

# The Evolution of Jonotar Rongoshala

Nodee Zaman

You've probably heard many stories about "The Beggar's Opera"; this musical play was written by a man named John Gay who was born in the small town of Barnstaple, London. John was educated in a local grammar school near by. After leaving school John was apprenticed to a silk mercer in London, soon becoming tired and restless of his job John decided to head back home to Barnstaple where he spent most of his time with his uncle who was reverend of the town. After a while he soon wondered back to London where he thought he could start his career, but this time not as a silk mercer but something else...perhaps a poet or a play Wright?



The Beggars Opera



John Gay

Soon enough John started writing all sorts of plays, but he's well remembered for his popular musical "The Beggar's Opera" which was inspired by the lower class people on the streets of London at the time. The production was opened on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1728 and ran 62 performances, all held at the play house in Lincoln Inns Field, London. The show was a hit due to its fabulous 69 songs as well as the gloomy, full of surprises feeling and atmosphere of the concept. The great thing about the play in my opinion is that it brings to life and shows the audience more about what was actually happening at the time out there on the streets of London.

There are a few main characters throughout the production all that relate to the topic.



Three Penny Opera

Here's a list of some of the main characters:

- Peachum - is the thieves leader/king in the underworld
- Mrs. Peachum - his wife
- Polly Peachum - their daughter
- Lockit - a jailor in league with Macheath
- Lucy Lockit - his daughter
- Macheath - gangster leader

Well after seeing the success of "The Beggar's Opera" Bertolt Brecht (another playwright) adapted the story line of the production and created a newer modified version and decided to title it "Three Penny Opera." Brecht translated the play in German and this version became more popular than the previous one because Bertolt Brecht was well known and more famous than other playwrights at the time. This production premiered on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1928 in the



Bertolt Brecht

Berliner Ensemble, Berlin, Germany. Brecht had come up with many great ideas in the past but this one has been one of the best for him and was very accomplished and satisfying production. Most of the roles in the play were still left as the original ones.

Bertolt Brecht was born in 1896 in a place called Augsburg, Germany. he was one of the greatest playwrights at his time in Europe. His father was a manufacturer but Brecht wasn't really interested in his father's occupation, instead he studied philosophy and natural science in Munich and Berlin.

His first play he wrote was called "Baal" and was written in 1918. Brecht introduced many new things to the theater world such as "Alienation effect" which is during a performance you don't hide anything from the audience such as when changing character, sets, props, scenes etc. This creation is now famous and used all around the world. He also invented the "Epic theater", the Epic theater is a sequence of non-chronological events that are narrated; the open ended scenes are left for the audience to link together. He is also very popular in third world countries because most of his plays are based around the life of poor and deprived people.



Ajitesh Bannerjee

This magnificent play was translated in many other languages which include Bangla. The first Bangla adaptation of the "Three Penny Opera" was called "Tin Poishar Pala" by Ajitesh Bannarjee. He was a very famous actor, director and playwright during his time. He was part of a well known drama group in Calcutta called "Nandikar." "Tin Poishar Pala" was a very successful production for "Nandikar" in the 70's.



Janotar Rangoshala

In the 90's Mujibur Rahman Dilu (a Bangladeshi actor, director, playwright) rewrote "Tin Poishar Pala" adding a hint of Bangladeshi flavour such as accents, customs and social and political life. He decided to call it "Jonotar Rongoshala" meaning people's theater. A popular Drama group in Dhaka called "Nagorik Natyangan" staged this play which was directed by Dr. Enamul Haque. It

received very positive feedback from the audience.

It's worth to mention here that the Sydney theater company (STC) performed this play in 1994.

A Melbourne based drama group called "Renaissance Drama Society" are rehearsing "Jonotar Rongoshala" as their eighth production. During the third week of October' 08 the play will premier in Melbourne. This drama group previously performed another play written by Bertolt Brecht called "Dewan Gazir Kissa" by Asaduzzaman Noor, an adaptation of "Mr. Puntilla and his Man Matti" which was performed successfully in Melbourne and Sydney. So we have to wait and see how they perform this time.



Mujibur Rahman  
Dilu