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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 continuingly 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