

**“Just the Right Bullets”: Music and Postmodernism in Robert Wilson, William Burroughs, and
Tom Waits’s *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets***

by

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For Nicole, who listens to all my babbling.

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Abstract

In March 1990, three American artists, Robert Wilson, Tom Waits, and William S. Burroughs, came together and presented a revised version of the classic *Der Freischütz* folktale to a Hamburg audience. Since its premiere with a thirty-minute standing ovation, this updated re-staging, titled *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*, has been mounted by theaters around the world. Despite this success, however, there has been little research on the show, especially its musical components. After providing an overview of the show, the creative team, and existing sources in chapter 1, this dissertation examines the music of *The Black Rider* from a large-scale perspective in chapter 2, finding traces of associative themes in the work as well as evidence of Waits's musical influences and theatrical compositional style. Chapter 3 investigates each sung number of the work and considers how it fits into the drama at large, finding that current systems of evaluating how numbers are integrated into a work are insufficient. The chapter closes with proposals for new models. Examining Waits's music and lyrics, in addition to the contributions from both Wilson and Burroughs, chapter 4 explores how the materials of the show point towards a postmodern attitude and considers how this postmodernism relates to Germany at the time of the premiere; the chapter argues that, much in the same way that Carl Maria von Weber's *Freischütz* opera reflected Germany of 1821 and continued to play an important part in the country's identity, *The Black Rider* reflects the world of post-Cold War Germany as it sought to redefine itself. Chapter 5 closes with a summary of findings and proposes new areas of study, both in *The Black Rider* and the two Waits/Wilson stage works that followed: *Alice* (1992) and *Woyzeck* (2000).

Chapter 1 — Introduction to *The Black Rider*

“Keep right and have your tickets ready...if you have a heart problem, beat it!”

– Old Uncle, Prologue

In a May 20, 1986, proposal, theater director Robert Wilson lays out a vision for staging *Der Freischütz*, which (despite the earlier appearances of such works as *Die Zauberflöte* and *Fidelio*) he labels “the first German National Opera.”¹ The preface to the document states:

Robert Wilson’s proposal for a production of *Der Freischütz* returns to the original story and its brutal ending. With the help of composer, Tom Waits, Mr. Wilson will adapt the story to the American country-and-western style. Mr. Wilson will take one of the most popular works of German culture, transform it into a basic American idiom, and represent to German audiences a familiar work interpreted in a new way.²

The work would not premiere until nearly four years later, on March 31, 1990 in Hamburg, Germany and it veered off course from its original vision in the meantime, most notably in its addition of American beat author William S. Burroughs to the creative team in late 1988.³ By the time the show arrived on Hamburg’s stage in 1990, it had also lost some of the “American country-and-western style” promised in the original proposal. Despite—or perhaps because of—these alterations, the resulting show, titled *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*, was a smash success on opening night, receiving a nearly thirty-minute standing ovation from the audience.

¹ Proposal for a musical by Tom Waits and Robert Wilson, 20 May 1986, Box 243, Robert Wilson Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Library, New York, NY.

² Proposal for a musical by Tom Waits and Robert Wilson, 20 May 1986, Box 243.

³ Fax from Robert Wilson to William Burroughs, 5 December 1988, Robert Wilson Papers, Box 243.

Billed as an opera, though the dialogue is not sung between number pieces, the Waits/Wilson/Burroughs project has since been staged hundreds of times in both Europe and North America. Combining Wilson's avant-garde aesthetics with Burroughs's dadaist text and Waits's particular brand of junkyard rock, *The Black Rider* is the successful product of an unlikely collaboration of artists with a source material that already had a deep literary, theatrical, and musical tradition. Following the success of *Black Rider*, Waits went on to write music for two more Robert Wilson productions: *Alice* (1992), which wove the *Alice in Wonderland* stories together with Lewis Carroll's biography, and *Woyzeck* (2000), an adaptation of the 1837 Georg Büchner play upon which Alban Berg based his 1925 opera.

Despite the show's success, the richness of its source material, and the notoriety of its collaborators, many aspects of *The Black Rider* remain generally unexplored, though it does serve as a case study in a few instances. These projects, however, favor exploring the production in relation to Robert Wilson or William S. Burroughs, thereby making Waits's musical contributions secondary.

One of the earliest writings on the show is Gordon Armstrong's short essay, "Political and Practical Ideologies," which argues that *The Black Rider* is a political product.⁴ Without pointing to many specifics in the show, Armstrong argues that the show has "revolutionary intent....*The Black Rider* suggests that the structures of authority...are all equally dangerous."⁵ Going even further, he closes the short essay by suggesting that *The Black Rider* perhaps even predicts the extremist fighting that took place in East Germany and the genocides in Serbia and Croatia.⁶

⁴ Gordon Armstrong, "Political and Practical Ideologies," *Performing Arts Journal* 15 no. 1 (1993), 38–41.

⁵ Armstrong, "Political and Practical Ideologies," 40.

⁶ Armstrong, "Political and Practical Ideologies," 41.

Chapter 3 of Roxanne Ray's 2005 dissertation, "Mortality's Reverberating Embrace: The Resonance of Denial and Desire in Contemporary Performances of Death," demonstrates the variety of ways that themes of death permeate *The Black Rider* and uses Wilson's imagery and staging to back up her claims.⁷ She further sets up the production as an attack on patriarchy, which this dissertation touches on in chapter 4.⁸ While Ray's dissertation chapter provides excellent insight into the work as a whole from the perspective of Wilson's contributions, it falls short in individual scene analyses as characters are misidentified or misunderstood, which hinders the interpretation. A chapter of Markee Cardwell-Rambo's dissertation uses *The Black Rider* as a case study in an examination of how Wilson collaborates with other artists, meaning that the study focuses on the creative partnership more than the show itself.⁹

Using Burroughs as the focal point, Nancy M. Grace's 2012 essay "The Beat Fairy Tale and Transnational Spectacle Culture: Diane Di Prima and William S. Burroughs" examines how *The Black Rider* celebrates and parodies fairy tale archetypes and how the show might conform with Beat attitudes towards fairy tales more broadly.¹⁰ Unlike previous authors, Grace explores some of the allusions to other works that the three collaborators include in the show and considers some of the postmodern humor that runs throughout the show. While all of the academic work done thus far on *The Black Rider* has brought about unique perspectives, none gives deep consideration of the musical aspects of the show beyond surface-level observations.

⁷ Roxanne Ray, "Mortality's Reverberating Embrace: The Resonance of Denial and Desire in Contemporary Performances of Death" (Ph.D., New York University, 2005).

⁸ Roxanne Ray, "Mortality's Reverberating Embrace."

⁹ Markee Cardwell-Rambo, "Wilson and Musical Collaboration: The Dramaturgy of Music and Musicians in Robert Wilson's Practice" (MLitt diss., University of Glasgow, 2013), 93.

¹⁰ Nancy M. Grace, "The Beat Fairy Tale and Transnational Spectacle Culture: Diane Di Prima and William S. Burroughs," in *Transnational Beat Generation*, ed. Nancy M. Grace and Jennie B. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 83–99.

The reason for this may be partly due to lack of available materials as well as music researchers' slow pace in addressing Waits's work.

In this dissertation, I intend to fill in some of the gaps of understanding in the *Black Rider*, particularly in regards to Tom Waits's musical contributions. Following a broad overview of the *Freischütz* myth and performance history, the present chapter summarizes the careers and aesthetics of the marquee creative team for *The Black Rider*: Robert Wilson, William Burroughs, and Tom Waits. Following this, I explore some of the issues of authorship that are present in the production and provide an overview of the sources used in this study and, more importantly, how those sources are used.

After providing an overview of the folk tale, the adaptation's collaborators, and the source materials for this study in chapter 1, chapter 2 delves into the musical aspects of *The Black Rider*, taking a zoomed-out approach to the score, looking for large musical themes. chapter 3 continues the exploration of the show's music, albeit with a zoomed-in approach as it examines each sung number of the show and considers its relation to the story as a whole. After completing this musical study, chapter 4 considers the information gathered in Chapters 2 and 3, and brings in non-musical elements from all three collaborators to build the case for *The Black Rider* as a postmodern work that reflects 1990 Germany. Concluding this study, chapter 5 looks at *The Black Rider* in the years since 1990, including Waits's 1993 album of the show's material. It also considers areas for further research, both on *The Black Rider* and on the later Waits/Wilson collaborations.

Before doing any analysis of the show's music, overall aesthetics, and place in Germany's history, however, it is necessary to review not only the *Black Rider* plot itself, but also the folktale and operatic origins of the 1990 production in order to better understand the

updated version's context as well as how the premiere's audience related to the tale prior to viewing the adaptation. Reviews on Wilson, Burroughs, and Waits follow this *Freischütz* overview; while Waits's career provides an immediately useful backdrop in Chapters 2 and 3, the context on Wilson and Burroughs will prove useful in chapter 4 when the music, libretto, and staging/choreography are all factored together.

History of *Der Freischütz*: From Folktale to *The Black Rider*

The *Freischütz* story has origins dating back as far as the sixteenth century due to its connections to the Faust legend, which was first printed in 1587. While this variation on the Faustian bargain may have been a part of an oral tradition for years, *Der Freischütz* appeared in text for the first time in the 1810 collection *Gespensterbuch* (trans.: The Book of Ghosts).¹¹ The collection was gathered and written by Johann August Apel and Friedrich Laun. In this version, a huntsman makes a deal with the devil for magic bullets and, in a shooting competition to win the hand of his love, one of the devil's bullets goes "astray" and kills the woman. Essayist Thomas de Quincey translated this version into English in 1823, titling it *The Fatal Marksman*.¹²

Shortly after Apel and Laun's publication of *Der Freischütz*, it became the basis for several theater works. The first performance was in Munich in 1812 with a libretto by Franz Xaver von Caspar and music by Carl Neuner.¹³ Two more adaptations of the story premiered in

¹¹ "The Black Rider: Back to the Source," *Words on Plays: The Black Rider*, edited by Elizabeth Brodersen and Jessica Werner. American Conservatory Theater, 2004, 61–64. This program book was prepared for the 2004 English-version tour of *The Black Rider*. It contains a synopsis of the work, interviews with the collaborators, and a history of the story.

¹² "The Black Rider: Back to the Source," 61–64.

¹³ Clive Brown, "Freischütz, Der." In *The Grove Book of Operas*, ed. Stanley Sadie and Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Brown further suggests that Franz Xaver von Caspar's libretto served as a model for Johann Friedrich Kind when he wrote the libretto for Weber.

Vienna in 1816.¹⁴ In 1821, Carl Maria von Weber—along with librettist Johann Friedrich Kind—premiered his take on the story at the Berlin *Schauspielhaus*. While Kind’s libretto largely follows Apel’s written tale, the opera ends with a moment of *deus ex machina* as a holy man interferes with the fatal shot and preaches forgiveness to those who want to condemn the hunter for his deal with the devil. Musicologist Clive Brown writes that the opera’s success was

immediate and long-lasting. It was by far the most widely popular German opera of its generation, and within a few years it conquered all the major stages of Europe. By 1830 it had been given in nine languages, and before 1850 it was staged as far afield as Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, and Sydney.¹⁵

Weber’s adaptation of the folk tale has since been hailed by many authors and critics as a triumph of German Romantic music. In his 1959 book *Introduction to Music*, David Boyden went so far as to state that “The German Romantic opera really began with [Carl Maria von Weber’s] *Der Freischütz*. . . . [From it], one can date the beginning of musical Romanticism,” following earlier *Singspiele* by Mozart and Schubert, and despite Beethoven’s *Fidelio* (1805).¹⁶ Furthermore, Weber’s use of a tale and elements of folk music throughout the opera contributed to its becoming a symbol of German nationalism in the early- to mid-19th Century; this element of *Der Freischütz* is further considered later in chapter 4 in relation to the adaptation undertaken by Wilson, Waits, and Burroughs.

One of the central elements to Weber’s “German Romantic” opera was the use of associative musical themes, or motives, to represent and advance the drama. Joseph E. Morgan writes that a common perception of German opera’s history is that it “proceeded directly from Weber to Wagner. Any compositions in between represented a ‘retreat’ from the natural progress of German opera. . . . These perceptions are all based on the idea that Weber was, throughout his

¹⁴ Clive Brown, “Freischütz.”

¹⁵ Clive Brown, “Freischütz.”

¹⁶ David Boyden, *An Introduction to Music* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 339.

career, working toward an aesthetic goal only realized in Wagner's later innovations of form and leitmotivic technique."¹⁷ Indeed, Weber uses associative motives from the outset of his opera with the overture sounding distinct music for the huntsmen, the terror of the Wolf Glen, and the protagonists' struggle with the Black Huntsman among others.¹⁸ Burton Fisher writes that Weber's overture

employs motives and melodies that will reappear in the opera, and forecasts important dramatic moments. The technique certainly represents a striking novelty for its time....Mozart was that rare exception, using the music from *Don Giovanni*'s Supper scene in his overture. Certainly, Weber's success helped to propagate the practice....The principal musical themes represent the underlying conflicts of the opera: the clash of the powers of virtue with the opposing dark forces of evil; good triumphs, and the overture concludes in a mood of rejoicing.¹⁹

In other words, not only is the story itself an important one for German history and culture, but the best-known musical adaptation of the story is renowned and celebrated in and of itself.

To say that re-staging this work for a German audience is a daunting task would be an understatement. Archival evidence also suggests that the Thalia Theater dramaturg Wolfgang Wiens had some hesitations about the proposed adaptation. A fax from William Burroughs's assistant James Grauerholz to the executive director of Robert Wilson's foundation, Dennis Redmond, highlights this in stating:

Tom [Waits] is well aware that Wolfgang [Wiens's]—and the Thalia [Theater's]—wish is for a German opera....However, as William [Burroughs] points out, if an American theme or treatment was not desired, why has the Thalia engaged an American songwriter and [an] American writer?—not to mention the American director.²⁰

¹⁷ Joseph E. Morgan, "Weber, Schumann, and the Latent Motive." *Indiana Theory Review* 28, no. 1/2 (2010): 111.

¹⁸ Burton D. Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses* (Miami, FL: Opera Journeys, 2005), 86.

¹⁹ Burton D. Fisher, *A History of Opera*, 86.

²⁰ Fax from James Grauerholz to Dennis Redmond, 31 May 1989, Robert Wilson Papers, Box 259, Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Library, New York, New York. Emphasis by Dennis Redmond.

Despite the theater commissioning Wilson for the work, the German company was nevertheless hesitant to have Americans handle a cultural commodity that was viewed as distinctly German.

In Weber's opera, the devil's bullet is thwarted by a holy man who ultimately absolves Max of his dealings with the devil as he only performed them out of love for Agatha. The 1990 adaptation generally follows the *Freischütz* tale and Weber opera, though there are some alterations. *The Black Rider* tells the story of a clerk, Wilhelm, who wishes to marry his love, Kätchen. Kätchen's father, Bertram, objects to the relationship as he wants his daughter to marry a huntsman, keeping with a long family tradition overseen by ancestor Kuno. After going into the forest and being unable to shoot down any game, Wilhelm makes a deal with the devil, Pegleg, to acquire magic bullets that will hit any target that Wilhelm wishes—except for one bullet, which will hit a target of Pegleg's choosing. After “proving himself” as a huntsman by bringing home wild game that he had shot down with the magic bullets, Wilhelm receives Bertram's blessing, but must shoot a wooden dove out of a tree on the day of the wedding. When Wilhelm shoots at the dove, however, the bullet—the one belonging to Pegleg—kills Kätchen. Wilhelm then goes mad and is taken away in a straitjacket. So, while Weber's opera employs divine intervention to provide the story with a happy ending, *The Black Rider* restores the tale's original, tragic conclusion. Figure 1.1 provides the Dramatis Personae for the production, and Appendix A gives a scene-by-scene walkthrough of the plot.

Bertram....	A forester who wants his daughter to marry a huntsman
Anne.....	Bertram's wife
Kätchen.....	Their daughter, who is in love with Wilhelm
Wilhelm....	A clerk who seeks Kätchen's hand in marriage but does not have Bertram's approval
Pegleg.....	The devil
Kuno.....	The Old Forester and Bertram's ancestor. Won a shooting competition in his youth to earn the forest.
Old Uncle....	Wilhelm's uncle who advises Wilhelm against deals with the devil
The Duke....	Awarded Kuno the forest in his youth and offers up a shooting competition for Wilhelm to earn Kätchen's hand in marriage
Robert.....	A hunter who also wishes to marry Kätchen
Georg Smid..	Another man who made a deal for magic bullets and went mad as a result

Figure 1.1: Black Rider Dramatis Personae

While the names of each character in 1990 production are changed from the Apel story and Weber opera, there are overlaps in the names used. In Weber's opera, the forester (Bertram in the Wilson production) is named Cuno, which is the name of Bertram's ancestor in the updated version. The names for Wilson's production primarily come from the 1963 edition of "The Fatal Marksman," which appears in *Coleridge and Opium Eating and Other Writings* by Thomas de Quincey; a photocopy of the story appears on pages 39–56 of Wilson's 1986 proposal. Some of the names are changed slightly (for example, the Anglo Kate is now the more Germanic Kätchen, and William is renamed Wilhelm). In aligning these names with previous iterations of the tale, the collaborators show themselves to be actively engaging with the history of the *Freischütz* tale. Perhaps the most significant of the connections is that of 1990's Kuno and

1821's Cuno. With the former being the ancestor in the updated production, there is a general acknowledgement that this production relates to the past and perhaps even indicates that the tragic mistakes of the show's characters are ones that have been repeated across generations.

To summarize, these three American artists are adapting and staging a work that is already replete with historical, artistic, and national significance. The tale is tied to both Germanic literary and musical history, and the audience viewing the production will likely be familiar with the story itself. The marquee collaborators though, Wilson, Burroughs, and Waits, could not be further from the German Romantic aesthetics in which *Der Freischütz* first took hold. In fact, each collaborator brings his own unique and distinct sensibility and combining their aesthetics ultimately yields unexpected results in *The Black Rider*.

The Collaborators

Archival material shows that Wilson felt that Waits and Burroughs should be equal partners in the creative endeavor from the outset of the production. A pre-production fax negotiating Burroughs's involvement demonstrates this, stating: "Bob [Wilson] feels that Burroughs should be considered a part of the collaboration not 'for hire.' Bob therefore agrees that Burroughs should be included in the commission of the work and should receive an equal share with Bob and Tom Waits." With that in mind, it helps to have a general understanding of each of these collaborators. Given this study's emphasis on the show's music, however, extra attention is given to Waits's biography and place in academic study.

Robert Wilson

In 1996, an article in the *New York Times* described Robert Wilson (b. 1941) as “[the] country’s—or even the world’s—foremost vanguard ‘theater artist.’”²¹ *Times* critic John Rockwell went on to write that “Wilson has defined a new kind of hybrid stage work, one that combines glacial movement, painterly visions, [and a] stylized articulation of text or song.... Within the universe of avant-garde theater, at least, the term ‘Wilsonian’ means something almost as distinct and original as ‘Brechtian.’”²² While Wilson first emerged in New York’s theater scene in the late 1960s, he did not gain considerable recognition until his silent play *Deafman Glance* in 1972; he gained further attention after his collaboration with minimalist composer Philip Glass on the 1976 opera *Einstein on the Beach*. In the 1980s, he undertook creating a six-part, day-long opera that was supposed to be a collaboration between Wilson and six other composers. However, this project did not materialize due to a lack of funding and has since been regarded as a career misstep.²³

As a self-described “Theater Artist,” Wilson often takes on the role of stage director as well as set and lighting designer in his productions. He argues that “Without light there is no space....Light is the essential element in the theater, because it lets us see and hear. It's what produces color and emotion.”²⁴ Writing about Wilson’s visual approach, Katherine Arens states:

Wilson usually sketches each scene as one in a series of black-white pattern variations, which are then blown up into stage backdrops. These backdrops are minimalist series, often based on pairs of objects or fields (such as foreground/background reversals); the forms’ progress through their transformations ties the performance together.²⁵

²¹ John Rockwell, “Staging Painterly Visions, *New York Times*, November 15, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/15/magazine/staging-painterly-visions.html>.

²² Rockwell, “Painterly Visions.”

²³ Katherine Arens, “Robert Wilson: Is Postmodern Performance Possible?” *Theatre Journal* 43, no. 1 (1991): 15.

²⁴ John Rockwell, “Painterly Visions.”

²⁵ Arens, “Robert Wilson,” 26.

Arens goes on to describe Wilson's approach to music and text in his works, writing that he "finds' either music or a text from the time period he wishes to highlight in the piece. If music, he lets it play freely through the time period of the production; if a text, he fragments it as a minimalist musician would, breaking the text into units which he varies freely."²⁶

Two more aspects of Wilson's typical aesthetics are worthy of note. The first is that he often focuses intently on actors' movements, forcing them to move deliberately and methodically at sometimes staggeringly slow paces; this practice has earned him the title of "the Sultan of Slow" from some critics.²⁷ The second is Wilson's "knee plays," a term that he coined for the interludes in *Einstein on the Beach*. While these are ill defined across Wilson's oeuvre, I will use the definition given in the 2004 program to *The Black Rider*, which states that knee plays are what Wilson "calls the interludes he sometimes adds between acts to provide an antistructure that questions the main text."²⁸ *The Black Rider* contains seven knee plays.

Despite the resounding success of the *Freischütz* re-telling, academic work on Wilson's output has by and large focused on his better-known works, such as *Einstein on the Beach* and *CiViL Wars*. Cardo-Rambo's dissertation on Wilsonian collaboration and Roxanne Ray's dissertation on death in drama are the only published studies known to me that specifically look at the director's involvement in *The Black Rider*.

²⁶ Arens, "Robert Wilson," 27. She notes that, when funding is available, Wilson commissions scores from composers instead of using found sounds.

²⁷ Jonathan Kalb, "Robert Wilson's 21st-Century Academy," *New York Times*, August 13, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/13/theater/theater-robert-wilson-s-21st-century-academy.html>

²⁸ Brodersen, *Words on Plays*, 2.

William Burroughs

William S. Burroughs (1914–1997) was an American writer and visual artist who is perhaps best known for his 1959 novel *Naked Lunch* and for being an early Beat writer along with Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Often viewed as an outlaw figure, Burroughs has a long history with drugs and guns, having used both throughout his life. In 1951, Burroughs shot his first wife Joan Vollmer Adams in a drunken attempt at recreating the “William Tell Act,” in which he tried to shoot a highball glass off of her head; he missed and killed her instantly.²⁹ Much of his writing revolves around his travels while high on various concoctions of opiates; even after his first wife’s death, guns also continued to play a role in his art through the end of his life. While living in Lawrence, Kansas, Burroughs developed a painting technique consisting of placing cans of spray paint in front of a black canvas and then firing at them with a shotgun.³⁰ These paintings were first exhibited in 1987 in New York City.

Naked Lunch is the first work in Burroughs’s output to make use of the cut-up technique. This method consists of cutting up and rearranging a text to create a new one. Burroughs cites T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land* (1922) and the *U.S.A. Trilogy* (1930, 1932, 1936) by novelist John Dos Passos as some of the earliest examples of the technique, though Burroughs was introduced to the procedure by artist Brion Gysin.³¹ Often Burroughs inserted texts from works other than his own. His obituary in the *New York Times* states that “In 1960, he started inserting shards of sentences and paragraphs from newspapers and other authors into his own prose because, he said, he wanted to break the patterns that one normally finds in a book and to

²⁹ Richard Severo, “William S Burroughs, the Beat Writer Who Distilled His Raw Nightmare Life, Dies at 83,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1997.

³⁰ Zoe Pilger, “Naked and the Dead: William Burroughs’s Artwork,” *Independent*, March 2, 2014.

³¹ Williams S. Burroughs, “The Paris Review Interview with William S. Burroughs,” interviewed by Conrad Knickerbocker in *A Williams Burroughs Reader*, ed. John Calder (London: Picador, 1982), 263.

emulate the peripheral impressions experienced in life itself.”³² In addition to his fragmented texts, Burroughs frequently drew on several literary and cultural traditions. In his 2020 book *Understanding William S. Burroughs*, Gerald Alva Miller writes: “Drawing from sources as diverse as surrealism and the avant-garde, hard-boiled crime fiction, pulp science fiction, satire, and the picaresque tradition, Burroughs created a unique, hybrid voice unlike anything before that explores topics as diverse as power, sexuality, language, and identity.”³³ Through his pulling together of disparate materials and exploring the topics that he does, Burroughs is often considered a postmodern writer.

Despite *The Black Rider* being Burroughs’s only theater work, it has gone relatively unexamined by the academy. The only known published research on Burroughs’s libretto for the 1990 stage play is the aforementioned article by Nancy Grace that uses *The Black Rider* as an example of the postmodern Beat fairy tale. Many publications fail to list the stage work when giving a select bibliography of the writer’s work, including Gerald Miller’s book, which instead only lists Burroughs’s brief audio contribution to Tom Waits’s 1993 album of *Black Rider* material.

Tom Waits

Tom Waits (b. 1949) is an American singer-songwriter whose musical style has varied wildly since the release of his first album, *Closing Time*, in 1973. While this first album presents Waits as a folk singer-songwriter, the six that follow show Waits relying more heavily on blues and jazz idioms. In 1983, Waits married Kathleen Brennan, who has been listed as a writer and

³² Severo, “William S. Burroughs.”

³³ Gerald Alva Miller, *Understanding William S. Burroughs*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2020, 3.

producer on almost every Waits album since, and he left his record label, Asylum, for Island Records, on which he released *Swordfishtrombones* (1983). This album is generally seen by critics as a significant departure for Waits and a turning point in his career.³⁴ The album features Waits experimenting with new styles such as German Cabaret and atonality, as well as unusual instrumentation. Instead of relying on a piano and strings, Waits's accompaniment becomes more rhythmic as he incorporates bass marimbas, brake drums, and African talking drums into his work as well as bagpipes and glass harmonica. Waits's next two albums, *Rain Dogs* (1985) and *Franks Wild Years* (1987), continue to experiment in this manner; the music for *Franks Wild Years* comes from a stage play written by Brennan and Waits, which premiered at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater on June 22, 1986.³⁵

While Waits's musical style has changed over time, the subjects of his songs have remained relatively consistent. Of his lyrics, one reviewer writes that

Tom Waits is widely acknowledged as the poet par excellence of the dispossessed. From his first album, *Closing Time* in 1973, through *Blue Valentine* [1980], *Rain Dogs* [1985], *Mule Variations* [1999] and many more, he has probed the dismal underbelly of America's cities and suburbs, producing seedily lyrical vignettes of tattered and busted lives, of prostitutes, drunks, low-life gangsters, hustlers, hucksters and schmucks. The keynotes of his songs are failure, frustrated hopes, booze-fueled regrets, loss, self-delusion.³⁶

Waits's work and performances have often been described as theatrical, and he himself expressed interest in theater and film work early on in his career. In a 1979 interview, he states that "Right now I'm doing my thing, writing and trying to develop—theatrically develop. Eventually I would like to go and do what I'm doing now—very disciplined—and do it, like, in

³⁴ See Jeremy Allen, "The Noisy Guide to Getting Into Tom Waits"; Jay S. Jacobs, *Wild Years: The Music and Myth of Tom Waits*; Barney Hoskyns, *Lowside of the Road: A Life of Tom Waits*; Corinne Kessel, *The Words and Music of Tom Waits*, Paul Maher, *Tom Waits on Tom Waits: Interviews and Encounters*; and Kate Streader, "The Evolution of Tom Waits' Varying Sound Across his 45-year Career" among others.

³⁵ While the 1985 album title is stylized without the possessive, the play is titled *Frank's Wild Years*.

³⁶ Adam Newey, "Can Tom Waits Do With Poetry What He Does in Song?" *The Guardian*, June 10, 2011.

New York, in a theater, on Broadway”³⁷ It is around this time that Waits explores the theater both on and off screen. He has had a brief acting career, starting with a small role in 1978’s *Paradise Alley*, and progressing through a lead role in Jim Jarmusch’s recent zombie film, *The Dead Don’t Die* (2019). He entered the world of film composition with Francis Ford Coppola’s film *One from the Heart* (1982); while the film was panned by critics, Waits’s score was nominated for an Academy Award for Original Music Score. *The Black Rider* was Waits’s first collaboration with Wilson and he went on to provide music for the Wilson productions *Alice* in 1995 and *Woyzeck* in 2000.

Tom Waits as Composer of Large-Scale Works

Waits’s first foray into composing for projects other than rock/pop albums was Sylvester Stallone’s directorial debut, *Paradise Alley* (1978). In addition to a cameo role as the piano player, “Mumbles,” Waits contributed two songs to the project: “Annie’s Back In Town” and “(Meet Me In) Paradise Alley.” While Stallone performed the film’s theme, which was written by *Rocky* composer Bill Conti, Waits performs his own songs on the soundtrack. Recorded a week and a half after sessions for the album *Blue Valentine* finished, it is of little surprise that both of these soundtrack pieces are in the same style that Waits was best known for at the time: melodramatic piano ballads accompanied by sweeping strings to maximize sentimentality.³⁸

³⁷Tom Waits, “Poet and Person Merge into Paradox: Tom Waits Is Tired of the Life That Has Made His Songs Unique,” interview by Pete Opper, *Dallas Morning News*, December 2, 1978 (issue date: January 21, 1979).

³⁸ In fact, the melody and chord changes in “(Meet Me In) Paradise Alley” resemble both 1976’s “I Wish I Was in New Orleans” and 1980’s “Saving All My Love for You” from the albums *Small Change* and *Heartattack and Vine* respectively. “Annie’s Back in Town” also has a piano figure similar to one found in “Saving All My Love.” Neither song from Stallone’s film made its way onto other albums or into most set lists, although “Annie’s Back in Town” is occasionally included in a live medley. Perhaps the most notable performance of the song is from Waits’s December 1978 appearance on *Austin City Limits*.

Waits's second project for the screen was the 1980 television documentary *On The Nickel* by Ralph Waite.³⁹ Following the documentary's story of two old friends finding each other on L. A.'s skid row, Waits's title track, "On The Nickel," shows sympathy for these characters as he presents yet another ballad with string accompaniment and a whole-step modulation to heighten dramatic tension.⁴⁰

With these projects requiring only one or two original songs each, it is not until director Francis Ford Coppola hired Waits to score his upcoming film, *One From the Heart* (1982), that Waits needed to change his work habits and compositional approach. Speaking about this new project, Waits stated:

It's my first experience in writing something [this] large... and it's terrifying. But I accepted the challenge and I guess I became perhaps more disciplined as a composer....So that aspect of it was very different for me in having to create a piece that was going to then again fit on another piece that was gonna fit on another piece.⁴¹

Unlike in previous projects, Coppola's script for the film was still in flux as the production came together. Waits explained in 1982 that

There was never any gospel script. There was a blueprint, a skeleton. And right out front, Francis explained that the story would be changing as the production unfolded. But before I started writing anything, I met Francis in Las Vegas....He [sketched] out sequences of events and would spot, in [very] rough, cryptic notations, where he wanted music. It was helpful. I was able to get an idea of the film's peaks and valleys.⁴²

Waits expanded on the role of music in the film a bit further in a 1981 *Rolling Stone* interview:

It was terrifying when I realized the urgency of the conditions—that so many people were depending on the musical decisions I made, because the music was going to be woven into the fabric of the piece and the singers were integral characters in the development of the story. I was writing music for scenes that hadn't been finished, and they were developing scenes for songs that hadn't been written—leaving space for an alleged

³⁹ Director Robert Altman incorporated some of Waits's music into the 1978 film *A Wedding*, but Waits did not contribute any new material to the project.

⁴⁰ Unlike the songs written for *Paradise Alley*, "On the Nickel" is included on the 1980 album *Heartattack and Vine* and was performed often in the supporting tour; Waits typically introduces the piece as a "hobo's lullaby."

⁴¹ "One From The Heart: Reportage" (France, January 1982).

⁴² Tom Waits, interviewed by Dave Zimmer in "Tom Waits: Hollywood Confidential," *Bay Area Music (BAM)*, Feb 26, 1982.

musical number with no real designated form. Traditionally, films are cut and then the music is arranged to fit in, but that wasn't the case here.⁴³

Despite the haphazard nature of *One from the Heart*'s creation, both the writing process and the production structure of the film prepared Waits for *The Black Rider* a decade later. In the June 1982 issue of *Recording Engineer/Producer*, Larry Blake explains the composition process for *One from the Heart*, stating "Sometimes we would go in the studio and lay down a demo on two-track so that Tom could have a tape to take home and listen to. Often it was just a melodic segment with Tom, on piano, and his bass player."⁴⁴ Waits repeats this process for *The Black Rider* as he and bassist Greg Cohen would spend their evenings after rehearsals writing and recording demos to take home and study. Furthermore, the flexibility of Coppola's story line and its reliance on a storyboard over a script parallels Robert Wilson's working documents for *The Black Rider*. Since he was working primarily from visuals and without a script, Wilson's outline of *The Black Rider* was similarly flexible in terms of where and how songs would fit.

A key difference here, however, is that Wilson's vision of *The Black Rider* was ultimately more clearly defined than Coppola's film, likely due in part to the fact that he was building on a preconceived tale with a rich tradition. Archival documents confirm that Wilson had a clear vision for the project before Waits and Cohen were formally brought in. A fax from Cohen shows the musicians working to fit music into Wilson's model;⁴⁵ this is in stark contrast to interviews around the time of Coppola's film confirming the director's willingness to bend the story to suit Waits's music. Further highlighting the difference between the two directors'

⁴³ Steve Pond, "Tom Waits on 'One From the Heart,'" *Rolling Stone*, April 1, 1982,

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/tom-waits-on-one-from-the-heart-63521/>.

⁴⁴ Larry Blake, "Sound Recording And Post Production For One From The Heart," *Recording Engineer/Producer*, June 1982, 81.

⁴⁵ Greg Cohen Letter to Robert Wilson, *Black Rider Project Files*, Box 1, "Correspondence/Lyric" folder, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, NY.

attitudes towards the music is Wilson's early comments in which he regards the visuals, music, and text in different strata for the story as opposed to Coppola's view of the music as a driving force.

While Waits acknowledges that *One From The Heart* was his first time composing for something so large, it does not represent his first attempts at writing music on a larger scale than individual songs. As early as his second album, 1974's *The Heart of Saturday*, Waits indicates that he is thinking of some of his music in a larger context. In a 1974 radio interview before the release of *Saturday Night*, Waits states that "...conceptually, I guess, I had in mind an album storyline with some sort of collection of songs like chapters—that weren't just a random handful of ballads but something that tied together."⁴⁶ The album *Small Change* is largely filled with characters dealing with alcoholism, which fits into Waits's 1976 statement that in this album he was trying to "[dispel] some things in these songs that I had substantiated before. I'm trying to show something to myself, plus get some things off my chest....I was really starting to believe that there was something amusing and wonderfully American about a drunk."⁴⁷ Furthermore, Hoskyns claims that, for the cover shoot for *Foreign Affairs* (1977), "Waits wanted to convey the film-noir mood that coloured so many of the songs."⁴⁸ In a 2004 interview with *Mojo* magazine, Waits expanded on his vision for the album *Blue Valentine* (1978) and how he regarded his albums from the mid- to-late 1970s more broadly as he stated: "I used to think I was making movies for the ears – writing them, directing them, releasing them. Kind of making a fiction in a non-fiction world. Taking the real world and then getting rid of certain things that I didn't want to be there and adding certain things that I hoped would have been there."⁴⁹ Waits even

⁴⁶ Tom Waits, interviewed by Howard and Roz Larman in *Folkscene* (Los Angeles, CA: KPFF-FM, July 23, 1974).

⁴⁷ David McGee, "Smelling Like a Brewery, Lookin' Like A Tramp," in *Rolling Stone*, January 27, 1977.

⁴⁸ Barney Hoskyns, *Lowside of the Road: A Life of Tom Waits* (London: Faber and Faber), 189.

⁴⁹ Sylvie Simmons, "Tom Waits," *Mojo*, 2004. <http://sylviesimmons.com/tom-waits/>

expressed interest writing for Broadway as early as 1978. While, to date, Waits has not written a theater piece for Broadway, his first foray into theater composition came eight years after this remark.

Notably absent from most discussions of Waits's venture into larger composition projects is his 1986 stage play *Frank's Wild Years*, written by Waits and his wife Kathleen Brennan. This absence is a largely due to a lack of materials for the show; it had a short run at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater and the script has never been made available to the public. A rough transcription of a bootlegged audio recording of a performance does provide some clues as to Waits's approach to this production's music.⁵⁰ The plot of the show focuses on a lounge singer; much of the music is diegetic and does not provide a deeper understanding of characters, situations, or settings, nor does it advance the plot in any meaningful way. This approach is, at times, in direct contrast to Waits's approach to the music in *The Black Rider* six years later, which is explored further in chapter 3.

Tom Waits in the Academy

Perhaps due in part to his lack of commercial success or scholars' general reluctance to engage with popular music, only a handful of academic articles address Waits and his music. One of the earliest academic treatises on Tom Waits is Corinne Kessel's 2000 Master of Arts thesis, which was later expanded and published as *The Words and Music of Tom Waits*.⁵¹ In the thesis, Kessel presents the evolution of Waits's style over time and offers close readings of some of the archetypal characters in Waits's songs. Unfortunately, providing overviews of Waits's

⁵⁰ "Frank's Wild Years: Texts," Tom Waits Library, accessed April 2018, <https://www.tomwaitxfan.com/tom%20waits%20library/www.tomwaitslibrary.com/frankswildyears-texts.html>.

⁵¹ Corinne Kessel, *The Words and Music of Tom Waits* (Praeger, 2008).

entire recorded output keeps Kessel from delving deeply into any of Waits's musical works so much as she provides an adequate overview of each project.

Gabriel Solis's 2007 article, "'Workin' Hard, Hardly Workin'/Hey Man, You Know Me': Tom Waits Sound, and the Theatrics of Masculinity," takes a more focused look at Waits's performing persona and music, arguing that "by inhabiting a series of clearly theatrical faces, [Waits] allows us to look at masculinity as a set of performances."⁵² This article does an excellent job addressing the ways that Waits performed in the early stages of his career and linking these traits to different ways of performing masculinity. Where the article falls short, however, is in addressing Waits's later works; Solis himself notes that:

A full investigation of that [later work] work, which includes such pieces as the rock-oriented album *Bone Machine*, the operas *The Black Rider*, *Alice*, and *Blood Money* (based on *Der Freischutz*, the relationship between Lewis Carroll and Alice Lidell (the inspiration for the Alice of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*) and *Woyzek*, respectively), will have to wait for another forum.⁵³

While these works will likely be addressed to some extent in Solis's upcoming book, *Tom Waits and Rock at the End of the "American Century,"* there have been no extensive studies of these late works.⁵⁴

Two articles have considered Waits's use of rhythm, meter, and how these elements interact with the poetic text. Chantal Lemire's 2013 Master's thesis, "At the 'Crossroads': The Interaction Between Speech Rhythm and Musical Rhythm in Tom Waits's Spoken-Word Song," which sets the groundwork for her ongoing dissertation, uses Waits's spoken-word pieces as case studies, and examines where musical accents and phrases line up or work against the accents and

⁵² Gabriel Solis, "'Workin' Hard, Hardly Workin'/Hey Man, You Know Me': Tom Waits, Sound, and the Theatrics of Masculinity," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 19, no. 1 (2007).

⁵³ Solis, "'Workin' Hard, Hardly Workin'/Hey Man, You Know Me," 54–55.

⁵⁴ I reached out to Dr. Solis in 2019 and 2020 hoping to discuss his project with him and hope for a response.

phrases in Waits's text recitations.⁵⁵ Similarly, Margaret Thomas's 2016 *Music Theory Online* article, "Text and Temporality: Toward an Understanding of Rhythmic Irregularities in the Music of Tom Waits," uses three songs as case studies to illustrate how Waits shifts hypermetrical downbeats to align with—or go against—the poetic text as a means of expression.⁵⁶

Lastly, my own chapter in the 2017 book *Coming of Age: Teaching and Learning Popular Music in Academia*, edited by Carlos Rodriguez, compares and contrasts the ways that Tom Waits and Bruce Springsteen use physical locations in specific and meaningful ways in their work.⁵⁷ This study of Waits's music, however, deliberately excluded the operatic works as it compared works that were written specifically for studio albums. In short, Solis's call for research into *The Black Rider*, *Alice*, and *Woyzeck* remains largely unmet.

Greg Cohen And Issues of Musical Authorship in "The Black Rider"

As is the case with most large endeavors, there are many creative contributors to *The Black Rider* beyond the marquee names of Wilson, Waits, and Burroughs. In a departure for Waits, Kathleen Brennan is noticeably missing from the credits for the stage production despite nearly all the songwriter's work from 1980 onwards crediting her as either a co-writer or

⁵⁵ Chantal Lemire, "At the 'Crossroads': The Interaction Between Speech Rhythm and Musical Rhythm in Tom Waits's Spoken-Word Song" (MA University of British Columbia, 2013), <http://hdl.handle.net/2429/45218>.

⁵⁶ Margaret E. Thomas, "Text and Temporality: Toward an Understanding of Rhythmic Irregularities in the Music of Tom Waits," *Music Theory Online* 22, no. 4 (December 2016), <http://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.16.22.4/mto.16.22.4.thomas.html>.

⁵⁷ Jacob Arthur, "'Home I'll Never Be': Location, Meaning, Persona, and Realism in the Music of Tom Waits and Bruce Springsteen," in *Coming of Age: Teaching and Learning Popular Music in Academia*, ed. Carlos Xavier Rodriguez (Ann Arbor, MI: Maize, 2017).

producer of his work.⁵⁸ Instead, the primary credited musical collaborator for this project is Greg Cohen, Waits's bassist and occasional co-writer.⁵⁹

In the original production, Cohen is listed as the musical director and arranger and can be seen discussing some elements of the composition with Waits in the 1990 documentary following the workshops leading up to opening night.⁶⁰ On Waits's 1993 album of *Black Rider* material, Cohen is credited as the sole writer of the nineteen-second "Interlude," raising the question of what other, if any, instrumental pieces did Cohen compose, let alone what was the nature of his collaboration with Waits in terms of arrangements (whether Waits made any suggestions regarding instrumentation, and so forth).⁶¹ Archival footage shows Waits attending early rehearsals with the orchestra and cast, but the rehearsals are clearly led by musical director Hans Brandenburg. With Waits rarely, if ever, needing to create a written score, surely Cohen and Brandenburg would have been useful in translating Waits's musical ideas to paper for pit bands, and they do a commendable job of capturing the sound world that Waits has inhabited for the past few experimental albums.⁶²

Upon further inquiry, it seems that Cohen's (and Brandenburg's) contributions to the project may have been larger than the listings in programs and CD inserts would lead us to believe. When Cohen was asked in June 2018 about what *Black Rider* pieces he composed and how the arrangements were put together, his response only raised more questions:

⁵⁸ She is, however, credited with contributing a painting to the insert of the 1993 CD of *Black Rider* material.

⁵⁹ Cohen became the regular bassist in the Waits lineup beginning in with the 1978–1979 tour and was consistently featured on albums through 1993.

⁶⁰ Theo Janssen and Ralph Quinke, *The Black Rider [documentary]* NCOX 3005, Robert Wilson Audio/Visual Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁶¹ The album contains all of the numbers from the show except "But He's Not Wilhelm!," "Chase the Clouds Away," "In The Morning," and "News From the Duke." The album also contains condensed versions of most of the interludes.

⁶² Waits's musical literacy is questionable. Correspondences with collaborator Bent Clausen indicates that Waits does not read music at all.

Rather than getting into specifics with you (and, yes, I remember exactly what I wrote), I will say this[:]. . . . To get the real story, you need to have Tom talk about things. . . . Why don't you write a book about the lines between authorship and collaboration[?] Surely needed and - too often muted. I like Tom and Kathleen. And the *Black Rider* was the reason we went our separate ways.⁶³

Cohen's bitterness comes through in his suggestion of a book along the lines of the relationship between authorship and collaboration, not to mention that he cites *Black Rider* as the reason for Waits and Cohen ending their fifteen-year partnership.⁶⁴

When asked about the collaboration in 2021, Waits wrote "I worked closely [with] Greg Cohen on arrangements and orchestration but primarily, arrangements were Greg's domain. And he also composed some connective instrumentals for scene changes. Greg and Hans [Brandenberg, with Gerd Bessler] selected most of the musicians from musicians they knew locally. They were there together the entire run. . . . I assume they took liberties after I departed."⁶⁵ Waits's last remark is particularly noteworthy as it hints at how many other musicians may have had a hand in shaping the final *Black Rider* music.⁶⁶ Also, Waits does not comment at all on *writing* songs with Cohen, only stating that he worked closely with the bass player on arrangements and orchestration.

Questions of authorship are complicated further when considering that Wilson would call out for musical cues during rehearsal that had to be worked out on the spot by the performers, not by any single composer or arranger. This issue is not new in popular music, however, as it is commonplace for such musicians to work with head arrangements, which often leads to musicians creating their own parts. Music theorist David Temperley notes this in his book *The*

⁶³ Greg Cohen, email message to author, June 25, 2018.

⁶⁴ While true that Cohen and Waits collaborated less following this period, Cohen plays bass on three tracks of 1999's *Mule Variations* and plays percussion on one other. Nevertheless, Cohen's role in Waits's output is diminished following *Black Rider*.

⁶⁵ Tom Waits, email message to author, May 4, 2021.

⁶⁶ There are some archival documents, such as contracts, available regarding the nature of the collaboration that may help clarify the creative partnership. This may be worth exploring further in later *Black Rider* projects.

Musical Language of Rock, writing that popular songs are “often composed by more than one person....During the rehearsal of the song, the musicians (who may or may not include the ‘songwriters’) may contribute to the composition in important ways: the bass player may compose the bass line, and the drummer the drum part. The distinction between composer and performer is therefore blurred.”⁶⁷ Indeed, in nearly all modern, popular settings, the lines between author, collaborator, and player are blurred and *The Black Rider* is no exception.

In the book *The Sound of Broadway Music*, musicologist Steven Suskin looks to clarify this issue of authorship as he explores the frequently characteristic relationship between composers and orchestrators/arrangers as they pertain to Broadway shows.⁶⁸ Suskin ultimately portrays orchestrators as extensions of the composer, working in the sound world that the composer creates in their songs. This view is consistent with statements made by Bent Clausen, who acted as the orchestrator/musical director for *The Black Rider* in 2004 on its English-language tour. In personal correspondence, Bent states that he “wanted it to sound like Tom [Waits’s] own band” and reaffirms that the “musical interludes [are] mostly based on the themes of the songs.”⁶⁹ In light of this, all of the music can potentially be understood as purely Waits’s, or at least Waits-derived. It is particularly noteworthy that Waits was an active member in choosing the musicians for the show, as it highlights Waits’s role in ensuring that the instrumentation contained certain musical colors regardless of how active his role was in arranging those particular voices.

Despite the difficulty in cementing who contributed exactly which instrumental passages, there are some issues surrounding the question of authorship that can be resolved with relative

⁶⁷ David Temperley, *The Musical Language of Rock* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 9.

⁶⁸ Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁹ Bent Clausen, email message to author, July 3, 2018.

certainty. First, it seems unlikely that Waits would explicitly deny Cohen a writing credit in regard to lyrics, harmony, and melody as he had given Cohen writing credit in previous projects and as he gave credit to William Burroughs for his lyric contributions in three *Black Rider* songs. The evidence that we have of early drafts of these songs comes primarily from the recordings that Waits made for the Thalia Theater in September, 1989.⁷⁰ While these recordings were made with Waits and Cohen performing all of the parts, the songs are, by-and-large, “stripped down” versions with Waits playing the Chamberlin and Cohen playing bass.⁷¹ The final versions of the work adhere closely to these draft recordings, implying that Cohen’s role in these cases was truly arranging instead of composing new material. In the case of the musical interludes and underscore accompanying spoken dialogue that are not in these drafts, however, there is no concrete evidence of Waits’s hand in the composition. Following Suskin’s model though, these passages are still understood as Waits’s music as the passages use his songs and sound world as a guide. While an imperfect system, it is the best one available to the analyst until other evidence can definitively show who wrote what.

There are similar issues at play when looking at Burroughs’s contributions to the production, as much of his free-flowing work is filtered and arranged by his assistant, James Grauerholz, translator Udo Breger, and Thalia theater dramaturg Wolfgang Wiens.⁷² Moreover, despite Wilson listing the author as an equal collaborator on the project, Burroughs still needed to cater to the director’s wishes. Discussing the project in a 1996 interview, Burroughs states:

Bob Wilson was the director of the whole performance, and his voice was [very] important....I’d write something, and he’d decide whether he wanted it or not—what he

⁷⁰ Tom Waits, *The Black Rider Demos*, unofficial release.

⁷¹ The Chamberlin is a keyboard instrument originally developed in 1949. Like the better-known Mellotron, each key triggers a tape-playing mechanism that can be customized to play various instruments and sound effects. Waits’s model is a Music Master 600, produced between 1962 and 1969, bought secondhand in 1985.

⁷² William Burroughs, interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg, “A Bleak Picture” in *Burroughs Live: The Collected Interviews of William S. Burroughs, 1960–1997*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2000), 770.

wanted changed, what he needed for it. So I endeavored to write what he wanted. When he went into the final rehearsals in February, I'd get faxes saying, 'We need more of this,' or 'This whole scene has to be redone.'⁷³

So, in addition to having his work translated and organized/compiled by Breger, Grauholz and Wiens, Burroughs is also specifically writing scenes based on Wilson's directions, which again raises questions of creative ownership in the work.

The issues surrounding the authorship of *The Black Rider's* music as well as the very nature of collaboration and using the premise of a German folktale lend themselves well to a postmodern interpretation. In his 1967 essay "The Death of the Author," French literary theorist and critic Roland Barthes argues that an author is historically and socially constructed and that they ultimately have no control over their product; that authority lies with the interpreter.⁷⁴

Barthes writes that "The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture...[the author's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as to never rest on any one of them."⁷⁵ He goes on to say that "No one, no 'person', says it: its source, its voice, is not the true place of the writing, which is reading."⁷⁶ In other words, postmodernists—and poststructuralists—take away the power of authorship and give it to readers.

Barthes's remark that authors merely "mix writings" is a particularly apt characterization of the collaborative process in *The Black Rider*, as the collaborators are not only drawing on each other's work to create a piece without a single author, but they are also drawing on multiple

⁷³ Burroughs, "A Bleak Picture," 772.

⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142–148.

⁷⁵ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 146.

⁷⁶ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 147.

cultures across many historical periods. In this way, *The Black Rider* becomes a work of postmodern theater, which is explored further in chapter 4.⁷⁷

Sources for this Study

The Black Rider's orchestra consisted of both literate and non-literate musicians. As a result, many of the musical parts were improvised and worked out during rehearsals with very little (if any) of the music being written down during the production's initial run. When asked about the arranging process, musical director Hans-Joern Brandenburg wrote that "Me and Greg [Cohen] did the arrangements mostly during the night before we rehearsed the scene with Bob Wilson next morning.... Its always a process working with Wilson[.] You have to be flexible and quick.... Tempo, Orchestration, Interpretation had sometimes to be changed on the fly. Lots of the changes were just being told and improvised by the musicians (head arrangements)."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, documents describing the nature of these head arrangements are not available, although there are still several score sources for the show.

The first official *Black Rider* score—both a full score and piano/vocal score—was commissioned by the Thalia theater and was created by Brandenburg in the mid-nineties after several other theaters expressed interest in mounting the production.⁷⁹ While he did not indicate so directly, it seems safe to assume that these two scores came from the head arrangements that Brandenburg and Cohen worked out in rehearsals with the *Black Rider* band. Due in part to the improvisatory nature of the interludes and interstitial music, these mid-nineties scores

⁷⁷ Postmodern theater is not yet an acknowledged genre, though Katherine Arens argues that Wilson's *CIVIL warS* points towards it. Arens, "Robert Wilson," 15.

⁷⁸ Hans Joern Brandenburg, email message to author, September 11, 2019.

⁷⁹ Hans Joern Brandenburg, email message to author, September 11, 2019.

unfortunately do not contain all of the music that appears in the show, most notably the underscore to the fatal wedding scene. Lastly, reflecting the improvisatory nature of the arrangements, many of the numbers rely heavily on slash notation, allowing performers to create their rhythms and fills in accordance with the given harmonic changes. While this approach allows subsequent performers to exercise creative freedom over their parts much in the same way the original performers did, this method of transcription is not ideal for music-focused studies on *The Black Rider*.

A revised copy of the score was created years later by Bent Clausen, who was the musical director for the 2004 English-language production of *The Black Rider* staged in London. According to Clausen, he was given Brandenburg's scores and developed his own lead sheets from which the musicians could improvise; he notes that he also transcribed some of the material from Tom Waits's recordings and demos of the songs in addition to the existing videos.⁸⁰ Lastly, Clausen reinforces that "Instrumental pieces in a Robert Wilson play you have to work out on the spot with the Director (R. Wilson) and the FULL crew."⁸¹ Once again, as a result of Wilson's improvisatory style, much of *The Black Rider's* interstitial music is not notated in the 2004 score. Finally, a score realization that includes transcriptions of non-sung material was put together based on Clausen's adaptation in 2016. The introduction to the score notes that "these materials are a realization of an adaptation for a pickup band by Bent Clausen....The original materials [consisted] of lead sheets, and Black Rider may be performed...with varying instrumentation, using the full score as a guide to instrumental choices."⁸² So, even though this score is the most complete notated representation of the production's music to date, the *laissez-faire* attitude

⁸⁰ Bent Clausen, email message to author, July 3, 2018.

⁸¹ Bent Clausen, email message to author, July 3, 2018.

⁸² Clausen, "Black Rider Score," 2016.

towards the instrumentation leaves some things to be desired before it can be considered an authoritative text. That said, this document is relied upon for score examples in the present study; any of my own changes to the score are clearly noted. Measure numbers throughout this dissertation are shown as x[y] where x is the global measure number in the entire score and y is the measure number relative to the song being discussed; voice leading figures use global measure numbers only.

With the score providing a guideline, the best available resource for the original production of *The Black Rider* is a video of the June 1990 performance by the Thalia theater company during Wiener Festwochen.⁸³ While the differences between this performance and the premiere a few months earlier are subtle, the June performance is more polished and better rehearsed (by both the actors and musicians) and technical issues that appeared in the premiere are no longer present.⁸⁴ It appears that this performance is most likely the “video” resource that both Brandenburg and Clausen’s refer to in their transcription process as the scores generally reflect the music in this performance, though occasional issues like certain rhythms or enharmonic respellings do occasionally crop up. For these reasons, the film is understood as the primary source material in this study, with the score providing supplemental material.

The last audio resources used in this study are the demos that Tom Waits recorded with Greg Cohen at the Music Factory in Hamburg while they were working through the music for the production. These drafts show the songs in progress, often without finished melodies, instrumentation, or lyrics, but provide insight into the composition process that went into the

⁸³ This film is available at the New York Public Library, but a more easily available copy can be found on Youtube: *Tom Waits - The Black Rider (Magic Bullets) Robert Wilson_tv 1990, YouTube* (YouTube, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbQkzAbCjio>.

⁸⁴ Minor issues at the premiere that are gone by the June 1990 performance include music entrance timings and technical difficulties with the “shooting gallery” prop.

larger stage work. These demos were recorded and given to members of the Thalia theater during the production process and were leaked to the public years later; they have since been regularly available on bootleg trading sites.

Encapsulating the issues of access to *Black Rider* material is that Waits himself supposedly secretly recorded the original *Black Rider* ensemble during a performance to help him recreate the music on his 1993 release of select songs from the show.⁸⁵ This apocryphal tale is given more credence when one listens closely to “The Briar and The Rose” on the 1993 album and can hear the stage actors in the background of the recording.⁸⁶ If the composer does not even have definitive sources for the show’s music, then what hope is there for the analyst? In the twenty-eight years since Waits made that recording, the internet has since made bootleg performances (and official, re-circulated recordings) much more accessible, making this a better time than ever to dive into the musical materials of this show.

Conclusion

To summarize, *The Black Rider* was a resounding success at its premiere and brought together three unique American artists who were accomplished and well-known in their respective fields. Despite all of this, however, the production has gone under-examined by critics and scholars alike. One reason for this oversight may be that, like much of Wilson’s work, the show was never received well in the United States. With a run time of a little over two hours, however, the show is one of Wilson’s shorter works and the structure, story, and choreography are easier to follow than much of his other work; it may be one of his most accessible works.

⁸⁵ Hans Joern Brandenburg, email message to author, September 11, 2019.

⁸⁶ Tom Waits, “The Briar and the Rose” on “The Black Rider.” New York, NY: Island, 1993. sound recording; Stefan Kurt’s voice can be heard most clearly at approximately 0:15, 0:30.

Burroughs scholars may not spend much time with it because it is one of Burroughs's few collaborations, and the author himself says that he wrote portions of it specifically to please the director. Lastly, music scholars have been slow to examine Waits's music writ large and, even among the niche Waits fanbase, the material from *The Black Rider* is often seen as separate from the rest of his output because its instrumental passages and harsher harmonic dissonances depart from the music found in the *Swordfish trombones/Raindogs/Franks Wild Years* trilogy. Despite the experimental nature of Waits's 1980s output and this being one of Wilson's most accessible works, *The Black Rider* is perhaps one of Waits's *least* accessible.⁸⁷ Additionally, the score materials for the show have only recently become available in the past couple of years, meaning that there has never been a better time to explore this topic than the present.

This study provides a strong step forward in researching the show's musical material. Chapters Two and Three dig into the score to inquire what holds the show together musically and how Waits uses the music to advance or deepen the story told on stage. In the process of doing so, it also highlights concrete examples of Waits's musical influences. Chapter Four folds in the contributions from Wilson and Burroughs to gain a clearer picture of the show's aesthetics, its possible message (if one exists at all), and how the production relates to the cultural history of the *Freischütz* legend as well as the geo-political atmosphere in which the premiere took place. Chapter Five looks at the production in the years following its premiere and suggests avenues for further inquiry in *The Black Rider* and the two Waits/Wilson collaborations that followed, *Alice*

⁸⁷ While the music of the 1993 album faithfully recreates the music from the production, the story is more or less lost. In fact, while the insert to the album includes a preface by Waits discussing his collaboration with Wilson and Burroughs, he makes no effort to explain the plot of the story, instead leaving it to the listener to decipher. With Waits singing all of the songs in the 1993 rendition, some of the music's drama is lost entirely, such as in the "Briar and the Rose" duet. The result of this distancing from the show is that the album is a bit of a curiosity piece wherein some of the instrumentation and lyric are similar to those of 1992's *Bone Machine*, but the multiple instrumental tracks along with the re-working of "T'Ain't No Sin" featuring William Burroughs's vocals places it apart from anything that Waits put out up until this time or since.

and *Woyzeck*. Before viewing the *Black Rider* and later stage works from such a wide scope, however, it is first necessary to dive into the musical forces at play within the 1990 show.

Chapter 2 — Influences and Themes in *The Black Rider's* Music

“Come on along with the Black Rider. We’ll have a gay old time.”

– Pegleg, Prologue

Aside from the issues of authorship explored in the introduction, the music of *The Black Rider* raises several questions on its own. First, what types of styles is Waits drawing from? American popular music (owing to his status as American rock musician)? German classical (owing to the location of the premiere and the subject matter)? Or some combination of the two with less discrete categories mixed in? Second, what type of large-scale compositional tactics might Waits take to heighten the drama onstage? Third, are there any recurring musical phrases or motifs associated with characters, actions, or ideas? Lastly, how do the individual musical numbers relate to the drama on stage? Simply put, what makes the music of *The Black Rider* hang together? This chapter aims to answer these questions, starting with musical subtleties such as outside compositional influences and broad compositional practices before moving on to musical moments that approach traditional motivic associative techniques.

Tracing Waits's Musical Influences in *The Black Rider*

Identifying Waits's influences can be a difficult task; long-time guitarist Marc Ribot recalls Waits saying "The minute that people know what something is, they stop listening."¹ Critics often draw comparisons between Waits's early music and that of other singer-songwriters, such as Bob Dylan, jazz musicians such as Thelonious Monk, and singers such as Louis Armstrong.² However, Waits remarks that his listening habits expanded shortly after marrying Kathleen Brennan, stating: "I didn't just marry a beautiful woman, I married a record collection."³ Waits lists some of the new music that he is listening to in a December 27, 1983 letter to film location scout Robert Mendel, writing that he is listening to Kurt Weill, Prokofiev, Nino Rota, Augustin Lara, Django Reinhardt, Dock Boggs, and carousel music.⁴ With his listening habits covering such a wide range of styles and genres, it is of no surprise that his own output becomes more eclectic from this point forwards. While tracing hints of *every* influence in *The Black Rider* may be a fruitless task and not change ways of hearing or thinking about the piece, several of the musicians listed in this 1983 letter are worth interrogating further as their influence appears clearly in *The Black Rider*, starting with the composer who is cited most often when discussing Waits's post-1980 output: Kurt Weill.

¹ Mark Ribot, interviewed by Rod Brakes in "Marc Ribot: 'It's Good to Understand Not Only How to Play Guitar, but Also Why to Play Guitar,'" *Music Radar*, December 1, 2017, <https://www.musicradar.com/news/marc-ribot-its-good-to-understand-not-only-how-to-play-guitar-but-also-why-to-play-guitar>.

² Robert Ward, "Play It Again Tom," 1976 interview in *Tom Waits on Tom Waits: Interviews and Encounters* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2011), 51–59.

³ Tom Waits, interviewed by Sean O'Hagan in "Offbeat: Tom Waits," *The Guardian*, October 29, 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/oct/29/popandrock1>.

⁴ This letter appears in "Robert Mendel," *The Mule*, December 30, 2013, <https://getbehindthemule.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/robert-mendel/>; While there is little information on this particular resource, this letter was checked against confirmed correspondences written by Waits and is believed to be accurate.

Kurt Weill

Comparing Waits's music to that of Kurt Weill (1900–1950) is nothing particularly new; indeed, critics began likening Waits's music to Weill's as early as 1985.⁵ That same year, Waits contributed a rendition of "What Keeps Mankind Alive" from *The Threepenny Opera* to the album *Lost in the Stars: The Music of Kurt Weill*, which pays homage to the composer.

In a 2002 NPR interview, host Terry Gross asked Waits specifically about this comparison:

TG: Some of your music writing seems influenced by the German songs of Kurt Weill. Have you listened a lot to him, do you feel like he's influenced your writing?

TW: Well you know I didn't really listen to him until I had people tell me that I sounded somewhat like him or had some influence in there so I said: "Well I better start listening to that stuff."

TG: What did you think?

TW: I liked it, it was really angry. I guess I like beautiful melodies telling me terrible things. So it works for me.⁶

Waits himself identifies one of the strongest connections between the two composers in this NPR interview: beautiful melodies corresponding with tragic tales. Despite Kim Kowalke labelling the understanding "a misleading and incomplete image," most listeners know Weill through the lens of *The Threepenny Opera*, primarily because of the show's success and Louis Armstrong's iconic rendition of the show's hit number, "Mack the Knife."⁷ Indeed, "Mack the Knife" tells of a gruesome murder accompanied by a pleasant, C-major melody. Waits takes a similar approach throughout his career with lilting, lyrical melodies accompanying drunken misadventures ("Tom Traubert's Blues"), prostitution ("Christmas Card from a Hooker in

⁵ Stephen Holden, "Tom Waits: Pop's Minstrel of the Downtrodden," *The New York Times*, October 6, 1985. Waits certainly is not the first popular musician to explore Weill's music. In addition to Louis Armstrong's rendition of "Mack the Knife," The Doors covered the German composer's "Alabama Song" in 1967 and Nina Simone performed "Pirate Jenny" in 1964. Waits has never acknowledged if he came to Weill's work on his own or through other artists that were performing Weill's material.

⁶ Terry Gross. Interview with Tom Waits. Fresh Air. NPR, WHYY, May 21, 2002.

⁷ Kim H. Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 299.

Minneapolis”), and death (“Flower’s Grave”). This ironic musical sensibility continues in the *Black Rider* with songs such as “Come Along with the Black Rider” and “I’ll Shoot the Moon,” which contain beautiful melodies setting texts, each with multiple allusions to death.⁸

On the one hand, the connection between Waits and Weill seems almost an obvious one, especially when looking at *The Black Rider*. Following a Weillian tradition, Waits combines elements of high and low art—and the fact that Waits blurs boundaries between American and German theater and music only helps to solidify the comparison. Kowalke argues, on the other hand, that Weill’s musical style is “far less dependent on jazz and popular music than previous commentary has left us to believe. Firmly rooted in the German tradition...his music attained new dimensions of harmonic freedom as a result of his experimentation under Busoni’s tutelage.”⁹ That said, Weill’s use of jazz instrumentation,¹⁰ and his assertion that he “did not borrow harmonic or melodic material from jazz—only its rhythmic vitality and formal clarity,”¹¹ shows that he was interacting with popular music on some level. His own writings reveal him to be thinking about the American art form as he describes jazz as an “international folk music”¹² and suggests in other writings that the music has “freedom, directness, [and] simplicity.”¹³ It is not unreasonable to say that Waits, looking to put an avant-garde twist on popular styles, may occasionally cross stylistic paths with Weill, who was, in effect, overlaying avant-garde practices with popular idioms. While the comparison between the two composers is rampant in the popular

⁸ Each of these numbers and their musical/lyrical disconnect is explored further in Chapter Three.

⁹ Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 309.

¹⁰ Kowalke writes “Certainly incorporation of features of jazz-band instrumentation and orchestration, specifically the rhythm section...muted trumpets, and saxophones is the most blatant and enduring effect of jazz on Weill’s music. (Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 105).

¹¹ Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 285.

¹² Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 104, quoting Weill’s “Notiz zum Jazz.”

¹³ Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 104, quoting “Weill quoted by “R.C.B.” in *New York World Telegram*, 21 December 1935.

press as well as in the modest body of academic Waits literature, however, authors have offered very little in the way of specifics when likening these composers to one another.

One reason for critics' lack of specifics may be that they struggle to define Weill's compositional style. In his book *Kurt Weill in Europe*, Kowalke notes that "for anyone familiar with it, Weill's unmistakable musical style is far easier to recognize than to describe.... Yet unquestionably there is a 'Weill-style' that imprints each of his compositions dating from 1928 to 1935."¹⁴ One element that Kowalke identifies as a key marker of Weill's style is an ostinato containing stepwise movement by semitone. He writes that "accompaniment patterns based on repeated rhythmic cells or traditional ostinatos are crucial to Weill's mature style.... the harmonic progression of stepwise movement by semitone in the inner voices is fundamental to Weill's harmonic practice."¹⁵ While Kowalke uses an excerpt from Weill's *Der Silbersee* to illustrate these points, an excerpt from *Royal Palace* (Figure 2.1a) serves equally well. Waits uses a similar technique in the number "Carnival" (Figure 2.1b) in *The Black Rider*. Like this Weill excerpt, "Carnival" is structured around an ostinato that features a semitonal descent over the course of the harmonic progression. While Weill's composition is more complex harmonically, the similarity of the ostinato and the clarity of the semitone descents aligns Waits with Weill's style.

¹⁴ Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 299.

¹⁵ Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, 302.

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Figure 2.1: Weill’s *Royal Palace* (top) and Waits’s “Carnival” (bottom)

So, not only is the comparison between the two musicians apt in terms of their combining popular and art-music styles, *The Black Rider* provides at least one concrete point of a musical connection.

Django Reinhardt

Despite Waits mentioning Django Reinhardt (1910–1953) in the 1983 letter to Robert Mendel, the jazz guitarist rarely comes up in interviews or research about Tom Waits.¹⁶ Marc Ribot, Waits’s guitarist through much of the experimental ’80s (and one who very much left his

¹⁶ Waits asserts in a 1983 interview that the last album he bought was of Reinhardt and Stephane Grapelli. This is likely the music he is referencing in the letter to Robert Mendel. (Kristine McKenna, “One From The Heart & One For The Road,” *New Musical Express*, October 1983.)

mark on Waits's new direction, acknowledges his own indebtedness to Reinhardt's influence.¹⁷

Ribot is not a part of *The Black Rider*, however, so any traces of Reinhardt's influence are of Waits's own creation.

Reinhardt is perhaps best known for contributing to the evolution of "gypsy jazz"; it is in this realm where we can see his influence in *The Black Rider*. The clearest example of gypsy jazz's—and, more broadly, Roma music's—influence sounds during the A sections of "Just the Right Bullets."¹⁸ Aside from the minor tonality and frequent use of minor thirds in the melodic line, the instrumentation includes both a banjo and a mandolin. While the mandolin is not a standard Roma instrument, the banjo is considered typical of the style.¹⁹ Moreover, the mandolin's function in the number is similar to that of the guitar in traditional Roma music as it strikes the accompanying harmony on beats two and four throughout the song. Above this texture, the clarinet—another typical Roma instrument—improvises lines that primarily draw on the Hungarian minor (or so-called "gypsy minor") scale.²⁰ Additionally, the melodic phrases throughout the number begin on beat two of a measure and accent offbeats at their conclusion, typically with an eighth note followed by a dotted-quarter (Figure 2.2). While this may be read as

¹⁷ Waits himself recognizes Reinhardt's influence on Ribot in Steve Dollar, "Neither Vinyl nor Film Can Contain Waits," *Film Threat*, 1989.

¹⁸ The use of the racial slur "gypsy" in the genre classification is unfortunate. Because the word continues to be used in academic scholarship, including the sources I cite here, I have chosen to keep the term in this text, though I acknowledge more work should be done to re-label this body of music. There is not necessarily a single Romani folk music style as the group is nomadic and their musics are reflective of whatever country they inhabit (see Katalin Kovalcsik, "Popular Dance Music Elements in the Folk Music of Gypsies in Hungary"). There are, however, some generalizations made by Western European countries regarding the music, which often group Roma music and klezmer music together (Carol Silverman, "Gypsy/Klezmer Dialectics: Jewish and Romani Traces and Erasures in Contemporary European World Music."). These musical elements include an inclination towards the minor mode (often with a #4), emphasizing metrical off beats, and instrumentation (Katalin Kovalcsik, "Popular Dance Music"; Carol Silverman "Gypsy/Klezmer Dialectics"; and Irén Kertész Wilkinson, "'Gypsy' [Roma-Sinti-Traveler] music").

¹⁹ Irén Kertész Wilkinson, "'Gypsy' [Roma-Sinti-Traveler] Music," *Grove Music Online*, 2001.

²⁰ Irén Kertész Wilkinson, "'Gypsy' [Roma-Sinti-Traveler] Music."

illustrating Pegleg’s limp, this rhythm is another way that the song resembles traditional Romani folk elements.²¹



Figure 2.2: Phrase endings in “Just the Right Bullets, mm. 486–89

“Just the Right Bullets” is not the only song in *The Black Rider* that hints at Roma music. The instrumental number “Russian Dance” plays as Wilhelm takes off to the woods to meet with Pegleg and similarly features some of these characteristics. Like “Bullets,” the instrumentation includes a mandolin accenting the harmony on the backbeats;²² the clarinet and viola—both typical Roma instruments—often double the melody and, once again, melodic phrases end with accented offbeats. At the end of each phrase, the clarinet separates from the viola and sounds an embellishment using the Hungarian minor scale (Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3: Clarinet flourishes in “Russian Dance,” mm. 1219–21 and 1229–30

Waits’s incorporation of “gypsy jazz” elements will play a larger role when considering *The Black Rider* through a historical, postmodern lens but, for the time being, it serves as a rare clear example of Reinhardt’s influence on Waits’s music that is of the latter’s own making and not from one of his sidemen.

²¹ Katalin.Kovalcsik, “Popular Dance Music Elements in the Folk Music of Gypsies in Hungary,” *Popular Music* 6, no. 1 (January 1987), 45. The Hungarian minor mode scale is comprised of a harmonic minor scale with raised $\hat{4}$ which creates two augmented seconds: one between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{4}$, the other between $\hat{6}$ and $\hat{7}$.

²² The mandolin is only used three times in *The Black Rider*. In “Just the Right Bullets” and “Russian Dance,” it provides chordal accompaniment on backbeats; in “November,” it is a separate melodic line. Its spare use throughout the show informs my interpretation that Waits incorporates it when he is looking to introduce a Roma atmosphere into the music.

Carnival Music

In addition to American, German, and Roma folk musics, there is one more overt musical influence running through *The Black Rider* that Waits mentions in his 1983 letter to Robert Mendel: carnival music. According to a fax recounting a meeting between Waits and Burroughs on May 27th, 1989, in London, Waits himself suggested that carnivalesque themes play a role in both the music and drama of the production. In Grauerholz's recounting of that meeting he writes that

The main single point which Tom brought forward, and which William likes very much is the controlling, over-arching stage metaphor of the midway of a carnival. Tom clearly finds a lot of inspiration in this concept, as well as appreciating the fact that it is a setting and theme which his and William's work have both shared over the years—the Carny World, in other words, is a mutual point of reference for Waits and Burroughs.²³

Despite the carnival not becoming the overarching metaphor that Burroughs and Waits originally suggested, Waits brings in carnival elements throughout the show with perhaps the most overt example being the opening number, the overture.

While the score simply titles the number “Ouverture,” the name is changed to “Lucky Day (Overture)” for Waits's 1993 album, *The Black Rider*, as the overture theme is based on the melody to the song “Lucky Day,” which appears near the end of the production. The number—and therefore the entire production—opens with a drum roll as Old Uncle welcomes the audience like a carnival barker. He speaks through a megaphone: “Ladies and Gentleman, Harry's Harbor Bazaar is proud to present, under the big top tonight, human oddities!”²⁴ From here, the Gb-major music begins with stepwise motion from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ in the bass and tuba while the French horn descends chromatically from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ and the percussion strikes the bass drum and crash cymbal on

²³ Fax from James Grauerholz to Wilson's office, May 31, 1989, Box 259, Folder 5, Robert Wilson Collection, Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

²⁴ In addition to possibly referring to the magazine *Harper's Bazaar* or the 1960s group Harper's Bizarre, Harry's Harbor Bazaar is a curiosity shop located in Hamburg and was likely recognizable to the Thalia audience.

each beat (Figure 2.4), all of which are evocative of circus music. Additionally, the oom-pah rhythm and reed organ sounds of the harmonium, the lilting chromaticism of the melody, and the instrumentation including a tuba and toy piano further the sense of the number as a circus piece.

The musical score for the Overture opening (mm. 1-4) is presented in 3/4 time. It consists of four staves: Horn in F, Tuba, Drum Set, and Harmonium. The Horn part begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a quarter note G4. The Tuba part starts with a half note G2, followed by a quarter note G2, and then a quarter note G2. The Drum Set part starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a quarter note G4. The Harmonium part starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a quarter note G4. The score includes dynamic markings of *f* and *mf*, and a *G^b* chord marking.

Figure 2.4: Overture opening, mm. 1–4

Over the music, Old Uncle continues his carney introduction, advertising so-called “human oddities” such as “the dog-face boy” and tells the audiences that “all sales are final, void where prohibited by law.... Step a little closer ladies and gentlemen and don’t be shy, dig deep in your pockets.” Again, these lyrics all evoke words barked at a carnival. Carnival music plays a bigger role in *The Black Rider*, with the number “Carnival” acting as a quasi-associative theme; this is taken up under the “Associative Themes” heading of this chapter.

While not major musical forces in *The Black Rider*, these various musical influences highlight the multicultural aspect of the production’s score as well as the serious music of Weill and Reinhardt juxtaposed against the spectacle and kitsch of Carnival music; this combining of opposites will contribute to the postmodern reading of the production in Chapter Four. Moving beyond the subtleties of musical influences, we find other forces at play as Waits heightens the drama on stage through concrete compositional techniques. One of the most prominent

techniques on display in *The Black Rider* is the use of consecutive half cadences to build tension over the course of a number.

Half Cadence as Dramatic Device in *The Black Rider*

There are several instances in *The Black Rider* where Waits ends consecutive phrases with half cadences. By avoiding authentic cadences, Waits keeps the drama of the song moving forward and forces the audience to seek tonal closure throughout the production. The audience's discomfort in longing for closure is perhaps emblematic of the discomfort that runs through the entire show as the audience watches—and even laughs at—a man unknowingly enter a Faustian bargain and go insane after killing his beloved.

The first instance of consecutive structural half cadences in the *Black Rider* music comes in the first scene, in which Bertram expresses his displeasure that Kätchen is in love with Wilhelm. In the song “But He’s Not Wilhelm!,” Bertram states that Kätchen must marry whom he chooses while his wife, Anne, argues that Kätchen should choose her partner based on emotional compatibility as opposed to hunting prowess. Wilhelm enters with Kätchen, stating that, while he cannot keep her safe with a gun, he will protect her with the “sword of ice brook temper.” Kätchen recognizes his devotion and returns the sentiment but ultimately concludes that her father will never approve; as in generations past, Wilhelm must learn to shoot in order to win her hand in marriage.

The song begins as shown in Figure 2.5, with Bertram singing a rising line beginning on the dominant. The dominant quickly moves from root position to the first inversion to create parallel tenths throughout the scalar line up to $\hat{5}$ as the harmony progresses from tonic to dominant. The elaboration of $\hat{5}$ hints at it functioning as the *Kopfton* for Bertram’s melody; the

first time through the melody (mm. 198[1]–201[4]), the phrase ends on a back-relating dominant and elides with Bertram’s repetition of the phrase (mm. 202[5]–205[8]). The second time through, however, Bertram’s phrase ends on $\hat{5}$ over the dominant, leaving listeners with a half cadence instead of a back-relating dominant (as was the case in m. 201[4]). Anne responds to Bertram starting in m. 205[8], with an ascending bass line and her melody prolonging $\hat{3}$ before it descends to $\hat{2}$ in a cadential $6/4$ progression, resulting in a second half cadence. The moment at m. 205[5] is significant since it highlights the disagreement between the husband and wife; just as they are unable to agree on Kätchen’s choice of husband, they are in a disagreement over where the melodic lines should begin. Further highlighting the argument is Anne’s interruption of Bertram’s thought when his melody has similarly reached an interruption.

Figure 2.5: Bertram’s and Anne’s interruptions in the “But He’s Not Wilhelm”

Following these two phrases that end in half-cadences, a root-position F-major chord finally arrives, but as a dominant-seventh chord, preparing the modulation to Bb in m. 216[19]. Now in the new key, Wilhelm and Kätchen sing the melodies previously performed by Bertram and Anne before the parents respond again, all ending their phrases on half-cadences. Following a grand pause—during which Robert appears, is well received by Bertram, and is quickly

rebuffed by Kätchen—the song continues in F major with Anne singing Bertram’s opening melody, still pleading with her husband to bless the union of Kätchen and Wilhelm. Ending the song, all four performers sing the melody on neutral syllables above a dominant pedal point. Finally, following ten consecutive half cadences (mm. 205[8], 212[15], 223[26], 230[33], 239[42], 246[49], 257[60], 264[67], 273[76], and 280[83]), the voices cut off at $\hat{2}$ and the orchestra completes the progression to $\hat{1}$ with a staccato tonic harmony. This appearance of tonic is not nearly enough to release the harmonic tension that has developed over the course of the song, however, and the orchestra restrikes the harmony three more times on Bertram’s cues and the orchestral voices rapidly arpeggiate up and down the F-major triad, releasing the tension created by the previous half cadences. While the musical tension is finally resolved, the dramatic tension continues as the couples have failed to settle the issue of Kätchen’s marriage.

The next number that features consecutive half-cadence phrases is “November” in Scene 2. The unnamed singer performs this mourning song while tied to a stag, hoping that someone will be able to kill the deer but not him. The song’s form is AA' with an eight-measure introduction and a nine-measure interlude separating the two sections. Following the introduction, the A section is comprised of six phrases. While the first and sixth phrases end with perfect authentic cadences, the four intervening phrases all end in half cadences.

At the start of A', the audience once again hears an eight-bar phrase that ends in a half cadence, which is extended into a ninth measure for dramatic effect. Following this, the man on the stag sings his final phrase, daring young Kuno to take aim. This phrase finally brings about tonal closure with an authentic cadence, though the man reaches over to $\hat{4}$ and ultimately ends the number on an imperfect authentic cadence, which—while it brings about some semblance of closure to the piece—it nevertheless leaves an impression of irresolution with the audience and

perhaps reflects the angst and turmoil felt by the singer as he faces down the barrel of Kuno's gun, hoping that the bullet hits only the stag.

The final number that uses this multiple interruption form is "Some Lucky Day," which Wilhelm sings shortly after killing Kätchen and going mad. The song follows an AA form in which each section may be subdivided into a srdc construction.²⁵ Both the Restatement and Departure phrases end on dominants, resulting in yet another instance of consecutive half cadences. The opening phrase is tonally closed as it tonicizes the submediant before arriving at an authentic cadence and the melody descends a sixth from Kopfton $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ (Figure 2.6). The second phrase opens similarly with a submediant tonicization before arriving on a V/V that progresses to the dominant supporting $\hat{2}$. The Departure section of the verse reaches over to $\hat{5}$, before descending to $\hat{4}$ as the tonic harmony progresses to the supertonic. The ii chord moves to a V/V, which accompanies $\hat{3}$, sounding as a chordal ninth that ultimately resolves into the fifth of V. The final phrase reprises that of the opening as it extends $\hat{3}$ through a submediant tonicization. Instead of descending a sixth, however, the line now leads smoothly to $\hat{1}$, giving audiences a perfect authentic cadence at the conclusion of each of the number's two verses. A tag repeating the last two lines of the second verse closes the song, though the melody ascends up to the tonic, which is common in musical theater literature.²⁶

²⁵ SRDC is an acronym for Statement–Restatement–Departure–Conclusion. When used in capital letters, it designates large formal areas; in lower-case, it denotes form at the phrase level. Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 365.

²⁶ One of the more famous examples of this is bars 37–39 of Harold Arlen's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Music theorist Michael Buchler covered similar ascending lines in "When You Wish Upon A Star Your Melody Ascends: Aspirational Disney Songs and the Ascending Urlinie," Paper presented at *Society for Music Theory 38th Annual Meeting*, October 30, 2015.

The image shows a musical score for the verses of "Lucky Day". The score is written in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. The lyrics are "s r d c" above the notes. Measure numbers 1481, 1487, 1490, 1495, 1497, 1504, 1505, and 1512 are indicated above the staff. Below the bass staff, chord reductions are provided: I, V V, I ii V V, I, ii V₄₋₃⁶⁻⁵ I.

Figure 2.6: Reduction of “Lucky Day” Verses

Highlighting some of the musical influences and compositional tools provides a glimpse into some of the generalities of *The Black Rider*’s music but shows little when it comes to individual characters or thematic ideas. The following two sections address musical traits tied to individual characters and themes, first looking at music that nears associative themes followed by an examination of the few identified associative musical themes.

Approaching Associative Themes

Pegleg’s Dissonance and Syncopation

While a lack of specificity makes it impossible to denote certain characteristics as associative themes, there are musical qualities present in characters’ songs that are worthy of examination. For example, the two most discordant simultaneities sound in numbers sung by Pegleg. The final cadence in “Come Along with the Black Rider” ends on the whole-tone collection C–E–F#–G#–A#, prime form <02468>. Pegleg’s climactic number “Gospel Train,” opens and closes on a similarly discordant harmony, B–Eb–F#–G#–A, or prime form <02358>.

These harmonies are related as three of the pitches in “Come Along” and transposed down by half step while F# and G# remain common tones. Since these dissonant harmonies only appear twice in the show and the chords differ from one another, it is difficult to argue for them being truly associative themes. The fact that the chords are closely related and appear in songs led by Pegleg, however, indicates that they are part of that character’s musical.

Similar characteristics for Pegleg’s music include stilted rhythms, such as the one created by a 5/8 measure in opening vamp of “Come Along” (see Figure 2.10 under “Black Box Theme”). A lesser example appears in “Just the Right Bullets” as each of Pegleg’s vocal phrases end with a syncopated eighth-note to dotted-quarter rhythm on the metric downbeats (See Figure 2.2 under “Django Reinhardt”). Similarly, the dotted-eighth to sixteenth accents that pervade “Oily Night” are indicative of Pegleg’s limp as the rhythm fights against a more normative quarter-note accent. Lastly, the jilted ostinato rhythm found in “Gospel Train” fights normative metric regularly more than any other number in the show (See Figure 3.12 in chapter 3). Since these types of irregularities do not appear in numbers sung by other characters, one assumes that these off-kilter rhythms are part of Pegleg’s musical language.

Kätchen’s and Wilhelm’s Musical Traits

It is more difficult to tie musical traits to other principal characters in the show, partly due to others not having nearly as many solo numbers. Kätchen and Wilhelm each only have one solo number, “I’ll Shoot the Moon” and “Some Lucky Day” respectively, while Pegleg has four features. Bertram, Anne, and Kuno have short solos in larger ensemble numbers and other solo numbers are performed by non-principal characters (“November” by Man on Stag; “News from The Duke” by Messenger). Despite the shortage of material, one can still identify some traits that

differentiate the betrothed couple’s—and, more broadly, all of the other principal characters’—music from that of Pegleg.

Perhaps the most notable feature of this music is the frequent use of parallel thirds and tenths. While this technique is employed in the opening measures of each phrase in “But He’s Not Wilhelm,” it figures more prominently in “The Briar and the Rose.” After an opening tonic prolongation, the melody moves in parallel tenths until the opening phrase ends in m. 407(8) (See Figure 2.7). The next section begins up the octave and descends in tenths until it reaches $\hat{2}$ in m. 411[12]. As the verse concludes, Kätchen and Wilhelm sing in harmony, beginning with parallel sixths before quickly switching to mostly tenths.²⁷

Figure 2.7: Graph of “Briar and Rose” highlighting parallel tenths

²⁷ Parallel tenths in duets are certainly nothing new. One of the most-cited examples is Duo des fleurs (or the “Flower Duet”) from Leo Delibes’s 1883 opera *Lakme*, which, like the duet portion of “Briar and Rose,” is performed nearly entirely in tenths.

Other prominent examples of parallel tenths in *The Black Rider* include the closing gesture in the melodic phrases of “In the Morning.” Kätchen’s “I’ll Shoot the Moon” features tenths occurring through a repeated pattern of chordal sevenths resolving down by step into tenths; each one of these numbers similarly highlights the love between Wilhelm and Kätchen, suggesting that this compositional feature is intentional.

While the entire “Briar and Rose” melody does not reappear in the production, a hint of the number’s cadential figure (Figure 2.8a) appears in the cadences of “Flash Pan Hunter” (Figure 2.8b). In both instances, the melody ascends by step over a tonic prolongation and continues upwards, creating a ninth against the bass as it reaches the subdominant. In both instances, this dissonant subdominant arrival is prolonged with a fermata. The closing figures have lyrical parallels as the love duet likens the couple to a briar and a rose, while “Flash Pan Hunter” indicates that Wilhelm will be a crown of thorns for Pegleg and that the clerk’s willingness to make a deal with the devil will have disastrous consequences for his rose, Kätchen. Furthermore, the relationship between the two duets’ keys, Ab major and its relative mode, F minor, further highlights Wilhelm’s moral corruption.

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt, labeled 'Kät.' and 'U. Bass', shows a vocal line in treble clef and a bass line in bass clef, both in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The vocal line has a fermata over the final note, with a circled '9' below it. The lyrics are 'tears will fall to make them grow; The bri-ar and the rose.' The bottom excerpt, labeled 'R.' and 'Harm.', shows a vocal line in treble clef and a harmonium line in bass clef, both in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The vocal line has a fermata over the final note, with a circled '9' below it. The lyrics are 'Wil-helm can't wait to be Peg - leg's - crown, and the bri - ar is stran - gl - ing - the rose back down'.

Figure 2.8: “Briar’s” cadential phrase (top); “Flash Pan” cadential phrase (bottom)

Additionally, songs featuring Kätchen and Wilhelm tend to contain wider ranges and larger structural melodic leaps. While Pegleg’s songs typically have ranges of an octave or less, “Just the Right Bullets” has the largest range of an octave and “Gospel Train” has the smallest, spanning a mere perfect fourth.²⁸ In contrast, the smallest range of a song featuring Kätchen and Wilhelm is an eleventh and the largest range is a thirteenth. Moreover, Pegleg’s songs feature few structural leaps larger than a sixth. The melodic seventh in “Bullets” simply ornaments the phrase as the chordal seventh descends by step; similarly, the octave glissando in “Gospel Train” reinforces the tonic goal and the octave shift is again merely ornamental. Pegleg’s largest leap that is fundamental to the melodic line is a major sixth, which occurs between the A and B sections of “Come Along.” Wilhelm and Kätchen’s numbers, in contrast, feature larger melodic leaps—and uses them more frequently—than those of Pegleg. The contrasting section of the “Briar and the Rose” begins an octave higher than where the previous section concluded. Octave shifts also populate the melody of “But He’s Not Wilhelm.” The melody of “Chase the Clouds Away” features frequent sixth leaps as its phrase reaches its climax, and “In the Morning” jumps a sixth between the verses and refrain.

In addition to these characters’ musical traits, Waits wrote two musical themes that appear in multiple moments throughout the stage play. While they may not reach the motivic status of those of Wagner or von Weber, they are worthy of examination nonetheless.

²⁸ A notable exception to this is “Pegleg’s Clouds,” which traverses a thirteenth. However, this number is mimicking the rest of the ensemble’s melody, meaning it belongs closer to the couple’s musical qualities, not Pegleg’s.

Associative Thematic Integration in *The Black Rider*

Matthew Bribitzer-Stull identifies “associative themes” as those that relate to characters, symbols, and settings in a drama.²⁹ Examples of associative themes include Carl Maria von Weber’s “Fairies” theme at the opening of *Oberon* and John Williams’s “Imperial March” (tied to Darth Vader) from the *Star Wars* franchise among countless others. While Waits did not write many true associative themes for *The Black Rider*, there are two numbers that are explicitly labelled as such, titled “Black Box Theme” and “Carnival.”

Black Box Theme

After the farcical overture concludes, a coffin-like black box appears on stage and moves into an upright position before the cast, nonsensically, emerges from it.³⁰ The piece “Black Box 1” (hereafter called the Black Box Theme) underscores the box’s motion. Following a twelve-second marimba roll and cymbal swell, the theme, shown in Figure 2.9, is primarily comprised of the upright bass (in harmonics) and banjo playing the chromatic ostinato Ab–A–Ab–G. The marimba doubles the banjo and upright bass on the weak beats, with a Db pedal sounding on the strong beats throughout. Above this ostinato, the bass clarinet carries the melody, filling out the perfect fourth between Ab and Eb using the <015> collection [A, Ab, E] and <014> set [G, E, Eb].

²⁹ Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7. He goes on to explain how the leitmotiv falls under the category of associative themes while also being in a class of its own.

³⁰ This clown-car effect is achieved by placing the black box in front of an opening in the curtain, thereby allowing the entire cast backstage to “emerge” from a box no bigger than a telephone booth.

38 ♩ = 126

Bass Clarinet in B \flat

Marimba

Drum Set

Banjo

Upright Bass

Cymbal Swells ad lib.

♩ = 126

Figure 2.9: Black Box Theme, mm. 38–41

The clarinet sounds this melody twice, each time followed by the bassoon providing a four-and then three-measure interlude. After this takes place, the clarinet, horn, and bassoon sound the chromatic ostinato above the incessant rhythm of the marimba's pedal point. In addition to the marimba's hollow bass tones, the chromatic ostinato saturates the theme with eerie, or even supernatural, qualities. This quality primarily comes from the repeated use of the half-step motion, which composers have long used to imbue their works with suspense or horror. One needs to look no further than John Williams's 1975 theme to *Jaws* or John Carpenter's 1978 theme to *Halloween*. Moreover, the interval of a minor sixth, which is created between the marimba's Db and Bbb (enharmonically written as A natural) in the Black Box Theme, and the tritone that appears between Db and G, are commonly used intervals when adding suspense and a sense of the supernatural to musical themes. In using both of these intervals in constant succession, the Black Box Theme is saturated to a high degree with elements of horror and suspense, so that the theme begins to border on the absurd, or even comical, appropriate for the device's incongruous staging. This trope of self-parody will play a larger role when exploring postmodernism in chapter 4.

While the appearance of the black box introduces the theme, a variant continues in the opening vamp of “Come Along with The Black Rider” (shown in Figure 2.10), which immediately follows the actors’ parading onto the stage. Pegleg is the first cast member to emerge from the box and he directs the audience’s attention back to the box to watch the rest of the cast follow. Over a chromatic bass line supporting a I–ii–V–I progression, the horn, ukulele, and bass clarinet all perform a transposed rotation of the Black Box Theme’s chromatic ostinato, sounding B–Bb–A–Bb.

Figure 2.10: “Come Along” opening vamp, mm. 69–72

The theme takes on a different character in this iteration, however, as the hollow tones of the marimba are replaced with the booming, full sound of the upright bass (doubled by the trombone). The new bass pattern accompanied by chromatic ostinato doubled at the minor second in the ukulele gives the number’s opening vamp a lighthearted quality that directly counters the tone set by the eerie Black Box Theme. With Pegleg being the first to emerge from the box and the leader of the opening number, the opening of the performance sets the stage for an understanding of Pegleg as the ringleader of the entire production, the show that follows entirely under his control.

sixth above the upright bass; it then falls to by half step to form a consonant fifth above the bass. The effect here is twofold: first, it reinforces the semitone motion, acting as an echo to the more pronounced one that appears a measure earlier; secondly, it creates a minor sixth against the bass, which again is a common device for creating suspense and drama in modern scores. Lastly, the rising and falling dynamics of the vamp create an effect similar to lungs inhaling over the duration of the Eb harmony and exhaling during the G, corresponding with the rising and falling of the Eb–D dyad. This effect further adds to the supernatural quality of the vamp as the black box takes over the stage.

While the previous examples of the Black Box Theme all emerge in the opening minutes of the performance, the third appearance of the theme occurs towards the end of the show when Wilhelm goes into the forest, begging Pegleg for more magic bullets. A chorus of ghosts ad libs phrases based on the half-step ostinato while the upright bass and marimba sound the Db pedal. Unlike prior appearances of the theme, this one is not accompanied by the black box itself. Instead, after the music fades, Wilhelm and Pegleg exchange brief bits of dialogue before Pegleg descends from on high singing “Gospel Train.” In this instance, the theme no longer represents merely the black box itself but the entire space in which Pegleg dwells. With the “Gateway Vamp” representing the black box taking over the entire drama, this third iteration of the Black Box Theme reinforces the notion that the entire drama is under Pegleg’s control.

Following his swan song at the conclusion of the show, the black box reappears and Pegleg enters it for a final time; the box flies through the air as the curtain closes. Underscoring the box’s departure is a final V–I cadence in Db. Though it may be coincidental, cadencing in Db gives a final sense of rest for the incessant Db pedal point that has accompanied the Black Box Theme throughout the show.

Carnival

The only other recurring number in the score is “Carnival.” The piece appears twice in *The Black Rider* and, in both cases, the music is associated with marksmanship following Faustian bargains. The first instance, simply titled “Carnival 1,” appears in Scene 2 after Kuno, Kätchen’s ancestor, proves himself to be a marksman by killing a stag upon which a man was tied. In the scene, Kuno receives from a hidden Pegleg the gun that he uses to shoot the stag. Further proving his hunting prowess, Kuno then shoots down a bird at the direction of the Duke. The second appearance, labelled “Carnival 2,” plays after Pegleg sells Wilhelm the magic bullets; it underscores Wilhelm shooting at game in the forest as he discovers his newfound accuracy. In both cases, the music sounds shortly after these bargains take place and accompanies the marksmanship that the deals bring.

“Carnival 1” follows an AA' construction with a four-measure introduction, a two-measure interlude dividing the two sections, and a three-measure codetta. Each section features a rhythmic ostinato that is a variant of the opening rhythm (Table 2.1).

Formal Division	Measures	Ostinato Rhythm
Opening	367-370	
A	371-379	
Interlude	380-381	n/a
A'	382-389	 → Gradual breakdown of ostinato
Closing	390-392	n/a

Table 2.1: “Carnival” Form chart and ostinato patterns

A common feature among the ostinati is the consistent avoidance of accenting the first two beats of the measure and, instead, sounding consistently on backbeats, sometimes emphasizing offbeats. As the piece progresses, however, the ostinato begins to break down. In the last three measures of A', the rhythms move closer together until both beats one and two of m. 389[23] are stressed. The rhythms moving in this way produce a hastening effect, which creates tension right before it is released by a horn solo in mm. 390[24]–92[6].

The rhythm throughout this number represents several different things. The orchestra's rhythmic precision in these highly syncopated passages highlights the marksmanship that both Kuno and Wilhelm gain after their deals with Pegleg. The syncopations also keep the piece moving in a quasi-staggered manner, which suggests that they are an extension of Pegleg and his limp. Or, read another way, the dancing around the downbeat in each measure is similar to the way that Pegleg is the orchestrator of these deals and how he easily dances around Kuno and Wilhelm's psyche much in the same way that the ostinato dances around the beat. Lastly, while the syncopation creates the effect of a limp, the ostinato also gives the sense of regularity. This regularity of rhythm contributes to a locomotive-like effect; this is heightened by the timbre of the Emax strings synthesizer patch and is perhaps reminiscent of Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, which was written a year earlier.³²

Harmonically, the piece opens with the chord cluster G–A–C–Eb–F above an alternating C–G pattern in the bass (see Figure 2.1 in previous discussion of Kurt Weill). This gives way to a C-minor progression, which is prolonged through the pitch C5 that descends chromatically to G4 over the course of four measures in the first phrase and five measures in the second.

³² Pegleg is later associated with the sound of locomotives in the number “Gospel Train.” However, the rhythm in “Gospel Train” is less coherent than this precise pattern, and thus perhaps gives the impression of a train that has run off its tracks.

Following this C-minor progression, a two-measure interlude ensues (shown in Figure 2.12), featuring stepwise chromatic descents in the upper voices while the bass plays two <0124> collections separated by T3. This is followed by two descending tritones, separated by a whole step, which brings the bass to C before it ascends as a chromatic $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ motion in F, where the A' section begins.



Figure 2.12: “Carnival” Interlude section, mm. 380–81

A' opens with Fm^{add6} sounding for three measures before moving back to C minor. Adding to the texture, this section features the clarinet playing aleatoric, chromatic glissandi above the ostinato. On the one hand, this sweeping line creates an effect similar to that of wind blowing through the forest. On the other hand, the long chromatic lines are reminiscent of those found in circus music such as Barnum and Bailey’s “Entry of the Gladiators” theme, thereby highlighting the carnival quality of the piece.

While the title, “Carnival,” would be unknown to an audience member not following a written program, Wilson’s staging during the theme’s second appearance draws attention to the title in how he portrays Wilhelm shooting at game following the bargain with Pegleg. In Wilson's staging, Wilhelm shoots at tin silhouettes of deer moving in a line across a conveyor belt and the deer flip over belly-up when they are shot (see Figure 4.10 in chapter 4). As in many carnivals, however, the person firing the gun is not actually in control of the situation. The carney, or in this case Pegleg, controls whether or not the targets will fall. The shooter, Wilhelm, is unaware that Pegleg is taking advantage of him. While this scenario in a true carnival may end

with the shooter simply losing their money, this carnival results in Wilhelm losing both the woman he loves and his sanity.

To summarize, with its appearance after two significant moments related to shooting—Kuno’s seemingly impossible shot and Wilhelm’s sudden ability to bring down game—“Carnival Theme” is inextricably linked to marksmanship. The tight syncopations of the rhythms reinforce the precision and accuracy portrayed in the shooting contests. The title and carnivalesque gestures throughout the theme, however, also hint at Pegleg’s hand in the matter. Just as shooting games in a travelling carnival are often rigged by a carney, Pegleg has full control over the accuracy of these shots. In other words, the Carnival theme does not represent shooting prowess, but rather a faulty sense of it.

Conclusion

Revisiting the questions posed at the outset of this chapter, we find many of them have been addressed in the previous discussion. An examination of Waits’s musical influences shows how they manifest in the show, thus demonstrating *The Black Rider* to be a combination of vastly different musical ideas. Waits also provides particular musical characteristics to main characters, such as Pegleg’s dissonance and small vocal range, compared to Wilhelm and Kätchen’s sweet parallel tenths and wider ranges. Waits nearly treats the love duet as a theme, as “Flash Pan Hunter’s” cadences corrupt that of “The Briar and the Rose.” While Waits may not rely heavily on themes in *The Black Rider*, he does attempt other compositional devices, such as consecutive half cadences, as a means to heighten tension and keep drama flowing until the conclusion of a number or scene. This is most evident in “But He’s Not Wilhelm,” as the half cadences illustrate both the *action* of the argument taking place between the couples and the

content of the argument. Lastly, while there are few true associative themes in *The Black Rider*, Waits does attempt two. Although the associative themes are infrequent and lack development along with the drama, their static quality may serve as clear guideposts for the audience as they watch the story unfold.

The only question posed at the beginning of this chapter that has yet to be discussed is that of number integration: To what extent do the individual songs of *The Black Rider* reflect the action on stage? A close examination of this issue takes place in Chapter Three.

Chapter 3 — Weaving Songs into the Drama

“And it’s so nice to hear the old songs, yeah?”

– Pegleg, Epilogue

Musical Integration in *The Black Rider*

“Integration” in a musical drama is broadly understood as how “song, dance, and story are artfully blended to produce a combined effect.”¹ While musical integration is not usually a concern for typical popular music that is not staged, it is a common topic for consideration when looking at music in theatrical works; Geoffrey Block’s tracing of integration’s development illustrates how the technique started as an ideal for Broadway musicals, but quickly became a false gold standard that has contributed to the development of super-integrated megamusicals in both American and European works, such as *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables*.²

Chapter Two explored the extent to which *The Black Rider* contains musical themes that transcend individual scenes finding that, while a few exist in the show, they are not a driving force. The purpose of the following study is to examine each individual number in the 1990 production and consider the extent of its integration into the drama. Before doing that, however, it is useful to consider director Robert Wilson’s pre-production explanation of how Burroughs’s

¹ John Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (January 10, 1984): 28.

² Geoffrey Block, “Integration,” in *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*. Ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf. Megamusicals rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s with works such as *Cats* and *Les Misérables*. These shows typically feature plots that are large in scope, present spectacle in set design and cast size, and the music is often sung throughout with a consistent orchestral underscore. Scholar Jessica Sternfeld writes that “Everything is fluid, underscored, tied together by the music....in fact, some consider megamusicals to be operas.” (Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1–3).

texts and Waits's music (both unwritten at the time) would fit into the performance. Wilson states in an early meeting with the *Black Rider's* creative team:

Visually the story is more or less told....So that maybe the texts of Burroughs are something else. More like the collage writing that he's known for so that they become like sound clouds or dreamy texts that are floating over these pictures that we see that have bits and phrases of words that relate to the story but may not relate directly to what you're seeing because then it doesn't have to illustrate what you're seeing. We don't have to double that. And then from these sort of dreamy, floating texts of Burroughs would come these more concise situations that are sung or talk-sung that Tom [Waits] would write.³

This approach is contrary to more typical storytelling, where the dialog carries the plot forward.

Waits confirmed Wilson's approach to text in a 2021 correspondence, stating that Wilson "is very particular about dialog and prefers little or none....He looks at dialog as tacks on the stage and you have to watch where you step."⁴ The director's pre-production remark that the music comes from Burroughs's "dreamy texts" hint at Waits's songs being tangential to the drama at hand, instead writing things that relate to Burroughs's text as opposed to advancing the plot. So, Wilson allows Waits to be flexible in terms of how well his songs need to be integrated into the drama as the director understands the plot to be told entirely visually.⁵

Waits himself echoes this philosophy when he was asked about the music in a 2006 interview. Waits explains that "with the songs, I was thinking, 'How on the money do you want it to be?' You don't want to land on every turn in the plot. [You want to] give the audience some credit for being able to see where it's going."⁶ In other words, Waits agrees with Wilson's

³ Wilson, 1989. *The Black Rider: [documentary] [videorecording]* NCOX 3005, Robert Wilson Audio/Visual Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

⁴ Tom Waits, email message to author, May 4, 2021.

⁵ Waits confirmed this flexibility in 2021 as well, writing that "Bob gave us free reign with the music, and never had restrictions or requests." Tom Waits, email message to author, May 4, 2021.

⁶ Tom Waits in Paul Hodgins, "Strange 'Magic': Singer-Songwriter Tom Waits Talks About One of the More Peculiar Collaborations in American Theater," *Orange County Register* (Santa Ana, Calif.), April 26 2006. In the same interview, Waits relates these ideas to his broader take on songwriting at large: "Songs are hard, 'cause if they're too obvious they go right out the other ear. If they're not obvious enough they never go in. Nobody listens to a song like they're reading instructions."

suggestion that the story is told visually and the songs may not directly illustrate what the audience sees in favor of playing off the visuals and situations. With both Waits and Wilson subscribing to the notion that the music does not need to *directly* score the action, the question arises as to why we should even consider integration when examining *The Black Rider*. My reason for investigating its usage is two-pronged: first, with the rise integrated megamusicals such as *Les Misérables* and *Phantom of the Opera* in the 1980s and 1990s, it is appropriate to gauge where the Wilson/Waits/Burroughs production fits into the popular theater scene of the day; second, integration serves as a tool for examining the various functions Waits's music carries in the production. Through a study of how closely the music adheres to the plot of *The Black Rider* and the creators' original vision of each medium's role, we may gain a deeper appreciation for the music itself as well as the production as a whole. Additionally, knowing the music's role in the production may contribute to our understanding of the production's broader meaning and context.

Defining Number Integration

In his autobiography, composer Richard Rodgers (1902–1979)—known for his score to the integrated show *Oklahoma* (1943) among others—shares his thoughts on the importance of integration in staged productions, writing: “When a show works perfectly, it's because all the individual parts complement each other and fit together. No single element overshadows any other....It [is] a work created by many that [gives] the impression of having been created by one.”⁷ Combining comments from Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein III, Geoffrey Block offers up five so-called “Principles of Integration” related to music, lyrics and book, but not necessarily

⁷ Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo, 2000), 227.

to blocking, dance, or other visual elements: (1) the songs advance the plot, (2) the songs flow directly from the dialogue, (3) the songs express the characters who sing them, (4) the dances advance the plot and enhance the dramatic meaning of the songs that precede them, (5) the orchestra, through accompaniment and underscoring, parallels, complements, or advances the action.⁸ Offering up a more nuanced approach to considering musical cohesion, John Mueller’s 1984 article “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical” proposes six distinctions for music’s role in musical films, with each subsequent level indicating a higher level of integration:⁹

1. Numbers which are completely irrelevant to the plot. This category covers instances in which a performer steps out of character and comes forward to do a song or dance, perhaps while the set is being changed backstage. It [is often] an obvious case of the vaudeville form intruding on the book musical. If it is the only way musical numbers are incorporated into a film or play, the resulting mix is not usually considered a musical.
2. Numbers which contribute to the spirit or theme. In some approaches, any number which suits the general tone or spirit, or theme of a musical is considered integrated – the [production’s] theme might be seen as a ritual of celebration for example.
3. Numbers whose existence is relevant to the plot, but whose content is not. This category includes many numbers in musicals which use show business as background.
4. Numbers which enrich the plot but do not advance it. Musical numbers can be used to establish situation or atmosphere, or to display character. As such, they attempt to contribute to the plot by deepening our knowledge of situation or character, although they may not actually change anything. In principle these numbers could be lifted from the plot without a loss in logic (because they underline or heighten something that has already been established in the dialogue), but the audience would have a lessened appreciation for the situation or character. Most love duets are in this category.

[While not made explicit, the function of expanding upon an idea, without advancing it per se, likely falls into this category as well.]

5. Numbers which advance the plot but not by their content. A classic example of a number where the plot is not advanced by the content is the audition or opening night

⁸ Geoffrey Block, “Integration,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Ellen Wolf (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 97–110.

⁹ The following distinctions and descriptions are direct quotations from John Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” 28–30. Edits were made for length and clarity. Commentary on the levels are bracketed and italicized.

performance. The performer does a number for a big producer and gets the job [...] the plot is advanced, but the exact content of the number is irrelevant.

[This categorization level stands out among the others as it addresses the issue of diegetic music versus underscoring. With many productions—including The Black Rider—not featuring any diegetic music, it is likely an infrequently applied categorization level, despite it appearing so high in this system.]

6. Numbers which advance the plot by their content. The numbers most often considered to be “truly integrated” are those which take up the action and advance the plot by their content. During these numbers something happens which changes the characters or the situation, and a test of integration in this sense would be whether the number can be cut out of the musical without leaving a noticeable gap in continuity.

This consideration of integration differs from that of the previous chapter as it is not asking whether the musical themes are woven *across scenes* to highlight plot points or character traits so much as it is considering whether the existence of a musical number and its content is relevant to moving the plot forward in an individual scene. Mueller’s concern with a number’s specific content turns our attention more towards the lyrics of any particular number than to the musical materials, though musical elements do play a part in interpreting those lyrics. This model’s flexibility—compared to the rigidity of Block’s five principles—makes it more suitable for our investigation. That said, it is possible that a musical number could fulfill more than one function, thereby occupying multiple levels of Mueller’s system. For this reason, I am using Mueller’s categories as a heuristic device for investigating musical integration in *The Black Rider*.

Given the vision that Wilson laid out in the pre-production meeting, we might expect to find that the *Black Rider* songs fall into the fourth category, “numbers which enrich the plot but do not advance it,” or lower. Waits agrees with this vision, as evidenced by an early fax from James Grauerholz recounting a meeting between Waits and Burroughs in which Grauerholz summarizes Waits’s thinking:

Tom stated his belief that the discrete words-and-music ‘songs’ he will write will not attempt to share the narrative burden—of moving the story forward—but instead will focus on ‘smaller subjects,’ attempting to convey emotions, picking up psychic details of the work in his song lyrics.¹⁰

Knowing Wilson’s and Waits’s initial intentions for *The Black Rider*’s music, this chapter examines the sung numbers of *The Black Rider* and considers their integration levels based on Mueller’s model.¹¹ The songs of *The Black Rider* generally fall under Mueller’s fourth and sixth categories, “numbers which enrich the plot but do not advance it” and “numbers which advance the plot by their content.” Having numbers fall into both of these categories contradicts both Wilson’s and Waits’s initial plans for the show’s music, meaning that the music is ultimately more closely related to the plot than both the director and songwriter first envisioned. While the reason for this change is unknown, the effect is that portions of the story are told through more than one medium (visual, text, music), which results in a clearer telling of the story.

This chapter first examines the category four songs in dramaturgical order followed by those in category six. Conducting such a study highlights some of the limits of Mueller’s model as some numbers occupy multiple categories simultaneously or even defy categorization altogether. Having demonstrated these limits, I will propose some ideas so that we may continue to refine Mueller’s model. Following this investigation, I once again step back from the individual numbers to consider integration in the show more broadly, how it relates to the

¹⁰ Fax from Burroughs office Wilson office, May 31, 1989, Box 259, Folder 5, Robert Wilson Collection, Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

¹¹ The only sung numbers unexamined in this chapter are “Bones” and “Crossroads.” “Bones” is not a part of this study because it is not sung by a character but, instead, uses a recording of Burroughs’s voice. Moreover, the song is used to introduce a scene following the entr’acte; in other words, it serves as transition music more than it is a part of the drama. If it were to be labelled a category, it would be ranked two at best. “Crossroads” is unexamined in this chapter as it re-enacts Bertram’s soliloquy from prior scene, word for word. At best, the number may be ranked four in Mueller’s system as it does not provide any new information, though the assertion that it “enriches the plot” is suspect given that the lyrics are simply the soliloquy.

original conception of the production, what other framework might be used to analyze the music, and how all of these questions might further our understanding of the show.

Mueller's Fourth Category: Numbers That Enrich the Plot but Do Not Advance It

"November"

This number takes place during a flashback in which Bertram's ancestor, Kuno, successfully frees a man tied to a stag by shooting the deer but miraculously missing the ill-fated man (an examination of the number's consecutive half cadences appears in Chapter Two).

While the titular month is not explicitly tied to the show, November is used throughout the song as a metaphor for dreariness and misfortune. More notably, however, the lyrics contain several instances of wordplay, beginning with the opening verse which states that there are "no shadows" and "no stars," which leads to the utterance of "November." This use of the word "no" leading up to "November," is markedly similar to the 1844 poem "No!" by English poet Thomas Hood, which begins every line with the word "no" until the final line reads "November." Hood similarly uses the month as a symbol of dread.

After an eight-measure introduction, the immobilized man begins to sing his haunting tune. At the outset, the number seems as though it may simply "contribute to the spirit or theme" of the drama (Mueller's category two) without providing additional knowledge about the situation or character (category four). As it continues, however, more explicit lyric references clarify that this song could only be sung by the man on the stag and it provides insight to his state of mind as he challenges Kuno leading up to the difficult shot. When Waits's lyric brings to life the month in the lyric "November has tied me to an old dead tree," and likens a tree to the stag's antlers, Waits crosses the threshold from writing images that exist outside the drama to ones the

audience is seeing on stage. This imagery is clarified later in the number as he sings that he is “tied to the branches of a roe-buck stag.” He shows his grim expectations for the shooting competition as he describes himself as being “left to wave in the timber like a buck-shot flag,” thereby painting a gruesome bullet-ridden image of himself.

As the song continues, the ambiguity of the opening lyrics clears away as lines directly related to the drama emerge. The man seemingly taunts Kuno as he calls the shooter his “firing squad” and closes the song sneering: “Go away, you rain snout / Go away, blow your brains out / November.” Lastly, the B section describes the singer’s hair as being “slicked back with carrion shellac”; carrion was a prominent term in Bertram’s monologue prior to this number. While this lyric is not directly linked to Bertram’s monologue, the word’s repetition does mark it for the audience and perhaps gives the sense that the number carries more significance.

This number ultimately falls under category four as it expresses the singer’s pained mental state leading up to Kuno’s fated shot. The music’s persistent half cadences (as discussed previously) contribute to our understanding of the character as the audience awaits tonal closure while the singer anticipates Kuno’s firing; in other words, the half cadences are a musical expression of the singer’s anxiety at this moment. In this sense, both the lyrics and music contribute to the audience’s knowledge of the character and situation.

“The Briar and the Rose”

Sung by Kätschen and Wilhelm, this love duet perhaps best captures Waits and Wilson’s pre-production intention of the songs not sharing “the narrative burden” and instead focusing on “smaller subjects” that convey characters’ emotions and broader themes in the production. An

earlier draft of the lyrics found at the Robert Wilson Archive, however, did not accomplish this goal as the song originally carried more of the narrative:

Our love will tear us
both apart
I'll never change your father's heart
And you will cry and I must go
The briar and the rose

This draft was likely abandoned for several reasons. First, while this original text suits the drama more clearly, the titular refrain is not woven as well into the lyrics; the same can be said for the other draft stanzas, each of which ends with the lyric refrain. Moreover, another stanza of the original “Briar” draft contains the lyric “But alas our love is all in vain,” which, combined with the previously mentioned stanza, relays that the lovers have perhaps resigned to not being able to marry; this submission is in direct contrast to Wilhelm’s conviction as he enters the forest to learn to hunt following the duet. In other words, these original lyrics were simultaneously carrying narrative while also straying from the plot.

Just as “November” recalled Bertram’s soliloquy in a prior scene, earlier drafts of “Briar” call back to “November” in the final stanza as the couple sings of November’s blowing winds. This original lyric would have made a clear allusion to the earlier number and hinted at the long shooting tradition in which Wilhelm is entering. It also would have recalled the macabre tone struck in the flashback scene. While this may have served as an effective counterpoint to the mood of the hopeful love duet, Waits ultimately scrapped this version of the number for the one that appears in the production.

So, instead of writing “The Briar and the Rose” as a plot-driven duet, Waits depicts the lovers likening themselves to the images of a briar and a rose. These images are part of a long-

standing folk tradition of ill-fated lovers that dates at least as far back as the mid-1500s.¹² The Scottish ballad “Barbara Allen” (sometimes titled “Barbry Ellen” among other variants) tells the story of Poor William calling upon Barbara Allen as he lies in his deathbed.¹³ Barbara Allen rejects Poor William and he dies of a broken heart. Filled with regret from spurning William and remorse for that rejection causing his death, Barbara Allen also dies and is buried in a grave next to William’s. From her grave grows a briar to represent her hard heartedness; from his, a rose symbolizing his love. These mystical plants grow towards each other and become entwined in a lover’s knot, signifying Poor William and Barbara Allen being joined in death.

Following many writers before him, Waits draws on this common folk-lore image that has long been used to depict ill-fated lovers.¹⁴ Unlike the Scottish Ballad, Waits depicts Wilhelm as a briar and Kätchen as a rose, thus adhering to stereotypes likening roses to femininity.¹⁵ Waits’s duet does not touch on “Barbara Allen’s” story so much as he ruminates on the image of the intertwined plants as a loving symbol that cannot be torn apart. In this way, the duet reflects Wilhelm and Kätchen’s desire to stay together despite Bertram’s insistence that Kätchen marry a hunter. A knowing audience that recognizes the allusion to “Barbara Allen” (made all the more clear from the similarity between the names William and Wilhelm) would perhaps make the connection to the Scottish folk song and, from that, appreciate that Wilhelm and Kätchen—much like William and Barbara Allen—are bound for disaster and may only reunite in death.

¹² Dave Marsh, “Barbara Allen,” in *The Rose and The Briar: Death, Love and Liberty in the American Ballad*, ed. Sean Wilentz and Greil Marcus (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2006), 7. While the song’s exact dates are unknown, Marsh writes that the song was “sung for a century or more” before the title’s first appearance in a 1666 diary entry.

¹³ Variants on the woman’s name include Barbary Allen and “Barbry Ellen” among others. Poor William sometimes appears as Sweet William, William Green, Willie Grove, Jimmy Grove, or John Graeme among others (Marsh, “Barbara Allen,” 11).

¹⁴ “Lovers” is perhaps the wrong term here as Barbara Allen is treated rather cruelly throughout the ballad; even in death, her heart is depicted as a thorny briar. Nevertheless, the song’s lore insists that the two were lovers. Hence this seemingly one-sided relationship persists as a symbol of couples meant to be together.

¹⁵ While it is unclear within the duet which character is the briar and which is the rose, “Flash Pan Hunter” clarifies the image.

Other knowledgeable audience members may make a connection between the fictional “Brennan’s Glen” in the lyric and the name of Tom Waits’s wife, Kathleen Brennan. In either case, whether audience members are pulling out references to the folk ballad or to the composer’s wife, the song has elements providing a deeper level of appreciation for an aware viewership.

In addition to these extra-textual allusions, the duet still connects to specific themes and images from the show. Bertram remarks in “He’s Not Wilhelm” that a proper suitor should be a reliable forester, singing that one does not “build [their] house from the willow by the stream.” At the opening of the duet, Wilhelm relates a story in which he fell asleep “down by the stream,” thereby highlighting how unsuitable he appears to Bertram. That Kätchen and Wilhelm liken themselves to plants bound in a lover’s knot further highlights their naïveté as Bertram’s Knee 2 soliloquy explicitly states that “it’s not all hearts and flowers out here in the forest.”

The image of a briar and rose appears several times in the production. In “Chase the Clouds Away,” the ensemble refers to the betrothed couple using the image, and in “Flash Pan Hunter,” Old Uncle and Robert liken Wilhelm’s deal with Pegleg to the briar “strangling the rose back down.” Lastly, Pegleg’s final number, “The Last Rose of Summer,” performed shortly after Wilhelm’s errant bullet kills Kätchen, displays false remorse over the death of a rose in his garden. In other words, Waits focuses on a “smaller subject” that captures the emotions of the singers while simultaneously introducing an image that pervades the work and symbolizes some of the “psychic details of the work,” which is exactly what Grauerholz stated Waits’s intention was when writing the music. Since Waits’s number does not advance the plot but provides significant insight into both the lovers and the story as a whole through its allusions, this number falls neatly into Mueller’s fourth category.

“Flash Pan Hunter”

Scene 6 shows Wilhelm struggling to shoot down any game in the forest, leading him to liken his need for magic bullets to an addict’s need for another fix as he states: “My hand feels for the bullets like a junkie groping for his stash.”¹⁶ Old Uncle and Robert observe this struggle while hiding behind a tree and, after Wilhelm departs defeated, the pair performs “Flash Pan Hunter” as Knee 7.¹⁷ The number summarizes the drama up to this point and predicts Wilhelm’s demise; the absence of emotion in this performance— created through Old Uncle’s *sprechstimme*-like delivery and Robert’s flat-toned falsetto— gives the impression of the singers acting as a quasi-Greek Chorus as they merely comment on the drama without involving themselves in it.

Lyrical and musically, the number connects back to “Briar and the Rose”: the text brings in the floral imagery describing Wilhelm’s actions and the phrase cadences are similar (as discussed in chapter 2). “Flash Pan Hunter” also features some of the most overt uses of text painting in *The Black Rider*, beginning in m. 855 as the monotone melody sets into motion with the lyric “sways with the wind” (as shown in Figure 3.1). Similarly, the lyric “beware of elaborate telescopic meats” is set with Robert and Old Uncle’s vocal lines moving as a wedge in contrary motion, thus creating a telescoping, expanding effect (shown in Figure 3.2).

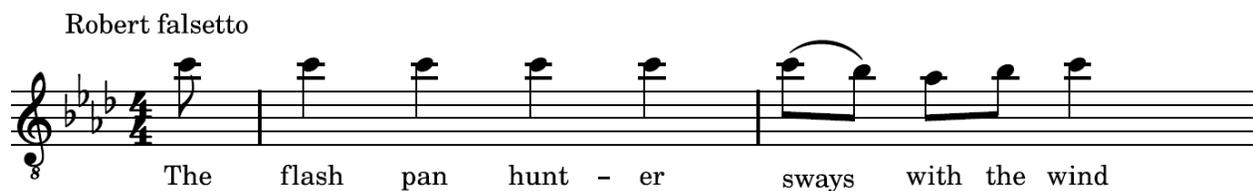


Figure 3.1: Text painting the opening line of “Flash Pan Hunter,” mm. 854–55

¹⁶ Burroughs English Language Script, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, NY.

¹⁷ The score for this scene identifies the players as Robert and The Duke, but the script labels them as Robert and Old Uncle. The mix-up is understandable given that the same actor plays both The Duke and the Uncle. Cross checking these sources against Wilson’s own synopsis of the show, and taking dramatic context into consideration, Old Uncle is the logical choice for which character is portrayed here.

The image shows a musical score for two vocal parts: Robert (top) and Old Uncle (bottom). Both parts are in 4/4 time and feature a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The lyrics for both parts are: "be - ware of e - lab - o - rate - tel - e - scop - ic - meats". The melody for Robert starts on a high note and moves generally downward, while the melody for Old Uncle starts on a lower note and moves generally upward, creating a telescoping effect. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables across notes.

Figure 3.2: Contrary-motion vocal lines in “Flash Pan” create telescoping effect, mm. 862–63

The song’s title and third line (“Each sulfurous bullet may have its own wit”) recall Pegleg’s first words to Wilhelm in Scene 4: “You can’t always count on a flash in the pan, / and a bullet may have its own wit.” When these words first appear, “bullets’ wits” implies that Wilhelm cannot control his gun and needs magic bullets to do so; the irony is that, after dealing with Pegleg, he *still* cannot control his bullets, as they now belong to Pegleg. The song illustrates Wilhelm’s weak moral spirit, describing him as a branch and Pegleg as a devil dancing with a hatchet. The singers similarly highlight Wilhelm’s self-destruction in the pursuit of fulfilling the hunting challenge, stating that he “cutting off his fingers so they’ll fit into his glove.”¹⁸ Each strophe returns to the Briar and Rose imagery introduced in the earlier love duet, emphasizing Wilhelm’s behavior as being destructive to Kätchen.

This song could be removed from *The Black Rider* without a loss in logic, placing it comfortably in category four. However, it recaps the drama and hints at the disastrous fate that awaits Wilhelm as he falls deeper into Pegleg’s clutches and brings back imagery from both Scenes 2 and 4, which helps tie in the variety of lyrical depictions that appear over the course of the performance. Furthermore, the song lays the groundwork for tying in later ideas as the image

¹⁸ This lyric also relates to the expression of “cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face,” though Wilhelm is not acting out of anger or revenge, as is typical for the expression’s usage. This allusion to cutting off appendages may similarly point to Wilhelm castrating himself in a psychological sense as he falls prey to Pegleg’s power.

of vultures, which appears in the penultimate line of the second strophe, returns in both “I’ll Shoot the Moon” and Old Uncle’s speech in Knee 11.

Truly Integrated Numbers

“Just the Right Bullets”

Following the love duet, “The Briar and the Rose,” Scene 4, opens with Wilhelm finding a rifle in the forest. After several unsuccessful shooting attempts, Pegleg emerges from the forest and offers Wilhelm magic bullets. As a sales pitch, he sings “Just the Right Bullets” and, by the end of the song, Wilhelm accepts the Faustian offer. With the number acting as the seduction, it is a crucial number in the plot and, therefore, could not be excised from the show without a loss of information. For this reason, it falls neatly under Mueller’s highest integration category, number 6.

A close musical analysis of the number demonstrates how this seduction takes place. Pegleg’s words make an appealing offer, the music is what closes the deal. The song is comprised of two AAB structures, with the A sections being sung verses followed by the instrumental B section. Lyrically, Pegleg begins by singling Wilhelm out, stating that he will pull him “out of the chorus.” He then suggests that Wilhelm has no hope of winning Kätchen’s hand in marriage without his help; he tells Wilhelm that he will not shoot down anything even if he “[blows] a hundred rounds” and concludes the first half of his pitch, stating “I have bullets for sale.” So, Pegleg uses the opening A sections to outline Wilhelm’s current predicament and offers a seemingly easy solution to all of Wilhelm’s troubles.

Following the first two F-minor A sections, there is a sudden tempo shift, and the seventeen-measure B section ensues. This interlude is marked by its horn arpeggiations that traverse a fifth from Ab to Eb, with chord alternations between the F-minor tonic and the major subtonic with an added sixth. After two iterations of this progression, the horns enter early, arpeggiating a tritone from Bb to E-natural, while the harmony shifts from bVII to V⁷ (Figure 3.3).

525 527 533 537
529 531

i bVII^{add6} V⁷ i

Figure 3.3: Reduction of “Bullets” B Section

The harmonic motion of the phrase and the use of horns traversing a perfect fifth in a syncopated line combine to create a musical effect similar to those found in Western film scores.¹⁹ This is especially brought out by the bVII–V⁷ expansion, which is dubbed the “Cowboy Cadence” by Philip Tagg.²⁰ Frank Lehman notes that the gesture is “customarily attributed to Jerome Moross, and his influential...score to William Wyler’s *The Big Country* (1958) in particular...The gesture is overwhelmingly Moross’s signature.”²¹ This interlude’s evocation of

¹⁹ Frank Lehman, “Hollywood Cadences: Music and the Structure of Cinematic Expectation,” *Music Theory Online* 19, no. 4. (2013).

²⁰ Phillip Tagg and Bob Clarida, *Ten Little Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media*, (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars Press, 2003).

²¹ Lehman, “Hollywood Cadences,” 44.

the American West instills the sense in Wilhelm that these bullets may help him become a marksman much like the mythical cowboys aggrandized in Hollywood Westerns. This is made evident by the fact that Wilhelm does not seem committed to Pegleg's bargain until the latter begins to imitate a rider of wild horses during this interlude, and Wilhelm attempts to mimic him with varying success.

Following the instrumental interlude, Pegleg continues his sales pitch by shifting away from Wilhelm's incompetence to the advantage of the bullets. He explains that he has "blessed" the bullets and states that "they'll be your private little fishes, and they'll never swim away." After doing this, Pegleg suddenly turns the focus to himself, explaining that he is trustworthy, and that he only wants what is best for Wilhelm. As Pegleg sings that he only wants Wilhelm "to be happy," Wilhelm jumps in to finish the last word of the sentence, thereby illustrating how Pegleg's pitch is working. Underlining the irony of Pegleg assuring Wilhelm of his trustworthiness, the music accelerates as the devilish salesman grows more excited and tells Wilhelm that he will "fix" the musket. Catching himself from his own enthusiasm, Pegleg closes his sales pitch, assuring Wilhelm that he will "bless the roof of [his] house" and the music returns to the opening tempo. The final segment of the sales pitch, in which Pegleg shifts the focus to himself, hints at the deceptive nature of this bargain. Pegleg's statement that *he* will fix Wilhelm's musket, keep the wind from its barrel, and bless Wilhelm's house, shows that the would-be suitor does not actually have control over the magic bullets, but it is in fact Pegleg who dictates their target. In sum, while the lyrical content is important to the number, it is ultimately musical content that seals the deal.

Following the closing of Pegleg's pitch, the Western instrumental passage appears a second time and Wilhelm again mimics Pegleg riding a horse—this time with more

enthusiasm—before dropping to his knees to receive the magic bullets. While Pegleg makes a convincing salesman, the music of the “old west” and its promise of marksmanship seems to be what ultimately hooks Wilhelm. By the song’s conclusion, Pegleg has sealed Wilhelm’s fate. Returning to Mueller’s categories, “Just the Right Bullets” carries a fundamental part of the plot, which places it under the “truly integrated” characterization, category six.

“In the Morning”

Scene 7 stands out from the rest of *The Black Rider* because it is almost entirely through-composed with the number “In the Morning,” save for short asides. The score divides the scene into four segments: “In the Morning (a,b),” “In the Morning (c),” “News From the Duke,” and “In The Morning (e).” This division marks where short dialogues take place as well as when new characters enter.

The scene opens with Kätchen fretting about her wedding day. Looking to ease her concerns, a bridesmaid assures Kätchen that all will be well after the wedding takes place the next morning. After a four-measure introduction, the bridesmaid sings eight measures before Kätchen joins in a refrain rejoicing over her wedding. The bridesmaid’s opening verse is an *srdc* construction, but the statement and restatement phrases sound off-kilter, due in large part to tonic harmony never appearing on a metric downbeat. While it appears in a strong position at the start of the Departure gesture in m. 959, it is positioned weakly at phrase’s final cadence as the expected structural dominant moves surprisingly into the subdominant in m. 962 by way of a phrase elision, which is shown in Figure 3.4. This elision highlights Kätchen’s anticipation—and perhaps nervous energy—as she frets over whether her wedding will take place. When the tonic appears on the upbeat of m. 962, it is in anticipation of the refrain, which begins on IV, not as a

conclusion to the verse, thereby leaving the opening eight-measure phrase unresolved. The refrain continues this pattern as tonic regularly appears on upbeats and the eight-measure refrain concludes with a dominant giving way to a subdominant.

961

Kät. In the morn - ing, in the morn - ing, in the morn-ing when I rise,

Bm. - way on the grey mare's tail. In the morn - ing, in the morn-ing when we rise,

Harm. *f* *p* *f* 10 10 10 10

Eb V IV(!) I IV I V

Figure 3.4: Tonic appears on weaker metric beats in “In the Morning”

Following a second verse, sung by a joyful Anne, and another presentation of the refrain, tonic sounds to close out the section before Wilhelm arrives. This tonic is corrupted, however, by the added-ninth F appearing in the final harmony, creating a dissonant cluster between Eb and G (shown in Figure 3.5).

Anne ing you will be your true loves bride.

Bm. ing you will be your true loves bride.

Harm. Eb I (vi ii) V I^{add9}

Figure 3.5: “In the Morning” mm. 887–89; added pitch F corrupts cadence

Wilhelm enters after an unsuccessful hunting outing, with the only game he actually shot being Kätchen's pet bird. He sings a variant of Anne's previous verse in the relative C minor. Showing anxiety over Wilhelm's lost hunting ability, the cast breaks into a minor-mode iteration of the refrain with the meter altered to 3/8 (shown in Figure 3.6), creating a hurried pace through the lyrics as the family questions whether Kätchen will "ever be his bride." The upright bass and bassoon highlight this restlessness as they rush down a seventh to tonic at the conclusion of the section, inverting the leading tone's more natural rise of a half step.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 3.6, starting at measure 1013. The score is written in 3/8 time and features six staves: Bassoon (Bsn.), Harp (Harm.), Kätchen (Kät.), Anne, Bass (Bm.), and Upright Bass (U. Bass). The key signature is C minor. The lyrics for Kätchen, Anne, and U. Bass are: "ing will she ev - er be his bride". The Upright Bass and Bassoon parts show a descending line of notes, ending with a sharp rise in the final measure, illustrating the restlessness mentioned in the text.

Figure 3.6: Metric changes highlight increased anxiety after Wilhelm's failed hunt

After this outburst from the wedding party, the Duke's messenger arrives in m. 1019(1) requesting that Wilhelm shoot game for an upcoming feast, thereby proving himself to be a huntsman and a worthy husband for Kätchen. Illustrating the stately manner of the Duke and his messenger, the opening measures of their segment mimics a Sarabande with the second beat of the triple meter accented. Harmonically, this section moves through a cycle of descending fifths from Eb to Cb with each harmony expanded by its subtonic (shown in Figure 3.7).

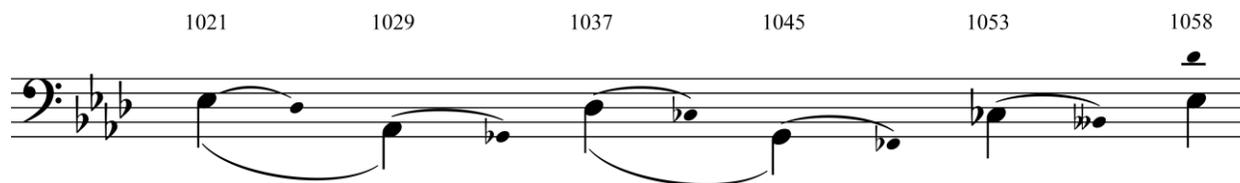


Figure 3.7: Harmonic Reduction of “News from the Duke”

There is a moment of rest in the number as the messenger performs an exaggerated laugh leading into a fermata as if to underscore the absurdity of how much game the Duke expects Wilhelm to kill. The messenger continues to add more game until the end of the section where the harmony abruptly shifts from Cb to Eb⁷, thus breaking the circle of fifths progression. The messenger’s dissonant chordal seventh, which is reached and then re-sung an octave higher, continues the theme of denying a resounding tonic throughout the scene. The Eb⁷ ultimately acts as a dominant into Ab, the key of the scene’s final segment.²²

The final measures of Scene 7’s music comprises the cast repeating the lyric “in the morning when I rise” over a IV–I–IV–V progression in Ab. Tellingly, the second half of that refrain—the outbursts “you will be your true love’s bride” or “will she ever be his bride”—are omitted, signaling the sense of uncertainty that now surrounds the fate of the couple. The major mode and incessant IV–I motions hint at hope for the couple as the regular plagal motion imparts a hymn-like quality to the end of the scene. With each phrase ending on a half cadence, the number never fully resolves and its fading out prevents any closure from taking place. With the change of key to Ab, the harmony at each half cadence is Eb—the key that opened the entire scene. By now the chord’s appearance is familiar as it has sounded regularly over the course of the eight-minute number. Its function in this final section, however, is that of a dominant

²² Besides setting up the Ab tonal space of the final segment, the circle of fifths progression may also have broken off where it did due to the practical matter of it being on the cusp of needing to regularly use double flats to continue the sequence (Cb–Fb–Bbb–Ebb etc.).

harmony, not tonic. So, not only does the number never reach a final tonic in *any key*, but the original tonic harmony has shifted to now be a place of rest, to the unstable position of the dominant.

With “In the Morning” sounding nearly throughout the entirety of Scene 7, its only logical categorization is into the highest level of integration. By the end of the scene Wilhelm has demonstrated his addiction to the magic bullets, as he cannot hunt without them, and the Duke’s messenger relays the scenario in which Wilhelm must prove himself to be a huntsman. The scene additionally provides deeper insight into the characters’ anxieties as the wedding day approaches, as Kätchen continues to have gruesome dreams and Wilhelm struggles to shoot game. These anxieties are once again brought out musically through both metric means—such as the change to 3/8 in Wilhelm’s refrain—and closure denials as the opening key of Eb is rarely attained in a strong position and ends the number as a source of instability instead of stability.

Problematizing Categorizations

“Come Along with the Black Rider” as Lyric Overture

The show’s opening vocal number serves as a case study of how a number may simultaneously fall under two headings. The reason for this lies in the problems of *The Black Rider*’s true opening piece, simply titled “Ouverture.” This introduction does not necessarily fulfill the functions that we have come to expect of dramatic overtures. Instead of introducing a litany of themes that audiences can anticipate hearing at different points in the production, this opening piece only presents one theme, the melody to “Lucky Day” (lyrics and form appear in

Figure 3.8), which appears again at the end of the on-stage drama.²³ While Waits’s 1993 *Black Rider* album titles this piece the “Lucky Day Overture,” the title in the production’s score leaves audiences wondering if the melody presented in the overture will be of significance later in the show.²⁴ This question is not answered until the end of the production when Wilhelm breaks out into this melody as he descends into madness after shooting Kätchen on their wedding day.

<p>1. A Come on along with the Black Rider We'll have a gay old time A Lay down in the web of the black spider I'll drink your blood like wine B So come on in It ain't no sin Take off your skin And dance around your bones A So come along with the Black Rider We'll have a gay old time</p> <p>2. A Anchors away with the Black Rider I'll drink your blood like wine A I'll drop you off in Harlem with the Black Rider Out where the bullets shine B And when you're done You cock your gun The blood will run Like ribbons in your hair A So come along with the Black Rider We'll have a gay old time</p>	<p>3. A Come on along with the Black Rider I've got just the thing for thee A Come on along with the Black Rider I want your company B I think I'll have the veal A lovely meal That's how I feel May I use your skull for a bowl? A Come on along with the Black Rider We'll have a gay old time</p>
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Figure 3.8: Form and Lyrics for “Come Along”

Even though the show does not have a traditional *musical* overture per se, its opening vocal number provides a lyrical one. Pegleg’s opening couplet simultaneously achieves two things. First, it breaks the fourth wall and beckons the audience to enter this dramatic world

²³ The actual last number of the show, “Last Rose of Summer,” takes place during the epilogue and is, therefore, outside of the proper plot.

²⁴ One reason for this non-traditional overture may be that, as the previous chapter demonstrated, there is not a significant number of themes that the overture might run through in a traditional sense. Additionally, the reason may be partly logistical as it was the last piece written for the show, having been completed by Greg Cohen mere days before opening night. Hans Joern Brandenburg, email message to author, September 11, 2019.

along with the cast and, second, it serves as a seduction piece for Pegleg to invite the rest of the cast to mimic him and have a “gay old time.” Combined with the vaudevillian musical accompaniment, the opening four lines of the number provide the audience with a sense of context and character at the outset of the show. Pegleg’s performance of the number identifies him as the work’s ringleader and his grinning through the second couplet, including “I’ll drink your blood like wine,” indicates early on that the show may lead one to smile through tragedy and possibly even make a farce of it. In short, the opening A sections set the tone for the show that follows and gives the audience insight into Pegleg’s character.

While the opening A phrases set the tone for the performance, the B section provides lyrical snippets that will reappear later in the show, much as a traditional overture plays musical themes that audiences can expect to hear as the show progresses. In this vein, the first B section of Pegleg’s opening number makes a double reference: one outside of the context of *The Black Rider* and one within it. The lyric in this section is a direct quotation of the song “T’aint No Sin (To Dance Around in your Bones),” which was written by Walter Donaldson and lyricist Edgar Leslie in 1929. It also makes a second appearance later in the stage performance. A recording of Burroughs reciting three verses of Edgar Leslie’s lyrics opens the second act, featuring an atonal accompaniment comprised of bass, bass clarinet, log drum, and marimba; the last two instruments are used to create a bones-like sound effect. Whereas Donaldson and Leslie wrote the song as a popular dance number, Waits’s dissonant recontextualization gives the song eerie undertones. While the accompaniment alone accomplishes this task, knowing that Pegleg sang these words at the top of the show adds to the knowledge that, in this new context, dancing around in your bones is a dance with the devil.

The second verse introduces the importance of ammunition as Pegleg states that he will drop the listener off where “the bullets shine.” This is followed by a contrasting section that highlights the importance of firearms in the show. Once again, the lyrics contained in the B section have both an inter- and intra-textual significance. Using red ribbons as a metaphor for blood and death is not new to Waits. The usage first appears in the song “A Sweet Little Bullet from a Pretty Blue Gun” on the 1978 album *Blue Valentines*, where he sings that “it takes a sweet little bullet from a pretty blue gun / to put those scarlet ribbons in your hair.” To a knowing audience, this lyric is a clear mark of Waits’s hand in the show, despite the form being a departure from his previous creative output. Secondly, this section tidily summarizes the second half of the show, as it foreshadows Kätchen’s fate.

Lastly, the third verse features the cast singing the first half of each couplet while standing practically motionless, while Pegleg prowls about the stage and completes each couplet. This staging reflects Pegleg’s power over the cast of characters as they act as his puppets, encouraging listeners to join him. In other words, “Come Along with The Black Rider” outlines the drama of the whole show: it establishes Pegleg as the master of ceremonies and, much as he beckons the listener to come along with him at the start of the number, the drama that follows features Pegleg seducing Wilhelm and providing magic bullets that ultimately bring death and misfortune. It is this summation of the drama that makes the number more of an overture than the actual opening piece of the show, albeit through lyrics rather than musical themes.

Instead of functioning like a modern musical overture, “Come Along” may be more akin to the Brecht/Weill composition “Mack the Knife,” which opens and closes *Threepenny Opera*. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, “Come Along” follows Waits’s notion of Weill’s music contrasting playful music with dark imagery. Furthermore, like “Mack the Knife,” “Come

Along with the Black Rider” follows common conventions of American popular music from the 1920s and ’30s.

In both form and harmony, Waits’s number is characteristic of Tin Pan Alley popular songs. The 32-bar AABA form of the piece is so commonly found in these works that Ralf von Appen dubbed the form the “American Popular Song Form.”²⁵ Moreover, the B section of “Come Along” behaves in ways expected for Tin Pan Alley contrasting sections as it tonicizes IV before leading to the dominant, which sets up a return to tonic in the following A section. The succession of chords at the close—or turnaround—of the song is also reminiscent of American popular songs at the start of the twentieth century. In his 1978 article “Toward a Theory of Popular Harmony,” Peter Winkler identifies this chromatically altered descending-fifths progression as a common cadence formula in jazz, vaudeville, and other popular genres and provides examples of it appearing in songs by Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and George Gershwin among others.²⁶

While “Come Along” may not act as a traditional overture, it still has the hallmarks of opening theme music, specifically in its final measures as it repeats a I–vi–ii–V–I progression, employing what Janet Schmalfeldt terms the “One More Time” technique (when used in the context of evaded cadences), before arriving on the final harmony.²⁷ Accompanying this repeated phrase is the lyric “We’ll have a gay old time;” both this musical technique and these lyrics are featured in the closing measures of the theme song to the 1960s animated television show *The Flintstones*. As the song reaches its conclusion a chromatically altered vi–ii–V–I

²⁵ Ralf von Appen, “AABA, Refrain, Chorus, Bridge, Prechorus – Song Forms and Their Historical Development,” *Samples* 13 (2013), 4.

²⁶ Peter Winkler, “Toward a Theory of Popular Harmony,” *In Theory Only* 4 no. 2 (1978): 3–26.

²⁷ Janet Schmalfeldt, “Cadential Processes: The Evaded Cadence and the ‘One More Time’ Technique,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 12 no. 1-2 (1992), 1–52.

progression unexpectedly resolves to the dissonant C⁷_{#5} (shown in Figure 3.9), eroding the jovial nature of the tune and hinting at the tragic story to follow.

The musical score for the final cadence of "Come Along" is presented in 4/4 time. The melody line (treble clef) and bass line (bass clef) are shown. The lyrics are: "We'll have a gay old we'll have a gay old we'll have a gay old time!". The chords above the staff are: Dm⁷, G⁷, E⁷, A⁷, Dm⁷, G¹³, and C⁷_{#5}. The Roman numerals below the staff are: C: ii⁷, V⁷, V⁷/vi, V⁷/ii, ii⁷, V¹³, and I⁷_{#5}.

Figure 3.9: Bass and melody at the final cadence of “Come Along,” mm. 141–7

So, the music does not act as an overture so much as it functions like opening theme music one might find for a television program or revue show. The lyrics, however, provide snippets of images and themes to come in the following drama, thus making it a kind of “lyric overture.” This unique status presents several issues for the analyst trying to categorize it according to Mueller’s model. On the one hand, the tune fits tidily into category two, “numbers which contribute to the spirit or theme,” especially since “Come Along” aligns with the category’s characterization of “ritual of celebration,” and my labelling it a lyric overture may extend it to being considered the production’s “theme.” On the other hand, “Come Along” also fits neatly into category four (numbers that enrich the plot without advancing it) because it deepens the audience’s knowledge of the show as a whole; it establishes Pegleg’s role as a seducer and leader of the cabaret. This number is not *needed* to fulfill that role however as Pegleg’s character becomes apparent over the course of the show. The issue is that “Come Along” appears outside of the drama, unfolding as the cast performs it as part of the prologue, but the lyric content forces it out of Mueller’s second category.

“But He’s Not Wilhelm”

Much as “Come Along” crosses the boundary between categories two and four, “But He’s Not Wilhelm” problematizes category four as it does not advance the plot per se, but it does fulfill a necessary expository and clarifying function that is not outlined in Mueller’s proposed categories (a more in-depth musical analysis of the number appears in the previous chapter). The scene opens with Bertram expressing his dissatisfaction with Wilhelm as a suitor; he states: “with a son-in-law who clerks, I lose all my perks / I must have a man who hunts, not a lily-handed pen grunt. / Shooting is no child’s play.”²⁸ Anne tries to calm him to no avail and the song begins.

The opening verses of the number recapitulate Bertram’s and Ann’s positions, with his stating that his daughter should marry whom he chooses for her and Anne arguing that their daughter should be allowed to decide. Following these exclamations, Kätchen and Wilhelm enter to continue the number. During a grand pause after these verses, Bertram’s chosen suitor, Robert, arrives and attempts to woo Kätchen, who finds him devoid of charm. Following this awkward exchange, the four principal characters sum up their positions, and the song concludes.

On the surface, “But He’s Not Wilhelm” cleanly fits into category four: “Numbers which enrich the plot but do not advance it.” These songs establish a situation and contribute to the storyline by deepening our knowledge of the characters without actually changing anything in the story. However, it is in consideration of Mueller’s notion that “in principle these numbers could be lifted from the plot without a loss in logic” that we might re-think this classification given the expository nature of the song.²⁹

²⁸ Burroughs English Language Script, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, New York.; Scene 1.

²⁹ Mueller, “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical,” 27.

In addition to providing a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the situation and characters, “But He’s Not Wilhelm” provides a necessary introduction to the principal characters (with the exception of Pegleg who is properly introduced during “Come Along”). Since Wilson believes that the story is told primarily visually, Burroughs’s text is often freed to be less clear as that in a traditional musical drama. In this case, however, the prior on-stage action does not mention any of the principal characters by name. “He’s Not Wilhelm” provides an opportunity for the audience to see Bertram, Anne, Kätchen, and Wilhelm and allows each of them to clearly state their positions at the outset of the drama.

When considered in context with the scenes that follow the song, the number’s presence becomes all the more important. After the final cadence fades, Bertram performs a brief soliloquy wherein he explains the importance of being a huntsman, the menacing nature of the forest, and how the devil may lurk behind any given tree. This passage leads into a flashback featuring a younger Kuno; none of the main plot characters appear. If “But He’s Not Wilhelm” were to be excised from the production, the audience would have no context for the lovers when they appear in Scene 3, nearly thirty minutes into the performance.

So, while “He’s Not Wilhelm” is not necessarily a truly integrated number in that it reinforces previously stated dialogue, its removal from the text could cause the audience some confusion, thus making the number a *necessary* clarifying device. Expository numbers such as this fall somewhere in the cracks between categories four and six of Mueller’s model.

“Chase the Clouds Away”

“Chase the Clouds Away” takes up a significant portion of Scene 5; as a result, portions of the number are important to the plot, aligning it with the “truly integrated” category. However,

some portions of the number could be excised without any loss in dramatic logic, thereby making it difficult to classify. An analysis of this scene and its music demonstrates its unclear integration level according to Mueller's system.

Scene 5 opens with Kätchen describing a vision of a white dove falling from the sky and a mysterious figure walking with a wooden leg. She sees a long box and peers inside just as she wakes up to see Wilhelm has filled the house with dead game that he has shot with Pegleg's magic bullets. Kätchen rejoices and the ancestral portrait of Kuno begins to sing in German:

There's blood upon the bridal wreath
The Devil shows his shiny teeth
So take a seat there by the door
He'll meet you on the killing floor
He's going to set the clouds on fire
They're burning there forever more³⁰

Kätchen, either not hearing her ancestor's dire imagery or not understanding it because it appears in German while all other songs appear in English, sings the same melody as Kuno. Kätchen's words strike a more hopeful tone, however, as she describes sunshine, birdsongs, and being entwined with Wilhelm (represented by the briar and rose) "forever more." While Kuno describes the devil setting clouds on fire, Kätchen envisions the wind blowing the clouds away for good. Bertram, Anne, and Wilhelm enter and begin singing the same stanza and rejoice in the betrothed couple's seeming good fortune.

Musically, the number follows a sixteen-measure srdc form. The Statement and Restatement phrases alternate between tonic and dominant as the melody arpeggiates upwards. The departure section takes the melody further as a third-progression expands passing tone "C"

³⁰ Burroughs English Language Script, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, New York. Script; Scene 5. The term "killing floor" refers to the area of a slaughterhouse where an animal is killed and initially processed. Howlin' Wolf famously recorded a song titled "Killing Floor" in 1964, wherein the singer states that he himself is on the killing floor in the aftermath of a failed relationship.

on its way to $\hat{5}$, which is similarly expanded by an upper-third progression. The $\hat{3}$ Kopfton is finally achieved at the start of the Concluding phrase. An inner sixth-progression moves downwards to D and $\hat{3}$ gives way to $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{1}$ through a cadential 6/4 (Figure 3.10).

The image shows a piano accompaniment for the song "Chase the Clouds Away". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Above the treble staff, there are measure numbers and letters: 's' above 694, 'r' above 696, 'd' above 703, '705', 'c' above 707, and '709'. Below the treble staff, there are fingerings: '6 5 3' under measures 694-696, '6 5 3' under measures 703-705, and '6 5 3' under measures 707-709. A dashed line connects the notes in the treble staff across measures 694-709. A solid line connects the notes in the bass staff across measures 694-709. Below the bass staff, there are chord symbols: 'G: I' under measures 694-696, 'II' under measures 703-705, and 'V bVI (!)' under measures 707-709.

Figure 3.10: Reduction of “Chase the Clouds Away”

The Departure and Concluding sections bear the most weight in illustrating the song’s meaning. With a chromatically moving bassline traversing $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$, tonicizing ii and iii in the process, the Departure’s rising motion highlights the singers’ anticipation of the coming nuptials as they sing “the sun will shine, the birds will sing, I’ll give my love a wedding ring.”³¹ The Conclusion gesture begins when the line reaches Kopfton $\hat{3}$, the climax of the phrase, in m. 707[32]. Since it follows a chromatic, anticipatory rising motion, the jump of a sixth between D and B sounds triumphant, illustrating the couple’s joy over Wilhelm’s newfound marksmanship and its implications for them being able to finally marry.

Kätchen’s solo iteration of the tune (as shown in Figure 3.10 above) is thwarted at the last moment as $\hat{1}$ is harmonized by Eb. This altered submediant substitute precedes Wilhelm entering and singing the tune with Kätchen, now in Eb major instead of the original G major. When they

³¹ This lyric may be a reference to the 1964 Dixie Cups song “Chapel of Love,” which similarly anticipates a wedding day, though far with less anxiety; thanks to René Rusch for spotting this connection.

sing together, the melody ends satisfactorily in Eb. This may symbolize the unity between the couple as they strive towards their common goal, but Wilhelm's entrance thwarting a clean conclusion to Kätchen's melody also anticipates how his actions in the drama have already corrupted their plans for marital bliss. Bertram and Anne join for a final performance of the joyous "Clouds" melody, again in Eb, but a harmonic substitution once again denies an authentic cadence as the singing ends with a Cb harmony, another major third from where the phrase started. Like Wilhelm's sudden entrance in Eb, this conclusion reminds the audience that all is not well beneath the surface. Following the cast's final rendition of the melody, the band picks up the theme and performs it loosely as a celebratory jazz number while a cocksure Wilhelm struts around stage, brandishing the rifle.

After the celebration ends and Wilhelm goes back into the forest to hunt, the theme takes a sinister turn into F minor and the synthesizer produces an eerie effect with a jingle-bell patch. Pegleg emerges from the floor and begins to sing the "Clouds" melody in C major with a stripped-down orchestration of harmonium and upright bass; drums provide accents towards the end of the number. Pegleg's lyrics align closely with Kuno's vision of the Devil having control in this situation as Pegleg describes waiting for Wilhelm in the forest and as Wilhelm—or perhaps both Wilhelm and Kätchen—will be his "forever more."

Pegleg's version follows a similar construction of the srdc form and harmonic formula. One slight deviation is that his Restatement gesture is five measures long instead of four as he ruminates on the phrase "blood red mood" for an extra measure. In this version, the climax coincides with Pegleg declaring that he will "wait here by the shady bush, and you'll be mine forever more." With Wilhelm having just left to hunt in the woods, Pegleg's triumphant declaration foreshadows the coming scene in which Wilhelm cannot shoot down any game and is

taunted by Pegleg's looming shadow. Like the earlier performance of "Clouds," this one ends with a submediant. This substitute is short lived, however, as it quickly gives way to tonic C major, providing more closure to Pegleg's desires compared to that of the couple's and their family.

This number may best be considered "truly integrated" into the drama because it represents the moment that the couple's fortunes have seemingly changed, and they may now marry. Large portions of the number, however—specifically the beginning stanza by Kuno and Pegleg's final stanza—could easily be removed from the scene and not significantly change the trajectory of the drama; Kuno's stanza acts as a Greek chorus as it predicts the disastrous end for Kätchen and Wilhelm. Pegleg's section raises the question of how prior knowledge should be considered when categorizing these numbers. While Pegleg does not confirm his ill intentions until the end of this number, they have certainly been implied throughout. Bertram warns of every hunter paying a price for his skill in the opening scene of the production. Moreover, Pegleg placing the rifle for Wilhelm to find and his strong sales tactic already implied that he may have nefarious motives. Even before the drama proper had begun, Pegleg showed himself to be the ringleader of the show in the prologue. Furthermore, the plot's place as one of Germany's most well-known—if not *the* most well-known—folk tale means that many audience members entered the theater already knowing that the character who sells Wilhelm bullets is not to be trusted. In this sense, Pegleg's stanza has not changed anything dramatically but instead provides a glimpse into his plan for the following scene. So, the temporary reversal of Wilhelm and Kätchen's fortunes place this song in the highest categorization, but prominent moments in the song fall short of this definition, making it difficult to cleanly categorize.

“I’ll Shoot the Moon”

After Wilhelm puts Kätchen to bed and sneaks out of the house to beg Pegleg for more bullets, Kätchen rises and sings “I’ll Shoot the Moon,” suggesting her aiming at great heights with the show’s central object, the rifle. The song is in a strophic AA form with each strophe following a srdc pattern and, like other numbers in *The Black Rider*, raises questions of categorization. At first glance, it aligns closely with Mueller’s first categorization. The song’s placement in the show seems insignificant; it is not even clear whether Kätchen is singing in a dream state or if it should be understood as lying completely outside the show itself. Moreover, the only explicit mention of characters or situations relating to the stage drama appears during an ad-libbed third verse. Even the whimsical musical accompaniment is reminiscent of vaudevillian revues and variety shows that rarely (if ever) used high-level musical integration.

Despite the song’s absence of directly engaging with the drama, however, the lyric images recall previous visuals and anticipate others, thereby grounding the song in the show. This process of bringing back prior material begins with the titular opening line: Wilhelm’s first appearance on stage occurs while singing that he will bring Kätchen the moon. Given his newfound ability to hunt, it seems that Wilhelm may finally be able to make good on his promises to Kätchen; while he won’t be able to actually “shoot the moon right out of the sky,” there is hope for the couple to be married. Despite this optimistic opening, Kätchen’s words soon turn bleak as she references the Greek practice of placing coins on the eyes of the deceased to pay the ferryman of the underworld: “I’ll be the pennies on your eyes.” Five measures later, she goes on to sing: “Here is a red rose ribbon for your hair,” which recalls Pegleg’s lyric in “Come Along” and Waits’s usage of the image in prior work.

In spite of the parade of deathly references, the music accompanying the lyrics remains optimistic and demonstrates the couple's aspirations for a life together, while also illustrating how these dreams may never come to fruition. The couple's hopes are demonstrated musically as the melody regularly arpeggiates up to the chordal seventh (see Figure 3.11), but ultimately falls short of reaching the goal octave as the dissonant seventh resolves down by step into the next harmony. Besides arpeggiating up the major seventh in m. 1167[2], the melody from mm. 1169[4] to 1182[17] features an inner-voice composing out of a fifth between F and C. The melodic line reaches for the moon—represented here by $\hat{3}$ (F5)—in its opening two phrases but consistently falls short as it ascends to C in the first attempt in m. 1168[3] and Eb in m. 1172[7], only to be thwarted and fall back downwards. The melody reaches the target pitch F5 for a fleeting moment as the Departure gesture concludes on a half cadence in m. 1180[15]. By the time this moment arrives, however, it is too late for the target pitch, as it is now a dissonant ninth that must resolve downwards into the more stable $\hat{2}$, which in turn continues downwards to an implied leading tone two measures later.

Figure 3.11: Reduction of “I’ll Shoot the Moon”

Kätchen's melody tries once again to reach its goal in the Concluding phrase (mm. 1183[18]–1189[24]), once again attaining only the seventh above the tonic harmony followed by an arpeggiation up to $\hat{2}$ supporting the supertonic leading into the dominant. Anticipating the descent to $\hat{1}$ at the close of the strophe, the melody touches on upper-third F before closing on tonic. This moment is both satisfying and unsettling. While $\hat{3}$ finally appears as a chord tone, it is touched on so briefly that the original goal, F5, still seems more aspirational than achieved. Moreover, the nature of the tone and its appearance as the penultimate melodic pitch show it to be appearing simultaneously too early (given its role as an anticipation) and too late as the melody reaches its conclusion without F5 ever truly appearing in a strong and stable position. Much like Wilhelm's hunting aspirations, the musical goal in this number is simply not possible. That the melody continues to strive for this goal, however, reinforces the hopeless romantic qualities in both Wilhelm and Kätchen as they struggle to attain marital bliss.

Like numbers before it, "Shoot the Moon" utilizes lyric recursion, with images and symbols from previous songs reappearing. Kätchen begins the second strophe by singing that there are vultures circling overhead, thereby making the image a recurring one as it had first appeared in "Flash Pan Hunter." Vultures will appear again in Knee 11, in which Old Uncle likens Ernest Hemingway selling out to Hollywood with a Faustian bargain. Like the Greek reference to pennies on eyes, Kätchen states in the second strophe that she will be "the flowers after you're dead." Later in the verse, she also states that she would like to "build a nest in your hair." Both of these images recall "The Briar and the Rose" from the first act as well as ribbons adorning hair in "Come Along." The former lyric is yet another allusion to "Barbara Allen" with Kätchen suggesting that, like her folk-song counterpart, she will become a flower if her beloved dies. This latter lyric is altered from its prior appearance in the love duet as Wilhelm had

originally expressed wanting to build a nest *out* of Kätchen's hair as opposed to Kätchen's building a nest *in* Wilhelm's.

So, this song straddles the line between integration levels. On the one hand, its seeming lack of context makes it appear superfluous or perhaps even inappropriate at the time. On the other, while the lyrics do not directly engage with characters or scenarios, the images conjured in the lyrics call back to previous numbers and foreshadow images that appear later, and the associations with death may allow for the number being interpreted as “contributing to the spirit or theme” of the drama (category two) or “numbers that enrich the plot” (category four). Moreover, the music summarizes Wilhelm and Kätchen's dilemma as it illustrates their inability to reach their goals. Given the lyric content of the number and their relation to other lyrics in *Black Rider*, it may suit us best to view this song as another quasi-Greek-Chorus moment with Kätchen signaling her and Wilhelm's ultimate death. This iteration of the Greek Chorus is less clear than in “Flash Pan Hunter,” however, due to its use of metaphors and abstract imagery over concrete characters and contexts found in the drama. Ironically, this song is a good representation of Wilson's vision for *Burroughs's* contribution to the show: “[Burroughs's text will be] like sound clouds or dreamy texts that are floating over these pictures that we see that have bits and phrases of words that relate to the story but my not relate directly to what you're seeing.”³² “Shoot the Moon” accomplishes exactly that: Waits's lyrics present dreamy text that relates to the story but does not necessarily illustrate exactly what one is seeing.

³² Theo Janssen and Ralph Quinke, *The Black Rider [documentary]* NCOX 3005, Robert Wilson Audio/Visual Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

“Gospel Train”

As Pegleg descends into the crossroads to meet an eager Wilhelm, he sings “Gospel Train,” accompanied by a cacophonous ostinato. The number overflows with irony as the show’s devil incarnate sings about the gospel. The number’s title recalls the African American spiritual “The Gospel Train (Get on Board),” which was first published in 1872.³³ The lyric structure, however, is closer to that of the traditional American song: “This Train.”³⁴ Pegleg’s garment takes the irony further as his white jacket is reminiscent of those worn by televangelists.³⁵

The bass ostinato, shown in Figure 3.12, consists primarily of a modally mixed Eb collection. Despite the Eb pitch center, the two-measure pattern begins on the subtonic, thereby contributing to the unsettling nature of the music. Further adding to this quality is the ostinato’s rhythm; the first seven quarter-notes of the pattern follow simple, duple beat divisions with accents either occurring on the quarter-note or eighth-note. The final quarter-beat of the pattern, however, accents the second sixteenth of the beat in the upright bass, creating a stumbling effect as the bass restarts its cycle. While this number does not contain any shifts in meter, the stumbling effect recalls the opening vamp of “Come Along.”

³³ Norm Cohen and David Cohen, *Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 620.

³⁴ Sometimes titled “This Train is Bound for Glory,” the earliest known recording of the song is from 1922 and became a staple for performer Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

³⁵ Waits himself makes this wardrobe suggestion in workshop archival footage at the NYPL.

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Bass Clarinet, showing a continuous stream of sixteenth notes with accents. The second staff is for Drumset, showing a similar sixteenth-note pattern with 'x' marks indicating cymbal hits. The third staff is for Synthesizer, with a treble clef staff showing a melodic line and a bass clef staff showing a bass line. The bottom staff is for Upright Bass, showing a simple bass line with some rests. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is 4/4.

Figure 3.12: “Gospel Train” Ostinato, mm. 1429–30

The constant sixteenth-note rhythm in both the drums and bass clarinet propel the number forward against the lurching ostinato. The bass clarinet’s rhythmic stream additionally provides syncopated accents derived from the “Oily Night” incidental music that opens the scene.

Furthermore, the clarinet supplements its predominantly monotone, Ab line with flashes of D and Eb. The tritone between D and Ab sounds at the downbeat of each measure, helping provide a sense of regularity in a cacophonous number. The driving rhythm heightens the sonic representation of a train as constant sixteenth notes are used in both popular musics, such as Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues” (1955), and concert music, such as the first movement of Steve Reich’s *Different Trains*, which premiered in 1989, one year before *The Black Rider*.

Unlike these prior examples, however, the staggering ostinato and the dissonant harmonies do not paint the picture of a well-running locomotive so much as one that has run off the rails.³⁶

The song’s instrumentation plays on both the religious and locomotive angles of the title. While the synthesizer’s sample patch clearly evokes a train whistle when sounding the

³⁶ The rhythm may also be likened to that of the *son clave* rhythm; this hearing inserts non-Western elements into this other-worldly number, but does not necessarily evoke locomotive associations.

discordant harmonies in the opening two measures, sounding out individual notes in the train whistle patch creates a sonic effect similar to that of a pipe organ. Pegleg also adds to the moving train effect in m. 1443[17] as his descending octave glissando mimics the Doppler effect created by a passing train whistle.

The song's layers of irony make it a difficult one to classify. One cannot argue that Pegleg's lyrics—on the surface level at least—provide deeper insight into his character. After all Pegleg cannot honestly tell Wilhelm to avoid listening to the devil when Pegleg himself already hooked Wilhelm on magic bullets earlier in the story. Moreover, Pegleg sings that “this train don't carry no smokers,” while smoking a cigar with his fingers on fire.³⁷ This irony, however, is also why this number *does* deepen the audience's knowledge of—or at least appreciation for—Pegleg's character. In wrapping himself in irony, Pegleg shows his duplicitous nature to Wilhelm and confirms that he is untrustworthy. Ultimately, “Gospel Train” meets the criteria of both categories four and six of Mueller's system. While the layers of irony give audience members insight into Pegleg's character, it also approaches the highest level of integration as this scene is the one in which Wilhelm receives the bullet that will kill his beloved Kätchen. Whether or not this moment is a turning point in the show is debatable, however, as Wilhelm's fate was sealed the moment he entered the pact with the devil in Act I. Alas, even Pegleg's lyric that the “train is leaving and there's room for one more” is laced with irony as Wilhelm hopped aboard the train well before this number appeared in the show.

³⁷ This line is also a play on previous versions of “This Train,” which included the lyric “No tobacco chewers and no cigar smokers / 'Cause this train is a clean train,” which is far from the train Pegleg is conducting.

“Some Lucky Day”

After Wilhelm’s bullet goes astray at the ill-fated wedding, Kätchen’s body is returned to Pegleg’s black box and the cast walks off, leaving Wilhelm alone at center stage. Wilhelm throws himself about, gradually removing articles of clothing, while the pit accompanies with jazz-inspired improvisations featuring prominent trombone slides and floor tom accents; the accompaniment is perhaps reminiscent of “The Stripper” instrumental, which David Rose wrote and recorded in 1958. After this descent into madness, Wilhelm begins to sing “Some Lucky Day.”³⁸

The song's lyric content has no bearing on the drama that occurs prior to or after this song; it opens with Wilhelm singing about a beautiful woman that he left in a “little Spanish town,” despite the fact that neither character nor location is referenced anywhere else in the production. He goes on to sing about friends “back home” and begins to shout excitedly as he claims to see an old teacher from grade school in the audience. The number concludes with the frantically performed statement: “you never knew that I knew you / you never knew that I cared / but I’ll be back some lucky day.”

On the one hand, this performance seems like a textbook example of Mueller’s lowest integration category: Wilhelm appears to step out of character and deliver a song that has no bearing on the drama. On the other hand, its complete disconnect from the drama highlights Wilhelm’s break from reality following the death of his beloved; this reading is supported by Wilhelm’s erratic movements and shift to shouting as the song progresses. If this is the case, the number should fall under the category of songs that enrich the plot but do not move it along. At the same time, Wilhelm’s descent into madness does not seem complete until the end of the

³⁸ Wilhelm’s psyche is not made clear through dialogue, though the Knee Play about Georg Schmidt implied that madness follows pacts with the devil.

song, so perhaps the number is truly integrated as Wilhelm's mental state has changed by the end of the song. Moreover, since "Lucky Day's" melody comprises the opening instrumental at the top of the show, it appears to have more structural weight as a clear recapitulation of that theme. Finally, hearing the melody in its full form and context may result in one's reconsidering its first appearance; perhaps the entire drama is framed by a madhouse.³⁹ In other words, insanity and recurring melodies cloud the issue of integration classification for the analyst. Depending on the stance that one takes, the number could conceivably be categorized as anything from the lowest level of integration to the highest.

Pegleg's "Last Rose"

Following Wilhelm's descent into madness, a curtain call ensues as the cast returns to the black box from which they emerged at the show's opening. While they proceed to the box, they sing frantically with images of "mad houses" (to borrow Wilson's term) floating behind them, indicating that the entire cast of characters has also fallen into hysteria. As Wilhelm enters the box, he freezes and the chaotic sounds cease, indicating that time has stopped. Pegleg emerges from stage right and a single, red rose is thrown from the audience, inviting him to break the fourth wall and address the theater.

Stopping time and breaking the fourth wall both immediately cause issues in terms of categorization. The presence of either device—never mind both—indicates that the action taking place on stage exists outside of the drama in some way. Moreover, this whole epilogue takes place after the curtain call, indicating that the story proper is concluded. Following this logic, any music that sounds during this epilogue should fall under one of the two lowest forms of musical

³⁹ Waits will go on to echo a similar sentiment in *Alice* when he writes "We're all mad here."

integration. This, however, is not the case in this epilogue. Instead, Pegleg takes the opportunity to give the audience a deeper appreciation of his character as he pushes the morality of the show beyond the confines of the stage and into the audience.

The silent theater allows Pegleg to address the audience directly as he expresses his gratitude for their attendance and states that “it’s nice to hear the old songs, isn’t it? Maybe you’ll remember this one.” While this line is stated partially in jest as the show’s music is original—albeit in an older, almost familiar style—the “old song” that Pegleg sings seems even more familiar. While the lyrics, “I’m a devil/just a little devil,” are novel, the tune is derived from Irving Berlin’s 1935 song “Cheek to Cheek” (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13: Irving Berlin’s “Cheek to Cheek” and transcription of Pegleg’s “Old Song”

Aside from the overt cheekiness displayed by Pegleg in replacing the word “heaven” with “devil” in his song, he shows even more humor by cutting the song off after two lines and thanking the audience as he begins to smile and laugh. In short, after he persuades Wilhelm to purchase magic bullets in the play, Pegleg has now turned his charm to the audience. After his

brief “old song,” Pegleg introduces the band before suddenly turning sentimental.⁴⁰ Lamenting the end of summer, he describes how his favorite rose is the first to bloom and the last to die in his garden. With that, he begins his final song, “The Last Rose of Summer,” which he describes as “a song about saying goodbye.” Using the song as a prop, Pegleg is able to cast himself as a sympathetic figure at the close of the show, despite being the demonic antagonist. At the same time, the audience does not trust this sentimentality as genuine due in part to his actions throughout the production but also because of his current perverse fondness for the death of the rose.

Following a four-measure instrumental introduction, Pegleg enters with a spoken six-measure phrase. The spoken-word quality allows Pegleg to maintain the sense of intimacy that he has established with the audience in this epilogue as it comes across as conversational. The harmonium accompaniment adds to the sentimentality as its upper line gradually descends from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{7}$ with the $\hat{1}$ arrival weakened by the supporting vii^{07}/V , which progresses to dominant as Pegleg moves from speaking to singing (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.14: Reduction of “Last Rose Opening”

⁴⁰ Note that the vamp that introduces Pegleg’s “Old Song” is a half-step higher than the vamp that opens “Come Along with the Black Rider.” This vamp is perhaps reminiscent of cabaret as it loops continuously while the actor extemporizes freely over it, with the orchestra ready to accompany the tune whenever the soloist is ready.

The fully-diminished-seventh chord supporting $\hat{1}$ gives the impression of sincerity in Pegleg's lament as the arrival of $\hat{1}$ should otherwise provide a sense of rest and ease. Instead of rest, however, this measure conveys feelings of sadness and disturbance. A similar effect is achieved at the end of the first sung phrase as the fully-diminished-seventh chord accompanies Pegleg's statement that the "petals of [his] favorite rose [lie] in the shadows dark and long." Again, the dissonant harmony accompanies Pegleg's lament. Dissonance is treated similarly through the use of a $\flat 9-\hat{8}$ above the V/ii harmony. These accented chromatic passing tones appear separately, accompanying the lyrics "my garden knows what is wrong" and "I should be carrying on" (Figure 3.15).

The figure shows a musical score with three staves. The top two staves are labeled 'Harm.' and the bottom staff is labeled 'P.L.'. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line (P.L.) has the lyrics: "I should be car - ry - ing on but I can be". Below the vocal line, there is a chord analysis: $V^{\flat 9 - 8}$ over ii .

Figure 3.15: Chromatic passing tones highlight Pegleg's supposed lament, mm. 1580–81

The fully-diminished-seventh chord leading to dominant appears throughout the song creating a strong arrival on the inconclusive dominant and highlighting Pegleg's wish to stretch time as he feigns dread over his last rose dying (and perhaps his wish to extend his time in the spotlight in this epilogue). Following Pegleg's final progression towards the tonic in m. 1583[19], which coincides with the lyric "the last rose of summer is gone," he begins to return to the black box from whence the entire show came, extending the phrase a final time with the

appearance of the fully-diminished-seventh chord. He turns to the audience and sings a tag of the final line accompanied by a cadential 6/4, bringing the sentimentality of the song to a climax and leaving the audience feeling sorry for himself as he enters the black box and the show ends (Figure 3.16).

Ham.
P.L.
U. Bass

last rose of summer is gone the last rose of summer is gone.

ii⁷ V⁷ I vii⁰⁷ V I

8—7
6—5
4—3

Figure 3.16: Closing cadence in “The Last Rose of Summer,” mm. 1587–88

Describing the stage action during this epilogue, theater scholar Gordon S. Armstrong writes that “Satan, the seducer of all men, presses a red flower to his breast. A tear wells up in his eye, offering a graphically moving scene of a man with only sincerity in his heart.”⁴¹ Gerhard Stadelmaier’s review of *The Black Rider*’s première opens and concludes with a discussion of this epilogue, stating:

The devil has the last word. He possesses a voice like Liza Minelli and...is as charming as Maurice Chevalier....After a full evening of orchestral tumult, of course one couldn’t wish for any better than a quiet sentimental little song in the final scene. A little bit of peace is devoutly to be wished after hellish cacophony. And the devil delivers....In the concluding scene when he squeezes out a few tears about the last rose of the summer, he presses a red flower to his breast. It appears he does this out of devilish pain. But a stage light reveals the truth: a red flower just happens to go so well with the black jacket.⁴²

⁴¹ Gordon Armstrong, “Political and Practical Ideologies,” *Performing Arts Journal* 15 no. 1 (1993), 40.

⁴² Gerhard Stadelmaier, “*Der Freischütz* im Nadelwald,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 2, 1990.

In other words, Pegleg charms the audience and, through a sentimental song and crocodile tears, effectively casts himself as an almost tragic figure, despite being the harbinger of disaster in the show proper.

Furthermore, the flower's use as a prop and key figure in Pegleg's number recalls the imagery of the rose that appears throughout the production. It appears in the love duet and "The Flash Pan Hunter" as a metaphor for Kätchen, who is contrasted against Wilhelm's "briar." With this prior context, Pegleg's fondness for the rose and his seeming infatuation with its death takes a demonic twist. Pegleg views Kätchen as just another soul under his possession, and one whose death brings him strange delight.

The collaborators' final act in *The Black Rider* demonstrates how easy it is to succumb to the charms of the devil and that the audience members themselves are perhaps no different from the performers in the cabaret that just played out before them. So, while this number perhaps "enriches" the plot in that it gives a deeper appreciation for Pegleg's character, methods, and morals, a better categorization may be one even higher than Mueller's sixth category of numbers that advance the plot; indeed, this number not only advances the plot, as it shows Pegleg beginning to woo his next victims (the unexpected audience); it transcends the plot, as it forces the ideas portrayed on stage out into the world beyond the theater.

Beyond Integration

While exploring integration levels in *The Black Rider* reveals there to be no consistency in how Waits positioned his music in the production, close readings of the numbers reveal the importance that the music plays in conveying emotional and dramatic ideas. The show contains overt attempts at this conveyance in moments such as the B section of "Just the Right Bullets"

and the train ostinato of “Gospel Train,” both of which provide clear musical signposts for listeners to grab on to and use to interpret the drama unfolding on stage. Subtler musical moves—such as elision in “In the Morning” highlighting the cast’s anxiety leading up to the wedding and the hoped-for F5 that never satisfies in “I’ll Shoot the Moon,” illustrating how Wilhelm and Kätchen’s dreams of marital bliss will never come true—show Waits as a considerable composer despite his little experience in the realm of musical theater.

Having investigated associative themes as well as explored levels of integration in each texted number of *The Black Rider*, we must now ask what this tells us about categorizing musical integration, about musical integration at large, and—most importantly—about the show itself. Despite Mueller’s integration categories being more flexible than a binary integrated/not-integrated choice, *The Black Rider* reveals that Mueller’s methodology may still be too rigid as numbers often do not fit neatly into discrete categories. Given theater critics’ ongoing predilection for labelling productions as “integrated” or “not integrated,” however, Mueller’s system demonstrates the multitude of ways that integration might manifest in a work. *The Black Rider* shows that, instead of treating each integration level as a distinct category, we should understand each categorization as an “integration function,” where any given number may fulfill multiple functions. In such a system, it may be prudent to remove Mueller’s two lowest categories (“numbers which are completely irrelevant to the plot” and “Numbers which contribute to the spirit or theme”), as the former is for non-integrated numbers and the purpose of this proposed system is to identify how *integrated* numbers are functioning. Mueller’s second category is removed for being a catch-all that does not indicate any type of function and the presumption is that *any* song with an integration function also contributes to “the spirit or theme” of the production. Lastly, I propose adding a new category of “transcending the plot” to

accommodate numbers such as “The Last Rose of Summer.” An example of how one might demonstrate these multiple categories is shown in

Table 3.1.

Song	Integration Functions
“Gospel Train”	<input type="checkbox"/> Existence is relevant to plot, but content is not. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enriches the plot but does not advance it <input type="checkbox"/> Advances the plot, but not by its content <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advances the plot by its content <input type="checkbox"/> Transcends the plot
“Last Rose of Summer”	<input type="checkbox"/> Existence is relevant to plot, but content is not. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enriches the plot but does not advance it <input type="checkbox"/> Advances the plot, but not by its content <input type="checkbox"/> Advances the plot by its content <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transcends the plot

Table 3.1: Representing multiple integration functions rather than a single category

There are, of course, other lenses that we may view *The Black Rider* through aside from a mid-twentieth-century Broadway ideal (despite integration still being a goal for many contemporary works). Block notes that “in the 1960s the idea of the ‘concept’ musical...began to replace ‘integration’ as the critical encomium of choice, perhaps reflecting a broader social movement toward a modernist aesthetic that favored vision and subject matter to elaborate settings and narrative.”⁴³ In typical concept musicals, plots, musical numbers, dances, and so forth, are organized around a central concept instead of advancing a unified story. There are

⁴³ Block, “Integration,” 104–105,

often shifting timelines, and the visuals tend to be more abstract. With Wilson's aesthetic coming of age in the 1960s and with *The Black Rider's* shifting timelines resulting from Knee Plays and the music not always directly interacting with the plot, the 1990 production seems like an ideal candidate for a "concept musical." It even has similarities to the early concept music *Cabaret* (1966), with its political overtones and Pegleg serves a similar role to the Kit Kat Klub's Master of Ceremonies. Numbers such as "Just the Right Bullets," however, fight against this categorization as, traditionally, the music of concept works may comment on the drama or expand on a dramatic theme, but not *advance* the plot. "In the Morning" is a particularly egregious case of Waits's music working against notions of concept shows as the entire scene is underscored and significantly advances, making Scene 7 appear closer to an integrated operetta movement than an abstract concept piece. In other words, while the Wilson/Waits/Burroughs work has elements that approach concept musicals, it still defies conventions, moving between the two poles of concept show and operetta instead.

To explore this further and show it in a different way, I would like to return to Wilson's assertion that the story is told visually, and the dialogue and music should float above it, with Burroughs's text drawing from Wilson's images and Waits's music drawing from Burroughs's text. Wilson's description might be thought of as each collaborator's medium—visuals, text, and music—each existing on different layers with Wilson's adhering closest to the story, followed by Burroughs's text and Waits's music. Investigating integration levels demonstrates that this is not the case in *The Black Rider*, as each medium weaves in and out of how closely it relates to—or tells—the story. While these elements are not necessarily quantifiable (the flaws in Mueller's system demonstrate this to be the case in music), an attempt to visualize how this works in the 1990 production appears in Figure 3.17 with the height of each point representing a relative

approximation of how closely it relates to the dramatic story, which is represented scene-by-scene along the x-axis.

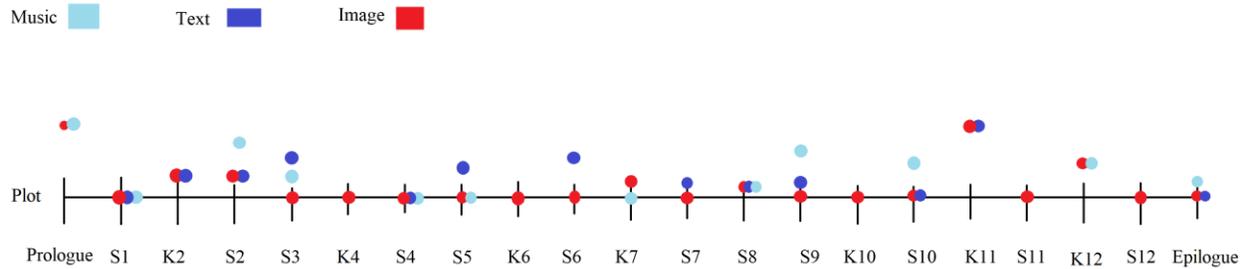


Figure 3.17: Representing how closely each medium (music, text, image) relate to the plot

What this figure demonstrates is that each medium’s relationship to the story is not a static one and that the dramatic weight of each medium may change from scene to scene. There are moments, such as Scene 9, where Burroughs’s text and Wilson’s staging engage with the narrative more closely than Waits’s “scenario” piece “I’ll Shoot the Moon.” Scene 5 shows the opposite, where Waits’s “Chase the Clouds Away” directly relates to the plot while Burroughs’s dialogue resembles the fragmented, dreamscape writing that Wilson alludes to in the pre-production meeting. This figure also demonstrates how entire scenes have seemingly little to do with the primary plot. For example, the backstory about Kuno’s fated shot at the man on the stag, the tale of Georg Schmidt, or Old Uncle’s tale of Hemingway selling the movie rights to *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. While all of these moments relate to the plot in terms of providing backstory—which is perhaps unnecessary to the primary narrative of Kätchen and Wilhelm—or thematic musings, they are not advancing the story in and of themselves. In other words, some scenes of *The Black Rider* are purely conceptual instead of being plot-driven. In creating a show that fights its own form and its ability to tell a clear, cohesive story, however, *The Black Rider*’s creative team allows for a larger narrative and cultural commentary to take place.

With *The Black Rider* using traditional formalist techniques such as integration *as well as* elements of the more modernist “concept” musical play, it may serve us well to view the production through the lens of postmodernism in conjunction with the geo-political and cultural context in which the show was performed.

Chapter 4 — Postmodernism in *The Black Rider*

“Confucius says: ‘He who hang happy ending on story about death, shall likewise take a hangman’s rope.’”

– Old Uncle as William S. Burroughs, Knee 11

The previous two chapters have demonstrated that there are no consistent overarching musical threads that run throughout the show that could provide a guiding hand to an audience watching a drama unfold. Sometimes even the images or text presented on stage in *The Black Rider* do not contribute to the plot. Instead, what we have is a presentation of the story where each individual scene (and knee play) may or may not directly relate to Kätchen and Wilhelm’s drama and, furthermore, each media device (image, script, music) may or may not relate to the scene it appears in. This is further complicated by flashback scenes that disrupt the story’s linearity.

To summarize, *The Black Rider* presents fragments that surround the *Der Freischütz* tale that sometimes relate directly to the story and sometimes relate to broader themes without touching on the plot itself. In this chapter, I intend to zoom out beyond individual numbers and overarching music themes to examine the show from a more holistic perspective, considering Wilson’s images, Burroughs’s texts, and then Waits’s music. In the process of doing so, I will demonstrate the ways in which the production touches on modernism before demonstrating how it is better suited for a postmodern analysis. Following this exploration of postmodernism in *The Black Rider*, I consider how this aesthetic lens translates to the broader socio- and geo-political landscape in which the production premiered in 1990. Providing this context gives us insight into

the show's smash success in Europe as well as why it did not perform nearly as well in the United States. It also provides a framework for understanding this updated production's place in the broader *Freischütz* performance history. Before doing any of that, however, it is necessary to come to a working definition of modernist and postmodernist styles and attitudes.

Defining Modernism and Postmodernism

One of the issues in defining the postmodern style and attitude is that it needs to be put in relief with that of modernism. In other words, before we can come to a working definition of postmodernism, we must first understand modernism, which came to prominence following World War I. Critic Tim Woods catalogues some of modernism's characteristics as follows:

1. A commitment to finding new forms to explore how we see the world rather than what we see in it (e.g., the break with realist modes of narrative in favour of a stream of consciousness; in visual art, the emergence of Cubism...in music, the abandonment of harmony in favour of tone).
2. A new faith in quasi-scientific modes of conceptualization and organization, for instance using basic geometric shapes like cubes and cylinders in the tower blocks of modernist architecture, as the expression of a rationalist, progressive society.
3. An ideologically inspired use of fragmented forms, like collage structures in art, and deliberately discontinuous narratives in literature to suggest the fragmentation and break-up of formally accepted systems of thought and belief.
4. Aesthetic self-reflexivity, in which artefacts explore their own constitution, construction and shape.
5. A clear demarcation between popular and elite forms of culture.
6. A gradual growth of interest in non-western forms of culture, albeit as a way to reinvigorate tired traditional aesthetics.¹

Postmodernism overlaps in several points with Woods's overview of modernism and the author says as much. In fact, postmodernism is not to be thought of as a temporal shift (i.e., "after modernism") so much as it is a sort of self-aware modernity. Woods characterizes the

¹ Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 7–8.

primary difference between the two schools of thought as one of “mood or attitude.”² While both modernism and postmodernism make prominent use of fragmented forms, these forms’ use in modernism is often associated with a deep sense of nostalgia and longing. Reflecting a sense of loss following the first World War, modernist fragments come attached with tones of “lament, pessimism, and despair about the world which finds its appropriate representation in these ‘fractured’ art forms.”³ Hawthorne writes that “Postmodernism takes the subjective idealism of modernism to the point of solipsism, but rejects the tragic and pessimistic elements in modernism in the conclusion that if one cannot prevent Rome burning then one might as well enjoy the fiddling that is left open to one.”⁴ That is, postmodernism takes the forms and aesthetics of modernism but without nostalgia coming into play. Sociologist Tod Gitlin summarized this attitude when he wrote “Modernism tore up unity and postmodernism has been enjoying the shreds.”⁵ Wrapped up in their nostalgia is a suspicion of progress through science and technology, even though Woods describes modernists as taking a “quasi-scientific” approach to conceptualization with clearly delimited geometric shapes; this suspicion is often attributed to “revulsion from the use of technology to slaughter millions in the First World War.”⁶

Tied up in the difference between how these two theories regard fragmented forms and their relationship to the past is their overall tone and attitude towards art forms and their views on popular versus elite forms of culture. Modernists are often associated with a disgust for commercialism and the popular, which is a stark contrast from the postmodernist’s view. Peter Barry sums up this contrast when he writes that “An important aspect of modernism was a fierce

² Woods, *Postmodernism*, 9.

³ Peter Barry, “Postmodernism,” in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 81.

⁴ Jeremy Hawthorn, “Modernism and Postmodernism,” in *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Arnold, 2000), 121.

⁵ Woods, *Postmodernism*, p. 8.

⁶ Hawthorne, “Modernism and Postmodernism,” 121.

asceticism which found the overelaborate art forms of the nineteenth century deeply offensive....By contrast, again, postmodernism rejects the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ art...and believes in excess, in gaudiness, and in ‘bad taste’ mixtures of qualities.”⁷

In his article “Postmodern and Late Modern: The Essential Definitions,” cultural theorist Charles Jencks defines hallmarks of modern and postmodern using architectural examples.⁸ He goes on to say that postmodern architecture is “an architecture that [is] professionally based *and* popular as well as one that [is] based on new techniques *and* old patterns.”⁹ What separates Jencks’s definition of postmodernism apart from others is its insistence on the engagement of postmodern work with the past. He justifies this through the assertion that modernism failed to communicate with the public because of its self-reflexivity, which both Barry and Woods identify as a defining feature of modernism.¹⁰

Perhaps the most famous and simplest definition of postmodernism is from Jean-François Lyotard in 1979’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, in which he writes “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives.”¹¹ In this definition, Lyotard is calling for a rejection of reductionism and overarching explanations of the world—such as “Christianity, Marxism, or the myth of scientific progress”—in favor of smaller, temporary, relative, and competing narratives; to Lyotard, metanarratives are actually

⁷ Barry, “Postmodernism,” 81.

⁸ Charles Jencks, “Postmodern and Late Modern: The Essential Definitions,” *Chicago Review* 35, no. 4 (1987), 33.

⁹ Jencks, “Postmodern and Late Modern,” 34. Author’s emphasis.

¹⁰ One could substitute “music” or even “art” more broadly for “architecture” in Jencks’s criticism. His definition, however, departs from those of other thinkers. Jencks writes that “what Davis, Goldberger, Foster, Jameson... and so many others often define as “Post-“ is mostly “Late” because it is still committed to the tradition of the New and not fundamentally concerned with a complex relation to the past, pluralism, the transformation of Western culture, a concern with meaning, continuity, and symbolism.” While this definition is calling for a shift in how we regard these writers who are often associated with postmodern writing, I feel compelled to use Jencks’s definition in order to define the boundaries between modernity and postmodernity more clearly.

¹¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xxiv.

illusions “fostered in order to smother difference, opposition, and plurality.”¹² More broadly, Lyotard’s definition of postmodernism shows a disbelief in any kind of power structure.

Lastly, postmodernism’s skepticism of narratives and the existence of any overarching “truths” calls reality itself into question. In his 1981 book *Simulations*, Jean Baudrillard argues that “the pervasive influence of images from film, TV, and advertising has left a loss of the distinction between real and imagined.”¹³ In short, everything is “a model or an image, all is surface without depth.”¹⁴ This “loss of the real” and the sense that “what you see is what you get” undercuts the works of other literary theories, such as Marxist or feminist readings, as those often rely on deriving meaning directly from a given text. In its most extreme form, Baudrillard’s loss of reality may instill a sense of nihilism and indifference to human suffering.¹⁵ While this last point is a bridge too far for some, an indifference to suffering does come into play in *The Black Rider*.

So, to summarize, postmodernism takes many of the ideas of modernism—such as a predilection for fragmented forms and a skepticism towards scientific progress—but has a less somber and nostalgic attitude towards it. Postmodernists celebrate this difference and view it as grounds for experimentation and play. While modernists draw a firm line between high art and kitsch and despise elaborate and excessive ornamentation, postmodernists revel in plurality and the gaudiness of more popular forms. In fact, instead of separating high and low art, the two are freely combined under postmodernism. Again, aiming for plurality above all else, postmodernists reject grand narratives and power structures that tend to couch a variety of ideas into a

¹² Barry, “Postmodernism,” 83.

¹³ Barry, “Postmodernism,” 84.

¹⁴ Barry, “Postmodernism,” 86.

¹⁵ Indeed, one of Baudrillard’s more notorious claims is that the Gulf War never really happened, and it only existed as some sort of virtual televised reality.

procrustean bed, in favor of mini, competing narratives (or realities). In its most extreme case, this attitude may appear as indifference towards tragedies.

With the fragmentary narrative and Wilson's angular, almost cubist approach to the furniture and costumes, some elements of *The Black Rider* may be read at first glance as an avant-garde modernist work. However, taken in context with the lighting, choreography, text, and music, this 1990 iteration of the *Der Freischütz* myth is practically a model case of a postmodern work. Due to the show's relationship to a folk tale with a rich history, it is inherently interacting with the past, while the revisions to the libretto, staging, costumes, and music seek to give the show elements of modernity as well as kitsch. Moreover, the show, which was staged initially in Germany, is adapted by three American artists, which brings a multi-cultural approach to the production. Taken as a whole, these forces combine to present a postmodern work that challenges audiences to view a well-known tale in a new context.

An element of postmodernity that is implied in much of the previous discussion but has so far gone unaddressed is the importance of intertextuality—the quoting of or allusion to other texts. With postmodernism prizing plurality and often juxtaposing high and popular art as well as old and new forms, the appearance of intertextual references is almost inevitable and perhaps even necessary. With Jencks stating that postmodern works should have a “complex relation to the past, pluralism, the transformation of Western culture, a concern with meaning, continuity, and symbolism,” the need for intertextual references seems all the more essential.¹⁶ Barry asserts that one of the primary actions a postmodern critic performs is foreground fiction where literary genres cross boundaries and where cross-references between various texts occur.¹⁷ In that spirit, this chapter explores some of the intertextual references and any other relevant postmodern

¹⁶ Jencks, “Postmodern and Late Modern,” 49.

¹⁷ Barry, “Postmodernism,” 87.

devices utilized in *The Black Rider* by Robert Wilson, William Burroughs, and Tom Waits.

Following this, I consider the implications of *The Black Rider* being a postmodern work in 1990s Germany, thereby postulating why these American creatives chose to tell the story in the way that they did and consider why this updated version of the show resounded so strongly with the Hamburg audience.

Pluralism in Robert Wilson's Lighting and Staging

As was already indicated, much of Wilson's aesthetics in *The Black Rider* closely aligns with modernism. In fact, the most pervasive allusion that runs through Wilson's staging of *The Black Rider* is to the German Expressionist aesthetics. This movement, which is subsumed under a modernist umbrella, reached its peak in 1920s Berlin and grew out of Germany's feelings of isolation following World War I. Like many modernist visuals, the style of German Expressionism is often characterized by its lack of realism, exaggerated geometric angles—which often skewed perspective, even in staged works—and stark contrasts between darkness and light.¹⁸ Films in this style often dealt with themes of insanity and betrayal.¹⁹ Perhaps the most successful film to come out of this movement is 1920's silent horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, which combines all of these elements. A side-by-side comparison of a still from this film and from *The Black Rider* help illustrate Wilson's allusion to the style (Figure 4.1).

¹⁸ Kimberly A. Redding, "German Expressionism," in *Movies in American History: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3. ed. Philip C. DiMare, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 964.

¹⁹ Redding, "German Expressionism," 964.



Figure 4.1: Scene from *Dr. Caligari* (1920) (Left); Scene from *The Black Rider* (1990) (Right)

The similarities between the two stills are most apparent in terms of exaggerated angles that create an unrealistic perspective. Where *Caligari* has exaggerated angles in the buildings, trees, and shadows, *The Black Rider* has exaggerated angles on the portrait frame (left side of the still), the chair (center), and the table (right). Additionally, all three objects vary widely in size compared to realistic expectations, a quality that reinforces the skewed perspective. In fact, all of the furniture in the Bertram's forestry in *The Black Rider* gradually appear smaller each time the forestry returns as a setting on stage. In the opening forestry scene, the chairs and table tower over the heads of the characters but, by Scene 7, the furniture is a normal size (or perhaps even smaller) albeit still with abnormal, exaggerated angles. This change is a subtle one, but significant nonetheless. In changing the proportions of the furniture, Wilson forces the audience to question the basic fundamentals of the world the show creates as even traditionally static objects such as chairs cannot be taken for granted. In other words, Wilson's subtle furniture trick contributes to a loss of reality within the show and fosters a postmodern questioning of everything presented.

Continuing in a German Expressionist vein, Wilson draws sharp contrasts between darkness and light. This is most evident in the costuming, as most characters wear dark clothing

and have jet-black hair, which is in stark contrast with their white-painted pale skin. In addition to providing high contrast with the dark clothing, some critics have likened the actors' whiteface (along with their slow and deliberate movements) to Japanese Kabuki theater.²⁰ The exceptions to these generalities about costuming are Kätchen and Pegleg, who wear both red and white over the course of the production. While the specific implications of these outfits will be explored in more depth later on, the very fact that Wilson includes the loud, chromatic red outfits in the production at all is a nod to working freely outside the bounds of German Expressionism (i.e. demonstrating a degree of pluralism). Moreover, the brightness of the color shows Wilson welcoming more ostentatious colors than traditional modernistic expressionism might allow.

The overall emphasis on black lines and sharp angles over curves is also seen in how Wilson stylizes the title screen that appears on a sheet at the opening of the performance (Figure 4.2a) as well as in how he designed the sets themselves. In the German documentary by Janssen and Quinke, Wilson is seen working with his set designer and he uses a piece of chalk to vigorously draw sharp, decisive lines on a black roll of paper. He attacks the roll so forcefully that the paper begins to tear as he lays out the vision for his design.²¹ The stylization of the title screen also has parallels with William Burroughs's shotgun paintings (Figure 4.2b), which featured splashes of color with overlays of black lines suggesting angular geometric shapes. In a trip to Lawrence, Kansas, to visit Burroughs and discuss the project, Wilson took pictures of some of Burroughs's shotgun paintings and offered to exchange works.²²

²⁰ Holden, Stephen. "When Tragedy Becomes the Food of Satire: The Black Rider." *New York Times* (New York, N.Y.), November 22, 1993, 2.

²¹ Theo Janssen and Ralph Quinke, *The Black Rider* [documentary] NCOX 3005, Robert Wilson Audio/Visual Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

²² Fax from James Grauerholz to Paula Cooper Gallery, August 2, 1989. Subseries III. 1, Box 260, Robert Wilson Collection, Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.



Figure 4.2: Title screen prior to show start (left); Burroughs's shotgun art (right)²³

Wilson's mimicry of German Expressionism was certainly noticed by the audience, and it is mentioned in reviews in the *New York Times*, *Daily Breeze*, and *Variety*, with the latter two explicitly drawing parallels with the style of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.²⁴ While this connection may occur simply because of *Caligari*'s widespread popularity, the significance of relating *The Black Rider* to this film should not be overlooked. The 1920 film depicts a hypnotist (Caligari) using his power to force a sleepwalker to commit acts of murder. While this is not exactly the *Freischütz* tale, both ask audiences to question sources of power as they depict an authority figure forcing an unknowing victim to commit murder. In *The Black Rider*, Pegleg gets Wilhelm addicted to the magic bullets until he accidentally murders Kätchen.²⁵

²³ Untitled shotgun painting photo is courtesy of the Robert Wilson Archive.

²⁴ Jim Farber, "Classic 'Black Rider' Rides Again," *Daily Breeze*, September 3, 2004; Dennis Harvey, "The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets," *Variety*, October 4–10, 2004; Stephen Holden, "The Black Rider; When Tragedy Becomes the Food of Satire," *New York Times*, November 22, 1993.

²⁵ Wilson himself indicates that he was inspired by *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in an August 28, 1989 fax to Waits.

While Wilson's set design and costumes draw on the serious German Expressionism aesthetics, his lighting and choreography bring in elements of kitsch that take the show beyond the realm of modernism and into postmodernism. From the outset, the lighting in the prologue uses overlapping reds, greens, blues, and yellows that clash with characters on stage both in terms of color and in terms of offering a soft wash of blended colors compared to the sharp, crisp lines that define the characters' dress. Much like how the furniture shrinks over the course of the production, when these colored lights return in the epilogue, they are reduced to mere streaks of lights instead of the large projections that appear in the show's opening (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: Color washes at opening of the show (left); streaks of light at conclusion (right)

Further setting himself apart from the cool, serious tone of German Expressionism, much of Wilson's choreography in *The Black Rider* is comedic, closely relating to silent film or mimed sight gags. For example, when Wilhelm comes upon a gun in the forest, he spends several minutes fumbling with it as he cannot figure out how he is supposed to hold it (Figure 4.4). These scenes are often accompanied by musical gags such as string glissandi and oboe squeaks. Wilhelm's struggle with the gun serves as an example of Wilson mixing high and low ideas as he gives the serious concept of gun play a comedic treatment.



Figure 4.4: Wilhelm struggling with rifle found in the forest in Scene 4

Additionally, Wilson plays on gender and sexual norms in Wilhelm's choreography and Pegleg's costuming. Burroughs's text links shooting to masculinity in the first scene (Robert's assertion that he "knows the forest like [he] knows [his] prick") and Wilson carries this notion through the rest of the show. When Wilhelm fails to shoot down any game after running out of Pegleg's bullets, he appears before Kätchen's family with his pants around his ankles, totally emasculated. This happens again after the fatal wedding shot as Wilhelm goes insane and removes nearly all his clothes. In making these decisions, Wilson reinforces the narrative that Bertram's family tradition of excellent marksmen is tied up with traditional norms of masculinity and sexual prowess.

Undermining his own display, however, Pegleg's costume and choreography challenge patriarchal norms. In both the prologue as well as Scene 4, Pegleg wears a vest that exposes his bare (white-painted) chest (Figure 4.5); the vest is black in the prologue and red in the scene wherein he sells Wilhelm bullets. Compared to the plain and modest costumes of the other

characters, Pegleg's outfit appears overtly sensual; this is made all the more clear in Scene 4 when the vest is red.



Figure 4.5: Pegleg's costume consistently displays his bare chest in the production

Moreover, Pegleg's choreography during his sales pitch to Wilhelm has homoerotic themes as he stands behind Wilhelm stroking the phallic rifle while he sings the final lines of "Just the Right Bullets." Ultimately, Wilhelm reaches behind Pegleg during this action and gropes Pegleg's backside. While the patriarchal society inhabited in the production used hunting as an extension of heteronormative masculinity, it is a sexually ambiguous being that possesses the magical bullets that can hit any target, thereby undermining the very foundation of the plot's traditional systems.

Queer coding a villain is hardly new; one need look no further than classic Disney animated films to see antagonists with perceived homosexual traits. The practice itself goes back to at least the 1940s in American film.²⁶ Filmmaker and author David Thorpe postulates that this homophobic archetype came about because "the central subject of a lot of movies is the marriage plot....Gay men stand outside the agenda....[they are] a threat to the moral order."²⁷ The same

²⁶ Hugh Ryan, "Why So Many Disney Villains Sound 'Gay'," *VICE*, July 14, 2015, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/5g9e4d/the-number-of-gay-animated-villains-will-surprise-you-456>.

²⁷ Ryan, "Disney Villains."

reasoning could be given for Pegleg's characterization in *The Black Rider*, another story with marriage as the central plot point. The difference in this 1990 production, however, is that the marriage ultimately fails and there is no moralistic overture about virtue winning out over evil. Instead, Pegleg proves to be the most powerful character in the whole production. Moreover, Pegleg is the most charismatic and perhaps most *likeable* character in the production; this is most evident during the prologue when he turns his charm from the cast to the audience. In other words, despite Pegleg's role as the devilish antagonist working to undermine Wilhelm and Kätchen's marriage, the audience cannot help but like—or perhaps even *root* for him; at the very least, it is hard to care about the less colorful, less interesting characters. Indeed, Wilson's depiction of Pegleg invites a postmodern attitude where the audience does not mind the undermining of the traditional societal norms so long as it can revel in its unraveling.

Wilson plays with other power structures as well through Pegleg's costuming and choreography in Scene 10 at the crossroads, where Wilhelm asks for more bullets before his wedding day. Pegleg descends from the ceiling, smoking a cigar with his fingers ablaze, wearing a white jacket. In rehearsal footage for this scene, Waits suggests to Wilson that Pegleg wear a jacket similar to those worn by televangelists at the time (such as those worn by Paul Crouch).²⁸ Moreover, the color white is often associated with purity, something that Pegleg surely does not have. So, for Pegleg—the devil incarnate of the show—to be advising telling Wilhelm that “this train don't carry no smokers” and that Wilhelm should “never listen to the devil, he's got ways to fool you,” is wrapped in several layers of irony as the singer actively undermines his own advice while he is singing it. After all, what should one do if the devil says that you should never listen to the devil?

²⁸ While Waits may have suggested for the costume in this scene, costumes and choreography were ultimately up to Wilson, hence my associating it with Wilson's work in the show.

Likening Pegleg to preaching televangelicals demonstrates yet another way that Wilson is undermining power structures—or metanarratives—in *The Black Rider* and directly relates to questioning metanarratives outside the scope of the production. While faith-based broadcasts were around in the United States since radio transmissions in 1906 and became more mainstream in the mid-1960s, it was not until Pat Robertson created the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in 1977 that televangelism truly took off in America.²⁹ Similar networks such as Paul Crouch’s Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and Jim Bakker’s PTL Network followed shortly thereafter.³⁰ Historian Jeffrey K. Hadden notes that, by the 1980s, televangelists “forged a coalition that provided critical support for Ronald Reagan and George Bush while also playing a significant role in defining the social agenda of the decade.”³¹ By the end of the decade, however, televangelism was rocked by a series of financial and sex scandals among other controversies. In polling how these scandals impacted American views on televangelism, researcher Tom W. Smith found that trust in evangelical leaders dropped thirty points between 1980 and 1989.³² By connecting Pegleg to televangelists, Wilson is connecting Pegleg’s double speak in the lyrics to his duplicitous actions in the drama as well as to the behaviors of religious leaders in the real world outside the production. In short, Wilson raises serious doubts about religious power.

Lastly, Wilson’s staging of the *Freischütz* tale involves several moments of breaking the fourth wall over the course of the show and blurring the boundaries between the stage and the auditorium. This happens right at the outset with Old Uncle addressing the audience like a

²⁹ Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527, no. 1 (1993): 113–130.

³⁰ Hadden, “American Televangelism,” 120.

³¹ Hadden, “American Televangelism,” 113. The most prominent of these political groups was the Moral Majority, which was founded in 1979.

³² Tom W. Smith, “Poll Trends: Religious Beliefs and Behaviors and the Televangelist Scandals of 1987–1988,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 22, 1992): 360–380.

carnival barker while walking through the aisles at the start of the show. Pegleg then addresses the audience in “Come Along With the Black Rider.” Before the plot properly begins, the black box expands until it seemingly envelops the entire theater. In this moment, the entire space is part of the production, not merely the stage. Pegleg breaks the fourth wall in scene 6, explaining his devilish plan for Wilhelm in the number “Pegleg’s Clouds,” and for the entirety of the prologue (analyzed under the heading “Pegleg’s Last Rose” in chapter 3). These moments blur the space between the show’s reality and the world beyond the stage. With Pegleg acting as the frequent mediator between these two spaces, it makes sense that he walks with a limp as one leg is in each world: the real and the staged. In creating these moments, Wilson muddies the boundaries of the theater, allowing Pegleg to move freely between stage and audience. This blurring of space is consistent with postmodernism’s playing with boundaries of reality as it comments on the show while it unfolds and simultaneously pushes the show out into the world beyond the theater.

So, through his contrasts of serious German Expressionism with slapstick comedy, muted and audacious costumes, and through breaking the boundary between audience and actors, Wilson creates a setting of high and low art in which the production can take place. Moreover, Wilson subverts heteronormative as well as religious power structures through his depiction of Pegleg. In accomplishing both of these tasks, Wilson brings out foundational elements in a postmodern work. Burroughs’s text similarly accomplishes this task.

Modernist Techniques and Postmodern Attitudes in William Burroughs’s Texts

As is noted in chapter 1, William Burroughs was already known for being a postmodernist prior to *The Black Rider*, as his previous work played with fragmentation, collage,

and language games through his “cut up” technique. His seminal work *Naked Lunch* also directly challenges idyllic notions of 1950’s middle-class America with the book’s depictions of sex and drug-fueled escapades. The purpose of this section then is to highlight the ways in which Burroughs’s postmodern aesthetics and attitudes manifest in *The Black Rider*. This is demonstrated through an examination of how Burroughs wrote the libretto for the production, as well as through an analysis of some of the intertextual references that pervade the work.

First and foremost, Burroughs constructed much of the text for the *The Black Rider* using two different types of fragmentary techniques: three-column cut-up and redaction editing. While the final text for the show is written in a standard script format, making it nearly impossible to discern whether or not Burroughs used these techniques, archives provide early drafts of Burroughs’s work that show him dividing a written scenario into three columns (Figure 4.6).³³ Instead of writing three separate texts in each column, however, this page features one coherent text when read from top to bottom and from column to column. This means that a reader may examine the story as Burroughs originally conceived of it or, by reading *across* columns, through the lens of the cut-up technique. While reading the page horizontally may not allow for traditional grammar and narrative structures, the coherence of the story permits the page to be read with some semblance of understanding. The goal of the horizontal reading is not to generate long stretches of dialogue so much as to capture small phrases that may make their way into the text or shape ideas going forward. Examples in the following excerpt include “I rifle obscenely” (which may describe Wilhelm’s pact with Pegleg), and “the gun goes open, extinguishing all” (which describes the devastation that Wilhelm causes with his rifle and the magic bullets).

³³ Fax from William Burroughs to Robert Wilson May 5, 1989, Box 259, Folder 4, Robert Wilson Collection, Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

forester, who has had too bullets on the table) huntsman quickly raises his
much to drink, embraces KÄTHCHEN But Vater, I rifle obscenely. It is a flash
him. Strident joy. The old ama woman, with a woman's in the pan, like a 1920s
forester is handicapped by his heart OLD FORESTER magnesium-powder flash
arthritic leg, but he dances, So it is time you get a bit picture. 1920s music? The
rather grotesquely. He points smart Think of your Duke points: DUKE
first to Wilhelm, then to his stomach, and forget your Dumb head, thank God for
old flintlock on the wall, and heart When the stomach is the pan flash A cow lumbers
says OLD FORESTER mellow, The heart will out from behind some
Ach, now that he has hit the follow. He stops in front of bushes. The cow looks at the
mark with Käthchen, perhaps the portrait of Kuno. He huntsman and moos
he will not be able to hit with points: OLD FORESTER derisively. The huntsman
the bullets! At this point a Do you know the story von roar with laughter. A
gust of wind blows the door Kuno? KÄTHCHEN moment later, the gun goes
open, extinguishing all but (resignedly) Yes, Vater, I off, narrowly missing one of
three candles. In the semi- know well the story of Kuno. the hunters. They exchange

Figure 4.6: Excerpt of Burroughs's cut-up technique sent to Wilson; highlights are my own

Beyond using the cut-up technique to generate phrases and ideas that appear in a more typical script format, Burroughs does write a scene where the dialogue acts out the phenomenon of having two texts that can be read horizontally or vertically. In Scene 6, Wilhelm wanders through the forest attempting to shoot game but finds that he has run out of magic bullets and with it, his marksmanship. Old Uncle hides in the shadows watching this take place and comments on the action as it happens. Interlaced with this commentary, however, is Wilhelm's own monologue. The script illustrates these two competing soliloquies as two separate columns (Figure 4.7). So, the audience can either listen to each individual character's spoken piece as a single unit (reading vertically) or combine the two dialogues into a single unit (reading horizontally). This combined monologue is also similar to that of a comedic split-screen effect, suggesting an element of low brow kitsch.

WILHELM

But between the hand and the eye,
falls the Shadow ...

Between the intent and the act,
falls the Shadow ...

And there is darkness at noon ...

Darkness before my eyes ...

OLD UNCLE

Knows what he's doing, does he?

They always know,
and they always know nothing.

And who's telling you knows it.

The last of the light ...

Figure 4.7: Scene 6, Wilhelm and Old Uncle perform interwoven monologues

The other form of fragmentary writing used in *The Black Rider* occurs through redaction. While redaction is commonly understood as a process of editing out or censoring documents, it also refers to a method of composition in which multiple sources, often organized by topic, are conflated (or “redacted”) to create a single, coherent text.³⁴ While the term has been used almost exclusively in viewing Judeo-Christian texts, it appears on the cover page of the *Black Rider* script to describe the work of Burroughs’s assistant James Grauerholz and Thalia Theater producer Wolfgang Wiens. Further evidence of this approach appears in archival material of Burroughs’s work as he types “topic: DEVIL” or “topic: ART/MADNESS” as headers before writing further (see Figure 4.8).³⁵ While this use of fragmentary forms may easily fall under the category of Modernism, it is the intertextuality and intersection of high/low and old/new that points towards postmodernism.

³⁴ Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 1.

³⁵ William Burroughs free writing, *Black Rider Project Files*, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, New York. This document was curiously misplaced in the folder titled “Lyric,” along with two other similar pages.

21.9.89 WSB

topic: DEVIL

Piss off, Satan, and don't take me for dumber than I look --
 Sucker's bargain, and there's one born every minute.
 Step right up: Hell under the shell.
 Shell game? Three-card monte? Money machine? Gold bricks?
 Buy a toll bridge?
 Why do they buy it? Because they fear the swindler . . .
 (enter Boy with cane du battu and 2 bottles wine)
 He listens like a three year child, the swindler has his will.
 Every swindler is the Devil, with something for nothing, the easy way,
 the short way, the crooked way. Yellow Kid Weil said: "You can't cheat
 an honest man."

Figure 4.8: William Burroughs's free writing on the devil

One of Burroughs's biggest contributions to the production may be his suggestion to incorporate elements of 1920s America. In a December 17, 1988, fax from Burroughs's office, assistant James Grauerholz recounts notes from his meeting with Burroughs about the project.

He writes that:

Overall, William compares the opera's theme to that of The Great Gatsby: Wilhelm is Jay Gatsby, blinded by his simple misguided ambition for Daisy's love, entranced by the Green Light at the end of Daisy's dock. Like Wilhelm, he misrepresents himself in his quest to demonstrate affluence and social class, when he is in fact from humble beginnings.... Thinking of Tom Waits's talents, one considers the possibilities of the 1920s atmosphere conjured by Gatsby—costumes, music, specifically and American music—and the idea of a fairground or circus or amusement park: Ferris wheel, spook-house, tunnel of love, shooting gallery, etc.³⁶

While the carnival concept never fully took off as a controlling metaphor in the way that Burroughs and Waits envisioned, both authors find ways to incorporate it nonetheless and the suggestion of conjuring an American atmosphere from the early twentieth century appears in both Burroughs's text and Waits's music.

³⁶ Fax from Burroughs office Wilson office, December 17, 1988, Box 258, Robert Wilson Collection, Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

For example, the character Old Uncle—who acts as a sort of Greek Chorus throughout the show—refers to “Yellow Kid Weil” at the end of Scene 6. This was the nickname given to American con man Joseph Weil (1875–1976), who once quipped that “The desire to get something for nothing has been very costly to many people who have dealt with me.”³⁷ Pegleg similarly remarks on Wilhelm’s desire to get something for nothing; when Wilhelm returns to the forest to acquire more bullets, Pegleg tells him “my bullets aren’t for free, there’s a question of my fee...six are yours and hit the mark, one is mine and hits the dark.”³⁸

Another example of Burroughs bringing in early 20th century figures appears in Knee 11, when Old Uncle performs an imagined scene from Ernest Hemingway’s life in which the author purchases several guns while also signing the contract for Hollywood to make a film adaptation of his 1936 short story “The Snows of Kilimanjaro.” In the Knee, Old Uncle speaks through various roles as Hemingway, Hemingway’s then wife, his agent, the gun dealer, vultures, and William S. Burroughs, who comments on the scene as an outsider. The scene seems to come from nowhere as the characters are unrelated to the *Freischütz* plot. However, Burroughs depicts the scene as Hemingway making a deal with the devil (represented by the Hollywood contract) and suggests that this pact is what led Hemingway to commit suicide in 1961; in this iteration of the tale, he presumably takes his own life with one of the guns that he purchased from the gun dealer.

One of the gun cartridges that Hemingway buys in this vignette is a .505 magnum, which ties to the same gun that the hunter carried in Hemingway’s short story “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. *Cosmopolitan* magazine published this story concurrently with “The Snows of Kilimanjaro.” Adding another layer of irony to this intertextual reference, the hunter in “The

³⁷ J. R. Weil, “Yellow Kid” Weil: *The Autobiography of America’s Master Swindler* (Chico: AK Press, 2011), 10.

³⁸ *The Black Rider* script, Scene 10, p. 45, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, NY.

Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” is named Robert Wilson. This whole scene is more or less told in Burroughs’s 1985 essay “A Word to the Wise Guy,” which appears in the collection *The Adding Machine*.³⁹

Burroughs’s text also makes frequent comparisons to Wilhelm’s desire for more magic bullets and drug addiction. Wilhelm describes himself in the forest “[feeling] for the bullets, like a junky groping for his stash” in Scene 6, and Bertram’s soliloquy in Knee 8 states that magic bullets lead “straight to Devil’s work, just like marihuana leads to heroin.... You’re hooked, heavy as lead.”⁴⁰ Bringing heroin into the text puts the work in dialogue with Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* as well as his own biography.

Connecting cannabis to heroin also aligns Bertram’s speech with early twentieth-century anti-drug propaganda. The 1930s saw a rise in exploitation films warning moviegoers of the supposed dangerous consequences that come from using cannabis. The 1936 film *Marihuana* draws a clear line between marihuana leading to heroin addiction as the film’s protagonist moves from the former to the latter and is depicted having the drug injected into her arm on the movie poster (Figure 4.9). This poster also describes marihuana as a “weed with roots in hell,” which is not far from Bertam’s assertion that magic bullets lead to the “devil’s work.”

³⁹ William S. Burroughs, “A Word to the Wise Guy,” in *Adding Machine* (New York: Arcade, 1993), 28–31.

⁴⁰ Burroughs English Language Script.



Figure 4.9: 1936 Marihuana movie poster

So, Burroughs’s text likening the magic bullets to marihuana has historical roots in the early twentieth-century American prohibition movement. This movement failed, however, and today the moralistic films that emerged from this period, such as *Marihuana* (1936) and *Reefer Madness* (1936), are now regularly lampooned. For Burroughs, someone famous practically *because* of his drug use, to be writing arguments similar to those found in 1930s anti-drug films is almost laughable. Furthermore, the *Der Freischütz* opera was first staged as a moralistic one so Burroughs’s inclusion of a failed moralistic argument from anti-drug films in the soliloquy may be a hint that, like 1930s prohibition films, this updated folk tale will similarly fail to deliver on its moral promises.

Beyond this monologue, Burroughs double-codes meaning at key moments in the text. Most notably, when Wilhelm is begging Pegleg for more bullets in order to hit the bird in the tree on his wedding day, Wilhelm states “I need it for my love, she is the forester’s little dove.” When Pegleg agrees to help Wilhelm, he says “as Kätchen is your love, you shall hit the little dove.” In wording the assent this way, it is unclear whether Pegleg is guaranteeing that Wilhelm

will hit the literal dove in the tree or if Wilhelm will shoot the forester's "little dove." This is further evidence of Burroughs playing word games and double-coding objects in ways consistent with postmodern aesthetics. The image of shooting a bird is actually taken a step further in Knee 11, which immediately follows Wilhelm's confronting Pegleg, as the gun dealer promises Hemingway that "with that aim-point sight, you could shoot a bird out of the sky at three hundred meters."⁴¹ This line alone points at both Pegleg's promise of Wilhelm hitting a bird (and how engaging in such an activity might be a deal with the devil) but it also points back at Kätchen's song "I'll Shoot The Moon," which opens with the lyric "I'll shoot the moon *right out of the sky*" (emphasis mine). In other words, Burroughs uses the image of shooting a bird to connect to Waits's music, Wilhelm's fatal shot, and Hemingway's Faustian bargain in Knee 11. This method of inter- and intra-textual reference is yet another way that Burroughs's *Black Rider Text* hints at the postmodern. So, while Burroughs's use of fragmented texts and sometimes unclear narrative highlights modernism in the text, his use of intertextual references brings the work into a postmodern realm as he combines an ancient German folk tale with elements of 1920s and 1930s America.

Additionally, he incorporates elements of high and low art as some of the scenes follow free-verse poetry while others are comprised of simpler rhyming couplets. A notable couplet in the first scene crosses language boundaries as Wilhelm states: "Put down a pen, pick up a gun/easy said, und schwer getan."⁴² This moment gets one of the loudest reactions from the audience in recordings from the premiere as well as the *Wiener Festwochen* performance as they laugh at Wilhelm's sentiment, the childlike simplicity of the rhyme, and that it is bilingual.

⁴¹ Burroughs English Language Script.

⁴² Burroughs German Language Script, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, NY. Burrough's original text reads "And hardly done," though "done with difficulty" would be a better translation of the German, albeit sacrificing the rhyme.

Through this combination of old/new and high/low, Burroughs creates a thoroughly postmodern text for *The Black Rider*.

High/Low Art and Intertextuality in Tom Waits's Black Rider Music

Of the contributions from the three collaborators, Waits's may be the most varied in its intertextual references and its use of juxtaposing old/new and high/low forms as well as a wide array of cultures from German cabaret to Finnish folklore to American cartoons.

The first numbers of the show alone demonstrate the juxtaposition of high and low art as the overture brings in elements of circus music with its calliope-like organ sounds, horns, toy piano, and percussion, along with the swaying chromaticism throughout the tune (see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of the number). There are elements of this tune, however, that keep it from sounding like a genuine circus number. First, its slow waltz rhythm and meter are diametrically opposed to the traditional fast marches that characterize most circus fanfares. Moreover, the clarinet that soars above the rest of the instrumentation bucks the traditional brass and string arrangements of typical circus bands. Waits's incorporation of these elements results in a number that has markers of being a circus number while also being decidedly not one; it is a conscious imitation, a pastiche.

Contrasting with the kitsch overture, the Black Box Theme that follows is far closer to twentieth-century art music. Where the overture follows tonal conventions, the Black Box Theme is atonal above a Db pedal point. The overture's harsh timbre of the harmonium and the brightness of the toy piano is substituted for the deep nasal tones of the bass clarinet and bassoon along with the hollow sound of the marimba. At times, the number resembles atonal melodramatic works such "Madonna" in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, which creates a similar

soundscape with flute, bass clarinet, and pizzicato cello. In other words, the first two musical numbers of *The Black Rider* show Waits to be freely moving between high- and popular-art idioms. As was mentioned in chapter 2, the theme makes regular use of both the minor sixth and tritone, which are common devices for composing suspense. In using both of these intervals in constant succession, however, the Black Box Theme is nearly over-saturated with elements of horror and suspense, so that the theme begins to border on the absurd, or even comical. Much as how the overture suggests the feeling of circus music without genuinely creating it, the Black Box Theme approaches the status of art music while seemingly parodying it at the same time. It is this sheen of artifice that brings the work into the realm of postmodernism.

Other elements of the show that have already been introduced contribute to my labelling *The Black Rider* as a postmodern work. One of the more kitsch elements in the show involves allusions to carnival midways, which archival faxes reveal to be a suggestion from both Waits and Burroughs. This carnival undercurrent is found from the outset with Old Uncle acting as a carney/ringleader and continues throughout the production, including visually with one of the most easily recognizable examples being the shooting gallery imagery that is used to show Wilhelm's shooting ability after his bargain with Pegleg (Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10: Scene 4; Wilhem shooting with magic bullets

Musically, Waits shows the kind of cultural pluralism that we would expect to find in a postmodern work, with “Just the Right Bullets” perhaps being the best example. As chapter 3 demonstrated, this number combines elements of American Western films in the B section, while the A sections are rife with fills closely associated with Romani music. Moreover, the oom-pah rhythm that takes place in the verses is similar to music of Kurt Weill and German cabaret. Additional layers of kitsch appear in songs such as “Come Along with the Black Rider,” about which Chapter Three highlighted the allusion to the American cartoon *The Flintstones*. Other examples include the “Stripper”-like music that precedes “Some Lucky Day” and the bastardization of Irving Berlin’s “Cheek to Cheek,” on which Pegleg riffs before performing “Last Rose of Summer.” In contrast to these low-art elements, Waits also includes music similar to Reich’s *Different Trains* (in “Carnival”) and Sarabande dances (in “News from the Duke”). In placing all these musics in relief with one another, Waits brings about a sense of timelessness as well as placelessness, as none of these sound spaces would typically co-exist in a single setting. In many ways, this varied collection of sound worlds reflects the carnivalesque quality that Waits and Burroughs suggested at the outset of the project, as carnivals themselves feature a potpourri of cultural influences.

So, musically, Waits’s contributions hint at postmodernism as he combines elements as disparate as the circus, early twentieth-century modernism, minimalism, cartoons, and American Hollywood Westerns. An examination of his lyrics show the composer similarly draw on a myriad of sources and idioms.

In addition to the lyric reference to *The Flintstones* that accompanies the one-more-time cadence, Waits’s lyrics in *The Black Rider* draw on sources such as 1930s popular songs, English poetry, folklore, and even his own previous work. Several examples from “Come Along with the

Black Rider” have already been covered, such as the first B section referencing Walter Donaldson and Edgar Leslie’s 1929 song “T’aint No Sin (To Dance Around in Your Bones)” and the lyrics in the second B section alluding to Waits’s own “A Sweet Little Bullet from a Pretty Blue Gun” from 1978. Adding to this single song’s list of references, however, is the opening chord progression, I–vii/ii–ii–V, which can be found in many early popular music recordings; one need look no further than the early vocal group The Ink Spots, who open many of their numbers with this progression, including their hit “If I Didn’t Care.” An even more apt comparison, however, may be to Duke Ellington’s “Drop Me Off in Harlem” from 1933, which similarly features this progression. The reason for choosing this particular song out of the countless others that feature this progression is that it clarifies one of the seemingly more disparate lyrics in “Come Along.” In the second chorus, Pegleg sing “I’ll drop you off in Harlem with the Black Rider.” Moreover, the bass lines in both songs at this moment are chromatic steps from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{2}$, with Ellington playing a I–vii/ii–ii–V–I and Waits harmonizing it I–V/ii–ii–V–I. In the context of the song and the show more broadly, Waits’s Harlem lyric is strange considering that there was no mention of Harlem (or any particular place) up to this point in the show, and it never appears again. In one sense, the lyric is a recognition of the placeless-ness of the show itself as it crosses global boundaries with three American artists telling a German folktale. Once again, this placeless-ness further relates back to the potpourri nature of traveling carnivals, whose style this number aims to evoke. What this lyric also does, however, is highlight Waits’s self-awareness that the “Come Along” music is of an entirely different era and continent than that of the stage performance.

Some numbers, such as “But He’s Not Wilhelm” and “Just the Right Bullets,” have few, if any, lyric intertextual references. This may be due in part to these songs being higher on the

integration spectrum. In other words, a song that needs to advance the story is less likely to stray lyrically from the plot at hand to reference other materials. That said, “Right Bullets” instead alludes to different musical styles. “Flash Pan Hunter” remains on topic for the plot as it summarizes the story up until that point and predicts Wilhelm’s fate, but it still makes a sly allusion to Liszt’s 1882–83 *Mephisto Polka* (S. 217) when Waits writes that “the devil does his polka.” With Liszt’s work being a late nineteenth-century piece based on the *Faust* legend, it is a perfect piece for Waits to touch on.⁴³

There are many different allusions to death throughout the show, and Waits’s lyrics are no exception. In addition to the form of “November” being similar to that of Thomas Hood’s 1844 poem “No!” it includes the uncommon phrase “stick your spoon in the wall,” which is a euphemism for death in several languages; it was used as early as the 1820s in the British Navy and, in nineteenth Century Germany, the phrase was “Den Löffel abgeben” [*trans.* “handing over the spoon”]. As was noted in chapter 3, “I’ll Shoot the Moon” brings in images of flowers on graves, pennies on eyes, and again, red ribbons in hair. Of course, the most enduring intertextual image in the show is that of the briar and the rose, which recalls the ballad “Barbara Allen.” Appearing in the numbers “The Briar and The Rose,” “Chase the Clouds Away,” “Flash Pan Hunter,” and “Last Rose of Summer,” it is the most pervasive reference in the show.

One of the stranger examples of lyric intertextuality occurs in the number “In the Morning.” In the song, a bridesmaid sings to Kätchen to help ease the bride’s worries leading up to the wedding ceremony. The bridesmaid begins her phrase by saying that Wilhelm will “wear [Kätchen’s] heart” and Kätchen will wear his ring. Taken metaphorically, the sentiment is

⁴³ While there are no clear musical connections to the Liszt piece, it is possible that Waits’s relatively monotone verse melody is in homage to Liszt’s monotone introduction to the *Mephisto Polka*, which insistently strikes the pitch F5 in its opening sixteen measures.

romantic; taken literally, and knowing the deadly fate that is to befall Kätchen, the lyric is horrific. The bridesmaid concludes her phrase by suggesting that Kätchen play a “fishbone harp” and leave on a “grey mare’s tail.” While Grey Mare’s Tail may be a reference to a sixty-meter waterfall in Scotland, it is likely a more general use of imagery; the mention of a fishbone harp, however, may be a reference to a nineteenth-century poem.

Written by Elias Lönnrot and first published in 1835, the epic poem *Kalevala*—in addition to its inspiring several works by Sibelius—is hailed as one of the most significant works of Finnish literature and is recognized as the country’s national epic.⁴⁴ The epic is divided into fifty songs and, while the story is wide ranging, one of its central elements is a mystical object called the Sampo. Like the magic bullets in *The Black Rider*, the Sampo is a totem that is supposed to bring the owner prosperity. Songs 39 to 44 of *Kalevala* tell the story of characters sailing to recover the Sampo and killing a gargantuan pike in the process; the characters then fashion a kantele, which is a Finnish plucked string instrument, from the pike’s jawbone. This passage has since been rendered into English as the character’s fashioning a “fishbone harp.” *Kalevala* has been translated into English three times in the twentieth century; the most recent translation was published in 1989, the year that Waits began composing the music for *The Black Rider*.⁴⁵ While the reference to *Kalevala* may be slight, the connection between the Sampo and the magic bullets is relevant and shows Waits to be bringing in Romantic-era folk tales from other countries to this rendition of *Der Freischütz*. Similar to the magic bullets bringing Wilhelm and Kätchen suffering at the end of the production, the Sampo brings the people of Elias Lönnrot’s epic misery as there is a continuous battle for its power over the course of the poem. Much as Burroughs brings other Faustian bargains to *The Black Rider*, this small allusion shows

⁴⁴ William A. Wilson (1975) “The Kalevala and Finnish Politics” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 12 (2/3): 131.

⁴⁵ Elias Lönnrot, *The Kalevala*, trans. Keith Bosley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Waits bringing in other examples of mystical objects that grant powers to those who possess them.

Outside the songs themselves, Waits took an eclectic approach to both the instrumentation of the score as well as the types of musicians. Although the instrumentation calls for standard theater music fare with flutes, clarinets, viola, and horns, it also calls for instruments less commonly found in Western theaters, such as the toy piano, harmonium (or pump organ), glass harmonica (or wineglasses), the singing saw, ocarina, and didgeridoo. With instruments such as the ocarina and didgeridoo bringing in sounds from different cultures and the toy piano and singing saw bringing in elements of kitsch, Waits effectively brings together a variety of styles and voices to create an ensemble sound all his own. Although it is not listed in the current *Black Rider* score, the original ensemble also included a Stroh bass and Stroh viola, which are string instruments mechanically altered to include a metal resonator and attached horn (perhaps evoking the sonics of pre-electrical recording).⁴⁶ The resulting aesthetic is practically steampunk as it seems simultaneously futuristic and historical.

A similar blending of styles and backgrounds occurs in the musicians themselves as the players were a blend of classical and non-classical musicians. Recalling the ensemble in a 2006 interview, Waits stated: “The musicians we chose were either from classical music or they were playing in a train station. At first there was a little conflict in the orchestra. There were folks that didn’t read [music] and folks that had played in the Berlin Symphony.”⁴⁷ So, even in the makeup of the *Black Rider* ensemble—which the musicians themselves named the “Devil’s Rubato Band—Waits intentionally created a blend of high art and kitsch aesthetics both in the

⁴⁶ Waits confirms these instruments in Waits, Tom. “Theater: Strange Magic.” In *The Orange County Register*, interviewed by Paul Hodgins, April 26, 2006.

⁴⁷ Waits, “Strange Magic.” This was also confirmed by musical director Hans Brandenburg in personal correspondence.

instruments that he chose to include in the band, and in the musicians that he selected to play them.

Implications of *The Black Rider* as a Postmodern Work

If nothing else, the previous pages have demonstrated the pluralism within *The Black Rider* as Wilson brings in elements of German Romanticism, Burroughs adds his beat style and references to early 1900s America, and Waits incorporates popular music, non-Western music, and lyrics that allude to death and folk tales from around the world. Outside of each individual collaborator's contributions, the production demonstrates pluralism in language, with most of the libretto spoken in German and the numbers sung in English. The story seems as if it could occur at any time or in any place all at once with its litany of references and styles. All of this is in addition to the foundational aspect of the show, that this is a German tale told by American artists. To say that the show demonstrates pluralism is nothing new and labelling the production "postmodernism" to reflect that quality is using the term merely as an umbrella. Moving beyond mere cataloging, however, "postmodernism" allows us to better understand the broader "message"—for lack of a better term, as the very notion of an overarching message in the production would undermine its postmodern label—in the show and the broader implications of the production when it premiered.

While Carl Maria von Weber and Friedrich Kind's 1821 production of the *Freischütz* tale features a *deus ex machina* ending in which love and atonement conquer all, this 1990 re-telling offers no such theme as Kätchen is killed by the errant bullet and Wilhelm goes mad. One interpretation of this ending is that Wilhelm should never have made his bargain with Pegleg but blame also lies with Bertram and his patriarchal insistence that a suitable mate for his daughter

must pass a shooting test; fault also lies with the Duke for upholding this tradition. In other words, the ending of the story questions the overarching power structures at play in the production as these systems inevitably fall apart and bring misery to both Kätchen and Wilhelm. The amorality of the show takes on more depth in its final minutes when Pegleg walks out and takes center stage.

When he breaks the fourth wall in the epilogue and closes the show with “The Last Rose of Summer,” Pegleg shows how easy it is to succumb to his own guile and charm. Being the most colorful and flamboyant character on stage throughout the entire production, it is nearly impossible to resist his charm, causing one to almost root for Pegleg’s victory over the couple; however, the audience is then left to ponder the implications of what it says about them if they are not hoping for love triumphing over all. In breaking the fourth wall to address the audience, Pegleg takes the morality—or rather, amorality—of the show into the theater and the rest of the world; the action is no longer taking place with artifice of a stage separating theater from reality, because the audience is all a part of the production. This may cause some to consider how they were entertained by a dark, gruesome tale and may have even supported the antagonist through the show. In other words, bringing the audience in as active members forces them to consider their role in the show at large. In his essay on *The Black Rider*, Gordon S. Armstrong writes that

The figures on Wilson's stage are marionettes, puppets on a string of conscious morality that hides deeper truths about ourselves. Chaos and indeterminacy, twin hermeneutical beacons of postmodernism, are reality; the world *is* a cabaret...Once again, in *The Black Rider*, reflecting the reality beneath the surface of pop culture, Wilson demonstrates prophetically the “Heart of Darkness” of the late twentieth century.⁴⁸

So, *The Black Rider* may be considered postmodern not just for its pluralism or for its collaborators questioning of certain power structures (such as religion, gender norms, and

⁴⁸ Gordon Armstrong, “Political and Practical Ideologies,” *Performing Arts Journal* 15 no. 1 (1993): 41.

traditions), but also for its blurring of where the stage stops and where the world begins and how the show's amorality plays into it all. The show does not ask audiences to walk away with a moral or necessarily a single coherent message; it simply presents a tale and asks the audience to "Come Along with the Black Rider," and, recalling Tod Gitlin's quote on postmodernism, "enjoy the shreds."

Understanding the production as a postmodern work takes on more significance when considered in its historical, geopolitical context. Following the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, a newly re-unified Germany was forced to reckon with its history, especially in terms of politics and racism, and work out whatever its new national identity might be, if one might exist at all, as well as defining its global geo-political position.⁴⁹ Historian Arnulf Baring wrote that after reunification "suddenly very old questions reappear, questions about the position of Germany in the middle of Europe, about the relationship between east and west."⁵⁰ Stefan Berger's 1995 historiography "Historians and Nation-Building in Germany after Reunification" highlights the variety of attitudes towards German reunification; he quotes Christian Meier, who wrote in 1990 that "German nationalism to any considerable degree only exists as a ghost haunting the thoughts of those who want to see in Germany's present the shadows of the past."⁵¹ Contrasting this view, Thomas Nipperdey argued for a return to nationalism, stating that reunification would allow for a return to a historiography centered on the nation-state and that this type of historiography would help Germans find an answer to "the question of why we are as

⁴⁹ Stefan Berger, "Historians and Nation-Building in Germany After Reunification," *Past and Present*, no. 148 (August 1, 1995): 187–222.

⁵⁰ Arnulf Baring, "Schluss mit der Behaglichkeit," in Berger, "Historians and Nation-Building," 203.

⁵¹ Christian Meier, "Wir sind ja keine normale Nation" in Stefan Berger "Historians and Nation-Building," 207.

we are: namely, German.”⁵² In short, the nation was grappling with large questions about its identity, its history, and its future as it worked through the aftermath of reunification.

While none of the collaborators explicitly spoke on these issues, this national context makes *The Black Rider*'s incorporation of Romani elements particularly noteworthy. On the one hand, Waits's Roma allusions in *The Black Rider* may simply serve to heighten the sense of Pegleg as a swindler and a cheat, as these are racial stereotypes often assigned to the Romani people.⁵³ During Germany's reunification, however, this choice also served as a reminder of Germany's checkered racial history, as more than 500,000 Romani people were killed in the Holocaust.⁵⁴ Romani elements also began to appear frequently in Europe's klezmer music after the Berlin Wall fell. Ethnomusicologists Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman write that

In 1990s Europe the difference between black music and Jewish music blurs in klezmer. It's both. And it's more, for there's Roma music in the new mix. No one says there's Roma music in the mix, but rather that it has a “Gypsy flavor.” Then again, no one would say that it is Jewish or black music. The music masks such racial categories. They are present but they are also invisible and inaudible. Everyone knows they are present, but the music makes it possible to imagine they are not. The music provides a site for unleashing the racial imagination, but it serves as a reminder of the consequences of the racial imagination unchecked. In post-Holocaust Europe klezmer has become a public site for confronting and reimagining the disastrous consequences of a century given historical meaning by the struggle with and against race.⁵⁵

Going further on the music's cultural significance, they argue that klezmer music became “a ubiquitous marker of a reunified Germany” and that “in the 1990s, [klezmer] has become that music that symbolizes race and racism in the public sphere of post-Holocaust Germany more than any other.”⁵⁶

⁵² Nipperdey, in Berger “Historians and Nation-Building,” 209.

⁵³ Jack Kelley, “Gypsy Stereotypes fuel German's hatred,” *USA Today*, November 25, 1992, 08A.

⁵⁴ Kelley, “Gypsy Stereotypes.”

⁵⁵ Ronald Rando and Philip V. Bohlman, “Introduction: Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence,” in *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200), 42.

⁵⁶ Rando and Bauman “Music and Race,” 41.

Archival research did not reveal Waits's incorporation of music with a "Gypsy flavor" in *The Black Rider* as a conscious choice in terms of the geo-political context in which it would be appearing. With elements of the music appearing in earlier works such as *Rain Dogs* (1985), it is plausible that the music made its way into the show as an adopted part of Waits's own musical language. However, it should not be overlooked that these elements were brought in to highlight racist stereotypes as they are most prominent in music directly relating to Pegleg, who is the ultimate swindler of the production. Given the prevalence of klezmer music at the time of the premiere, audiences must have recognized it as a marker of this new postmodern Germany.

As has been previously noted in this chapter, an important facet of our working definition of postmodernism is its questioning of authority and rejection of "grand narratives" and absolute truths.⁵⁷ I have already noted some of the ways that *The Black Rider* accomplishes this, including subverting masculine tropes in its portrayal of Wilhelm and Pegleg in terms of dress and mannerisms, religion in Pegleg's performance of "Gospel Train," and traditions more broadly in the tragic conclusion. Germany's postwar period is similarly marked with a questioning attitude towards authority. A German identity crisis spread into politics as the demise of communism in the East German state led to questions of how the government might function in these newly combined states with many West Germans viewing unification as a threat to democracy itself.⁵⁸ Stefan Berger notes that Germany's questioning of its place in Europe led to "a much more skeptical valuation of the European Union, even amongst liberal-minded Europeans."⁵⁹ In a similar vein, historian Ralf Dahrendorf argued that "any hope for a Europe which would transcend national allegiance [is] very much wishful thinking."⁶⁰ This skepticism is

⁵⁷ Barry, "Beginning Theory," 83.

⁵⁸ Anne-Marie Le Gloanec. "On German Identity." *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Mass.) 123, no. 1 (1994): 138–139.

⁵⁹ Berger, "Historians and Nation-Building," 203.

⁶⁰ Berger "Historians and Nation Building" 203.

understandable given that the German people saw oppressive governments in both fascist 1930s Germany and communist postwar East Germany and were once again seeing a nation looking to restructure its political system. Beyond systems of government, that historians doubt the notion of nationalism and a solitary national identity is yet another example of a questioning of larger power structures and metanarratives. Writing in 1994, Anne-Marie Le Gloannec states that “As long as different pasts, real or imaginary, linger in Germany, there will be no single national identity.”⁶¹ Going one step further, Le Gloannec asks if Germany even needs a single national identity to begin with.⁶² A postmodern Germany of 1990 saw the forcing together of two cultures and historiographies and questioned its role in the modern world, its governing structures, and the very notion of national identity. It is in the middle of this postmodern crisis of self that *The Black Rider* premieres in Hamburg at the end of March in 1990.

To appreciate *The Black Rider*’s place in 1990 Germany, it helps to contrast it with that of Weber’s *Der Freischütz* in 1821. While the opera itself may be French in form, it has long been regarded as a hallmark of German Romantic Opera.⁶³ In a 2003 article on the opera, musicologist Richard Taruskin writes:

[Weber’s] romantic opera was one of the first to draw virtually its entire cast of characters from the peasantry, in keeping with the new Herder-inspired view that saw the peasantry as symbolic not merely of a class, but of the nation. And no one valued the peasant character more highly than the Germans....[Its] Germanness is real enough, as is evident in the way it was seen by its audiences as embodying the national character, and the national values, that they held so dear.⁶⁴

Weber’s goal of creating a national opera was not unique. In his book *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera*, Stephen Meyer notes that “those engaged with the search for a

⁶¹ LeGloannec “On German Identity,” 142.

⁶² LeGloannec “On German Identity,” 142.

⁶³ Richard Taruskin, “A Suggestive Detail in Weber’s ‘Freischütz,’” *Current Musicology*, no. 75 (2003): 165.

⁶⁴ Taruskin, “A Suggestive Detail,” 165.

German opera in the early nineteenth century...imagined a confluence between the character of the work itself and that of the nation to which it addressed.”⁶⁵ Meyer goes on to note, however, that the national fervor surrounding *Freischütz* was due in part to external, political factors; he writes:

much of [*Freischütz*'s] discourse employs what we might call the 'military metaphor'....Here *Freischütz* is not an opera; it is a weapon aimed against the foreign. In the years surrounding and immediately after the unification of Germany, the discourse surrounding *Freischütz* seems to have taken on an increased urgency— here the premiere of *Freischütz* appears not only as a musical analog of the War of Liberation, but also perhaps of the Franco-Prussian War.⁶⁶

In the years following its premiere, the work persists in taking on nationalistic significance.

Meyers continues:

Like the symphonies of Beethoven, *Freischütz* served a quasi-ceremonial purpose for a variety of different German regimes. Here the performance history of the opera in Dresden provides a specific example of this broader phenomenon. Frequently seen during the Nazi period, *Freischütz* was the last opera performed in the Semper opera house before Goebbels and Hitler shut down the theater late in 1944, as a consequence of their declaration of “total war.”

This historical context for Weber's opera provides an important backdrop to *The Black Rider*'s premiere, especially in terms of the opera's legacy beyond its own premiere. With Germany reckoning with its past, the opera being used as a “weapon against the foreign” is certainly significant, and for it to be shown “frequently” during the Nazi period highlights that, wrapped up in the country coming to terms with its dangerous history of extreme nationalism and wars against the foreign, the country needs to rethink its relationship to the *Freischütz* opera itself. It is here where a revised telling of the story proves to be useful.; the country turned to

⁶⁵ Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria Von Weber and the Search for a German Opera*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2003), 110.

⁶⁶ Meyer “The Search for German Opera,” 112.

Weber's *Freischütz* in the years surrounding unification, so it stands to reason that the country would need a new *Freischütz* tale upon reunification

Similar to the success of the 1821 opera being due in part to its political circumstances, audiences' resounding approval for *The Black Rider* is likely largely due to its context. This may also partially explain why the show never performed as well in the United States. Though Wilson blamed the show's struggle to succeed on an unappreciative American audience, it is also likely that this postmodern production captured a *Zeitgeist* in Europe that simply did not extend to the United States and its audiences. While the United States was an international player in the wall's dissolution, its geographic distance allowed the average audience goer to not grapple with the aftermath of the event on a regular basis.⁶⁷ Moreover, *The Black Rider* did not come to the United States until 1993, meaning that there was both physical and temporal distance between the American audience and the German national circumstances surrounding the Hamburg premiere.

In short, Weber's *Der Freischütz* premiered at an opportune time for rising German nationalism, and its celebration of German folk through its depictions of peasantry and folk-like melodies echoed attitudes of the day. The opera's popularity continued to flourish in the twentieth century as a means of inspiring continued nationalism. Much as Weber's 1821 opera reflected the national sentiment of its time and circumstances, the Wilson/Waits/Burroughs production reflects its own; while *Freischütz* inspired and reflected unity in the German people at the turn of the twentieth century, *The Black Rider* mirrors the disjunction and crisis of self that was present in the country at the time of the premiere. Moreover, the retelling of the story premieres exactly when the country is re-evaluating its own cultural history, a history to which

⁶⁷ Baudrillard would perhaps go so far as to argue that the Berlin Wall and its fall never existed at all so much as it was a virtual reality that Americans experienced only through television.

the original tale is inextricably linked. So, while this updated *Freischütz* did not take the place of the 1821 opera as a source of national identity—and how could it given the nationality of its authors and the fractured nature of the nation-state to begin with—it arrived in Germany at the perfect time to demonstrate that the world was messy, multi-faceted, and sometimes bleak, but that does not mean they need stop laughing.

Chapter 5 — After the Curtain

“That’s the way the pan flashes”

– William S. Burroughs (recording), Scene 3

Looking back on the show in 2006, Waits stated that “it really caught on [in Europe]. It became kind of an underground version of ‘Cats’ or something. It went all over the place, in high schools and colleges, and [it was] done by a lot of different theater companies.”¹ Archival documents reveal that plans were drawn up for taking *The Black Rider* on an international tour almost immediately following the Hamburg premiere and Robert Wilson’s website notes that since 1994 there have been more than 100 licensed productions of the performance, primarily in German and Scandinavian countries. In 2004, Wilson revisited the show to tour with an English-language text; this later production featured English singer-songwriter Marianne Faithfull as Pegleg. Licensed versions of the production vary wildly from director to director with some adhering to a “Wilsonian” aesthetic, while others chart their own course; in July 2020 the German Bielefeld Opera House created a production of *The Black Rider* that involved five large projection screens that move independently from each other around the stage, supplementing the ongoing drama. In 1993, three years after the show’s premiere, Waits released some of the music for the production with his own vocals on all tracks. While Waits’s tour schedule slowed starting in the 1990s, he did include *Black Rider* songs in his live sets, with “I’ll Shoot the Moon” and “Some Lucky Day” appearing on 2006’s *Glitter and Doom Live* album. The show clearly had a

¹ Tom Waits, interviewed by Paul Hodgins in “Theater: ‘Strange Magic.’” *The Orange County Register* (USA), April 26, 2006.

lasting impact on both Waits's and Wilson's careers beyond the 1990 run. While the show has endured and continues to be staged all over the world, scholarship on the work has been lacking, especially in the realm of Waits's music. This dissertation is the first large-scale project that performs close readings of Waits's *Black Rider* material—or any of his musical material for that matter. The purpose of the present chapter is to summarize the primary findings and propose areas for future study including archival *Black Rider* material as well as the two Wilson/Waits theater pieces that followed the Thalia Theater production: *Alice* (1992) and *Woyzeck* (2000).

Summary of Findings

First, a study of the musical “themes” (labelled and not) provides insight into one of the ways the collaborators may try to create signposts in a show that consistently seems to subvert a clear roadmap. An examination of each individual number suggests that Waits oscillates between following Wilson's direction to write numbers that “float above” the plot and writing songs that directly tie into the story. Looking at how each song relates to the show also reveals the flaws of Mueller's integration system and suggests musico-dramaturgical functions that can be refined.

The Black Rider itself serves as an interesting case of a show that has elements of being a concept musical in its focus on imagery and choreography over story, but the music is unable to fully extricate itself from the plot as one might expect in a concept musical. Part of the issue is that underlying Wilson's images, Burrough's text, and Waits's music—each of which varies in their relationship to the drama—there is a strong, well known plot that runs through the work; the existence of this strong plot undermines the show being understood as a concept musical. Moreover, the show's postmodern aesthetics and attitudes subvert a clean label of concept musical given postmodernism's rejection of any kind of metanarrative or overarching theme.

The Black Rider demonstrates its postmodernism in its pluralism of aesthetics and influences from high art and kitsch sources around the world. This confluence of influences combined with its constant questioning of authority and traditions along with making light of tragedy bring it comfortably into a postmodern space. The cultural context of the show's premiere along with the history of *Freischütz* depictions help explain the show's immediate popularity in Europe and Germany especially. While Weber's opera was seen as a reflection of (or an aspirational reflection of) Germany at the time of its premiere, *The Black Rider's* pluralistic questioning of culture and traditional norms accurately reflected Germany's existential crisis during and following reunification.

Areas for Further Study

With the rise of globalization and cross-cultural exchange in the twenty-first Century thanks to ever-changing technology, *The Black Rider* could potentially begin to resonate with more cultures as they continue to grapple with this new era. Countries making dangerous isolationist policy decisions as a means to hold on to tradition may see themselves in Bertram, The Duke, and Kuno as they insist on holding on to traditional ways of life. With the density of material in *The Black Rider*, however, it runs the risk of being merely a strange oddity that crops up in theaters now and then as a conversation piece more than a coherent statement and reflection of an ever-changing world. Nancy M. Grace sums this up when she writes:

[T]he threat of [the show] becoming merely an image with no tangible existence, lurks all too close....

Unfortunately, the post-premiere history of the opera actualizes this very threat. First, quickly hacked out mass-culture reviews endlessly produce static images of Burroughs as a demonic Beat bad boy simplistically defined by guns and drugs. A few of these even make the erroneous claim that Burroughs chose the free shooter plot because it replicated his killing

of his common-law wife, Joan Volmer Adams, thus allowing him to engage in his own media fantasy of justifying the killing as the reason why he became a writer. Secondly, many people have come to know *The Black Rider* only through the collection of lyrics that Waits released commercially in 1993. When excised from the foundation text, the music stands as another stark appendage of the great image-driven machine that replaces a complex theatrical production with a pseudo-avant-garde brand—here, the face of Tom Waits—enabling anyone who acquires the music, legally or illegally, to assume the image of the marginalized neo/pseudo-Beat hipster.²

More investigations into *The Black Rider* need to be carried out to correct some of the issues that Nancy M. Grace notes in her writing and prevent the show from becoming an “image with no tangible existence.”

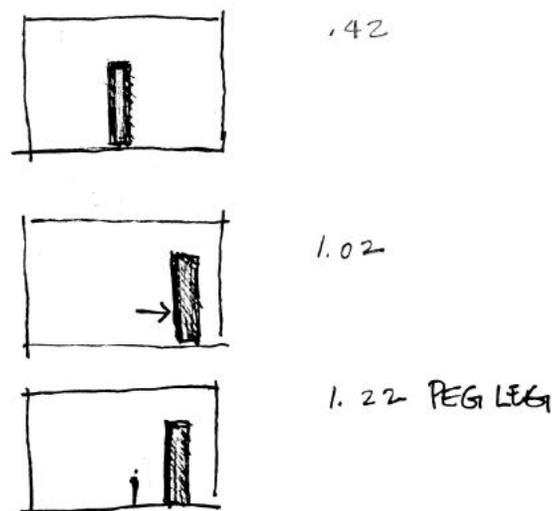
Given how little work has been done on *The Black Rider* up to this point, there are many avenues for further inquiry. While this study reveals a wide array of influences and references taking place in the show, running the gamut between avant-garde and popular, high art and kitsch, it almost surely did not reveal every inter- (or possibly even intra-) textual reference in the work and future studies are bound to find more obscure ones. Perhaps more pressing, a critical edition of the score would allow for easier work in future studies and would provide a definitive text to work from when examining the show.

Archival documents found at The New York Public Library (NYPL), Columbia University Rare Books Library, and the Robert Wilson Archive suggest avenues of inquiry beyond *The Black Rider*'s music that are worthy of further study beyond the scope of this dissertation. The New York Public Library holds archival footage of rehearsals leading up to the premiere that provide information on how Wilson choreographs and directs scenes and how he allows for very controlled improvisation from the actors in the production. For example, rehearsal footage reveals the importance of timing in Wilson's work as stage props are moved

² Nancy M. Grace, “The Beat Fairy Tale,” 98.

across stage while an off-camera Wilson counts down the seconds that each object has to move through the space. This is highlighted by Wilson's storyboards for the production, which are housed at his New York City archive, as they show specific timings next to each item (Figure 5.1).³

Figure 5.1: Wilson's storyboard with timings for the opening of the show



NYPL rehearsal footage also shows Wilson demonstrating to the actors the kinds of motions he would like them to perform or the types of nonsense speak he would like to hear from them while allowing room for improvisation. The library at Columbia University contains much of the correspondence that took place between the collaborators as well as their assistants and members of the Thalia Theater including drafts of contracts; financial records are available at the Robert Wilson archive upon request. These documents would prove instrumental in recreating the production history of *The Black Rider*. Lastly, Robert Wilson's archive contains his storyboard drafts as well as portions of Burroughs's free writing that Wolfgang Wiens and James

³ Robert Wilson storyboard, Black Rider Project Files, Box 1, Robert Wilson Archive, New York, New York.

Grauerholz used to stitch the libretto together. While the NYPL's collection of Burroughs papers does not specifically mention *The Black Rider* anywhere, a deep dive into his correspondence from this period may provide some insight into his vision and execution while working on *The Black Rider*, which has otherwise gone unexamined in the broader scope of Burroughs research.

Alternatively, examining the other non-Wilson-led production of *The Black Rider*—the Theater on Film and Tape archive at the New York Public Library contains several different versions—may provide more insight into Waits's, Burroughs's, and Wilsons's contributions to the show as one considers what is gained or lost when one of the collaborators is removed from the show. Future studies may also want to take a closer look at the English-language version that Wilson produced in 2003, which featured Burroughs's text as it was originally written. On the one hand, this version of the production allows for more of Burroughs's writing style to come through, as it is in the author's native language; on the other hand, stripping the show of its bilingual quality removes a layer of multiculturalism (i.e. pluralism) from the show, which may weaken its postmodern attitude. Lastly, given the show's success in Europe compared to its mediocre reception in America, a more complete performance and reception history may inform us of how this take on the *Freischütz* tale resonates with different cultures at any given historical moment.

Future studies may also look at how the *Black Rider* experience shaped Waits's later work as well as how the show's music fits into the composer's overall output. An obvious entry point to this inquiry would be Waits's 1993 album of *Black Rider* material. Further examination of this album and contextualizing it with his other work may show it to be an anomaly of his output, though placing *The Black Rider*'s lyrical themes in relief with those in 1992's *Bone Machine* may illustrate the extent to which Waits was examining death in his music and *The*

Black Rider is either an extension of a career-long obsession or looking at the topic in a different light.⁴ It may similarly be fruitful to consider Waits's other depictions of the devil and religion in his work outside of *The Black Rider* in songs such as "Way Down in the Hole" (1987), "Jesus Gonna Be Here" (1992), and "Come On Up to the House" (1999).

Considering whether *The Black Rider* changed Waits's later stage shows and following Gabrielle Solis's call for further research into Waits's theatrical works, *The Black Rider* should be examined in conjunction with the two follow-up projects that he worked on with Robert Wilson: *Alice* (1992) and *Woyzeck* (2000). The former was a commission from the Thalia Theater after the roaring success of *The Black Rider*. Along with librettist Paul Schmidt, Waits and Wilson tell a story weaving together elements of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" stories with the reality of the author's seeming obsession with the real-life Alice Liddell. Unlike the 1990 Thalia production, *Alice* did not receive nearly the same warm reception from the Hamburg audience. A partial explanation for this lukewarm response may be that the story was not already known to the audience going into the performance, so the quirks of Wilson's storytelling techniques are harder to overcome as the story is not clearly explained on stage. Moreover, with the plot focusing on Lewis Carroll and his literature, the story is more Anglo than it is Germanic and is not as richly woven into the cultural fabric of the audience's society as that of *The Black Rider*. Much like Carroll's stories, *Alice* reflects the absurdity of the Victorian era in addition to its own exploration of obsession; it does not reflect a present cultural moment in the way that its predecessor did. That said, Waits himself alludes to postwar Germany when writing about *Alice*, saying that "*Alice* occurred after the wall came down, but the song 'Lost in the Harbour' spoke to the separation of worlds, East Germany and West Germany implied,

⁴ Indeed, Waits starts writing about death as early as "Small Change (Got Rained on with His Own .38)" on *Small Change* (1976), and it plays a larger role in several songs from *Blue Valentines* (1978).

fantasy and reality, us and them.”⁵ It may be useful to compare Waits’s adaptation on Carroll’s work to that of other pop musicians, such as “I Am the Walrus” by The Beatles, Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit,” Captain Beefheart’s “Alice in Blunderland,” and Aerosmith’s “Sunshine” (2001) among others.

Waits’s music is no less haunting in *Alice* compared to *The Black Rider*, though the instrumentation and numbers generally reflect a greater reliance on an American jazz and ragtime idiom than the quasi-art songs of the 1990 production. Moreover, the numbers in *Alice* appear less relevant to the plot, though the plot itself is generally more loosely constructed than that of *The Black Rider*. The numbers by and large exist as localized character vignettes that do not enhance or deepen the story in any meaningful way. There are, however, a few notable numbers that highlight the imagined relationship explored between Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll, including “Alice,” “I’m Still Here,” and “Fish & Bird.” Waits himself admitted during rehearsals for the production that he struggled to wrap his head around what exactly the story was and, therefore, had a hard time writing some of the material for the production. Perhaps because the numbers did not need a specific theatrical context, Waits’s 2002 album of *Alice* material received a much more favorable critical reception than that of *The Black Rider* in 1993.

Despite the show’s tepid response, studying *Alice* may provide further insight into Waits’s musical process. The New York Public Library’s theater archive contains several hours of footage in which Waits conducts workshops with the Thalia Theater Company. This footage includes Waits encouraging the ensemble to work in pairs and musically express various emotions to create mechanical sounds. Perhaps more telling, though, is the footage showing Waits coaching performers through specific numbers as he demonstrates his unique style of

⁵ Tom Waits, email message to author, May 4, 2021.

placement, constantly dragging behind the expected melody phrase. In “Fish & Bird,” a violin plays the melody line in a strict rhythm with the bar line while Waits regularly follows this performed melody by two or three notes, creating a heterophonic texture that is somewhere between a musical canon and a seemingly sloppy performance. This footage shows, however, that this performance practice is an intentional choice and not one of poor abilities. While there have been studies that make passing reference to Waits’s unique vocal style and timbre, there are no studies to my knowledge that address this peculiar performance practice.⁶

The third and final Waits/Wilson collaboration, *Woyzeck*, premiered on November 18, 2000, at the Betty Nansen Theater in Copenhagen. Staging the story from Georg Büchner’s unfinished play, this production shows Waits and Wilson once again returning to source material with historical musical significance, as Austrian composer Alban Berg famously set the drama in 1925 with the title *Wozzeck*. Billed as an “Art Musical,” Waits’s *Woyzeck* returns to some of the cabaret musical themes that first appear in *The Black Rider*, while also including some more lyrical character pieces similar to those found in *Alice*. While *The Black Rider* takes a postmodern approach to the world with everything being fragmented and the players enjoying the shreds, *Woyzeck* takes a more nihilistic approach throughout with the opening number (and a recurring theme throughout) being titled “Misery’s the River of the World,” which contains the refrain “misery’s the river of the world / everybody row / everybody row.” Recognizing the morbidity in the score, a 2010 non-Wilson staging of the production went so far as to insert Waits’s 1992 song “Dirt in The Ground,” whose refrain is “We’re all gonna be dirt in the ground.” While this 1992 song was not written for *Woyzeck*, it clearly fits the mold.

⁶ Mark C Samples, “Timbre and Legal Likeness: The Case of Tom Waits,” in *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*, ed. Robert Wallace Fink, Melinda Latour, and Zachary Wallmark (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 119–140.

Research into these post-*Black Rider* productions would help scholars gain a deeper understanding of Waits as a theater composer and how *The Black Rider* set the stage for his future theater work. It would also provide deeper insight into Robert Wilson as a collaborator; research into Wilson's archives may reveal how Wilson and Waits's relationship changed over the course of their three shows together. These shows could also provide insight into Wilson's approach to adapting existing works, as both *Alice* and *Woyzeck* are stage works that are based on prior literature.

While the field of music theory has made great strides in the past fifty years to incorporate American popular music into its areas of exploration, Waits's music remains severely understudied. One reason for the lack of scholarship on Waits's music, especially when it comes to *The Black Rider*, may be that critics have often had a difficult time getting past the unique texture of Waits's voice, the at-times abnormal instrumentation in the 1980s Island era, and the quasi-beatnik spoken word pieces that appear on nearly every album. In other words, critics and scholars alike tend to focus so heavily on the surface-level oddities, that the beauty and intricacies of the individual songs are passed over in favor of the more outlying characteristics in his music. This is not to say that a study of timbral colors in *The Black Rider* would not be valuable, however. Such a study may consider the different synthesizer patches, and the contrasts between the deep, nasal marimba and bright toy piano. A study may also want to consider the different vocal timbres of the performers in the Thalia production. While characters beholden to tradition, such as Kuno, Bertram, and the Duke's messenger sing in a more traditional—or even operatic style—throughout the production, Kätchen's voice is

comically grating in “But He’s Not Wilhelm,” and Wilhelm shows his naivete through his gentle vocal tone.⁷

Conclusion

The Black Rider’s music and its various points of intersection are a microcosm of Waits’s work as a whole. Once we move beyond his distinctive voice, we find that Waits’s music is by and large an outgrowth of the American popular song tradition that draws on field hollers, American jazz, Brill Building songsmiths and crooners, as well as rhythm and blues, country, folk, and rock and roll. Despite never finding major-attraction commercial success, Waits’s longevity and the reverence he receives from other artists should signal to scholars that more can be done by exploring his oeuvre. A study of Waits’s music itself—looking beyond his voice—reveals a large section of the American musical landscape and how different ideas and traditions intersect. This notion of intersecting traditions and ideas contributed to the success of *The Black Rider* when it premiered in Hamburg, Germany, as the country was suddenly overwhelmed with colliding ideas and a cultural reckoning. The 1990 retelling of the *Freischütz* tale brought together three American artists to tell a German folktale immediately following a seismic shift in the nation’s history. Whereas it was not their intention to faithfully reproduce the story of the Weber opera that became significant in Germanic history, they updated it to accurately reflect societal attitudes of the time and, in doing so, successfully carried on the show’s tradition and the tale’s cultural history.

⁷ Indeed, archival rehearsal footage reveals that the actor playing Kätchen (Annette Paulmann) intentionally puts on this particular vocal affect in the show; it is not always present in rehearsals, nor is it the same when she plays Alice two years later in the follow-up Wilson/Waits production.

Appendices

Appendix A. Scene-by-Scene Synopsis of *The Black Rider*. This synopsis appears in *Words on Plays: The Black Rider*, edited by Elizabeth Brodersen and Jessica Werner, and has been edited for length and clarity.

Prologue. Pegleg (the Devil) emerges from a large black box onstage and presents the characters of the play.

Song: “Come Along with the Black Rider”

Scene 1. *A room in the forestry.* Bertram seeks advice from a portrait of his ancestor, Old Kuno. Bertram’s daughter, Käthchen, wants to marry a young bookkeeper, Wilhelm. Bertram objects to the match because Wilhelm is not a competent hunter. As Bertram’s frustration mounts, Anne enters, defending Käthchen’s right to love whom she chooses. Käthchen and Wilhelm enter, and Wilhelm boldly proclaims his love for her. Bertram warmly welcomes Robert, Wilhelm’s rival for Käthchen’s hand and Bertram’s favored candidate. Käthchen remains unimpressed.

Song: “But He’s Not Wilhelm”

Knee-play 1. After the others exit, Bertram explains the risks of the woodsman’s life: there is always a price to be paid for bounty taken from the forest.

Scene 2. *Flashback, the forest.* The Duke enters with his attendant and Kuno as a young man. The Duke tells a story from Kuno’s youth: A man was caught prowling in the forest. He was bound to a stag, which was to drag him until he was dead. The Duke’s ancestor, a prince, took pity on the trespasser, offering the forest as a reward to anyone who could “spare the man and hit the deer.” Young Kuno took aim and shot the stag, without harming the man. The prince set the man free, but, suspicious of Kuno’s skill, declared his achievement “a free-shot” and ordered him to prove his skill definitively with another test, by shooting a white dove out of the sky. Kuno again hit his mark and received his prize. Ever since, this test has been the trial all foresters must successfully endure to earn their position. Kuno’s triumph, however, left a debt to be paid by the generations that follow.

Song: “November”

Scene 3. *A room in the forestry.* Käthchen and Wilhelm sing their love to each other. By the end of the song, they are flying through the air. A giant gun appears beside them, and Wilhelm reaches for it.

Song: “The Briar and the Rose”

Knee-play 2. The gun falls gently to the ground.

[Appendix A cont.]

Scene 4. *Another part of the forest.* Pegleg enters, leans a gun against the tree, and hides. Wilhelm enters, determined to prove himself as a competent marksman. He discovers the rifle and fumbles with it. Pegleg emerges, mocking Wilhelm's ineptness with the gun. Observing Wilhelm's pathetic failure, Pegleg offers him magic bullets. Wilhelm accepts them.

Song: "Just the Right Bullets"

Scene 5. *A room in the forestry. Night.* Käthchen awakens from a nightmare to find her room filled with dead game. She rejoices that he has become a successful hunter. Bertram and Anne enter and bless their engagement. At the height of their collective joy, Käthchen is suddenly overcome by fear. She quickly talks herself out of it, however, and Wilhelm goes back to the forest to hunt again.

Song: "Chase the Clouds Away"

Knee-play 3. Pegleg emerges from the dark. He, too, rejoices, knowing that he has also bagged his prey. He settles in to wait for the appropriate moment to collect his prize.

Song: "Pegleg's Clouds"

Scene 6. *Another part of the forest.* Suspecting that dark powers are behind Wilhelm's success, Robert and the Old Uncle have come to the forest to spy on Wilhelm. Wilhelm enters with his gun. Animals appear; Wilhelm shoots and repeatedly misses. In a panic, Wilhelm wonders why he is suddenly no longer able to hit his mark. Pegleg appears as a huge shadow above the trees, taunting Wilhelm. After a brief chase, Wilhelm gets more bullets from Pegleg and loads his gun. Several animals appear and disappear before Wilhelm has the chance to shoot them. Finally, he fires into the air without aiming. A dead bird—it is Käthchen's—falls from above. Wilhelm picks up the lifeless bird and exits.

Knee-play 4. Robert and the Old Uncle predict Wilhelm's imminent doom.

Song: "Flash Pan Hunter"

Scene 7. *A room at the forestry. Early morning.* Käthchen wanders about, still troubled by nightmares. A bridesmaid enters with her wedding dress, followed a moment later by Anne. A depressed Wilhelm enters dragging the dead goose, cursing his ill aim. Their future now seems bleak. Robert leads Bertram into the room to show him what Wilhelm has done. Bertram tells Wilhelm that, although he is fond of him, their ways must part; Wilhelm has sold his soul and will have to repay his dire debt. A messenger arrives to announce the impending arrival of the Duke. The Duke has promised that if Wilhelm can shoot a certain wooden bird from a tree, he will win Käthchen's hand. Wilhelm comforts Käthchen with a wedding song. All leave except Bertram.

Song: "In The Morning;" "News From The Duke"

Knee-play 5. Bertram introduces the story of Georg Schmid, who made a deal with the Devil for magic bullets. Georg learned some hard lessons: that the Devil's magic can be addictive, and that some bullets are fated to hit a specific target, no matter where a man aims.

[Appendix A cont.]

Scene 8. *A crossroads.* Georg appear and acts out Bertram's soliloquy from Knee-play 5.

Song: "Crossroads"

Scene 9. *The forestry at night.* Wilhelm tries to sneak out of the house. He is about to leave when Käthchen approaches. Wilhelm leads her to bed, kisses her goodnight, and exits. Old Kuno's portrait falls off the wall, nearly hitting Käthchen.

Song: "I'll Shoot the Moon"

Knee-play 6. *Pantomime.* Pegleg's double leads Wilhelm's double into the forest.

Scene 10. *Crossroads. Midnight.* Wilhelm stands in the center, surrounded by various apparitions who attempt to scare him off. He calls on Pegleg, demanding one last bullet. Pegleg appears and warns him that his bullets are not free. Pegleg gives Wilhelm seven bullets, saying, "Six are yours, and hit the mark; one is mine, and hits the dark."

Song: "Gospel Train"

Knee-play 7. Old Uncle tells the story of another Devil's bargain. Playing the parts of Ernest Hemingway, his agent, his wife, a gun dealer, vultures, and William S. Burroughs, Old Uncle dramatizes Hemingway's sellout to Hollywood.

Scene 11. *Pantomime in slow motion.* The wedding party enters, all dressed in white. Wilhelm aims his gun and fires at the wooden dove sitting in a tree. Instead of hitting his intended target, however, the bullet follows its own path to Käthchen, who falls to the ground dead. Pegleg gathers up Käthchen's corpse into a black box and leaves. The wedding party disperses, and Wilhelm is left alone.

Knee-play 8. Wilhelm goes mad while singing.

Song: "Some Lucky Day"

Scene 12. Each character in the play appears and vanishes in a great cacophony of disjointed song, leaving only Pegleg.

Epilogue. Pegleg thanks the audience and introduces the band before singing a farewell tune.

Song: "The Last Rose of Summer"

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