

March 1, 2002

Opening of Kurt Weill Festival, Dessau

Minister President Hoepfner,

Lord Mayor Otto,

President Laczny,

Ms. Simonnette,

Minister President Hoepfner, this is a wonderful ending to our first visit to Saxony-Anhalt.

It is a privilege and my great pleasure to share with you the honors of officially opening the Weill Festival.

This year, for the 10th time, the Weill Foundation and the organisers, have put together a program that once again proves without a doubt that Kurt Weill - in his years in Europe - was not just Brecht's junior partner, and - in his years in the United States - was much more than "just" a pop composer.

The fact of the matter is that in the United States, Kurt Weill's collaboration with America's foremost authors, poets, actors, and playwrights had a major influence on American music and theater.

Kurt Weill, a Jewish citizen from Dessau, found a new home in the United States in the 1930s. Throughout American history, people like Kurt Weill -- brilliant musicians and writers and painters - have brought their traditions to America, where they found stimulation and support and audiences. American culture is vibrant and exciting because it has come from cultures around the world. That profusion of cultural expression has enriched our culture.

Marsha and I look forward to learning more about Kurt Weill - and the many other people from Saxony-Anhalt that have been connecting links between Germany and the United States.

My special thanks to the organizers of this festival for their dedication and initiative. Just 10 years old, the festival is now well-established on the international cultural scene.

Also my thanks to the artists, your hard work and discipline and creativity are the basis for a successful performance.

And to you all, best wishes for a rewarding and exciting festival.