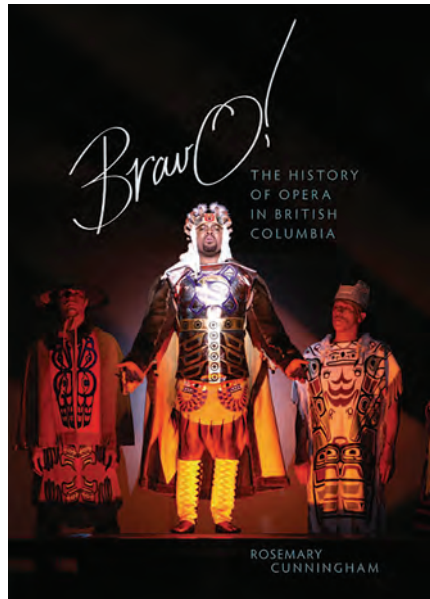


Bravo! A New Book about Opera in BC



Pacific Opera is in a new book! *Bravo! The History of Opera in British Columbia* is the first in-depth history of more than a century of opera in BC. Brimming with photos of POV and Vancouver Opera productions, this book is a labour of love by author Rosemary Cunningham. *Bravo!* includes accounts of productions, repertoire listings, and information about BC opera singers, composers and opera training programs.

As POV celebrates its 30th anniversary season and Vancouver Opera its 50th, *Bravo!* comes at a perfect time to showcase two extraordinary opera companies which now have the strongest audience support in all of Canada – POV is the fastest growing opera company in Canada, with more than twice the per capita audience of any other

Canadian opera company, and Vancouver Opera has the second highest per-capita audience in the country.

Book Launch: *Bravo! The History of Opera in British Columbia*

Tuesday, October 27, 7 pm
Bolen Books, Hillside Mall
 POV is delighted to announce that Bolen Books, one of our most generous, long-time sponsors, is holding the book launch for *Bravo!* This book is a must-read for everyone who knows POV or loves opera! Meet author Rosemary Cunningham, relive some operatic memories, enjoy a brief performance, and discover the perfect gift for any opera lover. **Free. No reservations required.**



Key Notes

Stravinsky The Rake's Progress

A simple country boy got chewed up by the temptations of the big city. His girlfriend remained faithful to the end. It was pure opera – and it broke my heart.

Musicologist **David Schiff**

Exuberantly bizarre and heart-breakingly tender, *The Rake's Progress* is a zany adventure, a fairy tale, and a love story, with music that is quirky, seductive, astonishingly sweet and lyrical – and as irresistible as temptation.

The Libretto

When Tom Rakewell makes a wish for money, a stranger, Nick Shadow, appears with the news that Tom's uncle has died and left him a fortune. Tom leaves for London with Nick, promising that as soon as possible he'll send for his sweetheart, Anne Trulove.

In London, Nick brings Tom to Mother Goose's brothel, where Tom succumbs to the temptations around him. But Tom soon grows bored and jaded. When he makes a second wish – for happiness – Nick persuades him to marry a bearded lady, Baba the Turk, arguing that happiness comes from acting freely rather than being a slave to duty or pleasure. The marriage quickly fails; Baba is a chatterbox who drives Tom nuts.

After Tom dreams of a machine that will turn stones into bread, he utters – and Nick grants – his third wish. As Tom aspires to end world hunger, Nick starts marketing the fraudulent machine to potential investors. When Tom goes



bankrupt, all his possessions (including Baba) are auctioned off.

Meanwhile Anne has followed Tom to London. Baba urges her to help Tom, and warns her against Nick Shadow. A year and a day after their first meeting, Nick leads Tom to a graveyard, where he claims Tom's soul as payment for his services. They play a game of cards to decide Tom's fate. Calling on Love and Anne, Tom wins – but Nick

condemns him to insanity. Tom ends up in Bedlam, believing he is Adonis and that Anne, who has come to visit him, is Venus. Anne sings him to sleep, then quietly leaves him. When he awakes to find her gone, he dies.

In an epilogue, the principal characters comment that the devil finds work for idle hands.

Events Calendar

PUBLIC EVENTS

INSIDE OPERA with Robert Holliston. Sunday, November 1, noon to 1:20 pm.

Stravinsky was a genuine eclectic who mastered virtually all of the major stylistic trends of contemporary music. A rich vein of lyricism runs through his output as well – after all, what tune could be more hummable than the opening of *The Rite of Spring*?

During the first part of this instalment of INSIDE OPERA, Robert will examine various facets of Stravinsky's art with a special emphasis on the sweet, the songful, and (yes!) the sexy in the composer's works. The second half will focus on the music of *The Rake's Progress* – how closely it is linked to the familiar operatic traditions of Baroque and Classical eras, and how irresistibly it opens up for us a unique world of rich treasures and unforgettable characters.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, MacLaurin Music Wing, University of Victoria. Free of charge.

Seating is limited. Reservations required.
Phone 250-385-0222 before noon October 30.

Victoria Symphony

Sunday, November 1, 2:30 pm.

Monday, November 2, 8:00 pm.

Can't get enough Stravinsky? The Victoria Symphony presents Stravinsky's *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, along with Holst's *The Planets* and Berlioz' *Roman Carnival Overture*.
 Information: www.victoriasymphony.ca/concerts/index.asp

Sense of Occasion:

Opening Night Pre-Performance Reception. Thursday, November 12, 6:30 pm.

A celebration of the opening night of *The Rake's Progress*. Gourmet finger foods and wine will be served. Space is limited. Dress is festive.

East Lobby, the Royal Theatre. \$25 per person.

Call 250.382.1641 to reserve with payment.

Monday Masters with Dr. Blaine Hendsbee.

Monday, November 16, 7 pm.

Observe as Dr. Blaine Hendsbee (Selle the auctioneer in *The Rake's Progress*) coaches three members of the chorus, followed by a question-and-answer period, led by POV Executive Director David Shefsiek. Royal Theatre West Lobby.
 Free of charge. Phone 250.382.1641 to reserve.

DONOR EVENTS

President's Circle Working Rehearsal.

Monday, November 9.

6 pm: coffee and cookies;

6:20 pm discussion;

7 pm: Rehearsal. This Orchestra Tech Rehearsal provides a unique perspective on opera in the making and includes a short discussion with Executive Director **David Shefsiek**

and Principal Coach **Robert**

Holliston. The Royal Theatre, 805 Broughton (at Blanshard). For donors of the Director Level (\$250/year) and above. Invitations will be sent by mail.

Boys of Britain

with Robert Holliston.

Sunday, November 15, 7 pm.

Colin Ainsworth, Chad Louwerse, Blaine Hendsbee, and Greg Dahl, all performing principal roles in *The Rake's Progress*, will present a delightful concert of English Language Art Song. *Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Avenue.*

This is a thank you concert for POV Producers and special guests. Invitations will be sent by mail.

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE SPONSOR



Editor and Writer: Maureen Woodall

Contributors: Robert Holliston, David Shefsiek

PUBLIC FUNDING



PRODUCTION SPONSORS

Not everyone receives the Key Notes newsletter! If you're a subscriber who buys tickets for someone else, please let us know their name and address so that we can share the newsletter with ALL our subscribers! Just call 250-382-1641 or email mwoodall@pov.bc.ca.

Background

The Rake's Progress is a masterpiece by two towering figures of the 20th century: the Russian-born composer Igor Stravinsky, and the British poet Wystan Hugh Auden.

It was inspired by the 18th century equivalent of a comic book: a series of eight satirical paintings by William Hogarth, which Stravinsky saw in 1947 at a Chicago exhibit. The series, called *A Rake's Progress*, depicts a young man who abandons his pregnant fiancée, squanders his inheritance, marries a rich old woman, and ends up in London's mental asylum, Bedlam.

At a time when artwork was becoming increasingly commercialised and when a new literary form – the novel – was coming into vogue, Hogarth came up with the idea of telling contemporary stories through a series of illustrations, the best known of which are *A Rake's Progress*, *A Harlot's Progress*, and *Marriage à-la-mode*. In each case Hogarth painted the series and then recreated the illustrations as engravings to be published as prints, which were widely distributed and became wildly popular throughout England, rather as comic books and graphic novels are today.

When Stravinsky saw Hogarth's illustrations for *A Rake's Progress*,

he knew he'd found the subject for an opera. Stravinsky's friend Aldous Huxley suggested W. H. Auden as librettist, and Auden brought in his lover, the poet Chester Kallman as a collaborator.

Composer-librettist collaborations are fraught with challenges, but this was one of the happier ones. It may have helped that Auden knew his place: early on he wrote to Stravinsky: *As (a) you have thought about the Rake's Progress for some time, and (b) it is the librettist's job to satisfy the composer, not the other way round, I should be most grateful if you could let me have any ideas you may have formed about characters, plot, etc.*

In March 1948, Auden and Kallman delivered what Stravinsky called *surely one of the most beautiful of libretti*. The opera premiered at Teatro la Fenice in Venice on September 11, 1951, conducted by the composer.

Characters

Stravinsky and Auden grafted the legend of *Faust* onto Hogarth's *Rake*, creating the devilish character of Nick Shadow. But Tom remains unexpectedly innocent and, at heart, faithful to Anne Trulove, who comes from a long lineage of perfect, loving Griseldas. Anne is pure and loyal and brave. And any soprano would wage battle with tooth and claw to have the chance to sing her music.

Rake is full of unforgettable characters, including Mother Goose, the brothel keeper who snaps up Tom for herself; the auctioneer Sellem, who presides over opera's wackiest auction; and Baba the Turk, the bearded lady from the circus, whom Tom marries – just to prove he can. Once one gets over the utter weirdness of seeing a bearded lady in the opera, one cannot but be charmed by Baba, whether she's boring Tom silly with an inventory of her knick-knacks, smashing crockery in a rage, or generously informing Anne that Tom still loves her. Voluble and volatile, Baba is also refreshingly honest and sublimely outspoken. And she gets to sing a patter song that is as divinely silly as anything by Gilbert and Sullivan.

Stravinsky's Music

The Rake's Progress represents the culmination of Stravinsky's neo-classical period – it's a throwback to Mozartean structure, an opera of formally constructed arias, recitatives and choruses. It uses a small chamber orchestra and even calls for a harpsichord to provide *recitativo secco* (to quite unnerving effect in the graveyard scene). But the music retains its 20th century twist; it's pure Stravinsky, full of his idiosyncratic spiky rhythms and unexpected lyricism.

As musicologist Gunther Schuller put it, *Rake is Mozart revisited, to be sure, but*

by a genius who has shown us aspects of Mozart we have never seen before. It's an extraordinary love affair with harmony... ravishingly beautiful sounds, filtered and savored by one of the greatest musical ears of all time.

Even though *Rake* is pure Stravinsky, it's difficult to believe the composer is the same *enfant terrible* whose ballet *The Rite of Spring* exploded upon the 20th century, inciting a full-scale riot at its 1913 Paris premiere. *The Rite of Spring* has been called an *icon of modernism*, and the *Rosetta stone of modern art*. As Leonard Bernstein said, *It's also got the best dissonances anyone ever thought up, and the best asymmetries and polytonalities and polyrhythms and whatever else you care to name.*

By 1940 a severely edited version of *The Rite of Spring* had found its way into Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, and the revolutionary work had lost some of its capacity to scare people. But it still dazzles and is considered as significant to the 20th century as Beethoven's Ninth was to the 19th.

By 1920 Stravinsky had moved on to neoclassicism and a re-examination of the music of Mozart and Bach. He was nearly 70 when *The Rake's Progress* premiered in 1951; the opera seemed almost quaintly old-fashioned in a world where with-it composers were conjuring up new harmonic adventures in atonality, aleatoric music, serialism, minimalism, and other isms ... not that Stravinsky would be left behind, for he would soon turn his hand to some of these modern styles. *Rake* remained his greatest – and last – neoclassical work.

20th Century Neoclassicism

Throughout cultural history, there is an artistic pendulum that moves between classicism and romanticism. For example, the classicist Gluck moves to the romanticist Wagner through the works of Mozart and Beethoven. In the unusual case of Igor Stravinsky, the pendulum can be seen moving through the works of a single artist.

In his youth, Stravinsky was known as the avant garde post romanticist capable of

FURTHER LEARNING ABOUT The Rake's Progress

What is our response when life doesn't turn out as planned? How would we cope if our lives were imitated by art? Stravinsky, inspired for this opera by a series of eight moral paintings, might have asked similar questions. *The Rake's Progress* is, therefore, a moral tale brought to life before us.

Students can piece together the wisdom that is being shared through this story. The clues to finding meaning in the opera are all here – through analysis of the characters' names, the poetic language they use, or by evaluating the relationships the characters have with one another. And to help clarify the point, the characters come out in the Epilogue to charge the audience to take care with their own stories so they do not end up like Tom.

Once again, Pacific Opera is creating a study guide with classroom and performance activities to help students and teachers explore the story and music of *The Rake's Progress*. The study guide has ideas to get your class moving, sharing, debriefing and thinking. Students may attend our dress rehearsal on November 10th at 7:30. It's a perfect opportunity for them to discover Stravinsky's opera and this meaningful story. Call the box office at 250-385-0222 for more information.

Andrew Snyder

Education & Outreach Coordinator. asnyder@pov.bc.ca

For the Study Guide and much more about *The Rake's Progress* – musical excerpts, production images, links and more – go to www.pov.bc.ca

exposing the most basic human emotions in earthy rhapsody. His middle period was absorbed with exploring the style and order of his classical predecessors, while he concluded his compositional life working in the serial/twelve tone manner, the intellectual complement to the emotional basis of his youthful inspiration.

The Rake's Progress is one of the central works of his middle Neoclassical period, and is accordingly linked to composers and compositions of the past.

We invite you to join us on our website for a "curated" view of these influences, using YouTube excerpts as our musical source book. We'll look at references to Verdi, Mozart, and Monteverdi in *The Rake's Progress*.

The Production

POV's original production of *The Rake's Progress* is being built in our production shop. Director Glynis Leyshon has set this production in the very early 19th century. Nancy Bryant's Regency costumes will bring elegance and the ambience of old London to the production, while Alan Stichbury's simple set allows a colourful canvas for the theatrical shenanigans,

fantastic baroque machine, giant fish, and other wonders of this opera.



Set model for Act 2, Scene 3, Tom and Baba's House: The Machine Arrives.

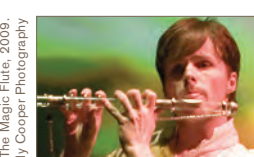


Costume sketches for Anne Trulove and Tom Rakewell

About the Artists

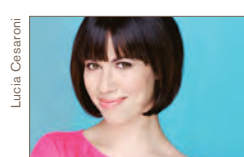


Greg Dahl has appeared with POV only twice before, but he made quite an impact, first as the swaggering title character in *Don Giovanni* (2007) and then as the disreputable bully Oscar Hubbard in *Regina* (2008). He has all the requisite qualities to play Nick Shadow – he's a consummate actor with a commanding voice and an impressive stage presence, and he's devilishly charming. Greg recently performed Jokanaan in *Salome* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, as well as Gianni Schicchi and Tonio (*Pagliacci*) with L'Opéra de Montréal.



Colin Ainsworth as Tamino in POV's *The Magic Flute*, 2009. Emily Cooper Photography

With his POV debut as Tamino last spring in *The Magic Flute*, **Colin Ainsworth** beguiled audiences with his beautiful voice and utterly likeable presence. This season he's also making his Calgary Opera debut as Laurie in Adamo's *Little Women*, along with performances with Opera in Concert, Edmonton Opera, and the Göttingen International Handel Festival. It's a pleasure to welcome him back in his debut as Tom Rakewell.



Lucia Cesaroni

When **Lucia Cesaroni** auditioned for last spring's Resident Artist Program, she so impressed us that we not only engaged her as

the First Lady in *The Magic Flute*, but asked her to come back for the difficult and beautiful leading role of Anne Trulove. She recently studied in Germany with Edith Wiens and was the soprano soloist for a European tour of *Carmina Burana: Monumental Opera* with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

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