

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910787386803321
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Titolo	John Gay and the London theatre // Calhoun Winton
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Lexington, Kentucky : , : The University Press of Kentucky, , 1993 ©1993
ISBN	0-8131-8533-5 0-8131-5936-9
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (232 p.)
Disciplina	822/.5
Soggetti	Theater - England - London - History - 18th century Brigands and robbers in literature
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Cover; Half-title; Title; Copyright; Contents; Acknowledgments; Introduction; 1. Apprenticeship-A Prelude; 2. The Mohocks; 3. Chaucer in Augustan England; 4. Words and Music; 5. False Starts; 6. The Beggar and His Opera; 7. The Beggar's Opera in Theatre History; 8. The Opera as Work of Art; 9. Polly and the Censors; 10. Last Plays; Epilogue; Appendix A: ""Were the Mohocks Ever Anything More than a Hairstyle?""; Appendix B: Gay's Payment for the Opera; Reference Abbreviations; Notes; Index
Sommario/riassunto	The Beggar's Opera, often referred to today as the first musical comedy, was the most popular dramatic piece of the eighteenth century -- and is the work that John Gay (1685-1732) is best remembered for having written. That association of popular music and satiric lyrics has proved to be continually attractive, and variations on the Opera have flourished in this century: by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, by Duke Ellington, and most recently by Vaclav Havel. The original opera itself is played all over the world in amateur and professional productions. But John Gay's place in all this has not