

# Brecht and Andrew Lloyd Webber make for strange Opera

by Moira MacDonald

It is April 3, 1997. Andrew Lloyd Webber's popular musical, *Phantom of the Opera* is finally closing at Toronto's luxurious Pantages Theatre. Tonight a financial success story is coasting to a smooth finish. Except backstage, the techies are plotting revolution.

Wait a minute — aren't we supposed to be seeing Bertolt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*? Well yes, except director David Rotenberg has written in his own sub-plot (co-plot? subplot?) to the upcoming Theatre at York production of Brecht's 1928 musical. But he's not telling how he manages the transition from 1990s Toronto to Victorian-era London.

The plot in *Three Penny* goes like

## PREVIEW

**Three Penny Opera**  
written by Bertolt Brecht  
adapted and directed by David Rotenberg  
Studio Theatre  
March 31 to April 4, April 6 to 8

this: Macheath — a.k.a. underworld kingpin — and Jonathan Peachum — owner of Beggar's Friend, which organizes and equips the poor as beggars in exchange for commission — come to blows after Macheath kidnaps Peachum's daughter Polly and marries her. A manhunt begins for Macheath who is constantly betrayed by his beloved whores.

Meanwhile, Peachum plots to upset a royal coronation by organizing a demonstration of human misery

by his beggars, thus eliciting the lucrative sympathy of the well-to-do. The possibility for utter chaos hovers over everything.

Where Rotenberg sees the connection between the two scenarios is in the dilemma which both sets of characters face: are they prepared to sacrifice their livelihoods to be anarchists, artistic or political? "The answer in *Three Penny*," says Rotenberg, "is absolutely not."

The "uncomfortable notion of making theatre (as well as) being an anarchistic artist," as Rotenberg puts it, was one that Brecht had to deal with in his own career as a playwright. Although Brecht constantly railed against bourgeois capitalism in his work, he was nonetheless a part of it, depending on its exploitative profits

to sustain his art.

The York adaptation of *Three Penny* will retain the well-known music of Kurt Weill and features the performances of the 12 acting students in the Graduate Programme in Theatre. The production previews

March 31 and April 1 and runs from April 2-8 in the Studio Theatre. Tickets are \$7 for students, \$10 for adults with March 31 as pay-what-you-can. And if you still aren't completely sold — there'll be plenty of garter belts a'flyin'...

## campus events calendar

**Arts Pigs**, an exhibition of recent work by Andrew Brouse and John Marriott, continues at the Student Centre Gallery until Friday, April 3. There will be a reception today from 6 to 9 pm, with the "artistes in attendance."

**Painting**, a Glendon studio course exhibition, continues until April 8 at the Glendon Gallery, Glendon College. Gallery hours are 11 am to 4 pm. For more information, call the Gallery at 487-6721.

"There's a fine line between pleasure and pain. It's called Cruelty." R. Kelly Clipperton's **Cruelty, A Blood Song**, directed by Christina Uriarte, officially opens today and plays until Saturday, April 4 in the Atkinson Studio, Atkinson College. Showtime is 8 pm. Tickets are \$4.



Lorraine White and "Silent Nightmare," by Sheryl Joyner. Tickets are \$7, \$5 for students and seniors.

Also, on April 10 there will be **Don't Forget the Other Show: Even More Choreography**. The Other Show is a student directed and produced show featuring works by fourth year dance composition students and other upper level independent choreographers. The show contains several group and solo pieces. Burton Auditorium, 12:15 and 4:15 pm. For more information on either of these shows, call the dance department, 736-5137.

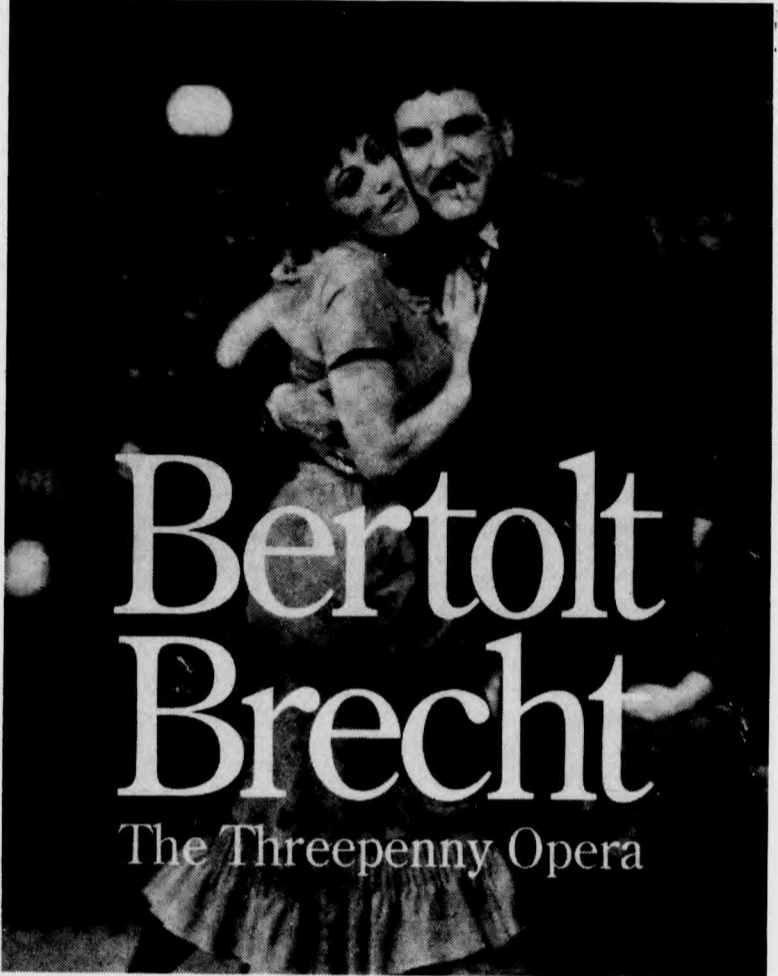
**Akafist**, a professional group of 16 male voices which continues the traditions of Russian choral art and church singing, perform at Dacary Hall (050 McLaughlin College) today at 8:30 pm. The repertoire of this award-winning choir includes church music of the 16th to 20th centuries and Russian folk songs. A recommended donation of \$5 will be collected at the door.

An entire afternoon of **piano music** will be performed on Thursday, April 2 by Christina Petrowska and Stephanie Sebastian's music students starting at 1 pm in Dacary Hall. Admission is free.

Also on April 2: **Ken Shorley**, a fourth year percussion student of John Brownell, will present a program of original music, assisted by Lia Hiebert (english horn and voice), Steven Howes (percussion), Gillian Stecyk (voice), Kim McBrien (alto flute) and Andrew Craig (piano). Dacary Hall, 8 pm. Admission is free.

The final concert of the year in the **Student Chamber Series** will take place Friday, April 3. It will feature the Brass Ensemble under the direction of Ian Cowie. Dacary Hall, 12

noon. Admission is free. For more information on any of these events, call the music department, 736-5186.



David Rotenberg's adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* asks its audience if they are prepared to sacrifice their livelihoods to be political or artistic anarchists. The photo above is from an early stage version of the play.

### FACULTY AND STUDENTS

#### HOST A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENT FOR A WEEKEND

Japanese university students participating in a month-long summer language program at York University's English Language Institute are placed with a homestay family for one weekend. Homestay begins **Friday August 14 and continues through Sunday August 16**. If you would like to open your home to one or two of these students please call the English Language Institute at 736-5353.

### YORK STUDENTS

#### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MEETING JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS?

If you would like to make new friends and find out about Japanese culture at the same time, why not get to know some of the 40 Meiji University students who will be studying English at the **York English Language Institute** from July 31 - August 27, 1992.

COME AND MEET THEM AT.....

- \* BAR B Q's
- \* evening baseball games
- \* social events

For information contact the English Language Institute at 736-5353 or come to Winters College Suite 287.

### Call for writers

CBC Radio, in association with University of Toronto's CIUT-FM, presents its first annual Under-25 Radio Drama Competition, for Ontario residents who are 25 years old or younger.

First prize will be \$750, second prize \$500 and third prize \$300. The winning scripts will be recorded and broadcast on CIUT's *Radio Stage*. Script editing will be provided by Dave Carley, script editor for CBC Radio's

The winners will be chosen by a panel of celebrity judges, including Governor General's Award-winning playwrights Judith Thompson and Joan Macleod, and Executive Producer of CBC Radio Drama James Roy.

Each entry must contain proof of age and provincial residence and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Scripts must be original and unproduced, with a running time of no more than 30 minutes. Style sheets can be obtained from the CBC.

The deadline for entries is Friday, May 29. Winners will be announced June 29.

For more information, or to submit scripts, write: Colin Taylor, Coordinator, Under-25 Radio Drama Competition, CBC Radio Drama, PO Box 500, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1E6, or call (416) 975-6001.