Valerie S: Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ruth G: Bonsoir Mesdames et Messieurs,

VS: Guten Abend, Meine Damen und Herren.

RG: We welcome you to our musical and dramatic presentation to celebrate the life of the esteemed composer Herr…. Mr…. Kurt…. Weill.

[Project: Welcome, Bienvenue, Wilkommen, etc… *other languages*]

VS: Yeah, [points up] you can stop that now.

RG: We begin - as you surely expect - with a song.

VG: Not merely a song but story.

RG: A harrowing tale concerning an evil villain.

Randy M: Named …. Mack the Knife.

01 MACK THE KNIFE

Enter Weill.

VS: Good evening, Herr Weill

[Weill acknowledged but says nothing and walks to band – starts discussing music, quietly audible]

RG: Kurt Weill was born in Dessau at the turn of the 20th Century. [projector shows separate captions for KW, born, Dessau, turn of the C20th]

Ummmm. Projector person?

P: [as caption] ***Yes***?

RG: You’re overdoing it again..

P: ***Sorry***.

RG: Weill was the son of a synagogue cantor and started learning music at a young age. With the First World War taking so many men away he was soon in demand as a music teacher, and started composing.

[Enter Lenya}

L: Ach, this is so dull, when do I show up?

VS: Karoline Blamauer, born 1898 near Vienna Austria, but moved to Zurich and then Berlin, seeking fame as an actress and showgirl. In between times she also worked as a domestic servant …

L: Also a woor ..

VS: A what?

L: Ach, sorry is not the right word? Prostitute.

VS: Oh, yes, I see.

L: I am bumsen for money, you know?

VS: Yes, we get the idea.

L: Just so you know, I am not ashamed. I am wild, I always believed in free love.

VS: I thought you just said it was for money.

L: Ach! Shut up now, I will sing.

L: [putting on apron] Ladies and Gentlemen. Imagine a shitty, run down hotel, in some shitty harbor town somewhere. Maybe it’s in England. And a girl, a barmaid, waitress, bottle-washer is clearing the tables. What is she thinking?

02 PIRATE JENNY

RG It is 1924. Kurt Weill is already making a name for himself as composer, when he takes a trip to visit Georg Kaiser, a famous playwright at his home in Grunheise.

[Train noise.]

[Caption: ***Grünheide, near Berlin. 1924***]

L: Herr. Weill?

W: Yes, hello.

L: I am Fraulein Blamauer. Karoline. Herr Kaiser asked me to bring you to the house.

W: Very pleased to meet you.

[She takes suitcase]

W: No, it’s okay I can take it.

L: Please, it is my job. We have to go across the lake, the boat is just along here.

W: Thank you.

L: I have heard a lot about you, Herr Weill. Herr Kaiser says you are a very talented composer.

W: Ah, well. I hope so.

L: Y Yes, yes. He says you will be very great.

W: Well, I have many ideas. You know, I want to break down the barriers between all the different kinds of music. There is the classical music of theory but there is atonality, there is musical comedy, there is jazz, there is so much more. [pause] What did you say you name was?

L: Actually, they call me Lenya. Lotte Lenya.

W: Like Chekov?

L: Yes, I am an actress. Actually, we met before when I was auditioning a while back. I don’t think you noticed me, you were just playing your piano.

W: I guess so. I would have remembered.

L: I haven’t started landing my great roles yet - but I will.

K: So we both have great things ahead of us?

L: I think so. Now you will follow me…

RG: So Lenya rowed Weill across the lake and things got so passionate that ….

VS: Did that actually happen?

Lenya: What? Of course it happened. I remember it that way so it must be true.

RG: It never happened.

Lenya: Ach! You people have no romance in your souls. It is our legend and we can tell it how we want.

VS: In 1926 Weill and Lenya moved together to Berlin. He kept on working, trying to make his name as a composer, and also giving music lessons.

W: So Liebchen. Do you want to get married? You know, stop the gossip?

L: You want to get married? But you hardly ever seem to notice I’m there!

W: Ach, that is not fair. I have to work.

L: Ah, yes – always the work! No time for me, I am nothing.

W: Liebchen, you know I love you. You come first, truly. [pause] After my music.

L: Ach!

W: Come on, Blümchen. That is what we do, both of us. We are Künstler, artists, you know.

W: Do you see our names up in lights?

L: I see them, my darling! Do you know how much I love you?

W: I know it, my love.

L: Where you go I’ll go with you.

W: And where you are, that’s where I will be.

03 LOVE SONG

RL: Weill enjoyed some success working with Lenya’s employer Georg Kaiser. But the truly life-changing moment came in 1927 when he contacted an already successful poet and playwright with a view to setting some of his poems.

SA: Eugen Berthold Brecht born in Augsburg, Bavaria, in 1898: poet, dramaturge, activist, contrarian and genius. By 1927 he was well on the way to developing his interconnected theories of politics and drama that would make him one of the most influential figures of 20th century theatre. He was ready to incorporate music into his work, and Weill was looking for a librettist: it was a match, you might say, made in heaven.

Weill/Brecht/Lenya: I don’t think so!

RL: They worked first on a setting of Brecht’s poems set in city in a mythical version of America called Mahagonny. But then Brecht’s writing partner Elisabeth Hauptmann presented him with a translation into German of John Gay’s Beggar’s Opera. Brecht was interested in adapting this into a full-length work and thought it had the potential as a modern opera.

B: So, Kurt. Do you think you can work on some music for this? [hands over script]

[looks up. Macheath smiles and shows knife]  
W: I can give it a go.

SA: The work was named the Threepenny Opera, and Lenya played the part of Jenny. It was a massive hit, the biggest of the decade and brought fame, and money to all three of them.

Mack the Knife: And that my friends, is what it’s all about.

04 BALLAD OF THE EASY LIFE

W: [goes across to band] Ah, yes, thank you, that was very good. Just one little thing, if I may …

Daniela: Herr Weill. I was just was wondering, if you could explain something to me. I don’t really understand what you have written here. The chord progression is a bit confusing did you mean for this to be a flat or …?

W: Well, my dear. I think I should explain it to you properly. Would you like to come back with me and we can go through it.

Daniela: Ah, yes. [she gets up and they make their way up to the stage] You know I am such an admirer. I think it is amazing what you have done, with taking the modern elements of popular music like jazz and incorporating into classical theatre music. It’s ... well, it’s world-changing!

W: Why, thank you for realising, that is exactly what I am trying to do.

[They see Lenya and guy coming the other way]

L: Oh hello, Weilli.

W: Lenya.

L: We were just um …. Looking at the duet, you know the …

W: Ja, ja. This lady plays in the orchestra. I have to explain some …

L: Okay, then.

W: See you later.

05 BILBAO SONG

06 SURABAYA JOHNNY

L: [enters] So how is the work going?

B: Ja, is good.

L: Is it going to be as good as Threepenny Opera?

W: Better.

L: Really? It was such as big hit!

B: Ja, but not important.

L: But everybody knows about it. They are going to make a film.

B: Ja, but we have to get our real ideas across.

L: What ideas? [Weill face-palms]

B: The inherent contradiction of a capitalist society caused by the appropriation of surplus product by a degenerate bourgeoisie, leading to …

L: Ach, Bert you’re so boring!

W: Any way, I am really not interested in setting the Communist Manifesto to music.

B: No? I am.

W: The point is we will make a great modern opera.

L: This is not going to go down well.

B: What? But we have already done the Mahagonny Songspiel, it has been much applauded.

L: I don’t mean the public, I mean the authorities, the Gott verdammt Nazis, Bert. They are already not happy with Jews having success. Or Communists. And now you are doing something political.

W: Well, we must have courage.

B: Yes. What is the point of theatre if you are not advancing the cause of the Revolution?

W: We each have our idea of revolution, Bert.

B: No, there is the true revolution of the proletariat, the rest is decadence.

L: Never mind that. Is there is part for me?

W: But, of course, Linerl.

07 OFF TO MAHAGONNY

08 ALABAMA SONG

W: Yes, hello, Good afternoon. I am here to inform you that I am leaving Germany. I think you understand my position here is becoming untenable.

Music Publisher: Yes, I quite understand. And where are you going?

W: To Paris. We have a production there already, they call it the Opera des Quat’ Sous, and people want to work with me. I am learning French. It should be a good opportunity.

Music Publisher: Ah, good. Then I wish you well.

W: So I am here to collect my money. There is quite a lot still owing from several productions and I will not be able to transfer money out of Germany once I leave.

Music Publisher: I see your problem.

W: For future productions we will have to work something out, but you can pay me now for what you owe me.

Music Publisher: That will not be possible.

W: What do you mean? I made a contract with you for my publishing rights. It is quite clear what you owe me.

Music Publisher: Yes, indeed. Very difficult.

W: I don’t understand.

Music Publisher: I think you do.

W: It is like that? How much money have I made for you?

OP: But that time is over, Herr Weill. The sort of work that your kind produces is not wanted any more. You are verboten. We listen to Germans now. You can try the courts I suppose, ah but no, I don’t think so.

W: Have you no shame?

Music Publisher: And have you no dignity? Ach, you Jews always will get so emotional.

W: Enough. I will go now. I wish you a good ... Ja, a good …. conscience, madam.

09 J’ATTENDS UN NAVIRE

Interruption Text – occurs over verse 3

1: What is this stupid music, we don’t want to be listening to this … this Weill guy!

2: Mais monsieur, laissez la dame chanter.

3: Oui, on était en train d’écouter.

4 : Non, on ne veut pas écouter des juifs!

1. Yeh, if it’s not good enough for the Germans it’s not good enough for us.

2 : Arrêtez ! On n‘est pas des Nazis!

4 : Ils ont peut-être raison les Nazis !

3 : Mais non, nom de Dieu !

L: So, darling, I guess this is it for a while.

W: If you say so.

L: Oh, Weilli. Don’t be like that. You know it’s for the best.

W: Really? You going off with that guy Pasetti?

L: Listen, Kürtchen. You know me, my heart will not be pinned down. I fall in love, I cannot help myself, but I will always be your devoted friend. And like this I will be free to help you. Between me and Pasetti we can get your money out of Germany and send it to you. Most people don’t have such a friend. Come on, now, you will be fine. We’re going to the Riviera, to the casinos, we have a sure fire system to make a fortune. I will write to you!

[Kiss on cheek – she exits]

10 JE NE T’AIME PAS

11 WHAT KEEPS MANKIND ALIVE