The Seven Deadly Sins

A satirical ballet chanté (sung ballet), *The Seven Deadly Sins* is a simplistic and over-the-top diatribe against American capitalism as seen through the eyes of two German socialists: composer Kurt Weill and playwright Bertolt Brecht. The odd hybrid form of the piece was a compromise between the composer and its commissioner which resulted in the lead character Anna being split into two different personalities: singer Anna I and dancer Anna II, though they are sometimes referred to as sisters. Presented as a concert work here, it is important to understand that Anna I is singing about the temptations Anna II faces.

**Prologue**

Sets up the premise:
The Annas leave their parents and two brothers and travel through a number of American cities to earn enough money to build a new family house in Louisiana. In each city, Anna II fails to resist each of the seven deadly sins, according to Anna I and her family. The Annas’ adventures, which leave a trail of victims as they succeed, serve to illustrate that the ambition of capitalism is the ultimate sin.

**Epilogue**

The Annas find themselves in their new home in Louisiana that they’ve built as a result of their adventures, left to contemplate what it took to get there.

The barbershop quartet represents Anna’s family and performs the role of a “Greek Chorus” commenting on the action throughout the drama and criticizing Anna II as she “sins.”

Infographic by Kurt Mortensen