

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Urbana-Champaign

THE STAR COURSE

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FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS 1957

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The School of Music

and

The Fromm Music Foundation

present

The World Premiere of Two Operas

“THE BELL-TOWER” by ERNST KRENEK

Five o'clock

“ESTHER” Music by JAN MEYEROWITZ  
Eight fifteen o'clock Libretto by LANGSTON HUGHES

Produced and Directed by

LUDWIG ZIRNER

Auspices

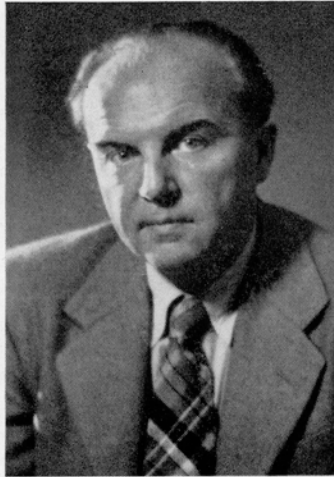
1957 STAR COURSE FESTIVAL SERIES

Lincoln Hall Theatre

Sunday evening, March seventeenth

Nineteen hundred fifty-seven

Five o'clock and eight fifteen o'clock



ERNST KRENEK was born in Vienna, August 23, 1900. He pursued his musical studies in the city of his birth, with FRANZ SCHREKER, among others. He created much excitement with his opera, "Jonny spielt auf," in 1927, which further enhanced his reputation as an avant-garde composer. Since coming to the U.S.A., he has taught at Vassar, Hamline, Chicago Musical College, and elsewhere. His compositions, which place him among the most prolific contemporary composers, are in every known category. He now lives in California.

## THE BELL-TOWER

Opera in one act (four scenes) after the story by Herman Melville  
Libretto and music by Ernst Krenek

### CAST (in order of appearance)

First Senator..... DAN MACDONALD  
Second Senator.....DONALD PASCHKE  
Bannadonna, bellcaster,  
and architect..... MANFRED CAPELL  
Una..... DONNA SUE BURTON  
Giovanni, her father.....WILLIAM OLSON  
First Workman..... EDWARD LEVY  
Second Workman.....BRUCE GOVICH  
Other Workmen.....DONALD FRICKER, KENNETH HUDSON, PAUL JOINER,  
ALLYN KENT, STEPHEN WEBB  
The Statue.....JOHN WILSON  
A Crowd..... CAROLYN BACKUS, PATTI BING, MARY ANN LILYA,  
NADA ROWAND, ALICE STEVENSON, INGE WEISS

The first two scenes take place in Bannadonna's workshop,  
the last two scenes on top of the Bell-Tower, in an Italian  
town during the fifteenth century.

Producer and Stage Director.....LUDWIG ZIRNER\*  
Conductor.....JOHN GARVEY\*

(\*) Member of the School of Music faculty.



on the night before his masterpiece is put into operation. Bannadonna, reciprocating her sentiments, agrees, but plans to have her brought up surreptitiously to avoid creating the impression that he has relaxed the utmost secrecy with which he had surrounded his work.

Una is hoisted to the platform of the tower in a canvas bag. Bannadonna pretends that it contains the delicate mechanism which will strike the bell. The conversation of the lovers is interrupted by the sound of someone approaching, and Una again hides in the canvas bag. Two senators appear and begin to harass Bannadonna with embarrassing questions. Giovanni's death, the long delay of the work, and Bannadonna's secretiveness and arrogance have made the townspeople restive. The senators view the bag with suspicion, since some observers thought it contained a living thing.

Bannadonna, more and more exasperated, replies with increasing insolence. Questioned about a rod in the shape of a snake, he tauntingly admits that it really is a snake which he had charmed and by a secret method of metallic infusions transformed into a rod with which to stir his alloys. Disgusted with what they take to be Bannadonna's perverted sense of humor, the senators remind him of the human life that was lost in the casting of the bell. They say not everybody believed that it was an accident, as the official version went to protect Bannadonna. Utterly forgetting himself (and Una), Bannadonna shouts that he deliberately killed Giovanni, who in impotent envy wanted to destroy his master's work. Pressed for a deadline, he promises that the clock will start running the next day at one o'clock. The senators depart and he returns to his work.

Stunned by what she has overheard, Una is entirely cured of her infatuation and tries to kill Bannadonna by pushing him over the edge of the platform. He saves himself and swears to do to her what he had done to the snake. He hypnotizes Una and begins to work over her with his mysterious chemicals.

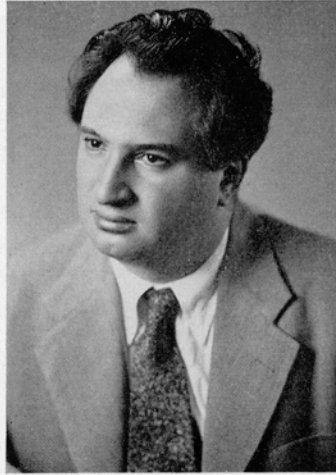
Shortly before one o'clock Bannadonna, in a state of near-madness, declares his work finished. Then he suddenly decides that the first figure on the bell should be the portrait of Una, whose face no one will ever see again. Frantically he begins to work at the image. At the stroke of one, a dreadful statue with elevated mace silently moves out of the background and strikes at the figure "one" on the bell, thereby killing Bannadonna. The people, waiting downstairs for the first sound of the much-vaunted bell, shout in disappointment.

The senators rush upstairs, horror-stricken. One of them, a physician, quickly examines the monster and reports that a living body must have somehow been integrated into the mechanism. The people imperiously demand to hear the bell. A workman is ordered to strike it with a hammer. The bell bursts from top to bottom. The physician investigates the break and declares that human blood must have entered the alloy. One of the workers remarks that this is the spot where the blood of Giovanni was shed when he was killed. While the people start praying to atone for the guilt the city had contracted by abetting Bannadonna's presumptuousness, a worker recognizes Una's face in the image on the bell. She has disappeared, he says, as if devoured by the big bell. The physician-senator replies: "Yes, my friend. This you might say." E. K.

(The essence of this plot was taken from Herman Melville's short story "The Bell-Tower." While it was the story-teller's prerogative to stud his narrative with unsolved mysteries, it was the dramatist's duty to make these explicit in his own way. An equation with as many unknown qualities as Melville's story necessarily allows for several solutions.)

Length of performance: About 60 Minutes

There will be an intermission of two hours between the operas.



JAN MEYEROWITZ was born in Breslau, Germany, in April, 1913. He studied at the Berlin Hochschule and at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. He came to the U.S.A. in 1946. He has written in most forms, but has recently composed mostly for orchestra, and for chorus and orchestra, and also for the operatic stage. He has been on the faculty of the Tanglewood Music Center, and presently teaches at Brooklyn College.

## ESTHER

Opera in three acts (16 scenes). Libretto by Langston Hughes.

Music by Jan Meyerowitz.

### CAST (in order of appearance)

Daniel, First Hebrew Sage.... DONALD PASCHKE  
 Hilda, Second Hebrew Sage... EDWARD LEVY  
 Eleazar, Third Hebrew Sage... ROGER COWEN  
 Esther..... ELAINE QUINT  
 Esther's Handmaidens..... RACHEL DAY, JOYCE HILDENBRAND, MARIAN GRONKE,  
 GERTHALENE HINES, ELAINE KATZOURAKIS,  
 NADA ROWAND, ALICE STEVENSON, INGE WEISS,  
 NANCY JO WILLIAMS  
 Bigham, First Guard..... BRUCE GOVICH  
 Theres, Second Guard..... WILLIAM OLSON  
 Ahasverus, King of Persia.... BRUCE FOOTE\*  
 The King's Chamberlain..... ROBERT MELHISER  
 Vashti, the Queen..... PATTI BING  
 Hakaman, the Executioner.... JOHN WILSON  
 Mordecai..... JAMES BAILEY\*  
 A Public Crier..... ROGER COWEN  
 Haman, the Grand Vizier.... DONALD HENRICKSON  
 A Small Crowd..... PATTI BING, DONALD FRICKER, KENNETH HUDSON,  
 PAUL JOINER, MARY ANN LILYA, STEPHEN WEBB  
 Zaresh, Haman's Wife..... CAROLYN BACKUS

(\*) Member of the School of Music faculty.

Aridatha, Their Oldest Son....DAN MACDONALD  
 Two Astrologers.....KENNETH HUDSON, STEPHEN WEBB  
 Two Soldiers.....DONALD FRICKER, PAUL JOINER

The story of ESTHER, derived from the Bible, is laid in the Kingdom of Shushan in the fifth century B.C. at the court of King Ahasverus.

Producer, Stage Director, and Conductor.....LUDWIG ZIRNER\*  
 Ensemble Coach and Chorus Mistress.....GRACE WILSON\*  
 Diction Coach.....DOROTHY BOWEN\*  
 Rehearsal Accompanist.....CHARLES LAWRIE\*  
 Technical Director.....JAMIL TOUBBEH  
 Scenic Designer.....GEORGE TALBOT  
 Technical Consultant.....GEORGE MCKINNEY  
 Costumes.....LAURA ZIRNER  
 Make-up.....PRESTON TUTTLE  
 Assistants to the Director.....KARL FUSS, CHARLES LAWRIE\*  
 Costuming Assistants.....GRACE COPLAN, JAN LAWRIE,  
 INGE WEISS  
 Make-up Assistants.....OYA KAYMAR, WILLIAM IRISH,  
 JEROME BIRDMAN

The costumes for both operas were designed and assembled from "convertible costume units." These "units" were created by Laura Zirner to facilitate the productions of the Opera Workshop of the University of Illinois.

### ORCHESTRA for "Esther"

First violins — PEGGY ANDRIX, SANFORD REUNING, HEINZ PEREZ\*  
 Second violins — JAMES RICKEY, JANET PASCH  
 Violas — GEORGE ANDRIX,\* JOAN REUNING\*  
 Cellos — PETER FARRELL,\* PEGGY MCKEAN\*  
 Bass — EDWARD KROSLICK\*  
 Flute — CAROL AHNELL  
 Clarinets — WILLIS COGGINS,\* VIRGINIA TILLOTSON\*  
 Bassoon — SANFORD BERRY\*  
 Trumpet — PHYLLIS BLACK  
 French Horns — ROBERT NEBGEN, JAN BACH  
 Trombone — ROBERT GRAY\*  
 Harp — ROSLYN RENSCH\*  
 Timpani and Percussion — WARREN SMITH, RONALD FINK, DANLEE MITCHELL  
 Fanfare (on-stage) — GERALD ANDERSON, RICHARD VANDAMENT (trumpets)  
 HAROLD RUTAN (French horn)  
 LIDA BEASLEY (trombone)  
 HASKELL SEXTON\* (conductor)  
 Orchestra Manager and Librarian — SANFORD BERRY\*

(\*) Member of the School of Music faculty.  
 The active cooperation of the voice faculty is gratefully acknowledged.

## SYNOPSIS OF "ESTHER"

### ACT I.

(1) As the Sabbath is ending, three Hebrew SAGES conclude the ceremony of extinguishing the candles in wine when ESTHER, the Queen, with her retinue of HANDMAIDENS comes to request that the SAGES inscribe on their Holy Scrolls the story of how the Jews of Shushan have been saved from annihilation at the hands of HAMAN, so that the story might be a source of strength to posterity. As one of the SAGES, DANIEL, begins to write, "Now it came to pass in the days of KING AHASVERUS who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia . . .," the scene changes to the Royal Courtyard of Shushan where a seven day feast is ending and the KING is in his cups. . . . On the terrace (2) AHASVERUS berates his COURTIERs for deserting the feast and asks what could be lacking. When they reply, "Women," the KING demands that his own wife, VASHTI, be summoned as the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. But VASHTI refuses to emerge and, from her balcony, she berates the KING as her father's former stable boy, and now a drunken sot. The KING orders his EXECUTIONER to kill VASHTI. With drawn sword the HEADSMAN strides toward the QUEEN's quarters. . . . (3) The next day a PUBLIC CRIER announces to all the world that the KING is seeking a new wife, and has commanded that all the lovely virgins in the kingdom be brought to court that he might make his choice. . . . That night in (4) the house of MORDECAI, the Jew, there is woe for the fate of the lovely ESTHER, his niece whom he has loved as his own daughter. Her life is in danger if she does *not* go to the KING—and her faith is in danger if she must live at court among the heathens. But ESTHER says that she is not afraid to go, nor will she relinquish her faith even among the worshippers of pagan idols. Veiling her face to hide her tears, ESTHER departs for the COURT OF SHUSHAN. . . .

### ACT II.

There, (5) within the Women's Quarters of the palace attired by her HANDMAIDENS in rich array—which to ESTHER means nothing, for goodness is her crown and purity her robe—ESTHER wonders if the KING will find her fair and will treat her kindly, as she leaves for his chambers. . . . (6) But shortly the PUBLIC CRIER is heard announcing that the KING has chosen a new Queen, an orphan child named ESTHER, selected as the most innocent of the thousands of virgins he had seen. . . . (7) Months later outside the palace walls as the KING prepares to leave for war, two SENTRIES who do not wish to fight away from home, plot the death of AHASVERUS by putting a snake into his wine. MORDECAI overhears them and thinks to warn QUEEN ESTHER. Seeing MORDECAI at the gate, the KING's VIZIER, HAMAN, demands who is this man that does not bow before him. HAMAN learns that he is MORDECAI, the Jew whom he hates, and utters ominous threats. MORDECAI goes into the palace grounds to warn of the SENTRIES' plot, and shortly the EXECUTIONER and his AIDES emerge and seize the traitors at the gate. . . . Each day (8) in her royal chamber ESTHER removes the queenly jewels and silken robes of Court and, in simple garb, sings with her HANDMAIDENS her love of Jordan, and of her own people, and the glories of her ancient faith.

### ACT III.

Meanwhile, with his wife, ZARESH, and their son, ARIDATHA, plotting the destruction of the JEWS, HAMAN casts lots with dice bearing astrological symbols to indicate a propitious time. It is decided that Adar, the month in which Moses died, shall be set for the massacre. . . . (10) HAMAN prepares a decree ordering the slaughter of the Jews and takes it to the KING who, defeated at war and drunk with wine, has no interest in affairs of state and pays no attention to what HAMAN reads to him. But the KING in his stupor allows HAMAN to lift his hand and implant the seal of his royal ring upon the infamous decree. . . . That night, in (11) sackcloth and ashes, MORDECAI rushes to inform ESTHER of this new edict against the JEWS and to entreat her to intercede with the KING. His heart, however, is torn with fright and grief that no one may go in unto the KING unbidden, not even the QUEEN,—so ESTHER's intercession might mean her death. But ESTHER says that, nevertheless, for the sake of her people, she will go to the KING. And she does. . . . (12) ESTHER faints before the throne. But when the KING sees who it is, he is glad she has come. AHASVERUS not only grants her life, but offers her whatever else she may wish. ESTHER says that she wishes that the KING come with HAMAN to supper in her garden, and there she will tell him her desire. (13) ESTHER's beauty awakens in the KING an interest in life again, so he calls in his ASTROLOGERS for he remembers that he has wished to honor MORDECAI for having saved his life, and he wants to know, therefore, if for this the stars are right. Assured they are, he orders HAMAN to honor MORDECAI publicly throughout the town. Distressed, HAMAN begs that anything *but* honor be granted this JEW whom he hates. But the KING is insistent that, before they go to dine with the QUEEN, MORDECAI be honored in his royal name—with HAMAN as his deputy. . . . (14) At sunset in ESTHER's garden the KING awaits the coming of HAMAN who, without the gate, laments to ZARESH his humiliation at having had to dignify MORDECAI by walking beside his horse as the JEW rode through the streets in honor. ZARESH urges her husband to leave Shushan before some awful fate overtakes them. ZARESH is frightened as HAMAN goes in to the KING and QUEEN. . . . (15) At supper in the garden beneath the stars, ESTHER reveals to the KING that HAMAN's decree means her death, too—for she is a JEW. Not knowing this, the KING in anger rushes from the garden lest he do sudden violence to HAMAN. Prostrating himself at ESTHER's feet, HAMAN begs for mercy as the KING returns with a CHAMBERLAIN whom he commands to have HAMAN hanged on the very gallows that HAMAN has prepared for MORDECAI's death. To ESTHER the KING swears then and there to repeal the infamous decree—that she and her people might live. . . . (16) So again we see the SAGES as they watch the end of the story being written on the Holy Scrolls while ESTHER and her HANDMAIDENS join them in jubilation—that the children of ISRAEL are saved, AND THEIR STORY RECORDED FOR POSTERITY. L.H.

Length of Performance—About 90 Minutes

There will be a 10 minute intermission between act two and three of "Esther."