

Theatre review – The Attic Collective's Threepenny Opera****

☒ Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill's subversive 1928 alt.opera-noir, scurrilously drawing on John Gay's satirical 18th century, *The Beggar's Opera*, allows enfants-terrible, The Attic Collective, their ultimate swansong apotheosis.

They are all for cooking the goose that lays the golden-eggs – with 24 carat omelette for starters au naturel.

Their debut priapic, inflatable dongs with tumescent noses, *Lysistrata*, a salacious kiss me kitsch – 'Hello sailor, you're not going to come here often, if at all,' riotously ribald take on Aristophanes's anti-war/sex satire, established the tone of their milieu.

That giving them enough rope to hang their doubters was heartily reinforced with the inspired setting of Jo Clifford's Premier *War In America* at the former Royal High School. I

ts coprophelia shock-plop themed political polemic elicited both bowels of laughter and proctal inversion in equal measure. In addition, it imposed a persuasive fecal anti feng shui aura that convinced the City Planners to kick the proposed controversial horror-hotel conversion project in to the midden. So, maybe the Music Academy may come to fruition after all. Big it up for *Attic Massive!*

Director, Susan Worsfold's indulgent plot interpretations allow anachronistic licence; ranging from the play's original Victorian setting, via 1928 brothel-creeping Weimar Republic, to eliciting naughty nods to contemporary Britain. Projections of The London Eye and not least the narcissistic self-referencing Edinburgh Grassmarket tableaux are just their way

of a tease.

With signature Attic Collective rascality the show is but minutes in harness when the lighting gantry 'apparently' explodes. But hey! Cue Mack The Knife and Polly's alternative-chic wedding breakfast in horse stable villain hell lit by candle-light and pedal-power generation. Lighting guru, Sulie Wood, thrives in her capriciously Baroque cool, luminary element here.

Synaptically short-fused misogynist, Charlie West, as Macheath (alter ego, Mack The Knife) is a nasty piece of alpha-male, colonial preening officer factory git. But rather repellant succulent for it. His are the charms giddy girls just can not drippingly deny. He riffs ebulliently with Max Reid's Mr Peachum, played with bombast, serpent slithering up its own backside, paternal sincerity not witnessed since King Herod offered to baby-sit at the manger on Boxing Day.

A perfect tandem of narcissistic, tantrum braggadocio with the nuanced subtlty of the *Top Gear* ego trio at The Charge of The Light Brigade.

But it is Kirsty Punton as Polly Peachum – pinched-cheeked, bullied rouge-bruised, china-doll automaton play-thing of husband to flee and opportunist-pimp father, singing with singularly scorching pathos who makes it her night of sliming amour. Her vulnerability hangs by a thread, her timing as taut as the hangman's rope ought to be about the necks of those who have despoiled her life – or so they would like to believe.

Musical Director, Simon Goldring's pinched keyboard tapestries, weaving staccato barbed-wired entangled fandangos, drive the dissolute 'House band' rhythms like they are reading a score etched by a red-hot poker on the buttocks of the damned in an Hieronymus Bosch nightmare.

An accomplished conclusion to their year's journey to the bars and dives of human iniquity,

The Attic Collective come together most precisely, and with singular irony, in a play that teases with subversive intentions but demands the most disciplined application and skill-sets.

They set the audition bar damnably high for next year's aspirational cohort and The Edinburgh Reporter wish them well.