



Coda Connections

Columbia Bands, Inc.
Quarterly Newsletter

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Greetings, fans and members of the Columbia Bands!

Spring concerts are well under way, with more coming! Please check the calendar for our latest musical offerings all around Maryland!

Sharing the River Hill High School stage is becoming a more frequent occurrence; the concert band played a slightly shortened spring concert to allow the big band to enjoy their first time in the public eye. Both groups received many kudos for outstanding performances.

The Flute Cocktail director has stepped down to pursue other conducting opportunities, but not before leading the flutes for their part in an excellent tandem concert with a local brass quintet at the beginning of May. The flutes are looking forward to auditioning a new director for the Fall.

Heads Up: The CBI website design change is taking longer than expected, and we apologize for the wait. Until it is ready, the current website will continue to be updated. Thanks!

Please also remember that the members of Columbia Bands, Inc. value your feedback, so feel free to contact us any time with comments, questions, or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Len Morse
Coda Connections Editor

Performance Calendar

(Local public performances only)



June:

- **This Sunday**, 6/5, 6:00-8:00, Jazz Band at [Lurman Woodland Theatre](#), Catonsville, MD
- Sunday, 6/12, 6:00-6:45, Concert Band at [William A. Humbert Amphitheatre](#), Bel Air, MD

July:

- Monday, 7/4, 7:00-8:00, Concert Band at [Columbia Lakefront Stage](#), Columbia, MD

August:

- Sunday, 8/14, 6:30-8:30, Concert Band at [Columbia Lakefront Stage](#), Columbia, MD
- Saturday, 8/20, 5:00-7:00, Concert Band at [Lurman Woodland Theatre](#), Catonsville, MD

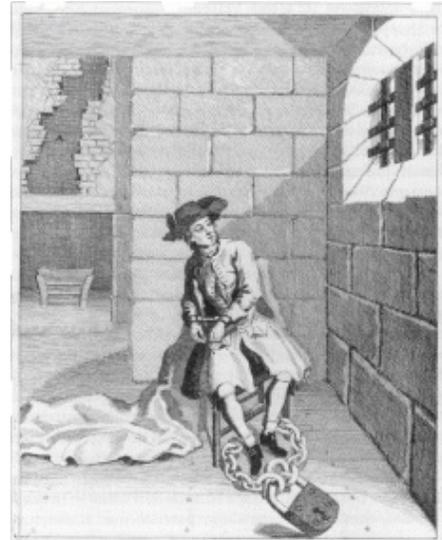
Mack the Knife: History of a Lovable Rogue

by Len Morse (Coda Connections Editor)

Most vocal tunes have a good marriage between music and lyrics - the style of the song supports the story the singer is trying to tell. A composer could write about a topic that's relevant to the audience--a favorite place, a special ability, a personal hero, a love infatuation, or even music itself--and they traditionally accompany that story with a good beat and a melody that sticks in your head. However, that's not always the case.

Mack the Knife is a popular tune, played in various styles and tempos throughout history, but it features a story about a serial murderer. The lyrics are not gratuitous, yet there's no mistaking when the singer belts out phrases about scarlet billows and oozing life. Why would someone do that? Why write about a killer, then lay it over an otherwise infectious beat and generally happy-sounding music? To answer that question, let's hop in the way-back machine and visit 1724 London.

Jack Sheppard was born into poverty, and began his young adult life as an apprentice carpenter. For a few years this worked out just fine, until he discovered alcohol and began spending time with "women of abandoned character." He took to stealing from client's houses, and over time managed to break out of various prisons four times--sometimes with accomplices, sometimes alone. The seeming ease of these escapes, plus his non-violent, charming nature and handsome looks, made him a notorious figure and a hero to the London working class. Sheppard was eventually caught a fifth time, convicted, and hanged after two years of criminal activity. He was 22. (For a more in-depth account of Jack's life, visit [London Particulars](#).)



In 1728, the story of Sheppard's exploits inspired English poet and dramatist John Gay to write the first comic ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera*. His protagonist, womanizer Macheath, was a well-mannered pickpocket who stole from the rich, and the main thrust of the show was to make fun of government and the upper class. It became the first musical play to be performed in colonial New York, and George Washington allegedly enjoyed it.

Now skip ahead two centuries. The original play was revived during the 1920s, when the concept of the anti-hero was all the rage with the avant-garde movement. Poet-playwright Bertolt Brecht had it translated into German and in 1927 created *Die Dreigroschenoper*, or [The Threepenny Opera](#), writing or adapting lyrics while composer Kurt Weill focused on the music. They changed the ballads to tangos and foxtrots, reflecting the more self-indulgent times. Also changed was our thieving protagonist, now a ruthless mugger and deviant criminal.

As the story goes, *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer*, or *The Ballad of Mack the Knife*--composed in less than 24 hours--was added to the show at the last minute, thanks to lead tenor Harald Paulsen demanding a song to introduce his character, Mackie Messer (Messer is German for knife). Mack, while still charming, is a more intense and violent criminal than the petty thief from 200 years earlier, and the song introduces him as a thief, murderer, arsonist, and rapist.

The show premiered on August 31, 1928 and was an instant hit. According to the [Straight Dope Science Advisory Board](#), it was translated into 18 different languages and was performed more than 10,000 times throughout Europe over the next five years. The first English translation of *The Threepenny Opera* came to Broadway in 1933, closing after only 12 performances. However, at least eight English translations have been written since then.

In 1950, Marc Blitzstein began writing a cleaner adaptation of *Mack the Knife* that is probably the one you've heard before--the version without the stanzas about arson and rape. Louie Armstrong recorded it in 1956, bringing a jazzy version of the song to the public, but Bobby Darin saw more success from the tune than any other musician: his single



was #1 on the *Billboard* charts for nine weeks in 1959, and it earned him a Grammy. In fact, his interpretation has been described as "absurdly cheerful," which, along with each verse key moving up by a half step, makes the song an inspiring experience. Yes, it's still a sinister subject, but you listen to it and suddenly dead bodies become no big deal.

Other vocal artists who have recorded *Mack the Knife* include Sonny Rollins, Bing Crosby, Eartha Kitt, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Ben Webster, The Doors, Frank Sinatra, Sting, Roger Daltry, Lyle Lovett, The Brian Setzer Orchestra, Robbie

Williams, Michael Buble, Rosemary Clooney, Lawrence Welk, and others.

The [Shmoop Editorial Team](#) sums up Mack's personality well: "You can't wait to meet this guy, but you don't want to meet this guy--especially not in a dark alley at night."

Ordering books, music, or other stuff on Amazon? Support Columbia Bands and use Amazon Smile!

As you're getting ready for spring with necessary (or not-so-necessary) purchases on Amazon, don't forget that you can also support your favorite organizations. When you select **Columbia Bands, Inc.** as a recipient, every time you buy something using AmazonSmile, 0.5% (that's half of one per cent) of the purchase price will go to CBI. As a non-profit organization, we use our income for the following expenses:

- Rehearsal space rental
- Venue performance fees
- Transportation and maintenance
- Director stipends
- Sheet music
- Program advertising and printing
- Insurance
- Music and equipment storage
- Guest artists

This allows us to continue providing you, our audience members, with the same high-quality performances you've grown to expect from each of our ensembles. Unfortunately, a direct link to Amazon from this newsletter, defining us as your recipient, is not currently possible. The "Get Started!" link below will take you to the page on our website where the "Shop at AmazonSmile" link resides.

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Learn more about the [AmazonSmile](#) program. Many thanks for your support!

Fun Stuff

Celebrity Birthday: [Armando Anthony "Chick" Corea](#), (born June 12, 1941) in Chelsea, Massachusetts. His father played trumpet and bass in Boston-area Dixieland bands. He got his unusual nickname from an aunt who "called him 'Cheeky' whenever she pinched his cheek."

Corea began studying piano at age four and has been extremely fortunate to perform jazz, fusion, electric, classical, and other styles with



Happiness (Japan)

many music greats: Cab Calloway, Stan Getz, Sarah Vaughan, Miles Davis, Stanley Clarke, Tony Williams, Herbie Hancock, Michael Brecker, Freddie Hubbard, Eric Marienthal, Bobby McFerrin, Bela Fleck, and countless others. He is extremely open-minded and has a penchant for collaboration, either reading the written music, or going off on an unknown jazz tangent. He's played for audiences of hundreds of thousands, and has won 22 Grammy Awards.

His most famous album was one of his first, *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, and many of his compositions have remained popular over many decades, including *Spain*, *Friends*, and *The Hilltop*.

Quarterly Word: "Ornaments" - Tones used to embellish the principal melody.

Quarterly Quote: "I decided that I didn't want to spend my time in a liberal arts college." ~ Chick Corea

Official CB Positions



Elected Officers

President - Kim Drake
Vice President - Al Ingalls
Secretary - Jackie Bryant
Treasurer - Kathy Bartolomeo

Members-at-Large

David Blackman, Tom Monroe, Chris Roscoe, Kathleen Shoemaker,
Rylee Smith, Jim Wesloh, Harold West

Ex-Officio Music Directors

CCB - [Mike Blackman](#)
CJB - [Pete BarenBregge](#)
FC - [Len Morse](#)
CBB - Robert Miller (Link coming soon!)

Ex-Officio Ensemble Managers

CCB - Bill Devuono
CJB - Bob Frantz
FC - Jeanette Donald
CBB - Jeff Eckert

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Appointees and Volunteers

Accountant - David Weisenfreund, CPA
CBI/CCB Webmaster - Len Morse
CCB Equipment Manager - Len Morse
CCB Librarian - Karissa Strawley
CCB Personnel Manager - Michelle Sobel
CCB Program Editor - Jeanette Donald
CJB Librarian - Bob Frantz
CJB Tour Manager - Randy Malm
CJB Sound System Managers - Mark Morris, Megan Zontek
CJB Webmaster - Matt Williams
Facebook Fan Page Moderator - Katy Clemens
Fundraising Chair - Harold West
Grant Manager - Jeanette Donald
Graphic Artist - Corey Holland
HCAC Liaison - *Vacant*
Historian - *Vacant*
Insurance Liaison - Kim Drake
MASCB Manager - Jeanette Donald
Poster & Flier Manager - Jim Kaiser

