

A peachy pair: Sheila McCarthy as Mrs. Peachum and Peter Donaldson as J.J. Peachum organize the beggars in "The Three Penny Opera."



V. TONY HALLER

Stratford from page B4

Now imagine a production in which there is a real sexual spark between Higgins and Eliza, where it isn't just a tugged on ending but a real possibility. The Stratford production teams up two of Canada's finest actors in a nearly perfect production of this popular musical about proper pronunciation and a demand for respect.

Cynthia Dale has become a special treasure at Stratford, taking the lead in the big musical productions but also outstanding in dramatic and comic roles. She handles the transformation from slum flower girl ("Ah, a girl! Ah, an em") to radiant lady beautifully. She sings expressively, handling the rich emotions from the dreamy "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" to the romantically intoxicated "I Could Have Danced All Night" to the fiercely angry "Just You Wait Henry Higgins."

But the real difference in this production is the casting of Colm Feore as Higgins. Feore, who has moved from Stratford leading man to international film star, brings relative youth (mid 40s rather than late 50s), good looks, giddy athleticism and a real singing voice to the querulous bachelor. He leaps when he's excited, his eyes blaze with emotion. He has all of Higgins' irritating self-centeredness but he also has tons of charisma.

When Higgins and Eliza celebrate *The Rain in Spain*, there is definitely some serious chemistry going on, even as Higgins tries to find other words for it in *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face*.

Barry MacGregor is amusing and effusive as the kindly Pickering. Laird Macintosh does a fine job singing *On the Street Where You Live* as Freddy. Veteran James Blendick has a good time as Eliza's father Alfred P. Doolittle, though he isn't quite vulgar enough in the Stanley Holloway tradition.

Director Richard Monette has created a fluid production that suggests rather than shows the Edwardian London setting and that properly plays to the un-

Stratford Festival Schedule

At the Festival Theatre
Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well, through Aug. 31

Lerner & Loewe's *My Fair Lady*, through Nov. 10

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, through Nov. 2

Shakespeare's *King Lear* (with Christopher Plummer), Aug. 20 to Nov. 6

At the Avon Theatre
Brecht and Weill's *Three Penny Opera*, through Nov. 2

Cross *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, through Nov. 2

Shakespeare's *Richard III*, through Nov. 3

At the Tom Patterson Theatre
Shakespeare's *Henry VI: Revenge in France*, through Sept. 28

Shakespeare's *Henry VI: Revolt in England*, through Sept. 28

Shakespeare-Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, through Sept. 29

Sept. 28 Bedford's one-man *The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet*, Aug. 6-30

To order tickets, call (800) 667-1600, by e-mail at orders@stratford-festival.on.ca or by mail at Stratford Festival of Canada, P.O. Box 520 Stratford, Ontario N6A 6V2. The festival's Web site is www.stratfordfestival.ca on the Internet.

To drive to Stratford from Michigan take the Ambassador Bridge to Hwy. 401 east to Exit 222 (the next exit after Ingersoll), then follow County Road 6 north to Stratford.

filled romantic possibilities between his leads. Chorusgrapher Donna Feore has done an excellent job in creating movement and style from ball room waltzes to bar room romps. Berthold Carriere and orchestra perform Frederick Loewe's great music superbly.

Feore is one of three Higgins

also notable is Blythe Wilson as the leather-wearing Lucy Brown, another of Mack's conquests.

The *Three Penny Opera* continues through Nov. 2 at the Avon Theatre.

(See reviews of *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* Thursday.)

this summer. His run ends July 13. Geraint Wyn Davies plays the part July 14 to Sept. 14 and director Monette takes over Sept. 18 to Nov. 10. They have a tough act to follow.

The Three Penny Opera

Playwright Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill created a different kind of musical in *The Three Penny Opera*. It is part polemic, part satire, part music hall revue.

The musical is set among the denizens of London's criminal community on the eve of Queen Victoria's coronation. The dastardly but darkly charming Mackeath (Mark the Knife) is courting Polly Peachum, daughter of J.J. Peachum, the king of the beggars. Peachum doesn't like the dangerous Mackeath hanging around his daughter and wants him arrested by police constable Tiger Brown, Mack's friend and admirer.

All of this is played for laughs but also as an opportunity for the far left-leaning Brecht to make comment on poverty, government and morality. His lyrics and Weill's imaginative score still have a fair share of wit and wisdom. *Mack the Knife* and *Pirate Jenny* are perhaps the best known songs.

The Stratford production has some good moments though it fails in crucial ways. Tom McCamus isn't quite as regal as Mack the Knife. Diana Coatsworth's voice doesn't carry as Polly. Parts that are meant to be funny instead play flatly.

The comic duties fall to Peter Donaldson and real-life wife Sheila McCarthy as the terrible Peachums and they deliver. McCarthy is especially amusing as the protective and scheming mother.

Also notable is Blythe Wilson as the leather-wearing Lucy Brown, another of Mack's conquests.

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Read your way to good health with books on food, fitness

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Staying healthy may be more about knowledge than luck. Here is some reading that will improve your odds:

■ The best exercise equipment is already paid for and conveniently located: Your two feet.

In *Walking for Health and Happiness* (Reader's Digest Books, \$24.95 hardcover), Dr. William Bird and Veronica Reynolds list all the reasons walking is good for you, from physical fitness to emotional well-being. You think you learned to walk when you were 2 years old? The authors offer a refresher course to make sure your posture and gait are right. And they outline how to get started on a walking program, either by yourself and with others.

■ Get Enthusiastic about exercise, and the first thing you know, you have an injury to go with it. Charting a steady course — or perhaps getting past a bad patch of hurting — is the theme of *Exercise Rx* (Kodansha, \$19.95 paperback), by Gary Yunker.

Yunker and a team of experts look at the real you, the one who may be a bit overweight and out of shape and trying to do something about it. The book has preventive, maintenance, and rehabilitative advice to get the best out of your exercise regimen without injury.

■ Like most Americans, you may have grown up with a meat-centered diet. Yet you know now that vegetarian fare can help you touch more of the nutritional bases.

The *Vegetarian Bible* (Reader's Digest, \$35 hardcover), by Sarah Brown, is a down-to-earth, around-the-globe presentation of more than 250 vegetarian dishes that will satisfy even the steak lovers in your household. For example, there's a recipe for Cottage Pie that's a veggie version of shepherd's pie, or all-vegetable versions of pasta favorites. The book includes a gazetteer section of vegetables, with information about the nutrition, storage and preparation of each.

■ *Pilates: Body in Motion*, by Alycea Ungaro, and *Dynamic Yoga*, by Kia Meux (DK Publishing, each \$14.95 paperback), are guides to popular alternative choices for keeping in shape. Pilates, named after its creator, Joseph Pilates, involves non-impact exercise with ordered exercises that help align the entire body. Dynamic yoga builds on hatha yoga and targets mind-body connections. Each book describes the history and dynamics of the exercise discipline and lays out a program of exercises.

■ Pilates advocate Penelope Lathey focuses on an evolution of the discipline in *Modern Pilates* (Allen & Unwin, \$13.95 paper-

back). In her view, traditional pilates may work well for people already in good shape and with no injuries, but others need a method that offers safety as well as results. Lathey, who has taught the method in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, includes illustrated exercises and detailed explanations of what they are supposed to achieve.

■ *The Everything Yoga Book* (Adams Media, \$12.95 paperback), by Cynthia Worby, is a fairly easy start to learn the basics of yoga for de-stressing, flexibility, and getting in shape. Worby, who runs yoga classes in Bedford, N.Y., explains and illustrates the benefits.

■ Yoga, taken slowly, can help people with stress injuries and pain and can be undertaken by pregnant women, the disabled or elderly, according to Dr. Brian Payne, author of *Slow Yoga: For Enhanced Fitness, Strength and Health* (Souvenir Press, \$13.95 paperback).

■ Celebrity trainer Matt Roberts offers a manual that will let you in on professional advice he gives to movie and music stars: *Fitness for Life* (DK Publishing, \$24.95 hardcover). He covers diet, flexibility, aerobics, and resistance exercises. In addition, he looks at specific needs, such as pre- and post-natal exercise, back care, fitness for tennis and skiing.

Benefit from page B4

business who she can call on whenever the need arises. In 1985, she and Bacharach united with Elton John, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder to record *That's What Friends Are For* as a way to raise millions of dollars for the American Foundation for AIDS Research. But she shares the happy times as well. To commemorate her 40th year in music, Warwick will release *My Friends and Me* in November. She's in the studio now working on the duet project with James Ingram, Kenny Rogers, Julio Iglesias, Gladys Knight, and Elton John.

"I asked them to choose their favorite Dionne Warwick song. I feel very honored to have them as friends."

This may be the last time for a while that Detroit audiences will be able to see Warwick who divides her time between homes in New Jersey and Brazil. She plans to travel less for concert dates.

"I'm going to slow down from the road," said Warwick, "but I'll continue to record as long as people want to hear songs by me."

Randy Lee has been listening to Warwick's music for the last three decades. Recently, she and Music Hall president Sandy Duncan tried to pick their favorites.

"I can't pick just one song, when they were doing all those songs in the 70s, I loved them all," said Lee, special events director.

Deciding to invite Warwick and Bacharach to perform at Music Hall's annual major fundraiser

was easy for Lee and Duncan. They knew this year's event would need to draw as large a crowd as the Grand Prix Ball did for the last 23 years.

"There's no Grand Prix race this summer so we brainstormed with a focus group on what to do," said Duncan. "The event raised \$500,000 to \$600,000 every year. We decided to make it more music focused. The concert is the centerpiece. We hope to sell 500 to 600 of the \$300 tickets that include a sit-down dinner, cocktails and an afterglow in a party tent along with the stage concert."

The money raised will enable Music Hall to produce another successful season by bringing in performers like Pete Fountain, Smokey Robinson, Ray Charles, and a new show as yet unnamed. Since opening its doors in 1928, the venue has presented dance and Broadway style musicals and plays from September to May, and the Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival labor day weekend in Hart Plaza.

"New is an auction," added Lee, "with tickets to Hob Noble Gobble plus the opportunity to be on a float in the Thanksgiving Day parade courtesy of The Parade Company, use of a New York apartment for a week, a party for 10 on Music Hall's stage, race packages for the Indy 500 and NASCAR, a Walt Disney World package for four, and dinner for eight with the curator of *Degas* (and the *Dancer* opening Oct. 20 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.)"

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