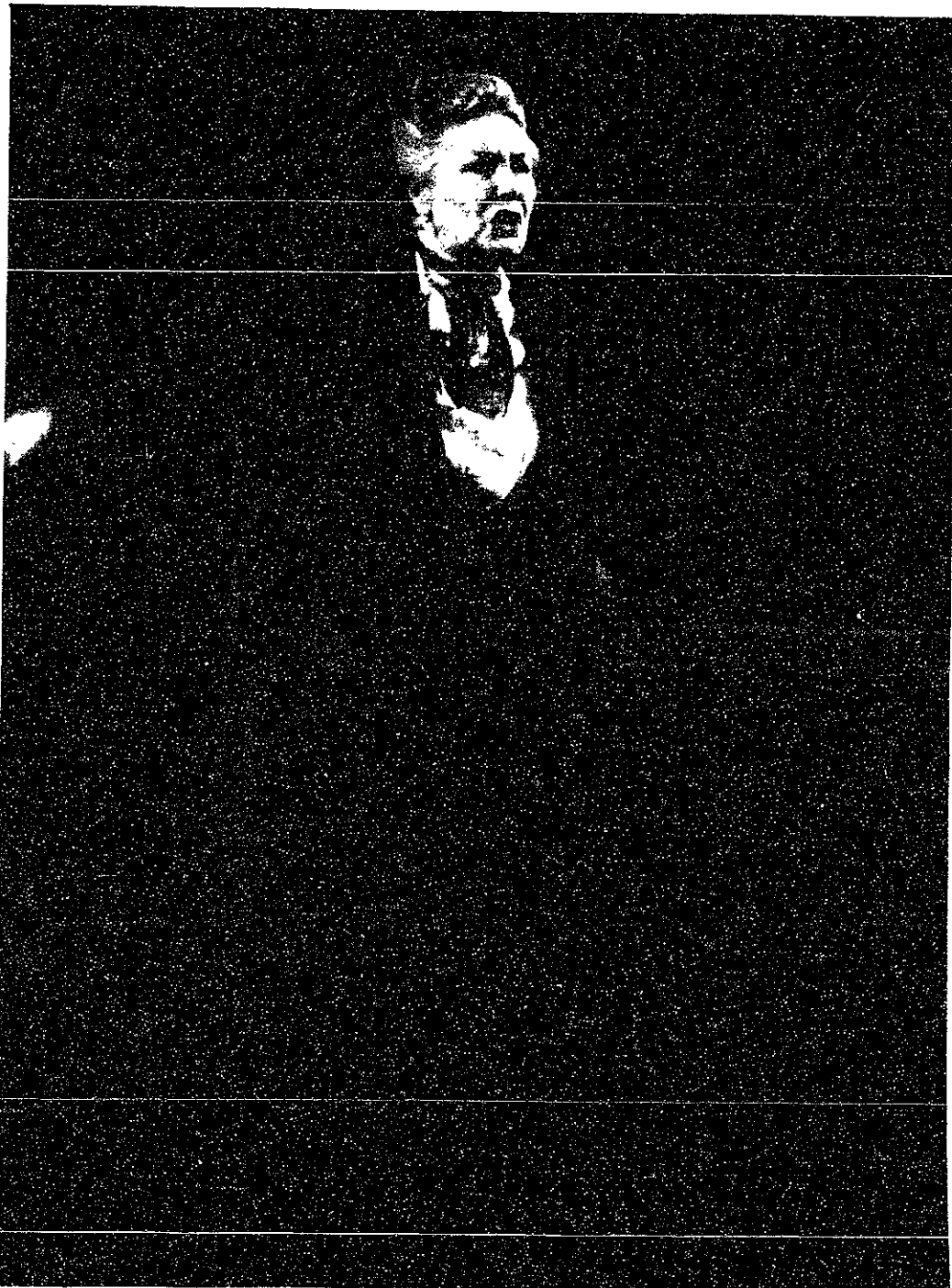


## ARTS

**Slow, witless Threepenny Opera shortchanges audience**

Phyllis Curtin as Mrs. Peachum.

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA**

Staged by Sarah Caldwell.  
Conducted by Joel Thome.  
Opera Company of Boston.  
Opera House, April 22, 24, 27 & May 1.

By JONATHAN RICHMOND

**Y**AWN, YAWN, FIDGET FIDGET, yawn. Sarah Caldwell and Joel Thome's *Threepenny Opera* is an endurance test. The singing is nondescript, the acting sleepy, the music insipid. It compares very poorly with the MIT Musical Theatre Guild's excellent production of last fall.

Without humor or pungency, it's a waste of time to stage Brecht/Weill. Apart from one coup de grace — the moment when Peachum's beggars pose before setting off for the coronation — this was a production without wit. The cast walked through their numbers without living their roles.

Take Chester Ludgin's Peachum. His singing was poorly projected and sloppily articulated. Many lines of spoken dialogue were fudged. Characterization was flat — this Peachum was a wimp.

John Bradstetter's Macheath was little

better. He conveyed Macheath's fear as he awaits his fate on death row, but lacked the essential incisiveness of Brecht's character earlier on; he only briefly engaged the audience with the trademark sinister power of this role. His singing was limp, although a little improved towards the end. The dark rascal Erik Schwartz '86 conjured up for MIT was a far more sophisticated portrayal.

Phyllis Curtin — as Mrs. Peachum — pulled some nice faces, but failed to live up to her reputation for rich characterization. This was no place for the prettification we saw. Richard Crist made for an anemic Tiger Brown — F. Burriss Jackes '90 for MTG had been far more interesting and entertaining. Sarah Reese sang a couple of good numbers as Jenny, but even her acting was uncommitted.

The band was small, its sound dull, and the slow-paced conducting of Joel Thome was dreary. Where were the biting, adrenal rhythms Deepto Chakrabarty '88 had drawn from his band at MIT? Where were Brecht and Weill last Friday night?

Keep away from this one unless you need a sleeping potion.



Sarah Reese as Jenny (center) and John Brandstetter as Macheath (standing) surrounded by ladies of the brothel.

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by

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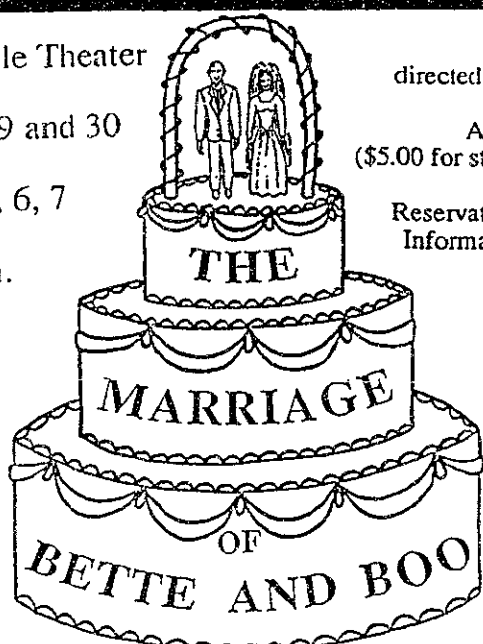
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BY CHRISTOPHER DURANG

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