

# Biedermann and the Firebugs

composing contemporary music for live theater

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Max Frisch's "(Biedermann and) The Firebugs" is an eccentric German play with many nuanced directions. One such direction calls for a chorus of firemen (and/or women), functioning as a typical Greek chorus.



Upon discussion, Dr. Rick Jones and I decided to treat the chorus' lines as lyrics, setting them to music. This decision allowed us to investigate three challenges that come with setting text to music:

## Style

How to align musical style with the style of the play?

*What we landed on:*



**Kurt Weill**

+

**Oompah band**

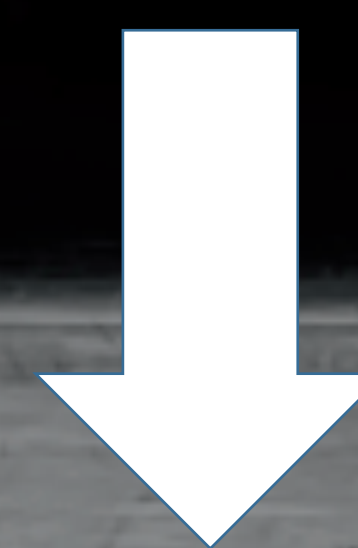
*with*

**a sprinkle of Broadway**

## Function

How does the music interact with the play?  
What interpretation does it bring?

*What we decided:*



**Primarily helps to establish mood**

(incredibly useful for the audience in interpreting a particularly bizarre narrative)

+

**Further separates the chorus from the characters, highlighting their position as commentators**

+

**Heightens dramatic irony**

## Meter

How to integrate text with irregular meter and music with regular meter\* without obscuring line and meaning?

\* (a decision we had previously reached in answer to the question of style)

*How we solved the problem:*



**fragmenting form –**

keeping each line of text intact creates a collection of musical phrases with contrasting lengths and contour. Each phrase independently has a unique style, together creating a mosaic that captures our overall style choices while still delivering lines clearly.