

Gate Theatre presents

The Threepenny Opera

by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill
a version by Frank McGuinness
from a literal translation by Constance Hayes

Cast
(in order of appearance)

Balladsinger/Smith/Kimball	John Olohan
Peachum	Jim Bartley
Filch/Constable	Darragh Kelly
Mrs Peachum	Barbara Brennan
Matt/Constable	Brendan Laird
Machèath	Paul Raynor
Polly Peachum	Anna Healy
Jake/Beggar	Mark O'Regan
Bob/Constable/Beggar	Pat Kinevane
Walter/Constable/Beggar	Alan Archbold
Tiger Brown	Bosco Hogan
Pirate Jenny	Marianne Faithfull
Vixen	Maria McDermottroe
Dolly	Jane Brennan
Betty/Constable	Julie Byrne
Molly	Lynn Cahill
Lucy/Constable	Marion O'Dwyer

Time: 1953
Place: London

There will be one interval of 15 minutes.

Director
Musical Director
Set & Costume Designers
Lighting Designer
Choreographer
Assistant to Director

Patrick Mason
Jason Osborn
Monica Frawley & Joe Vanek
Mick Hughes
Terry John Bates
Peter McMahon

Piano/Harmonium
Alto Saxophone/Clarinet
Tenor Sax/Clarinet
Trumpet
Trumpet
Trombone
Banjo/Guitar
Percussion

Jason Osborn
Sarah Homer
Kenneth Edge
Benny McNeill
Earl Gill
Jack Bayle
Liam Grundy/Des Moore
Bernard Reilly

Technical Supervisor
Stage Director
Assistant Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Electrician
Sound
Wardrobe
Stage Carpenter

Ken Hartnett
Lita O'Connell
Triona Coen
Melanie Murnane
Jim McConnell
Edward Walsh
Monica Ennis
Fred West

Set and Prop Construction

**Galaxy Construction
and Design**

No photographs or recordings may be taken in the auditorium.



The Begging Business



With many begging impostors the assumption of the "burnt-out tradesman" is simply a change of character to suit circumstances; with others it is a fixed and settled role. The burnt-out tradesman does not beg in the streets by day; he comes out at night, and his favourite haunts are the private bars of public-houses frequented by good company. He appears among them, and moves them by the striking contrast which his personal appearance and condition offers to theirs. When the burnt-out

tradesman enters a bar he allows his appearance to have its due effect before he opens his mouth, or makes any other demonstration whatever.

After remaining motionless for a moment, to allow the company fully to contemplate his miserable appearance, he suddenly and unexpectedly advances one of his hands, which until now has been concealed behind his coat, and exposes to view a box of matches. Nothing can surpass the artistic skill of this mute appeal. The respectable look, and the poor, worn clothes, first of all - the patient broken-hearted glance accompanied by a gentle sigh - and then the box of matches! What need of a word spoken? Can you not read the whole history? Once a prosperous tradesman, the head of a family, surrounded by many friends. Now, through misfortune, cast out of house and home, deserted by his friends, and reduced to wander the streets and sell matches to get his children bread. Reduced to sell paltry matches! It is seldom that this artist requires to speak. No words will move men who can resist so powerful an appeal. When he does speak he does not require to say more than - 'I am an unfortunate tradesman, who lost everything I possessed in the world by a disastrous fire - ' Here the halfpence interrupt his story, and he has no need to utter another word, except to mutter his humble thanks.

Henry Mayhew



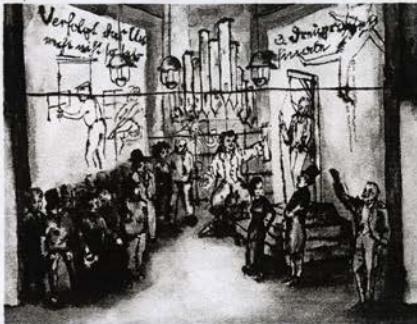
Frank McGuinness

Frank McGuinness comes from Buncrana, County Donegal. His work for the Gate Theatre includes *Innocence*, a play on the life of Caravaggio, a version of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, a version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and, most recently, *The Breadman*. For the Abbey Theatre he has written *The Factory Girls*, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, *Baglady*, *Times In It*, *Carthaginians* and a version of Lorca's *Yerma*. *Sons of Ulster* and *Carthaginians* were also produced at the Hampstead Theatre, London. For Team Theatre he wrote *Borderlands* and *Gatherers*. His version of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* was produced at both the National Theatre of Great Britain and at La Mama in New York, directed by Sarah Pia Anderson. In September 1989, *Mary and Lizzie* was premiered at the Barbican by the Royal Shakespeare Company. He directed Brian Friel's *The Gentle Island* at the Peacock Theatre. For television he has written *Scout*, starring the late Ray McAnally, and *The Hen House* with Sinéad Cusack. He has been awarded an Arts Council Bursary, the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, the Harvey's Award, a London Evening Standard Award and the Cheltenham Literary Prize; and, in 1987, he received the Ewart-Biggs Peace Prize.

Frank McGuinness lives in Dublin and lectures in English at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Archive Collection: T26 Joe Vanek Archive.
Ref No. T2614/12/1004
Date Digitised: 5/2/10/2019

Berlin, 1928: The Threepenny Opera



It was Elisabeth Hauptmann, Bertolt Brecht's reliable co-worker in the 1920's, who first drew attention to John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. There had been a new production of this in London and it had been a great success. Elisabeth Hauptmann immediately obtained the text and started on a rough translation. Brecht was at that time deeply involved in work on a very ambitious play of his own which he had already promised to a director.

This, however, did not prevent him from plunging without delay into a new project; even then he delighted in starting innumerable things at the same time. In Gay's play he met whores and pimps and beggars from eighteenth century London, and they amused him: why should he not make them speak his language, Brecht's language?

...Though we did not know it, a young actor had decided at the beginning of 1928 to start a theatre of his own. For this purpose he had rented the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. The young and enterprising actor, Ernst Robert Aufricht, immediately started looking for a new play with which to reopen the theatre and make it famous at one stroke...

A few days later, on a rainy afternoon, Aufricht sent his maid to Brecht's studio for the manuscript. Aufricht read it, his editor Fischer read it, and astonishingly enough they both wanted to put on the play. The first night should be at the opening of the theatrical season...

The next thing that occurred to Aufricht was to move the date forward to August 28th. It was agreed that Brecht and Weill must immediately leave Berlin. Somebody proposed a small spot on the Riviera as refuge for the two of them. Immediately a number of rooms were reserved, and on June 1st we set out. Kurt and I took the express, Brecht drove by car to the south with Helene Weigel and his son Stefan. The two worked day and night as though demented, writing,

altering, cutting, rewriting; they interrupted their work only to go down to the sea for a few minutes. I can still see Brecht today, paddling through the water with his trousers turned up, cap on head, the inevitable cigar in his mouth. I cannot remember ever seeing Brecht completely immersed. He must have been slightly water-shy.

When we returned to Berlin, Brecht and Weill had practically finished their work. Now it was time for rehearsals.

And this was when the chain of bad luck began. I do not believe that there has ever been in theatrical history such a series of catastrophes shortly before the first night. All Berlin spoke of the fact that Aufricht was up to his ears in trouble. One misfortune followed another. Klabund was dying in Davos. His wife, Carola Neher, who would have been the

ideal Polly, had to cancel all rehearsals and go to him in Switzerland. Then the actor who was to have played Peachum quit the role. Rosa Valetti, whose own repertoire was certainly not drawing room, screamed threats that she would never sing the "filth" in the *Ballad of Sexual Bondage*. Helene Weigel got a swollen appendix, and her part had to be re-cast too.

The dress rehearsal the evening before the first night was a farce; it lasted until five in the morning. Everybody was completely finished. We were all shouting and swearing at one another. We learned that Aufricht was already going around asking everybody if they did not know a new play for him; he needed something new on the spot, otherwise he was lost...

So much has been written about the first performance that I can keep it short. It has become a legend. Up to the second scene, which plays in a stable, the audience remained cool and non-committal. Then came the *Cannon Song*. An unbelievable storm of applause. The audience was beside itself. From this moment on nothing could go wrong...

Berlin was gripped by a *Threepenny Opera* fever. Everywhere, even in the streets, the tunes were whistled. And the funniest thing was that all sorts of people now claimed sturdily that they had known from the very start that *The Threepenny Opera* would be a raging success.

Lotte Lenya Weill, 1955.



Archive Collection: T26_Joe Vanek Archive.
Ref No. T2612121004
Date Digitised: 02/10/2009