

## Mack The Knife

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 16 June 2011 20:36 - Last Updated Tuesday, 17 March 2015 14:39

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Murder ballads are a sub-genre of the traditional ballad form, the lyrics of which form a narrative describing the events of a murder, often including the lead-up and/or aftermath. A medieval version of the murder ballad performed by strolling minstrels was *A moritat* (from *mori* meaning "deadly" and *tat* meaning "deed").

## Mack The Knife

**"Mack the Knife"** or "The Ballad of Mack the Knife", originally **"Das Moritat von Mackie Messer"**, is a song composed by Kurt Weill with lyrics by Bertolt Brecht for their music drama **Die Dreigroschenoper**, or, as it is known in English, **The Threepenny Opera**.



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### John Gay

In The Threepenny Opera, the moritat singer with his street organ introduces and closes the drama with the tale of the deadly Mackie Messer, or Mack the Knife, a character based on the dashing highwayman **Macheath** in **John Gay's** The Beggar's Opera. The Brecht-Weill version of the character was far more cruel and sinister, and has been transformed into a modern anti-hero.



### Macheath from The Beggar's Opera

**Kurt Julian Weill** (March 2, 1900 – April 3, 1950) was a German-Jewish composer, active from the 1920s, and in his later years in the United States. He was a leading composer for the stage who was best known for his fruitful collaborations with Bertolt Brecht. Weill was a socialist who held the ideal of writing music that served a socially useful purpose.



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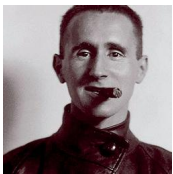
## **Kurt Weill**

He wrote a number of works for the concert hall, as well as several Judaism themed pieces. Apart from "Mack the Knife" and "Pirate Jenny" from the Threepenny Opera, his most famous songs include "Alabama Song" (from Mahagonny), "Surabaya Johnny" (from Happy End), "Speak Low" (from One Touch of Venus), "Lost in the Stars" (from the musical of that name), "My Ship" (from Lady in the Dark), and "September Song" (from Knickerbocker Holiday).



## **Kurt Weill**

**Bertolt Brecht** (10 February 1898 – 14 August 1956) was a German poet, playwright, and theatre director. An influential theatre practitioner of the 20th century, Brecht made equally significant contributions to dramaturgy and theatrical production, the latter particularly through the seismic impact of the tours undertaken by the Berliner Ensemble—the post-war theatre company operated by Brecht and his wife, long-time collaborator, and actress Helene Weigel.



### Bertold Brecht

Along with his contemporary Erwin Piscator, Brecht created an influential theory of theatre—the epic theatre—that proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself.

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**English Lyrics** Opera premiered in Germany in 1928 at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. The



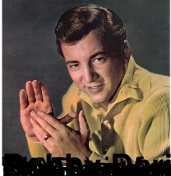
**German Lyrics** Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's collaboration produced a Broadway hit in the 1930s. The



**Swing Lyrics** The song was adapted into a Broadway musical, "Mack and Mabel" (1934), and a film, "Mack and Mabel" (1934).



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