

SIMPLY SINFUL

Streaming on May 25 and May 26

The Seven Deadly Sins (1933)

Music by Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

German libretto by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956),

English translation by W.H. Auden (1907-1973) and Chester Kallman (1921-1975)

Stephanie Blythe, director

Howard Watkins, conductor / music director

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, Kayo Iwama, and Erika Switzer, musical preparation

Lisa Krueger, production assistant

Sung-Soo Cho and Diana Borshcheva, piano

Anna I (in order of appearance):

Sarah Rauch, mezzo-soprano

Jardena Gertler-Jaffe, soprano

Chuanyuan Liu, countertenor

Melanie Dubil, mezzo-soprano

Diana Schwam, soprano

Anna II: Kirby Burgess, soprano

Family (in order of appearance):

Maximillian Jansen, tenor

Chuanyuan Liu, countertor

Pauline Tan, mezzo-soprano

Louis Tiemann, baritone

Sarah Rauch, mezzo-soprano

Kirby Burgess, soprano

Samantha Martin, soprano

Megan Jones, soprano

Alexis Seminario, soprano

Painting: James Albertson, "Statue in the Park"

The Medium (1946)

Music and libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

Stephanie Blythe, director

Howard Watkins, conductor / music director

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, Kayo Iwama, and Erika Switzer, musical preparation

Lisa Krueger, production assistant

Gwyyon Sin and Elias Dagher, piano

Cast 1

Monica: Alexis Seminario, soprano

Toby: Sarah Rauch, mezzo-soprano

Madame Flora (Baba): Joanne Evans, mezzo-soprano

Mrs. Gobineau: Kirby Burgess, soprano

Mr. Gobineau: Louis Tiemann, baritone

Mrs. Nolan: Micah Gleason, mezzo-soprano

Ghost: Megan Jones, soprano

Cast 2

Monica: Samantha Martin, soprano

Toby: Sarah Rauch, mezzo-soprano

Madame Flora (Baba): Joanne Evans, mezzo-soprano

Mrs. Gobineau: Jardena Gertler-Jaffe, soprano

Mr. Gobineau: Louis Tiemann, baritone

Mrs. Nolan: Melanie Dubil, mezzo-soprano

Ghost: Megan Jones, soprano

Seven Deadly Sins Synopsis

In Kurt Weill's quasi-opera, we follow Anna I and Anna II, two sides of the same person, as they venture away from their home in Louisiana to achieve the American dream and send money back to their family. Even though there are two of them, Anna I claims that they are the same, divided being. Anna I is the self-proclaimed pragmatic one, while her sister, Anna II, while artistic and hopeful, is described as flighty and unrealistic. Anna II tries in multiple cities to make money performing in a Cabaret, but at every turn she is

scolded by Anna I and her family. The Greek-chorus-like family chastises the Annas every chance they can get and under the guise of religious righteousness, accuse them of falling victim to the titular Seven Deadly Sins. In this production, Anna II stays the same while Anna I is played by multiple performers, further fracturing the Anna character. The family members rotate as well, but they still function collectively as one character and their shaming is relentless.

Seven Deadly Sins was Weill's last collaboration with the librettist, Bertolt Brecht, and was his last major theater work in Europe. Both Weill and Brecht, seeing Germany buckle under the power of the Nazi party, left Berlin in 1933 and both ended up in Paris. This *ballet chanté* features the duo's signature directness with Weill's parody of popular song styles such as cabaret and barbershop and Brecht's biting criticism of capitalism. *Seven Deadly Sins* marks the end of an era for both artists and Weill would soon leave Europe for the United States, never to return to his homeland.

-Maximillian Jansen, Bard VAP '21

The Medium Synopsis

With both music and text written by Gian Carlo Menotti, *The Medium* follows the fraudulent psychic, Madame Flora (Baba), and the two young people under her care - her daughter Monica, and a mute boy she rescued from the streets, Toby. The show opens with Monica and Toby playing dress-up, which is quickly interrupted by Baba's return home and chastisement of them for not preparing for that evening's seance. The guests soon arrive - Mr. And Mrs. Gobineau, who are regulars, and Mrs. Nolan, a newcomer - and Madame Flora initiates the "seance", where Monica pretends to be the voice of the guests' departed children. Unbeknownst to Madam Flora, however, a real spirit has appeared and reaches out for her throat, causing her to gasp in fear and send her guests away in a panic. She explains to Monica what she felt, and blames Toby, believing it was him that touched her as a trick. Monica calms Baba by singing her the lullaby, "Black Swan", which is interrupted by the same ghostly voice from the seance, and in fear and confusion Baba demands that Monica and Toby pray with her to save their souls.

A few days later, Toby and Monica are playing pretend together, and it becomes clear the feelings that they have for one another. When Baba suddenly returns home, drunk, she insists on talking to Toby to find out what happened at the seance, moving from encouraging questions to violent accusations. The previous seance guests arrive and interrupt, reminding her that there is another seance scheduled for that day, but she sends them away, revealing to them how she cheated them and was really a fraudulent medium. She then proceeds to send Toby away as well, telling him to never come back, despite Monica's desperate pleas on his behalf. Baba, alone, begins to question her sanity, eventually becoming overwhelmingly drunk and falling asleep. Toby sneaks back into the apartment, trying to get to Monica, but finds her door is locked. Baba, hearing something, wakes up and waves her handgun around wildly, threatening to shoot the intruder. In her blind terror, she shoots and hits Toby, and upon seeing what she has done, declares, "I've killed the ghost".

-Sarah Rauch, Bard VAP '22