



Press Release

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For immediate release:

Mack the Knife is Back in Town!

Clarence Brown Theatre Closes 2014-2015 Season

with Bertolt Brecht & Kurt Weill's The Threepenny Opera

A landmark in modern drama which inspired the hits “Cabaret” and “Chicago” and which includes one of the most popular songs of the century, “The Threepenny Opera” plays on the Clarence Brown Theatre Mainstage April 16 through May 3, 2015. An Open Captioned performance will take place on Sunday, April 19 at 2:00 pm. A talkback with the actors will take place following the March 26 matinee. Free and convenient parking is available in the McClung Tower Garage on Volunteer Boulevard. The production is sponsored by Schaad Companies. Media sponsors include Knoxville Mercury, Knoxville News Sentinel, WUOT, B97.5, WBIR, Comcast and WUTK. This production contains adult themes and language.

Written in 1928 as “an opera for beggars,” the work changed the course of opera and musical theatre. Based on “The Beggar’s Opera” written by John Gay in 1728, “The Threepenny Opera” favored a cabaret-style and the sound of 1920s Berlin dance bands as reflected in Kurt Weill’s jazz-based score over traditional operatic form. It also added a sharp political perspective and Bertolt Brecht’s biting text to create one of the most influential works of the century. The opening number, “Mack the Knife,” has become one of the most recorded songs of all time.

“The Threepenny Opera” follows the charismatic scoundrel Macheath and his exploits in 19th century London where an assortment of characters maneuver for advantage, revealing a profoundly corrupt society and asking the question: Who is the criminal? The person who robs the bank or the person how finds it?

“The influence of “The Threepenny Opera” on the 20th century theatre cannot be overstated. It continues to entertain audiences around the world, and still shocks and challenges them,” said Director Calvin MacLean. “It is the first time I have staged this profound work, although I have staged some of its “children,” like “Sweeney Todd” and Joshua Sobol’s “Ghetto.”

Calvin MacLean (Director) is the Theatre Department Head and CBT Producing Artistic Director. CBT productions he has directed include “A Flea in Her Ear,” “The Life of Galileo,” “The Secret Rapture,” “A Streetcar Named Desire” (with Dale Dickey), “Amadeus” (with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra), “Kiss Me, Kate,” “Sweeney Todd” (with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra and Dale Dickey), and “Our Country’s Good.” Previously Head of Directing at Illinois State University, he also was the Artistic Director of the Illinois Shakespeare Festival for 11 seasons. Professionally active in Chicago, his productions – mostly at the Famous

Door Theatre – earned several prestigious Joseph Jefferson Awards for Outstanding Production and Outstanding Direction.

Members of the band, which will be featured on the stage, will include: **Terry Silver-Alford** (Conductor/Keyboard); **Melony Dodson** (Keyboard); **Deidre Ford** (Reed 1); **Tom Johnson** (Reed 2); **Hunter Bright** (Trumpet); **Tom Lundberg** (Trombone 1); **Jeff Mize** (Trombone 2); **Will Yager** (Bass); and, J. Miller (Percussion).

Michael Elliott (Musical Director) has directed across the country and also performed in several national tours. Recently, he won the Distinguished Achievement in Composition from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for scoring the original work “Frankenstein.” He earned an MFA in Musical Theatre from San Diego State University and serves as coordinator for the Musical Theatre program at Ball State University.

The cast is comprised of several visiting guest artists, UT Theatre faculty and resident artists, community artists and UT Theatre graduate and undergraduate students.

Visiting Guest artist, **Lise Bruneau** (Jenny Diver) currently residing in Washington, DC, is a founding member of the Taffety Punk Theatre Company where she has directed several productions. She has performed in regional theatres across the country, such as Cleveland Playhouse, the Old Globe, ACT, Seattle Rep, Berkeley Rep; and for the St. Louis, Alabama, Chicago, Santa Cruz, and Oregon Shakespeare Festivals.

Brian Herriott (Macheath) has performed on Broadway and in the 3rd National Tour of “Les Miserables.” Chicago credits include: Chicago Shakespeare Theater; The Royal Shakespeare Company; Goodman Theatre; Chicago Opera Theatre; Marriott Theatre; and Drury Lane Oakbrook Theatre, to name a few. He graduated from Illinois State University where he received the Jean Scharfenberg Award for Acting.

Roderick Peeples (JJ Peachum) lives in Chicago and has performed at Chicago Shakespeare, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Remy Bumppo, Victory Gardens, Famous Door, Court, and Next theatres and is the winner of a Joseph Jefferson Award. Regionally, he has performed at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Madison Repertory, and Illinois Shakespeare Festival. His film work includes: Robert Altman’s “The Company,” “Road to Perdition,” “Novocaine,” “The Hudsucker Proxy.” Television credits include: “Prison Break,” “ER,” “Early Edition,” and the “Untouchables” series (syndicated).

Community artists include: **Rachel Britt** (Nelly/Ensemble); **Benjamin Pratt** (Ned/Ensemble); **Donald Thorne** (Smith); and, **Pedro Tomás** (Old Beggar/Whore).

UT Theatre resident artists and staff include: **Bill Black** (Reverend Kimball/Constable); **Neil Friedman** (Tiger Brown); and **Katy Wolfe** (Celia Peachum).

UT Theatre MFA candidates include: **Melissa David** (Lucy Brown); **Andrew Drake** (Chainsaw Bob/Ensemble); **Brian Gligor** (Matt the Mint); **Kyle Maxwell** (MC/Narrator); and **Steve Sherman** (Filch).

UT undergraduate students include: **Rachel Brown** (Beggar Girl); **Robert Parker Jenkins** (Weeping Willow Walter/Ensemble); **Stephanie Lee** (Polly Peachum); **McKinley Merritt** (Dolly/Ensemble); **Ellen Nikbakht** (Betty/Ensemble); **Ethan Roeder** (Jimmy/Ensemble); and **Eric Sorrels** (Crook Fingered Jake/Ensemble).

The creative team for this production includes: UT MFA candidate **Poua Yang** (Costume Designer); UT MFA candidate **Kristen Geisler** (Lighting Designer); UT Theatre faculty **Joe Payne** (Sound & Media Designer); UT MFA candidate **Josafath Reynoso** (Scenic Designer); visiting guest artist **Christie Zimmerman** (Choreographer); visiting guest artist Ian Messersmith (Stage Manager) and, visiting guest artist **Eric Tobolski** (Voice & Dialect Coach).

A Preview for “The Threepenny Opera” is Thursday, April 16 followed by Opening Night Friday, April 17. The production runs through May 3. UT faculty/staff, senior citizens, military personnel, children and students receive

discounts. For tickets, call the Clarence Brown Theatre box office at 865-974-5161, Tickets Unlimited at 865-656-4444 or order online 24/7 at www.clarencebrowntheatre.com

With a dual mission to train the next generation of theatre artists and to provide top quality professional theatre, like that of a teaching hospital, the Clarence Brown Theatre at the University of Tennessee Knoxville is one of only 12 academic LORT (League of Resident Theatre) institutions in the nation. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Calvin MacLean and Managing Director David B. Byrd, the CBT season runs from August through May and features eight productions ranging from musicals to drama.

For more information, tickets or accessibility accommodation requests including Open Captioning, ASL, and assistive technologies, please call the CBT Box Office at 865-974-5161 or visit us online at clarencebrowntheatre.com/access. Stay Connected to the Clarence Brown Theatre on Facebook (Clarence Brown Theatre), follow us on Twitter (@ClarenceBrown) and view Clarence Brown videos on YouTube (Clarence Bro).

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