

# Entertainment Puts It's Two Cents Worth in on The Threepenny Opera

The Threepenny Opera is a wonderful collection of parodies and satire, thumbing its nose at conventions and attitudes both in London Society circa 1840 and at theater and musicals themselves. Brecht writes a musical quite opposite to what we are used to. Gone are the sweet-voiced, sickeningly perfectly-featured and stereotypically good and evil hollywood figures one so monotonously finds in shows like *South Pacific* and *The Music Man*. Brecht's characters are not singers who are trying to act, but rather actors who are trying to sing, and more importantly, are not even really 'characters' at all, but real, dirty, often slimy and deceitful embodiments of all the characteristics of human society that we try to forget about; the very stuff we spend so much time writing treacle-soaked musicals to ignore.

So, hat's off to U.N.B's Drama Society for tackling what amounts to a breath of fresh air in our stagnant little pond of soap operas and bawdy little British titty-bum comedies.

And tackle it they do. This is

broken does nothing to take away the enjoyment I felt in being treated to something different for a change. There were many wonderful ideas and clever tricks executed in the production, and it was obvious that a hell of a lot of thought and true caring went into it. However, I couldn't help feeling that a simple lack of vision hampered the cohesiveness of this production. Putting on a play is much like being in a cover band (here I attempt, realizing my sadly lacking skills as a theater critic, to wrestle the whole thing into a forum I feel more comfortable in). You can get up and reproduce a Stone's song (and with today's technology do it perfectly), but the real joy is in doing something unexpected and different with something familiar. This production was full of clever tricks and good, solid choreographic ideas, but the whole thing felt like everyone had worked on their separate fields (props, lighting, stage movement, singing, acting) in isolation booths. There was simply no solid and common vision in what people were doing.

been asking myself why they rolled the picture to its proper position in the first place. Again, this seemed simply a matter of my isolation booth theory.

The show is musically quite challenging, and I was impressed with not only the competence of the vocals, but also in the matching of voices. Quite opposite from the typical amateur musical production, it appears as though the characters were assigned with a good ear for their vocal compatibility - Mike Doyle's (Peachum's) strong, coarse bass complemented and supported Laura Fournier's (Mrs. Peachum's) edgy tone and volume, and Peter Toner (Macheath) and Karen Savoie (Polly) blended well in tone and volume as well. Vocally, I think that it was probably Kate Rogers who stole the show for me, mainly because when she was singing, it felt like she new what it was she was saying and why - overcoming the problem I mentioned before about realizing your audience. Other mentionable performances came from Shawn Malley as the head of Macheath's thugs, adding life to the comical group of bumbling crooks, and Paul Lenarczyk as Tiger Brown, again I think he had a handle on what it was he was doing.

An unfortunately unimaginative set (full of clever tricks, mind you, but that damn booth is hard to hear in) and some fairly incomprehensible stage movement (i.e. why are these people here? Why are they leaving?) made it a jerky and unstructured production, and I can't help feeling, given all the wonderful ideas and true guts so visible, that maybe given some more time, it could have been one of the greats. As it stands, it is an entertaining production, lacking nothing in exuberance and effort, but I can't help feeling the pressure to be painfully positive. As I said before, and as anyone who really cares about drama knows, Frederickton is in sad need of good, solid and innovative new blood in plays. I am tired of Highschool musicals. I am tired of Gilbert and Sullivan. I am tired of Norm Foster and I am tired of seeing people who are actually trying something different and new being handed twenty bucks for a production. We should be giving them blank checks. The only people with the cash for production in this town (namely the Playhouse) continue to crank out fluff for the ladies in the fur coats who treat the whole thing as a social event.

The Threepenny Opera is an amateur production of a great play. Much of the play's true intent is lost in the ignorance (this is not a derogatory term) of its players. The interpretation is lacking, and the production is painfully cheap (in monetary terms, again not derogatory). Go see it. I guarantee you will have fun, although maybe not the kind of fun Brecht intended. Go anyway. If you go because you think it will be good for heightening some fantasy about 'culture' or 'artistic awareness' stay home. Go because it is fun. Go because it is live. Go.

by  
Chris Hunt



## bertolt brecht THE THREEPENNY OPERA

hard stuff. Because it is Brecht, the actor must immediately throw out any preconceived notions about developing a character or trying to understand where his or her character is coming from, so to speak. In fact, Brecht quite purposefully gives two-dimensional frameworks for the players. This radical approach to theater creates a situation where the actor is forced into a necessary rapport with the audience, and an awareness of the whole thing simply being a play, and a bad one at that - the very thing that actors usually try so desperately to avoid.

The score for this show reflects this attitude as well - typical of the point of satire, the melodies are often rough to the point of atonal, reflecting and emulating a bad orchestra trying to play genuine show music. The songs are lyrically brilliant in satire and tastelessness, again, wonderful parodies of the usual tripe found in 'serious' musicals.

This production required a lot of pure guts, and I think the fact that most of the acting and stage movement were amateurish and

A good example is the clever trick in Act One. The arch-crook Macheath, having proposed marriage to Polly, the daughter of Peachum, a man whose occupation is granting licenses to and properly dressing beggars so as to achieve their full potential for patheticness (while taking a seventy percent cut in their holdings). They are wed, and Macheath's cronies steal decorations for the stable in which the ceremony is to be held. These props were wonderfully tacky and tasteless, and included a huge portrait of a rather chunky nude woman. As it turns out, the picture itself is made of theater scrim cloth, and we are treated to a wonderfully clever trick where Polly and Macheath, hidden by the picture are suddenly visible as the lights shift and the scrim becomes transparent. Clever and well done technically. There was, however, no real reason for the picture to be there in the first place, as it was simply rolled out in front of the bed that Macheath and Polly sit on. You have to justify these clever tricks and contextualize them properly - I should not have

# Entertainment

Desrosiers this year celebr of originalth offering a unforgettable impressive rep based on an ext of theatre and the celebration Creative Arts pleased to Desrosiers' A Playhouse on 24th, at 8:00p.

This is a rare number of land of which have several years. you on a whin world of Rober the beautiful M dance the com 1980, to the moving *Concer* (1987), audier chance to see t work of Canada theatre.

The evening in film sequenc (1986), which r film and live ac fantastic *Ult* represented by with Sonya De Director Robert together, and b Suite," a m company's hi women entom gowns are carri

When I was to go see I Mu my curiosity w noticed poste campus which as an orchestra with over twe few of which international despite my professional somewhat skep

I, having be classical musi to the conserv concert-giving play their pic faces and are things such as tapping their t Montreal boar that each p orchestra wa soloist and wa his or her ind through the Turovsky, the ensemble, wa (according to this type of only add to the performance

When the co my fears about opinion disa opening piece, D major by