

# Guide to Engraving of a scene from Act III of "The Beggar's Opera" by William Blake after William Hogarth C0459

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1790



## Title Statement

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

**Unit ID**

C0459

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**Unit Date**

1790

**box**

1 (folder)

**Language**

English .

**Abstract**

Engraving of a scene from Act III of "The Beggar's Opera" by William Blake after a painting by William Hogarth, created in 1790.

**Creator**

Blake, William, 1757-1827

**Extent**

.01 Linear Feet 1 item

**Physical Location**

R 72, C 3, S 1

**Repository**

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

## Administrative Information

**Access Restrictions**

There are no access restrictions.

**Use Restrictions**

Public Domain. There are no known restrictions.

**Acquisition Information**

Purchased by Steve Gerber from J & J Lubrano Music Antiquarians on February 7, 2017.

**Processing Information**

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**Preferred Citation**

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## Biographical and Historical Information

"The Beggar's Opera" is an English opera written by John Gay and music by John Christopher Pepusch, which premiered in London in 1728. It was immensely popular, mostly due to its satirization of Italian Opera, which at the time was considered elite and boorish to English society. "The Beggar's Opera" was also the vehicle for Gay's inventing of the ballad opera, in which a satirical play is peppered with popular songs and tunes - or ballads - of the day with original lyrics that furthered the plot.

William Blake was a renowned English poet, artist, and engraver who lived from 1757 to 1827. In his career as an engraver, Blake became so skilled that he was asked to engrave not only the works of others, but his own as well, which were ultimately his greatest achievements. His engravings depicting scenes from The Canterbury Tales, the Book of Job, as well as the writer Dante are considered "to be among the greatest triumphs of line engraving in England" (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

## Scope and Content

Engraving of a scene from Act III of "The Beggar's Opera" by William Blake after a painting by William Hogarth, created in 1790. The original painting was created in 1731, with multiple iterations afterwards, and the engraving was commissioned by John Boydell in 1788.

The image represents a performance of "The Beggar's Opera" at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a theatre in London, England, in 1728. The scene depicts the opera's central character, a highwayman named Macheath, chained and under sentence of death between his two lovers - the jailer's daughter, Lucy Lockit, and the lawyer's daughter, Polly Peachum.

Present in the scene a variety of actors, including Thomas Walker as Macheath, Mr. Hall as Lockit, John Hippisley as Peachum, Mrs. Egleton as Lucy, and Lavinia Fenton as Polly. Members of the audience are also

depicted, including the Duke of Bolton, Sir Robert Fagg (who was the lover, and later husband of Lavinia Fenton), John Rich, the opera's producer, and John Gay, the opera's author. Underneath the image the text reads "Beggar's Opera, Act III. 'When my hero in Court appears, &c.' From the Original Picture, in the Collection of his Grace the Duke of Leeds. Publish'd July 1st 1790 by J. & J. Boydell. Cheapside. & at the Shakespeare Gallery Pall Mall London." While the imprint is given as July 1, 1790, this copy may be a later printing.

## Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds many other collections related to opera and the performing arts.

## Keywords

Art  
Engraving  
Opera

## Bibliography

"The Beggar's Opera." Encyclopaedia Britannica. December 8, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Beggars-Opera>

Bentley, G.E. "William Blake." Encyclopaedia Britannica. December 8, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Blake>

Goff, Moira. "An Introduction to The Beggar's Opera." British Library. December 8, 2020. <https://www.bl.uk/restoration-18th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-the-beggars-opera#>

"William Hogarth - A Scene from 'The Beggar's Opera' VI 1731." Tate Museum. December 8, 2020. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-a-scene-from-the-beggars-opera-vi-n02437#>

## Arrangement

This is a single item collection.