



Marc Blitzstein: His Life, His Work, His World

Howard Pollack

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A composer and lyricist of enormous innovation and influence, Marc Blitzstein remains one of the most versatile and fascinating figures in the history of American music, his creative output running the gamut from films scores and Broadway operas to art songs and chamber pieces. A prominent leftist and social maverick, Blitzstein constantly pushed the boundaries of convention in mid-century America in both his work and his life.

Award-winning music historian Howard Pollack's new biography covers Blitzstein's life in full, from his childhood in Philadelphia to his violent death in Martinique at age 58. The author describes how this student of contemporary luminaries Nadia Boulanger and Arnold Schoenberg became swept up in the stormy political atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s and throughout his career walked the fine line between his formal training and his populist principles. Indeed, Blitzstein developed a unique sound that drew on everything contemporary, from the high modernism of Stravinsky and Hindemith to jazz and Broadway show tunes. Pollack captures the astonishing breadth of Blitzstein's work--from provocative operas like *The Cradle Will Rock*, *No for an Answer*, and *Regina*, to the wartime *Airborne Symphony* composed during his years in service, to lesser known ballets, film scores, and stage works. A courageous artist, Blitzstein translated Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* during the heyday of McCarthyism and the red scare, and turned it into an off-Broadway sensation, its "Mack the Knife" becoming one of the era's biggest hits.

Beautifully written, drawing on new interviews with friends and family of the composer, and making extensive use of new archival and secondary sources, *Marc Blitzstein* presents the most complete biography of this important American artist.

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