

1973  
**BANFF  
FESTIVAL  
OF THE ARTS**  
AUGUST 4TH TO AUGUST 18TH

THE BANFF CENTRE  
School of Fine Arts

presents

## **THE THREEPENNY OPERA**

by Bertolt Brecht

Music by Kurt Weill

English version by Hugh MacDiarmid

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 8:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2:00 p.m.

MARGARET GREENHAM THEATRE

Musical Director: Alfred Strombergs

Stage Director: Rowland Holt Wilson

Choreographer: Jacqueline Ogg

Set Design: Rob Lefroy

Lighting Design: Jim Frank



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## PROGRAM NOTES

Brecht first became acquainted with John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* at the time of its revival in London in the mid nineteen twenties. This ballad opera about the underworld in the 18th century with its bawds, bully boys and beggars was a piece which delighted Brecht. He obtained a German translation and at odd intervals began fiddling with this scene or that, keeping intact what suited him, boldly adding or subtracting as he saw fit. This was always his procedure to adapt, reinterpret, recreate, to add modern social significance.

Obviously the original Pepusch score would no longer do. Something racy, biting, powerful and satirical was called for. Straight away Brecht called in Kurt Weill and announced he had found a play which needed some "incidental music." Weill had at this time written three operas which had been applauded by the most austere music critics. He felt strongly though that serious composers had withdrawn into too rarified an atmosphere, and saw *The Threepenny Opera* (as Brecht now called it) as an ideal medium to bridge the gap between them and the great public. He immediately set to work composing for a small cabaret-style orchestra and incorporating elements of jazz, rag-time and folk music.

Early in 1928 a young German actor named Ernest-Josef Aufricht, deciding he wanted to become a producer, had rented a theatre in Berlin and set about searching for a play. He read the few scenes of *The Threepenny Opera* that Brecht had worked on and immediately chose it for production. No mention was made of music. It wasn't until later that Brecht let it drop there would be incidental music by a certain Kurt Weill. Aufricht was horrified. Wasn't this Weill the enfant terrible of atonal music? Secretly he engaged a musician to look up the original Pepusch score. It wasn't until much later that he abandoned this idea.

Never in theatre history has a play approached its opening in such an atmosphere of utter doom. The word got around that Aufricht, poor benighted amateur, was stuck with the disaster of all time. At a late stage in rehearsals the Polly and the Mr. Peacham backed out. The Mrs. Peachum shouted constant protests over "those filthy words" in the *Ballad of Sexual Slavery*. She even signed a contract with another producer, confident that she would be free within a week of opening. The MacHeath, vain even for an actor, felt his part needed building up. "What about a song about Mackie to open the show," he suggested. Brecht said nothing, but returned the following morning with some verses which Weill immediately set to music. Thus, as an afterthought, came the famous *Ballad of Mack the Knife*. The final dress rehearsal lasted until five in the morning. Aufricht was heard asking people where he could get a new play in a hurry. Respected Berlin theatre oracles slipped out to spread the word that Brecht and Weill proposed to insult the public with a ludicrous mishmash of opera, operetta, cabaret and straight theatre, not one thing or the other. People suggested withdrawing the work before the opening.

Its fantastic success that evening has passed into theatrical history. Until halfway through the first act the audience was cold and apathetic, as though convinced in advance it was attending a certain flop. Then after the *Soldiers' Song* an unbelievable roar went up. From that point on the cheers grew, song by song until its triumphant conclusion. The *Threepenny Opera* ran for three years in Berlin. Set in an imaginary city jungle called "Soho" its savage satire was perfectly in tune with the mood of cynicism and despair which characterised the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Naziism. What it has to say about political corruption and urban strife is hardly less relevant today.

- Rowland Holt Wilson

## SYNOPSIS

- Act I, scene 1 Mr. Peachum's wardrobe for beggars  
scene 2 Deep in the heart of Soho  
scene 3 Mr. Peachum's wardrobe for beggars
- Act II, scene 1 Deep in the heart of Soho  
scene 2 A street  
scene 3 A brothel in Wapping  
scene 4 The Old Bailey
- Act III, scene 1 A boardroom  
scene 2 Mr. Peachum's wardrobe for beggars  
scene 3 Mr. Peachum's wardrobe for beggars - the following morning  
scene 4 Lucy Brown's room in the Old Bailey  
scene 5 The Old Bailey

## CAST (in order of appearance)

- Narrator .....Douglas McEachan, Regina, Saskatchewan
- Mr. Peachum .....Richard Poppino, Davis, California
- Filch .....David Giffen, Edmonton, Alberta
- Mrs. Peachum .....Sonia Meroniuk, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- MacHeath (Mack the Knife) .....George Cotton, Edmonton, Alberta
- Matt .....Lary Benson, Edmonton, Alberta
- Hook Fingered Jake .....Kim Deal, Kenosha, Wisconsin
- Bob the Saw .....Ron Silver, Los Angeles, California
- Walt Dreary .....Dieter Rahn, Edmonton, Alberta
- Polly Peachum .....Nancy Davis Booth, Tucson, Arizona
- Tiger Brown, Commissioner of Police .....Michael Harvey, Berkeley, California
- Ginny Jenny .....Andrea Mellis, Chilliwack, B.C.
- Lucy Brown .....Ruth Laufenberg, Madison, Wisconsin
- Jailor Smith .....Graeme Mitchell, Fort San, Saskatchewan
- Whores: .....Sandra Gavinchuk, Smoky Lake, Alberta  
Iris Fraser, Edmonton, Alberta  
Colleen Letourneau, Thorsby, Alberta  
Anne Longworth, Edmonton, Alberta  
Katheryne Perri, Edmonton, Alberta  
Susan Summers, Calgary, Alberta  
Pat Howieson
- Policemen: .....Florent Gregoire, Montreal, P.Q.  
Henry Irwin, Toronto, Ontario  
Kevin McKendrick,  
Robert W. Laur, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
David Anderson,
- Judges: .....Tim Gustafson, Banff, Alberta  
Rowland Holt Wilson, Edmonton, Alberta  
Ken Moure'

## ORCHESTRA

Piano .....Harold Brown, Burnaby, B.C.  
Organ .....Janet Scott, Millett, Alberta  
Saxophone .....Randy Bain, Edmonton, Alberta  
Clarinet .....Randy Bain, Edmonton, Alberta  
Trumpet .....David Montalbetti, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
Percussion .....David Warne, Calgary, Alberta

## PRODUCTION STAFF

### The Threepenny Opera

Executive Stage Manager - George Ross, Vancouver, B.C.  
Stage Manager - Marion R. Hood, Calgary, Alberta  
Lighting - Sara Norquay, Toronto, Ontario; Larry Wray, Alliston, Ontario;  
Melinda Comeau, Haverhill, Massachusetts  
Properties - Janet Smith, Chilliwack, B.C.; Frances Blau, Newton, Massachusetts  
Costume Preparation - Anne Clark, Montreal, P.Q.  
Costume Assistant - Martha Landry, Aspen, Colorado  
Make-up - John Cox, Calgary, Alberta; Laura Baird, Ottawa, Ontario  
Repetiteurs - Sandra Atkinson, Calgary, Alberta; Terry Cotton, Lynn Grinstead

## THEATRE COMPLEX - Permanent Staff

Laszlo L. Funtek - Artistic Director, Manager  
Lloyd Montour - House Manager  
David Hignell - Stage Manager  
Ron Fedoruk - Assistant Stage Manager  
Myra Ferguson - Secretary

## 1973 SUMMER PRODUCTION STAFF

John W. Graham - Head, Stagecraft Division  
Liliane Johnson - Head, Costume Department  
John Cox - Make-up

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS

Marlene Almond, Sherryl Clelland, Bradley Diddams, David Grinstead, Marion Hood,  
Ian Jones, Robert Lefroy, Bruce Leighton, Peter Murphy, Murray Palmer,  
Steven Renton, Randy Cormack.

## COSTUME ASSISTANTS

Margaret Bethune, Wendy Bullows, Nancy Goodfellow, Catherine Green, Elizabeth  
Homewood, Steven Jung, Mary-Jane Werishora.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Produced with the cooperation of Actor's Equity with whose permission  
Lary Benson and George Ross are appearing.