

What is it about?

THE THREEPENNY (NOT-AN-) OPERA

Our next production is The Threepenny Opera.

The first thing to remember is that it is not an opera, so don't be put off by that word. If one had to put it in a category, it is a musical comedy, with elements of pantomime.

It's called The Threepenny Opera because it's loosely based on the 18th century musical play The Beggars Opera, which was a political satire on Sir Robert Walpole, and the subtleties of which are entirely meaningless to us today.

In 1928 Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill turned the story into an attack on bourgeois morality. You may remember Gilbert's line in The Mikado that virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances. That was fairly cynical, but Brecht takes cynicism much further: in this theatrical performance, the only winner lacks any redeeming virtues, and the message is that, ultimately, we all only look after number one.

If all that sounds fairly heavy, don't worry, it's all done with wit and panache and style, and if you let it rip you will have great fun with this show.

The action is set in the three days leading up to the Coronation of Queen Victoria, which actually took place on the 28th June 1838, despite what the lib says (1837- in fact, the lib contains a number of anachronisms, whether because of sloppy editing, or because the author was not English, or what, I don't know, nor does it particularly matter).

The hero, if that's the right word, is Macheath (Mack the Knife)- professional criminal, inveterate liar, serial womaniser, and dangerous charmer. Not the sort of chap you would want for a son-in-law, you might think; and that's certainly what Mr Peachum thinks when he discovers that Macheath has seduced and "married" his daughter Polly. Not that Peachum is a model of rectitude; in fact, he is the boss of an organised begging racket for the whole of London. "Break a leg" might be a theatrical term, but it's the least of what will happen to you if you try begging in the streets of the city without a licence from Peachum.

Peachum and his formidable wife swear revenge on Macheath, and to get it, they exploit his one weakness- women. Macheath has, shall we say, a prodigious appetite for dalliance; but however much they fall under the spell of his charm, his lovers too have a weakness- jealousy, encouraged by the liberal bribes offered by Peachum for the betrayal of Macheath's whereabouts.

Macheath is brought to - well, not exactly justice, we seem to miss out the technicalities of a trial and so forth- but to the gallows, when, at the last minute, a highly improbable (and deliberately so) resolution is effected, in a splendid spoof of an operatic finale.

It's not a particularly long show. Although written in 3 Acts, I shall do it in 2. There are 24 vocal numbers and a lot of lib.(61 pages of lib and book).



Male Roles

1. Street Singer. Baritone. Has the opener of "Mack the Knife", which he reprises at the end. Also introduces each scene.
2. Peachum. Baritone. Larger than life character. 5 musical nos. 2nd biggest amount of dialogue.
3. Macheath. High Baritone, 2 octave range. 9 musical nos.. Big role, lots of oomph.
4. Tiger Brown. The weak, corrupt Commissioner of Police, an old Army mate of Macheath, happy to accept a cut of Mack's proceeds of crime in return for a blind eye. Only 1 song but a fair amount of lib. Lovely character role.
5. Mack's Gang - the biggest bunch of cretins you ever saw:
 - 1 Bob the Saw
 - 2 Walt Dreary
 - 3 Crookfinger Jake
 - 4 Readymoney Matt(you see, I told you this wasn't serious)
All conventional baritones. Plenty of lib, Jake the most, followed by Matt, then Walt, then Bob. 3 musical nos. incl. Reprise. Great fun roles
6. Filch. Good little comic role as an eager trainee beggar. No songs in this role, but doubles as the Messenger from Queen Vic (via Albert Square) which is sung/ parlante.
7. Rev. Kimball. Not a great advert for the Cloth, but a nice little cameo, and will double as second Policeman
8. Smith - Tiger Brown's Deputy, completely incorruptible (until you offer the right amount). No songs but another nice cameo role.
9. Policeman - 3 lines
10. Sundry beggars (non-speaking) but sing finale chorus as do all Principals



Female Roles

- 1) Mrs Peachum. Like I said, a formidable lady. Mezzo. 6 musical nos. incl. Reprise. Plenty of lib. Good character role.
- 2) Polly. The biggest female role. Soprano. 6 musical nos., good chunk of dialogue. Naïve, or is she her father's daughter?
- 3) Jenny. One of Mack's old flames. Betrays him, regrets it (sort of). Alto. 2 musical nos.. Fair amount of lib.
- 4) Lucy. Daughter of Tiger Brown, who does not know that his best friend (Mack) has seduced and "married" his young innocent daughter. She has a showdown with Polly, as to which of them Mack really prefers. Flexible alto/ mezzo. 2 musical nos., smallish amount of lib.
- 5) Prostitutes viz
Dolly
Betty
Molly
Coaxer
have a nice scene to themselves and join in the final chorus and any other group activity I might devise. They are of varying degrees of beauty and experience.

Chorus

Only 1 musical number, but could be some walk-ons, street-scenes etc.

So there you have it. A fun show, played OTT (what else?), cynical, bawdy, half a dozen (plus) good meaty parts, minor roles for those who want less commitment, and a good time to be had by all.

Auditions etc on next page>>>>>



Auditions

Audition Pieces (musical):

Street Singer no. 2 Mack the Knife
 Peachum no. 28 Useless Song
 Macheath no.23 Ballad of the Easy Life and no.10 Army Song
 Brown no. 10
 Mack's Gang no.8 Wedding Song
 Mrs Peachum no.14 Ballad of Dependency
 Polly no.9 Pirate Jenny
 Jenny no.30 Solomon Song
 Lucy no. 24 Barbara Song

Lib audition pieces

Character	Lib
Mr Peachum	pp3-5 (to "seventy percent") with Filch 21-22 with Mrs Peachum and Polly
Filch	4-5 with Peachum
Jake, Matt, Walt, Bob	12-14 with Polly and Macheath
Macheath	12-14 with gang & Polly 27-29 (to "Gentlemen I'm glad to see you") with Polly 39-41 with Polly & Lucy
Brown	37-38 with Macheath
Polly	12-14 with Macheath & gang 27-29 with Macheath 21-22 with Mrs Peachum 39-41 with Lucy & Macheath
Mrs Peachum	21-22 (to Polly's exit) with Polly & Peachum 47-48 with Jenny
Dolly, Betty, Molly, Coaxer	32-33
Jenny	47-48 with Mrs Peachum
Lucy	39-41 with Macheath & Polly

One final point- players must be 16 or over (sounds like the Lottery)

For any further information please ring me on 01664 560407 or send me an email.

To reiterate:

First meeting March 27th (7:30)
 Pre-audition rehearsals April 3rd and 17th (7:30)
 Auditions Sunday April 19th (10:00 – 2:00)
 All at the Theatre
Performance October 20th-24th