has his hero wander almost aimlessly through much of the South for eight years. Eneas leaves the plantation with the family silver hidden in a wagon drawn by a tired old mare. He travels between various places with the mare and a foal sired by a famous racehorse. In the course of his journey, Eneas marries a mulatto woman and has several children with her. He tries to support his family as a sharecropper, but finds a better source of income by entering the colt in races. He makes a good amount of money in horse racing and eventually wanders back to the old plantation. His arrival just happens to coincide with the wedding of his old master's daughter. Eneas presents the family with the silver cup, and also offers the family the money earned by horse racing. With the matter of Tommey's heirloom concluded, but the fate of Eneas unresolved, Edwards' story ends.

In the course of this work all action—since it is reported indirectly through letters—is implied, yet provides fertile ground for dramatization. Both its brevity and loose scenario made Edwards' story a convenient work for a playwright like Anderson to adapt for the stage. In bringing his own ideas into the plot, Anderson makes full use of his theme of self-discovery, while such a perspective is less prominent in Edwards' original.

In Anderson's hands, the story of Aeneas (rendered by Anderson as *Aeneas* not *Eneas*) Africanus took shape as a two-act play with music to be supplied by Weill. In the course of the text, the dramatist changed the name of the



# ENEAS AFRICANUS

By  
HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS



*Illustrated by*  
Ernest Townsend

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Figure 1: Title page of *Eneas Africanus*.

protagonist to Ulysses and thus evoked the name of the Trojan War hero who returns home after a decade of wandering. Anderson also gives the plantation owner the clichéd Southern name of Beauregard instead of Tommey. Notwithstanding these changes, the basic structure of the plot is essentially that of Edwards. Yet it is the alteration and addition of detail that make Anderson's adaptation dramatic.

At the opening of "Ulysses Africanus," the fighting of the Civil War threatens a southern plantation just as Master's daughter takes leave of her beloved. A parallel situation exists between the black slave Ulysses and his wife Pennie, as Beauregard informs them of the danger they all face. The owner entrusts the family silver to Ulysses, instructs him to remain always south of the fighting and to return to the plantation at the end of the war.

Ulysses leaves the endangered plantation in good spirits, but soon runs into members of the Ku Klux Klan. He survives the encounter, but finds himself lost both physically and spiritually. The song "Lost [Out Here] in the Stars" underscores his distress. It is ironic, then, that at the end of the first act Ulysses becomes part of a minstrel show, and entertains the white men who made his life so miserable.

At the beginning of the second act, Ulysses has become owner of the minstrel show.<sup>3</sup> The black women who perform in the minstrel show adore Ulysses, and, in a sense, become for him the very sirens that they portray in the version of the *Odyssey* that plays within the show itself. Pennie finds Ulysses and persuades him to return to the plantation, since he is in the best position to help the family at a difficult time. In this scenario Ulysses' return to the plantation is not a convenient accident (as in Edwards), but is clearly motivated and serves as an important element for the resolution of the plot, as Anderson had already intimated in his letter to Robeson. To save the mansion from carpet-baggers, Ulysses uses the silver that he has been keeping for years. In doing so, he must make a significant moral decision, on behalf of others and at some cost to himself. Thus, at the end of the play, as he resumes life with his wife at a place of stability, he understands the responsibilities of a free man.

While a complete draft of the libretto and some of the music sketched do exist, neither Weill nor Anderson explicitly stated their reasons for abandoning work on "Ulysses Africanus." For Anderson, Paul Robeson was absolutely essential for the leading role. Writing to the actor in 1939, Anderson confessed: "I don't know of anybody who could both act and sing it and the script might be wasted completely if you were not available."<sup>4</sup> Robeson, on the other hand, declined to participate in the production soon after receiving the playwright's description of the work because of the racist sentiments in the story itself.<sup>5</sup>

Both *Eneas Africanus* and "Ulysses Africanus" portray a former slave in a patronizing way. The protagonist Eneas/Ulysses was hardly inspirational; he reacts to situations rather than creates them and, at best, serves as a foil for

humorous but hackneyed situations. Anderson's depiction of the black man reverted to stereotypes that a dramatist like Eugene O'Neill had countered and Robeson portrayed in such works as *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Despite any good intentions on the part of Anderson, "Ulysses Africanus" promised to be the kind of work that would perpetuate stereotypes, not counter them. As Essie Robeson wrote to Anderson about "Ulysses Africanus":

. . . The general public's idea of a Negro is an Uncle Tom, an Aunt Jemima, Ol' Mammy, and Jack Johnson. These types have always been sold to the public deliberately. Well, now they don't exist any more except in the sentimental minds of credulous people, and we feel that we certainly must not do anything in any way, to prolong their non-existent lives!!! We feel Mr. Robeson must play a Negro who does exist, who has something to do with reality. <sup>6</sup>

Without Robeson to act in "Ulysses Africanus," Anderson sought another star, Bill Robinson, who was committed at the time to another show, *The Hot Mikado*.<sup>7</sup> Despite the problem with finding a suitable star for "Ulysses Africanus," it seems that Anderson needed to go further to find another black performer for the production or to change the tone of his libretto to attract a star like Robeson. He succeeded on neither count.

At the same time the motivation for finding the appropriate actor to star in "Ulysses Africanus" impinged upon another aspect of the work—its production costs. Alan Anderson, the playwright's son, recalled the difficulties his father experienced in negotiating the rights for the show. Apparently, after Weill and Anderson were well along with their work, they learned that the owner of the rights to Edwards' story, the family of the actor George Arliss, wanted so high a percentage of the gross profits that it would be virtually impossible to produce the musical.<sup>8</sup> They had little choice but to give up the work in progress.

Both the problem of finding a star who could attract an audience and the difficulties with negotiating the rights must have affected Anderson and Weill. While no single factor completely swayed the decision to abandon "Ulysses Africanus," many conditions simply were not right for continuing work on the play. Thus, Anderson went on to write *Key Largo*, and Weill composed incidental musical for Sidney Howard's play *Madam, Will You Walk?*, helping Howard to revise his play.<sup>9</sup>

## The Scope of Work on "Ulysses Africanus"

The extent of the music intended for the play "Ulysses Africanus" becomes clear from an examination of Anderson's libretto<sup>10</sup> and Weill's sketches.<sup>11</sup> Anderson indicated musical numbers in his libretto either by stage directions or with lyric texts. He planned music for almost every scene of

both acts of the music, as shown in Table 1. Some of the pieces envisioned by Anderson are found in Weill’s sketches, as summarized in Table 2. (David Drew has ordered these sketches and even supplied titles for them, as found in Table 3.)<sup>12</sup>

Because of the close relationship of Weill’s lyrics with Anderson’s text, it is likely that the composer had referred directly to the play when he composed the music for “Ulysses Africanus.” Anderson also supplied Weill with separate typewritten texts for the lyrics of some songs (typescripts of the texts for some of the songs are found with the music sketches). Weill did not compose music for all the numbers that Anderson indicated in his play, but rather, wrote music for several of the numbers from both acts of the libretto.

The sketches for “Ulysses Africanus” encompass several stages of composition. Early sketches exist for most of the numbers, while more advanced short scores exist for other music (like the instrumental “agitato”). Weill also took two songs into a piano-vocal score, “Lover Man” and “Lost in the Stars.” It is impossible to establish absolute dates for Weill’s work on

Table 1  
Maxwell Anderson, “Ulysses Africanus”  
Manuscript D23, University of Texas, Austin

Act	Scene	Pagination	Indications for Music
1	1	1-28	“dance” [for Ulysses and his girl] “White Folks”; “music” [scene between Melissa and Strickland]; “Lover Man” [?] song [“Stay Well”]; “17 Miles Away”
	2	1-3	
	3	1-6	“One, Two, Three. . . .”; “Lady, You Your Feminine Wiles”
	4	1-9	“The Place I’m Referring to Is Home” [“The Little Gray House”]
	5	1-5	“The White Sheets”; “Lost Out Here in the Stars”
	6	1-8	
	7	1-3	“Dance Little Doggies”
	8	1-2	“When I Was a Pickaninny Child”; “In the Old Time”; “I Had a Girl”
	9	1-9	
	unnumbered pages		drafts for “Lover Man”
2	1	1-10	“Sailor Ahoy”
	2	1-9	
	3	1-6	
	4	1-16	“Women on Porches”(=“Faithfully Yours”); “Going Down Hill” (“Has It Come to Your Attention”); “We’re Come to a Time” (=“Little Tin God”)
	5	1-6	
	6	1-2	dance (as at beginning)
	7	1-11	dance (as at beginning); Little Gray House (concluding number)

Table 2

Kurt Weill, “Ulysses Africanus,” Yale University, Music Library,  
Archival Collection, MSS 30, Box 32, folders 441-444

Folder	Number	Comments
441	“Here’s how it is when	typescript (lyrics only) you’re going away”
441	“Little Gray House”	typescript (lyrics only)
442	“Lost in the Stars”	piano-vocal score
442	“Lover Man”	piano-vocal score
442	“Lover Man”	piano-vocal score, earlier copy (ending tentative)
443	Miscellaneous sketches: “Off foot, out foot” “Little Gray House” “Lady you drop yo` feminine wiles” “Has it come to your observation” “When I was a pickaninny” “It’s come to a time in the age” “White folks” Vivace Agitato “White Folks” (another version) “Lost in the Stars” “Lover Man” Various tunes* Vivace Agitato [Ku Klux Klan Meeting?]	     [= “Going Down Hill”]  instrumental piece  early sketch early sketch  short score of earlier sketch
444	“In an old time far away”	
444	“When I was a pickaninny”	

\*These sketches include transcriptions of “traditional blues” tunes as indicated by Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 310.

Table 3

Kurt Weill, “Ulysses Africanus,” Contents of Sketches\*

Music	
[1a]	Introduction ( <u>agitato</u> ) and Melodrama
[1b]	“White Folks” (chorus and dance)
[1c]	“White Folks” (solo)
[2]	“When I was a pickaninny” (bass solo, chorus)
[3]	“Lady, you drop yo’ feminine wiles” (solo)
[4]	“The Little Tin God” (solo)
[5]	[Ku Klux Klan meeting] (speech, chorus and orchestra)
[6]	“The Little Grey House” (duet)
[7a]	“Lover Man” (solo; first version)
[7b]	“Lover Man” (solo; second version)
[8]	“Lost in the Stars”
[9]	“Going Down Hill”
Lyric Sheets	
“In an old time far away and long ago”	
“Here’s how it is when you’re going away”	

\*Based on Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 310.

“Ulysses Africanus,” but the evidence of the paper and the handwriting found in these sketches indicates that much of the music emerged from approximately the same time. The paper used for many pages of the early sketches is that produced by Robbins Music Corporation, a paper that Weill used for other works that he composed in 1939.<sup>13</sup> Some pieces are found on O.S.A. brand paper.

Weill took the songs “Lover Man” and “Lost in the Stars” to a relatively advanced state. In comparison with other music, his sketches generally contain a continuous vocal line; some accompaniment figuration also appears sporadically. Fuller textures are the exception, not the rule, since Weill was still working out his initial ideas in these sketches. He would have revised the music substantially in subsequent drafts before bringing the pieces to rehearsal, and he likely would have added more numbers to the musical, had he seen it to completion and performance.

The sketch for the first-act number “Lady, you drop yo’ feminine wiles” is related to the song “Huxley” ([no. 2]) for *Lady in the Dark*, which Weill completed in 1940. While this is hardly conclusive evidence that Weill actually returned to the sketches of “Ulysses Africanus” when he worked on *Lady in the Dark*, it suggests that the composer still had the 1939 work on his mind and found ways of using ideas originally intended for it. After 1939 Weill had little reason to do anything more with the sketches than to review them.

## A Return to “Ulysses Africanus”

Anderson wrote in his diary that he and Weill returned to “Ulysses Africanus” in July 1945. The extent of their work at this time is not clear, however. In spring 1945 Weill went to Hollywood to work on the film score for *One Touch of Venus*, and he returned to New York in the summer to revise the opera *Down in the Valley* for radio, although the latter work was neither performed nor published in that version. Also that summer Anderson considered writing a play about the nineteenth-century actor Joseph Jefferson after reading his *Autobiography*. Anderson revised his drama *Winterset* and then proceeded to work on *Truckline Cafe*, which occupied him through the latter part of 1945. If he actually worked on them, it seems unlikely that Weill added significantly to the sketches for “Ulysses Africanus” during summer 1945.

In 1943 Weill recorded with Lenya two of the numbers intended for “Ulysses Africanus.” “Lover Man” and “Lost in the Stars” were included in an album of six songs for Bost Records. The former recording preserves the early version of the song that was to become “Trouble Man” in *Lost in the Stars*, for which Weill revised both the text and the accompaniment. Lenya’s is the first recording of the song “Lost in the Stars,” and it contains the dialect text as it was intended for “Ulysses Africanus.” This version of the song lacks the choral ending that was composed for it when it became part of *Lost in the*



Stars in 1949. Lenya later recorded “Trouble Man,” “Lost in the Stars” and “Stay Well” from *Lost in the Stars* in August 1957.

Weill registered the copyright on “Lover Man” in 1944, and published the piano-vocal version of “Lost in the Stars” in 1946. The copyright submission of “Lover Man” may have been done in anticipation of its eventual publication, but the song was not issued in that form. Perhaps the popular appeal of “Lost in the Stars” after the release of the 1943 album had encouraged Weill to consider publication of “Lover Man” as well.

Before 1945 Weill appears to have taken material intended for “Ulysses Africanus” as far as possible after he and Anderson abandoned work on it. Their intentions for the play when they returned to it in 1945 remain unclear. Yet, that Anderson and Weill returned to the musical at all shows the respect each had for the other’s work. It may be that they wanted to retrace their steps through a satisfying work process in order to prepare for another collaboration.

No projects followed immediately, but two years later, on 10 July 1947, Weill wrote Anderson about the reaction of John Wharton, an amateur member (and lawyer) of the Playwright’s Company, to an idea that they had had for a musical which involved a spaceship and space travel. Wharton suggested that they use a trip through space and time as the basis of a satire about human nature. In his letter Weill went further to suggest a romantic situation that would personalize the eventual comedy. He explained to Anderson his concept of the work with some caution:

On Monday I met with John in the office. He told me that he had done some thinking about our spaceship musical and had written down some thoughts which I pass on to you. He thinks, if we mention the spaceship at all, it would be too overpowering an idea to use it just as a sort of background. So his idea includes a real trip on the spaceship, and I think he has a nice idea to have the people arrive, after [a] hundred years of travelling, at a place which is really earth again, but a different kind of earth, different not in appearance or in more technical perfection, but in spirit and emotion. He thinks that would give you a good opportunity to say, in an amusing, light way, a lot of things you want to say about the state of the world we live in. I know that you have the same apprehension about a play that takes place in the future that I have. But if this future world would look very much like our world, only the human race has developed into a higher form of spiritual and emotional life, and if these members of the human race would be confronted with some people who still have our way of thinking and acting, it might make for a very nice high comedy situation. (My idea would be that the man, before he goes on the spaceship, would find himself in a difficult emotional situation with his girl or wife[,] that for some reason she goes along, and that they both have to adjust to their way of thinking when they are faced with the new humanity.) I don’t know, if all this is any good, but I thought it worthwhile mentioning to you—and anyhow, I promised John to do so.

This outline for the "spaceship musical" is not far removed from the plot of "Ulysses Africanus." Ulysses' journey through time, albeit a decade not a century, returns him to the same world from which he started and the circumstances are indeed changed after the Civil War. At the same time, the difficult situation between the protagonist and the woman is common to both "Ulysses Africanus" and the spaceship musical. The new work is essentially the same as the earlier one, except for the new emphasis on social criticism that would emerge with the depiction of a more advanced humanity of the future and the apparent elimination of a group of stereotyped racial elements.

Anderson's response to this idea is found in an undated letter (probably from July 1947) to Weill in which he first commented critically on Wharton's suggestion. Anderson went on to state that he envisioned the work as a "plain play—with a few songs in it." He proceeds to name the play as "Lost in the Stars" and describes how the song of the same title would open it.

Speaking of John [Wharton], I resent a little his attempts to guide the erring playwrights—set tasks for them. I shouldn't have mentioned my theme, for it's an invitation to amateur suggestions. And I still don't know what I can do with it—or whether. At the moment it begins to seem to me like a plain play—with a few songs in it. That's not a form at all—or not one I've even heard of, yet this seems to fall into it. And though there would be no numbers, no dances, no musical comedy, no music drama or operatic conventions, still the songs would be integral—a necessary part of the atmosphere and theme. But I'll have to talk about all this when I see you. I know, of course, that the kind of play *Lost in the Stars* seems to turn into may be disappointing to you, but I'm not exactly in control of my imagination—and I have to follow where it leads. Pretty often it takes me astray, but I still have no choice.—Please don't discuss this with John, but my present notion is of a scene in the kitchen of 220 C.P.S., with a negro singing *Lost in the Stars* at the opening as he's washing the dishes -- and a group of youngsters living there who don't know what to do with their lives. The spaceship is just one of the fantastic projects [sic] that float through the room.

Just how the song would tie into the plot is vague, although obviously its title alone suggests a literal image of space travel. In Anderson's hands, the idea for the spaceship musical is further removed from "Ulysses Africanus" with the exclusion of numbers, dances and musical comedy. The reference to "Lost in the Stars" is striking, however, since it takes the song out of the context of "Ulysses Africanus" and places it in another stage work. The mention of fitting the song into the projected new work indicates the continuing intention of Weill and Anderson to use the song in a Broadway musical, and not to let it remain an independent—and perhaps otherwise little-known—composition.

Weill's subsequent letter to Anderson, dated 25 July 1947, contains his response to the plans. Confirming Anderson's implication that the new work

“move in the direction of a play rather than a musical,” Weill does not attempt to dissuade him, but remarks hopefully about their future work together:

As to our plans: I felt in your last letter that your ideas for the spaceship story are moving very definitely in the direction of a play rather than a musical, and, of course, as you say, you have no control over your imagination and have to follow where it leads you. I just know that someday we will hit again on an idea that cannot be done any other way except as a musical, and we will know it when we find it. I hope very much that this will happen because you are my favorite lyric writer, and it is such a shame to have this wonderful talent of yours wasted. I will make myself available for this event if and whenever it will happen—and we will have lots of fun. . . .

The esteem that Weill and Anderson had for each other is borne out in the communication that continued after this particular exchange of letters. The spaceship musical did not go much further than the comments found in these letters, and Anderson never used isolated songs by Weill as incidental music in his plays.

### Plans for *Lost in the Stars*

Anderson became involved with a number of other projects during the latter part of 1947 and left for Greece in November. On his return to the United States in mid-December, he found that several people he knew were on the same ship, including Oscar and Dorothy Hammerstein and Dr. Everett Ross Clinchy, a Presbyterian minister concerned with race relations. During the voyage Anderson discussed with Clinchy the idea of mobilizing theater people to deal with issues of race as a means of educating the general public.

Clinchy's ideas spurred Anderson, Oscar Hammerstein, and others to meet after they returned to the United States, thus opening a social and professional connection that had not existed before. Nothing emerged from this single meeting, but Anderson became better acquainted with the Hammersteins. In March 1948 Dorothy Hammerstein gave Anderson a copy of Alan Paton's then newly-published novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which followed from their discussions of portraying racial issues in the arts. Paton's novel became a best-seller instantly upon publication in the United States, and critical judgment was widely favorable. The story brought into focus abstract issues of racial injustice that had concerned them since the cruise with Rev. Clinchy.

It may be that Anderson sensed a challenge in Dorothy Hammerstein's remark about her husband's finding it impossible to dramatize Paton's novel.<sup>14</sup> Anderson's comments about his early efforts on the play reflect some of the intentions he and Weill had expressed earlier: “ This [*Cry, the Beloved Country*] was a true, moving and honest story and its subject fitted exactly

into the scheme for a musical tragedy which Kurt Weill and I had hoped for some years to be able to write. <sup>15</sup>

It is significant that Anderson refers to *Cry, the Beloved Country* as "fitting the scheme" for a work that Weill and he had wanted to write for years. Their earlier ideas coalesced into a workable scheme with the adaptation of the *Cry, the Beloved Country* for the stage. The basic structure of the unfinished "Ulysses Africanus," as Anderson indicated in his letter of March 1939 to Robeson, concerns "a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his own rules of conduct,"<sup>16</sup> an idea which is at the core of Paton's novel.

*Cry, the Beloved Country* is clearly the story of such a search. The plot concerns the black minister Stephen Kumalo, who leaves his rural South African village to look for his son Absalom in Johannesburg. The world that Stephen discovers in Johannesburg is indeed a chaotic one, and the things that he encounters challenge his deepset beliefs. In the course of his search Stephen learns things about his son that surprise him: Absalom is living with a woman and has fathered their child out of wedlock; moreover, Absalom has been in trouble, and he reports to a parole office. When he finally meets his son, it is in jail. Absalom has taken part in a robbery and unintentionally killed a white man—ironically a man who had been campaigning for the rights of blacks in South Africa.

Stephen Kumalo faces a dark night of the soul, and the sentiments found in the song "Lost in the Stars" express the emotions he experiences: abandonment and incomprehension that a just god could permit the horrors he has witnessed. The number fits the play so well that it would seem to have been written expressly for it.

Stephen's nephew, also involved in the robbery, manages to get himself acquitted, but Absalom realizes the seriousness of his actions and he refuses any help towards an easy escape. He believes in the power of truth and he trusts in justice. Yet telling the truth costs Absalom his life; he is found guilty and sentenced to death. At the end of the novel Stephen must face the execution of his own son, and this further challenge brings him more self-doubt. After much soul-searching, he makes peace with the father of his son's victim and, finally, they part in friendship.

The story of Kumalo's search resembles the story of the slave Aeneas in the earlier work. But the contemporary setting of *Lost in the Stars* allowed for a less clichéd characterization than Anderson's original portrayal of Ulysses in "Ulysses Africanus." By removing the constraints of a Civil War period piece and its virtually unavoidable resonance with minstrel show spinoffs, Weill and Anderson could easily drop the stereotyped portrayals of the black man that occurred in the earlier work and retain the philosophical kernel of the story in a much stronger fashion. For both characters, Ulysses and Stephen Kumalo, their journey transforms their life. *Lost in the Stars* thus became the perfect vehicle for Anderson and Weill to tell their earlier story, albeit a decade after their initial efforts in that direction.

## The Libretto of *Lost in the Stars*

In adapting *Cry, the Beloved Country* for the stage, Anderson outlined the novel in detail, marking the episodes he wanted to dramatize on stage. He arranged the scenes into a brief outline, before proceeding to create a three-act (see Table 4), then a two-act scenario (see Table 5) for the play.<sup>17</sup> While the short outline of the play lacks any reference to music, the three-act scenario includes the song “Lost in the Stars” at the end of the first act and “Lover Man” (not “Trouble Man”) in the second. Anderson went on to indicate “Lament—Cry, the Beloved Country” at the conclusion of the second act. He also refers to singing in the third act without specifying a song or number.

Anderson used both numbers and letters to refer to scenes in the three-act scenario and seems to have begun by using letters to refer to scenes with music and numbers to those consisting of dialogue alone. But he did not hold to that scheme. As early as act 1, scene 5 a musical idea (“There’s a little gray house”) begins to intrude in a numbered scene.

The two-act scenario was made after the three-act one, and it lacked any letter/number distinctions among scenes, although in the two-act scenario Anderson was more explicit in referring to music than before. As shown in Table 5, Anderson placed the song “The Little Gray House” in the fourth scene of the first act and the chorus in the seventh scene. He placed “Lost in the Stars” at the end of the first act, in the ninth scene. In addition, Anderson indicates that the song “Lover Man” is to occur at the beginning of the second act. The title of that song is changed in this manuscript, with the suggested “Lonesome Man” crossed out and the substitution of “Trouble” for “Lonesome” written above the title.

Anderson went on to specify other music for the second act. He has a “Song for Chorus” before the next scene, then “The Wild Justice” (a number eventually used in *Lost in the Stars*), a pantomime, and then a “lament.” “Cry, the Beloved Country,” found in the three-act scenario, also occurs in act 2, scene 5 in the two-act plan. Another unspecified song—probably “Big Mole”—occurs in the seventh scene, and Anderson indicates a reprise of “Lost in the Stars” in his notes for the final scene.

Just as Weill would rework some of his music for “Ulysses Africanus” in *Lost in the Stars*, Anderson used some of his ideas for the earlier play in the later musical. A striking example of this occurs in the lyrics eventually used for the song “The Little Gray House.” In “Ulysses Africanus” the text of the first verse for the song titled “The Place I’m Referring to Is Home” (act 1, scene 4) contains the following lyric:

There’s a little gray house in a one-street town,  
And the door stands open and the steps run down,  
And you prop the window with a stick on the sill,  
And you carry spring water from the foot of the hill,  
And the white Star of Bethlehem grows in the yard,

**Table 4**  
The Maxwell Anderson Collection, The University of Texas (Austin)  
Ms D21, “Lost in the Stars,” Three-act scenario

Number or Letter	Description
Act I	
A	Introduction The land, the hills -- the two men -- the drouth [ <i>sic</i> ] -- begin in prose -- then singing
1	Kumalo and his wife The letter from John Kumalo business -- other great plans
B	Chorus -- All roads lead to Johannesburg
2	Train gate -- Jarvis -- Grandson going to Johannesburg, with nurse
C	All roads lead -- (again) (Material from train chapter)
3	John and Stephen Kumalo -- Gertrude and the two sons
D	Hunting for a room -- picture of Johannesburg
4	Stephen and Gertrude
E	Search for son, told by chorus. Stephen finding places and clues. Vignettes.
5	Stephen in his room -- the little boy -- “There’s a little gray house” -- weary --
D	On the other side of the stage -- night club -- boys and girls doing burlesque of white men and obsequious negroes. They need money to go to the new gold-mining region. Plan a robbery. Simple. Absalom decent fellow -- the girl, Irina, having a baby., John’s son -- “Go on to the next girl”.
6	Stephen and Irina -- shanty-town -- Parole office
E	Extra -- Extra -- the montage about fear -- Murder in Parkwold -- Parole officer rushes out for paper -- talks with Stephen.
7	Stephen’s room “Lost in the Stars” (He reads the Bible.)
Act II	
1	Jarvis -- in dead son’s room
2	Kumalo and Irina.
3	Jail scene -- Stephen and Absalom -- chorus --
4	Stephen meets John Kumalo -- outside jail
5	(Lover Man) -- Scene with girl -- Irina.
6	Kumalo meets Jarvis -- before trial.
7	Trial
8	The marriage in the jail. Lament -- Cry the Beloved Country.
Act III	
	Hi-yo -- The church -- Kumalo’s wife -- letters -- Arthur’s boy -- milk -- rain -- roof leaks Jarvis outside the church to see the roof -- the singing -- the talk with congregation -- they want Kumalo to stay. Kumalo speaks of the execution -- is not sure whether he will want to live on. Boy comes to Kumalo in Kumalo’s house. Wife asleep -- four o’clock coming. Jarvis -- “I don’t know whether we’ve done well here. I don’t know whether we’ll ever do well.”

**Table 5**  
The Maxwell Anderson Collection, The University of Texas (Austin)  
Ms D21, “Lost in the Stars,” Two-act scenario

Number	Description
[Act] I	
1.	Ixopo
2.	Scene at train
3.	[Scene] with John -- <del>Hi-yo*</del>
4.	Shanty-town -- vignettes -- <i>hunting for Absalom -- Parole officer**</i> Room -- Little Gray House
>---->	
<del>6 5:</del>	Stephen finds girl -- parole officer The murder --
<del>7 6:</del>	Jarvis in Arthur's room -- <i>wife</i> With comment by chorus Police <del>baffled</del> Scene with Jarvis' wife
<del>5 7:</del>	Juke joint -- <i>gold fever</i> Vincent with Absalom with girls <i>Irina [indecipherable]</i> <i>plan to rob Arthur</i>
8.	Scene between Stephen and Absalom <del>Glass in prison</del> <del>Vincent with news of wrong arrest</del> <i>letter to his wife</i>
9.	Stephen walks home -- <del>talks to Gertrude's son</del> <del>knows it was Absalom</del> Lost in the Stars
[Act] II	
	<i>Hi-yo</i>
1.	Stephen and John -- “ <i>What you need is a good laugh</i> ”
<del>2:</del>	Jarvis and the police -- trying Absalom and <i>Matthew +</i> <del>Vincent and 3rd boy + {?}</del> <i>Johannes Papui</i> Stephen enters to plead for Absalom
<del>2. 3:</del>	Irina alone -- <del>Lover Man</del> <i>Lonesome Man</i>
<del>3. 4:</del>	Trial -- <i>Song for Chorus -- between scenes -- The Wild Justice</i> <i>Pantomime -- 2 men meet after sentence -- Lament</i> Marriage in jail Lament -- Cry the Beloved Country <i>Stephen + Edward Jarvis wife died, Stephen sends letter to Jarvis</i>
<del>7 6</del>	-- Jarvis and <del>Arthur's son</del> <i>Edward Song -- Edward's point of view</i>
<del>8 7 7:</del>	Jarvis outside the church Stephen offers to resign
<del>9 8 8:</del>	Early morning -- clock on the shelf -- Jarvis comes to help with the church -- and to sit with Stephen--Stephen realizes that all men -- white and black -- suffer together -- are lost in the stars. <i>good comes out of evil</i>

\*Strikeout is used to indicate materials crossed out by Anderson  
\*\*Italics indicate material handwritten in Anderson's typescript

And I can't seem to find it but I'm hunting it hard,  
 And the place I'm referring to,  
 The place I'm referring to,  
 The place I'm referring to's home.

The first verse for no. 7 “The Little Gray House” in *Lost in the Stars* (act 1, scene 5) reads nearly the same, with only the last lines changed:

There's a little gray house  
 In a one-street town,  
 And the door stands open,  
 And the steps run down.  
 And you prop up the window,  
 With a stick on the sill,  
 And you carry spring water  
 From the bottom of the hill.  
 And the white star-of-Bethlehem  
 Grows in the yard,  
 And I can't really describe it,  
 But I'm trying hard.  
 It's not much to tell about,  
 It's not much to picture out,  
 And the only thing special is,  
 It's home.

Obviously Anderson rewrote part of the lyrics from “Ulysses Africanus” when he composed the texts for “The Little Gray House.” The refrains for the two songs differ, however, as do the second verses of each. In adapting the earlier text for *Lost in the Stars*, Anderson was selective, and chose what he regarded as suitable for the new work, not appropriating the previously-written lyrics wholesale when he wrote the lyrics for the new song.

Such reworking of the earlier materials suggests that Anderson may have eyed and reexamined the libretto of “Ulysses Africanus” at many points while writing the text of the later play. In the first scene of the first act of “Ulysses Africanus” the plantation owner's daughter Melissa takes leave of her love and is given a lyric to sing. The verse for an untitled song reads:

Forget whose head lay on my breast,  
 Forget the name in the night?  
 Forget whose lips my lips have pressed,  
 Whose arms have held my delight?  
 When unto earth my love be given  
 Then let my earth be earth again,



No fear of hell be left, nor hope of heaven,  
My fears go back to the wind and rain.

This text has a parallel in no. 19 “Stay Well” of *Lost in the Stars* (act 2, scene 2):

Stay well, O keeper of my love,  
Go well, throughout all your days,  
Your star be my luckiest star above,  
Your ways the luckiest ways.  
Since unto you my one life is given,  
And since with you it will remain,  
Though you bring fear of hell, despair of heaven,  
Stay well, come well to my door again.

Besides their similar sentiments, a direct connection between “Forget whose head” and Weill’s later work on *Lost in the Stars* is found on a single sheet inserted after the early sketches of the latter (folder 268).<sup>18</sup> This sketch, entitled “Stay Well,” contains a setting of the text from “Ulysses Africanus” as given above—a single melody but lacking any accompanying figure. Among the materials in the same folder is another sketch for the version of “Stay Well” that Weill later used in *Lost in the Stars*.

The textual connection between the two sets of lyrics is less direct than those for “The Little Gray House,” but the emotion conveyed by each of them is clear. The juxtapositions of heaven and hell are shared. Also, the rhyme scheme of the two verses is close enough to suggest that Anderson may have referred to one when he wrote the other.

## The Music for *Lost in the Stars*

With regard to the music intended for *Lost in the Stars*, the references found in Anderson’s two-act scenario anticipate the numbers Weill included among his early sketches for *Lost in the Stars*.<sup>19</sup> The song “Lost in the Stars” is conspicuous by its absence from the set of early sketches for the musical. “Trouble Man” also stands out from other sketches because, unlike other numbers found among the early sketches, it is relatively complete, rather than fragmentary.

In taking “Lover Man” into the early sketches for *Lost in the Stars*, Weill reworked the accompaniment and set the new lyrics for the song as it became “Trouble Man” for the new work. He started the number at the beginning of the song and left the introduction to be composed later. Rather than reuse the song as it had been completed years before, and insert a copy of the piano-vocal version, Weill worked out the song anew. (The paper and handwriting for this number are similar to that found in the other early sketches.)

**Table 6**  
The Disposition of Sketches for *Lost in the Stars*, Yale University Music Library,  
Archival Collection, MSS 30, Boxes 15-17, (Identified by Folder Number)

Completed Numbers	Early Sketches	Vocal Sketch	Early Vocal Score	Later Vocal Score	Orchestration Draft
[Act 1]					
The Hills of Ixopo	268	267	274	279	
The Little Tin God*	268		274		264
Thousands of Miles		267	274	279	
Train to Johannesburg	268	267	274	279	273
The Search	268	267	274	279	266
The Little Gray House	268	267	275		263
Who'll Buy?	268	267	276	279	282
Gold*	268		276		
Trouble Man	268	267	276	279	
Murder in Parkwold	268		276	279	
Fear!	268	267	276	279	
He Will Be Found	268		277		
The Shadowy Glass*	268		277		
Lost in the Stars		267	277	279	
[Act 2]					
Entr'acte				280	256
The Wild Justice	268	267	277	280	
Soliloquy		267	278		
O Tixo, Tixo Help Me!	268	267	278	280	
Stay Well		267	278	280	
Cry, the Beloved Country	268	267	278	280	
Big Mole		267	278	280	
A Bird of Passage				280	
Four o'Clock				280	
Finale		267	278**	280	

\*Composed for, but not used in, the finished work  
\*\*Indicated as “Ending for *Lost in the Stars*”

Weill handled the song “Lost in the Stars” differently when he incorporated it into the musical of the same name. He included it with neither the early sketches for the new work nor the subsequent draft. Weill did place the song in the early vocal draft (folder 267) where it is inscribed as no. 11, but physically placed it before no. 17. That version of the song, in the key of F minor as it is in the completed work, contains a new choral ending.

The song “Lost in the Stars” is also found twice in the subsequent draft, the early vocal score (folders 274-78): it is indicated as no. 11 and also found at the end of the manuscript, thus corresponding to the reprise of the song suggested in Anderson’s two-act scenario. The reprise of the song at the end of the early vocal score bears the marking “new end” to show a further revision of its conclusion. In the subsequent manuscript, the later vocal score, the song occurs in the position it holds in the completed work, as the final number in the first act (no. 15). The song does not recur at the end of the second act, nor does a reprise of it occur elsewhere in the vocal score. The finale in the later vocal score of *Lost in the Stars* is a reprise of the number “Thousands of Miles” from the first act.

Notwithstanding the decision to place the song “Lost in the Stars” in the first act and avoid using it in the second, the number remains a powerful moment. Given to the principal character of Stephen, it has come a long way from its utterance by a secondary character in “Ulysses Africanus.”<sup>20</sup> Set carefully in an intimate scene, it becomes an effective vehicle to express the anguish of Stephen in the latter show, and it fittingly gives the work its title.

## Conclusion

In considering the place of “Ulysses Africanus” among Weill’s works, it is important to judge it differently than music the composer had taken to completion. The intention to abandon “Ulysses Africanus” was not based entirely on aesthetic reasons, and the subsequent decision of the composer and librettist to leave the work unfinished may be ascribed to several coincident circumstances: more pressing projects; the prospect of formidable production expenses; and the resistance of black players to co-operate in the revival of racist characters and shopworn scenarios. Nevertheless, it is a seminal work for its influence on the subsequent collaboration between Weill and Anderson.

The evidence of the letters which describe the abortive plans for a “spaceship” musical reveals something of the professional bond between Weill and Anderson, along with their desire to collaborate again on a work with a noble theme for the stage. Such an opportunity occurred with the intention to adapt the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* as a musical tragedy, and they found in the latter work a place for some of the music completed much earlier. More importantly, they arrived at a means to express in *Lost in the Stars* their previous idea to tell the story of “a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood

and his own rules of conduct." The work that Anderson and Weill created in *Lost in the Stars* is far removed from the earlier musical. In the ten-year odyssey of "Ulysses Africanus" the trappings of a period piece, with its patronizing depiction of a black man, gave way to the compelling contemporary drama of *Lost in the Stars*. After surfacing several times in the course of the decade, the plans for a musical *comedy* resulted in a musical *tragedy* that went far beyond the initial impulses of Anderson and Weill.

## NOTES

1. A version of this article was presented at a meeting of the Midwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society, Minneapolis, 6 October 1991. Research was supported in part by a grant from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. Laurence G. Avery, ed. *Dramatist in America: Letters of Maxwell Anderson, 1912-1958* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 85.

2. Harry Stillwell Edwards, *Eneas Africanus* (1920; reprint ed., New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1940). The latter edition is illustrated by Ernest Townsend and contains a biographical note about Edwards (1855-1938), probably written by his daughter Roxilane Edwards, (xv-xvi).

3. Evidence to confirm Weill's knowledge of Anderson's libretto is found in a letter of 5 June 1939 in which Weill tells his collaborator that "I was in the library every day last week and I know everything about minstrel shows (there is not much to know)." The letter is found in the Weill-Lenya Archive, New York, and catalogued among the materials in Series 40: Kurt Weill Correspondence.

4. Avery, *Dramatist in America*, 85-85.

5. Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 230. See also Duberman's note on P.645. The text of Essie Robeson's letter of 29 March 1939 to Anderson, in which she describes Paul Robeson's reaction to the story, is given in that note.

6. Quoted by Duberman, 645.

7. See Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), 286. David Drew comments on this situation in his entry on "Ulysses Africanus" in *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1987), 309-10.

8. Alan H. Anderson wrote about the problem of rights in his letter of 1 April 1991 to James L. Zychowicz. According to Alan Anderson:

When Kurt [Weill] and Dad [Maxwell Anderson] discovered "Ulysses Africanus," they asked someone to find out who owned it and immediately went to work on the book, lyrics and music. When they were well along with their work, they learned that they would have to pay ten percent of the gross of any production to the owners, who turned out to be the family of the late George Arliss. Paying that much for the rights would have made it impossible to produce the show. They abandoned the project and then decided, at a later date, when Dad read *Cry, the Beloved Country*, to utilize the material they had for "Ulysses" in *Lost in the Stars*.

9. Avery, *Dramatist in America*, li ("Maxwell Anderson: A Chronology").

10. Maxwell Anderson, "Ulysses Africanus," The Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas. The libretto is identified as item D23 by Laurence G. Avery, *A Catalogue of the Maxwell Anderson Collection at the University of Texas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 1968), 78-79. Avery provides a summary of the work on pp. 78-79.

11. Kurt Weill, "Ulysses Africanus," Yale University, Music Library, Archival Collection, MSS 30, Box 32, folders 441-444.

12. Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 310.

13. See Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 81. A brief description of Weill's use of papers occurs on pages 78-79.

14. Anderson, "Acceptance Speech for the Brotherhood Aware to *Lost in the Stars* from the National Conference of Christians and Jews," in Avery, *Dramatist in America*, 298-301. See p. 300.

15. Anderson, "Acceptance Speech," 300.

16. Avery, *Dramatist in America*, 85.

17. Anderson's outline of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, along with his scenarios for *Lost in the Stars* are found with the holograph of the libretto, The Maxwell Anderson Collection, The University of Texas (Austin), Ms D21.

18. The early sketches for *Lost in the Stars* are collected in a single folder of Weill's manuscript, New Haven, CT, Yale University, Music Library, Archival Collection, MSS 30, Box 16 folder 268. The sketch for the earlier version of "Stay Well" is on O.S.A. brand paper, unlike the paper used for sketches that belong to *Lost in the Stars*.

19. Table 6 contains a summary of the sketches for *Lost in the Stars*, with the numbers for the musical listed in the right hand column and the types of sketches listed across the top in order of composition. Where a sketch for a particular number exists, the folder in which it is found is listed in the appropriate column. The categories of sketches and disposition of manuscripts are described by this author in a monograph on the materials for *Lost in the Stars* currently in preparation.

20. In "Ulysses Africanus," the character of Nicodemus, not "Ulysses" was given the song "Lost [out here] in the Stars." Thus, the song would not have been sung by Robeson, as implied by Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1908), 385. Anderson's text has Ulysses listening while the other man sings the song. After an encounter with the Ku Klux Klan (act 1, scene 5), Ulysses and Nicodemus contemplate their fate:

U[lysses]: Bless God, maybe they ain't coming back.

Nic[odemus]: What you huntin' in your sack for?

U: I lost one silver piece. I keeps feeling for it, like for a sore tooth.

N: I keeps feeling for -- for somebody to turn to. They ain't nobody to turn to no more.

U: You's a free man.

N: Yas, suh. Free, and nobody to turn to.

U: You mean it make you feel bad?

N: Terrible bad.

U: When you gits lonely why don't you git right down on your knees and pray?

N: I does. I been doing that. Only I happen to look up once when I was praying, and I look out there in the moonlight and I notice God wasn't listening. It was completely empty out there when I was ~~prayed~~ praying to.

U: No, suh.

N: It was nobody listening. It was completely empty.

U: Like out there now?

N: Like out there now. (*sings*) Before Lawd God ~~held~~ made the sea -- etc.

21. These sketches include transcriptions of "traditional blues" tunes, as indicated by Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 310.

22. Based on Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*, 310.

23. Strikeout is used to indicate materials crossed out by Anderson.

24. Italics indicate material handwritten in Anderson's typescript.

25. Composed for, but not used in, the finished work.

