



THE RAKE'S PROGRESS



**Music by Igor Stravinsky
Libretto by W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman**

**Study Guide for
Pacific Opera Victoria's Production
November, 2009**



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Welcome to Pacific Opera Victoria!

This Study Guide and the attached Activity Guide have been created primarily to assist teachers in preparing students for their visit to the opera. It is our hope that teachers will be able to add this to the existing curriculum in order to expand students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and the fine arts.

Materials in the Study Guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is not enough time to discuss in class. The opera experience can be made more meaningful and enjoyable when students have the opportunity to learn about the opera before they attend the performance.

Please visit <http://www.pov.bc.ca> to download this study guide or to find more information about *The Rake's Progress*, including musical selections from POV's Best of YouTube and artist biographies. POV Study Guides for other operas are also available for download.

Teachers: Your comments and suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire at the end of this study guide.

Please Note: The Dress Rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some singers choose not to sing in full voice during the Dress Rehearsal in order to preserve their voice for opening night.

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The Rake's Progress

Music by Igor Stravinsky
Libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman

First Performance September 11, 1951, Teatro La Fenice, Venice

Dress Rehearsal November 10, 2009, 7:30 pm
Performances November 12, 17, 19, 21, at 8 pm. November 14 at 3 pm
Royal Theatre, Victoria, BC

Sung in English with English surtitles

The performance is approximately 2 hours, 40 minutes, with one intermission.

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Anne Trulove	Lucia Cesaroni
Tom Rakewell, Anne's fiancé	Colin Ainsworth
Trulove, Anne's father	Chad Louwerse
Nick Shadow	Gregory Dahl
Mother Goose, the madam of a brothel	Rebecca Hass
Baba the Turk, a bearded lady	Mia Lennox-Williams
Sellem, an auctioneer	Blaine Hendsbee
Keeper of the Madhouse	Steven De Vries
Conductor	Timothy Vernon
Director	Glynis Leyshon
Set Designer	Allan Stichbury
Costume Designer	Nancy Bryant
Lighting Designer	Gerald King
Resident Stage Manager	Jackie Adamthwaite
Assistant Stage Managers	Steve Barker
	Jennifer Braem
Apprentice Stage Manager	Nicole Olszewski
Principal Coach	Robert Holliston
Associate Conductor	Giuseppe Pietraroia

Chorus of whores, Roaring Boys, servants, citizens, and madmen

With the Victoria Symphony and the Pacific Opera Victoria Chorus,

Cast and programme are subject to change.

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Synopsis

Chapter 1. Garden of Trulove House, Spring.

As the opera opens, the young lovers Tom Rakewell and Anne Trulove enjoy an idyllic spring afternoon. However, Anne's father, Trulove, is worried. He tells Tom he has arranged for a job for him, but Tom refuses the offer, assuring Trulove that his daughter shall not marry a poor man. Trulove responds sharply, *So he be honest, she may take a poor husband if she choose, but I am resolved she shall never marry a lazy one.*

Tom sees no point in working hard for someone else since everything is predestined. If Fortune favours him, he is confident he'll achieve wealth without actually having to work for it. (*Here I stand ... Since it is not by merit - Recitative and Aria*).

Tom makes the first of three wishes – for money– a wish that is no sooner uttered than granted. A stranger appears, introduces himself as Nick Shadow and announces that an uncle, of whom Tom has never heard, has died and left Tom a fortune (*Fair lady, gracious gentlemen*). Nick tells Tom the two of them must depart for London immediately to collect the inheritance. When Tom asks Nick what wages he expects to receive, Nick assures him that they'll settle up in a year and a day.

Tom bids farewell to Anne and her father, promising to send for them as soon as his affairs are settled. As Tom and Nick depart, Nick turns to the audience and announces, *The progress of a rake begins.*

Chapter 2. London - Interior of Mother Goose's Brothel.

Tom, Nick, and Mother Goose drink together, surrounded by whores and Roaring Boys (gangs of upper-class thugs). As the Roaring Boys sing boisterously of the delights of brawling, the whores recount their own conquests. Together the boys and the girls toast Venus and Mars.

Shadow and Mother Goose prompt Tom to recite the philosophy he's been learning from Nick, and he responds in a monotone reminiscent of Gregorian chant, praising the selfish pursuit of Beauty and Pleasure. But when asked to define Love, he becomes upset (*That precious word is like a fiery coal, It burns my lips, strikes terror to my soul*).

As a cuckoo clock coos one, Tom pleads to leave before it is too late. Nick turns the clock back and assures him he has plenty of time (*Enjoy. You may repent at leisure*). Tom sings desolately of love, lamenting the vow he has broken and begging the goddess to be there for him to call upon when he is dying (*Love, too frequently betrayed*).

As Mother Goose claims him for herself and leads him off, the whores and roaring boys sing a lilting folk song (*The sun is bright, the grass is green. Lanterloo, lanterloo!*). Nick raises his glass in an ironic toast (*Sweet dreams, my master... For when you wake, you die.*)

Chapter 3. Trulove Garden, late Autumn.

Anne suspects Tom has betrayed her. Although she hesitates to leave her father, she decides that Tom is weak and needs her help. She resolves to follow him to the city (*No word from Tom ... Quietly, night ... I go, I go to him - Recitative, Aria, and Cabaletta*).

Chapter 4. Interior of Tom's London Townhouse, Winter.

Tom is bored and jaded with his idle life in London. Despite all his wealth he is disenchanted with the hectic city life (*Vary the song, O London, change!*). He makes a second wish – for happiness. Nick appears and persuades Tom to marry Baba the Turk, the famous bearded lady, arguing that happiness comes from acting freely rather than being a slave to duty or pleasure. Tom perks up at the idea, and the two laughingly plan Tom's courtship of Baba (*My tale shall be told both by young and by old*).

Chapter 5. London street, outside Tom's house.

Anne arrives and waits apprehensively outside Tom's house.

*O heart, be stronger . . .
Hear thou or not, merciful Heaven, ease thou or not my way;
A love that is sworn, sworn before Thee
Can plunder Hell, can plunder Hell of its prey*

As she summons her courage, a sedan chair arrives and Tom steps out. Dismayed and agitated at the sight of Anne, he insists he is unworthy of her and urges her to go home. They are interrupted by Baba who is waiting to be helped from her sedan chair. Tom explains that Baba is his wife, and he and Anne mourn their love while Baba expresses her vexation. Once Anne has left, Baba and Tom parade grandly toward the house. When Baba asks Tom who *that girl* was, he replies, *only a milkmaid*.

Intermission

Chapter 6. Inside Tom's Townhouse.

Tom sulks in his room, which is now cluttered with all kinds of bric-à-brac. Baba gives a running commentary on each object and who gave it to her (*As I was saying, both brothers wore moustaches*). When she tries to coax Tom to cheer up, he pushes her roughly away, and she launches into a tantrum, smashing things and jealously reminding him that Anne will never be his wife (*Scorned! Abused! Neglected! Baited!*). Fed up, Tom takes off his wig and pops it over her head; she freezes and remains still for the rest of the scene.

Despondent, Tom falls asleep. Nick enters, wheeling in a *fantastic baroque machine* and demonstrates how, through a hidden compartment, the machine can appear to turn a broken piece of china into a loaf of bread ... or vice versa. Tom wakes, having dreamt of a wondrous machine that will turn stones into bread. He utters – and Nick grants – his third wish. Even as Tom aspires to end world hunger and to once again be worthy of Anne, Nick assures him that he has already started marketing the machine to potential investors.

The ruinous venture has ended in Tom's bankruptcy, and all his possessions are to be auctioned off. Citizens arrive to inspect the loot and speculate as to Tom's whereabouts, while Sellem the auctioneer directs the bidding. All sorts of wonders are auctioned off, including a stuffed auk, a mounted pike, and eventually, Baba herself, who all this time has remained motionless, covered by Tom's wig. As she is sold, Sellem removes the wig, and Baba picks up her tantrum where she left off, this time venting her rage at the crowd for messing with her things.

She calms down as Anne enters and urges her to help Tom:

*You love him, seek to set him right:
He's but a shuttle-headed lad:
Not quite a gentleman, nor quite
Completely vanquished by the bad:
Who knows what care and love might do?*

She warns Anne against Nick Shadow. (*I can tell who in that pair Is poisoned victim and who snake.*)

Anne determines to go to Tom, while Baba decides to return to her life on the stage.

Chapter 7. Churchyard.

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. He points out Tom's waiting grave and tells him to choose how he will die. Tom pleads for mercy, and Nick agrees to play a game of cards to decide Tom's fate. If Tom names three cards correctly, he will be free.

The game is accompanied solely by the menacing sound of a harpsichord, with the right hand and left hand in different keys. Making one last wish for Love and Anne, Tom successfully names each card. Even as Nick sinks, defeated, into the grave (*I burn! I burn! I freeze!*), he has the power to condemn Tom to insanity.

As dawn comes, Tom is alone in the churchyard, quite mad, singing to himself in a childlike voice (*With roses crowned, I sit on ground; Adonis is my name*).

Chapter 8. Bedlam.

Tom, believing he is Adonis, anticipates that Venus, Queen of Love will visit him. The madmen mock his delusions.

Anne arrives, and Tom, believing she is Venus, begs forgiveness. Anne assures him of her love and they share a brief moment of timeless love and forgiveness

*Space cannot alter, nor time our love abate;
Here has no words for Absence or Estrangement
Nor Now a notion of Almost or Too Late.*

Anne sings Tom to sleep with a lullaby (*Gently, little boat*). Her father arrives and she quietly leaves.

When Tom awakes to find Anne gone, he cries out for Venus and dies. The madmen sing a mourning chorus (*Weep for Adonis*).

Epilogue

The principal characters expound on the moral of the piece: Anne warns that not every young man has an Anne to rescue him; Baba comments, *Good or bad, all men are mad*, Tom warns young men not to delude themselves; Nick sulks about his loss of power (*Many insist I do not exist. At times I wish I didn't*). All agree that the devil finds work for idle hands.

*At all times, in all lands
Beneath the moon and sun,
This proverb has proved true,
Since Eve went out with Adam:
For idle hands
And hearts and minds
The Devil finds
A work to do,
A work, dear Sir, fair Madam,
For you and you.*

Background

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 part fairy tale, part cautionary fable. At once a love story and a zany adventure, it is also an ode to the redemptive power of love and music – and a fabulous theatrical romp. Stravinsky's score is a revelation, quirky, seductive, astonishingly sweet and lyrical – and as irresistible as temptation.

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 created by William Hogarth in 1733, which Stravinsky saw in 1947 at an exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute. The series, called *A Rake's Progress*, told the story of a young man who abandons his pregnant fiancée, squanders his inheritance on high living, gambling, and prostitution, marries a rich old woman, and ends up first in debtor's prison, and then in Bedlam (Bethlehem Hospital), London's famous mental asylum.

The English artist William Hogarth (1697 to 1764) lived at a time when artwork was becoming increasingly commercialised and when a new literary form – the novel – was coming into vogue (Hogarth was good friends with Henry Fielding, author of *Tom Jones*, a novel about another rakish character). Rejecting classical subjects for a clear-eyed, satiric look at the foibles of his time, Hogarth came up with the idea of telling contemporary stories through a series of illustrations – a sort of graphic novel. The best known of these series were *A Rake's Progress*, *A Harlot's Progress* (country girl Moll Hackabout is lured into prostitution and dies of syphilis), and *Marriage à-la-mode* (an upper-class marriage is broken apart with affairs, syphilis, murder, and suicide). In each case Hogarth painted the series and then recreated the illustrations as engravings to be published as prints. Because they could be reproduced in quantity, these engravings were widely circulated and became wildly popular throughout England. This was populist art with a moral message, brim full of wit, pathos, and melodrama.

Hogarth has been called the inventor of the comic strip and the father of the modern editorial cartoon. His illustrated stories remain as rich and full of action as any of today's graphic novels.

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 (best known as the author of *Brave New World*) suggested the great Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden as librettist. Without consulting Stravinsky, Auden brought in Chester Kallman as a

collaborator. Kallman was Auden's faithless lover and himself a fine model for a rake; the two would go on to co-write libretti for other composers and to translate both *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni* into English.

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.*

Stravinsky later recalled the process of creating the story: *Early the next morning, primed by coffee and whisky, we began work on the Rake's Progress. Starting with a hero, a heroine, and a villain, and deciding that these people should be a tenor, a soprano, and a bass, we proceeded to invent a series of scenes leading up to the final scene in Bedlam that was already fixed in our minds. We followed Hogarth closely at first and until our own story began to assume a different significance.*

In March 1948, Auden and Kallman delivered what Stravinsky called *surely one of the most beautiful of libretti*. The composition of the music occupied the next three years. The result, in the words of composer Zeke Hecker, was *one of the few opera scores .. that are really love letters to the libretto*. 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*, adding the character of Nick Shadow to guide Tom into the brothels and gambling dens of sleazy old London. But Tom remains unexpectedly innocent and, at heart, faithful to Anne. As Baba explains to Anne,

*He's but a shuttle-headed lad:
Not quite a gentleman, nor quite
Completely vanquished by the bad:
Who knows what care and love might do?*

Tom Rakewell is every callow, overconfident, impulsive youth who ever stumbled upon love and ruin. There's a little of Tom in every brother, son, and sweetheart who is fretted over by the people who care and fear for him. Despite his foolishness, there remains enough native goodness in Tom that he almost deserves Anne Trulove, who comes from a long lineage of perfect, faithful 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 brings us, in addition to its young lovers, a panoply of unforgettable characters, including Mother Goose, the brothel keeper who snaps up Tom for herself; the suave, sinister Nick Shadow, who with Mephistophelean charm propels Tom into ruin; the auctioneer Sellem, who presides over opera's wackiest auction (*this ne plus ultra of auctions*); and most exotic of all, 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 graciously greeting her adoring public, 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 (*As I was saying, both brothers wore moustaches*) that is as divinely silly as anything by Gilbert and Sullivan.

Musicologist David Schiff says, *Baba was Auden's way of embodying his love for the genre of opera in all its glorious absurdity. Baba breathes the spirit of opera itself... Morality is fine, she seems to say, but could we have some entertainment, please?*

The Composer, Igor Stravinsky

Born in Russia in 1882, Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky was mentored by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and worked as a composer first in Russia, then in Switzerland and France.

As he began to make a name for himself in Russia with works influenced by Russian folk culture and music, he came to the attention of the great Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev, who asked Stravinsky to compose a ballet for the celebrated Ballets Russes. The result, *The Firebird* (1910), was so successful that another commission quickly followed for the ballet *Petrushka* (*Petrouchka*), which premiered in 1911 starring the great Russian dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky.

But it was his next ballet that established Stravinsky's international reputation as an *enfant terrible* and THE quintessential modern composer. The iconic ballet *The Rite of Spring* exploded upon the 20th century, inciting a full-scale riot at its 1913 Paris premiere. Heralding a revolution in classical music, *The Rite of Spring* (*Le Sacre du Printemps*) has been called the most famous musical work of the 20th century, an *icon of modernism*, and the *Rosetta stone of modern art*. Between Stravinsky's music and Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography, this ballet about ritual pagan sacrifice, with its intense rhythms and barbaric, inelegant dance movements was like nothing seen or heard before. The audience went crazy with catcalls, whistles, boos, fistfights and brawls, and the Paris police had to be called in to restore order.

Of *The Rite of Spring*, 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 audiences. But it still dazzles and is considered as significant to the 20th century as Beethoven's Ninth was to the 19th.

When World War I broke out, Stravinsky moved to Switzerland; finances were tight, and he worked on smaller scale works such as the 1918 theatrical work *The Soldier's Tale*, based on a Russian folk tale. After the Russian Revolution it became impossible for him to return to Russia, and in 1920, he settled in France where he began to compose in the neo-classical style, re-examining the music of Mozart and Bach.

In 1939 Katerina, Stravinsky's wife of 33 years, died of tuberculosis; their eldest daughter had died the year before. When World War II broke out in 1939, Stravinsky moved to the US where he taught for a year at Harvard. He stayed on in America, marrying his longtime mistress Vera de Bosset and settling with her in Hollywood.

In 1941, to show his gratitude to his adopted country, Stravinsky harmonized and orchestrated his own arrangement of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. It was performed without incident in Los Angeles. But when he came to Boston in 1944 to conduct it in a series of three concerts with the Boston Symphony, he ran afoul of a 1917 Massachusetts law forbidding tampering with the National Anthem. Before the second concert, the Boston police arrived to confiscate the sheet music.

The law is still on the books in Massachusetts.

CHAPTER 264. CRIMES AGAINST GOVERNMENTS

Chapter 264: Section 9. National anthem; manner of playing

Section 9. Whoever plays, sings or renders the "Star Spangled Banner" in any public place, theatre, motion picture hall, restaurant or café, or at any public entertainment, other than as a whole and separate composition or number, without embellishment or addition in the way of national or other melodies, or whoever plays, sings or renders the "Star Spangled Banner", or any part thereof, as dance music, as an exit march or as a part of a medley of any kind, shall be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars.

Source: <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/264-9.htm>

This law would theoretically make performances of *Madama Butterfly* illegal, as the opera quotes a brief excerpt of *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

Shortly after the war ended, Stravinsky began to compose *The Rake's Progress*. 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. *Rake* was his greatest – and last – neoclassical work.

Stravinsky would soon begin exploring serial compositional techniques, including the twelve-tone technique originally devised by Arnold Schoenberg. He was influenced in this new direction by Robert Craft, a young

conductor whom he met in 1948. Craft became his musical aide and the two wrote a number of books about Stravinsky's life and musical views. The artistic partnership continued until Stravinsky's death in 1971. Craft has conducted throughout the world, and continues to be influential in supporting contemporary music; he is the first American to have conducted Alban Berg's operas *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*. He has conducted pioneering recordings of works by Schoenberg, Varèse, and Webern, and led the world premieres of several of Stravinsky's later masterpieces.

Stravinsky was a major influence on 20th century music and many consider him the greatest of the century's composers.

He won a number of Grammy awards:

1961 Best Contemporary Classical Composition for *Movements for Piano and Orchestra*

1961 Classical Album of the Year for *Stravinsky Conducts Le Sacre de printemps; Petrouchka*

1962: Best Contemporary Composition for *The Flood*

1962: Best Classical Performance – Orchestra – for *Stravinsky, The Firebird Ballet*

1967: Best Classical Performance – Orchestra – for *Stravinsky, Firebird and Petrouchka Suites*

1987: Lifetime Achievement Award

Stravinsky also has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6340 Hollywood Boulevard.

The Librettists, Chester Kallman and W.H. Auden

I chose Wystan Auden as librettist for my opera "The Rake's Progress" because of his special gift for versification ... I simply gave all priority to verse, hoping that we could evolve the theatrical form together and that it would inspire Wystan to dramatic poetry. I think he was inspired, and in any case he inspired me ... I wonder whether any poet since the Elizabethans has made a composer such a beautiful gift ...

Igor Stravinsky

W. H. Auden brought **Chester Kallman** in as co-librettist for *The Rake's Progress*. Kallman (1921 to 1975) was an American poet, librettist and translator, whom Auden had met shortly after his arrival in New York in 1939. Kallman published three collections of poems, *Storm at Castelfranco* (1956), *Absent and Present* (1963), and *The Sense of Occasion* (1971) and wrote the libretto for an opera by Mexican composer Carlos Chávez and translated libretti for a number of operas, among them *Bluebeard's Castle* by Béla Bartók and *Falstaff* by Arrigo Boito. However, he is best known for being Auden's promiscuous lover and lifelong companion and for his collaborations with Auden on opera libretti and translations.

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907 –1973), best known as W. H. Auden, is considered by many to be the greatest English poet of the twentieth century. He was born in York, England and studied at Oxford, majoring first in biology, and then switching to English. He was part of a group of young intellectuals that included poets Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender and novelist Christopher Isherwood, who was his mentor and later his lover.

After graduation, Auden worked as a schoolmaster and as a freelance reviewer and essayist, and began to make a name for himself with his first collections of poems (1928, 1930, 1933, and 1934), each slightly different, all entitled simply *Poems*. In 1937 he was awarded the King's Gold Medal for Poetry.

Through his work with the General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit, he met composer Benjamin Britten, and the two collaborated on the classic 1936 documentary *Night Mail*.

In 1935 Auden married Erika Mann, daughter of the great German novelist Thomas Mann, in order to provide her with a British passport to escape the Nazis. He served in the Spanish Civil War and in 1938 went to China with Isherwood to observe the Sino-Japanese War; out of this trip came their book *Journey to a War*.

His political awareness and opposition to totalitarianism came out strongly in his writing of the time; a memorable example is the concise little poem called *Epitaph on a Tyrant*, which he wrote around 1939, and which ends with these lines:

*When he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter,
And when he cried the little children died in the streets.*

In January 1939 Auden and Isherwood emigrated to America. Within three months Isherwood moved to California, while Auden settled in Brooklyn, where he met the poet Chester Kallman. The two became lovers; however, while Auden saw their relationship as a marriage, Kallman was a philanderer; the relationship fizzled after two years, although the two remained friends, companions, and collaborators until Auden's death.

In 1940 George Davis, an editor recently fired from Harper's Bazaar (and the future husband of singer Lotte Lenya), leased a dilapidated house at 7 Middagh Street in Brooklyn Heights and invited Auden to move in. The building soon became an exciting experiment in communal living, housing an amazing cross-section of American and expatriate artists who, in between fighting and drinking, actually managed to get some work done. The building was christened February House by writer Anaïs Nin because so many of the residents had February birthdays. The inhabitants – and the works they created while living in February House – included the following:

The 23-year-old Carson McCullers, whose debut novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, had just been published, began work on her second great novel, *The Member of the Wedding* and the novella *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*.

British composer Benjamin Britten and his life partner, tenor Peter Pears. While living at February House, Britten collaborated with Auden on their first opera *Paul Bunyan*.

Klaus Mann, son of the great novelist Thomas Mann, wrote the autobiographical *The Turning Point*.

Composer and writer Paul Bowles wrote music for *Pastorela*, a Mexican Indian ballet, while his wife, Jane, worked on her novel *Two Serious Ladies*.

The stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, who desperately wanted to be a writer, wrote a mystery thriller called *The G-String Murders*

Visitors to the house included a who's who of American and European artists, among them painter Salvador Dali, poet Louis MacNeice, choreographer George Balanchine, and composers Virgil Thomson. Aaron Copland, Marc Blitzstein (composer of *The Cradle Will Rock* and *Regina*) and Leonard Bernstein.

February House has been called a *Petri dish for literary creativity*. When Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont visited the house, he wrote, *All that was new in America in music, painting, or choreography emanated from that house, the only center of thought and art that I found in any large city in the country*'

The hotbed of creativity that was February House inspired a 2005 book by Sherill Tippins: *February House: The Story of W. H. Auden, Carson McCullers, Jane and Paul Bowles, Benjamin Britten, and Gypsy Rose Lee, Under One Roof In Wartime America*.

Auden left February House in the fall of 1941 to teach at the University of Michigan; the other residents drifted away, and in 1945, the house was demolished to make room for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

Auden continued to work as a poet, reviewer, lecturer and editor. He taught at various schools and universities and became a US citizen in 1946. From 1956 to 1961 he was a professor of poetry at Oxford. His long poem *The Age of Anxiety* won the 1948 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

After writing the libretto for Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, Auden and Kallman collaborated on two libretti for Hans Werner Henze, *Elegy for Young Lovers* (1961) and *The Bassarids* (1966), and on the libretto of *Love's Labour's Lost* for Nicolas Nabokov (1973). They also collaborated on translations of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*, and on translations of *Seven Deadly Sins* and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht.

As a librettist, Auden is frequently compared to the great Hugo von Hofmannsthal. His libretto for *The Rake's Progress* continues to be admired for its beauty, wit, and profundity, and Auden is widely considered the 20th century's finest librettist.

Auden was a longtime friend of J.R.R. Tolkien, and among the most prominent early critics to praise *The Lord of the Rings* when it was first published in 1954. Tolkien wrote of his support, *I am... very deeply in Auden's debt in recent years. His support of me and interest in my work has been one of my chief encouragements. He gave me very good reviews, notices and letters from the beginning when it was by no means a popular thing to do. He was, in fact, sneered at for it.*

In 1972 Auden moved back to England, but spent his summers in Austria. He died in Vienna in September, 1973. W.H. Auden continues to be seen as one of the greatest literary figures of the 20th century.

Auden's popularity and familiarity increased after his poem *Funeral Blues* was read aloud in the 1994 film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994).

*Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,. . .
He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong*

The Music

I chose to cast "The Rake" in the mould of an eighteenth-century "number" opera, one in which the dramatic progress depends on the succession of separate pieces -- recitatives and arias, duets, trios, choruses, instrumental interludes ... Having chosen a period-piece subject, I decided -- naturally, as it seemed to me -- to assume the conventions of the period as well.

Igor Stravinsky

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.

20th century Neoclassicism in music

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 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 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.

Verdi

Anne Trulove's Act I aria *No word from Tom* is comparable to any number of bel canto arias. It begins with a recitative followed by a slow section (cavatina), interrupted by another recitative, then ends with a fiery coloratura section (cabaletta). Compare this aria with Violetta's Act I aria, *Ah fors'e lui, Sempre Libera* in *La traviata*. In this form, the singer can use all of her vocal capabilities to reveal character and advance the story.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skUwYWwX7ms>

Elizabeth Futral as Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo2LtFXlgA8>

Dawn Upshaw as Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*

Mozart

The references to Mozart are many. *Un aura amorosa*, Ferrando's Ode to Love, from *Così fan tutte* is the undeniable influence for Tom's darker, slightly twisted ode, *Love, too Frequently betrayed*. Note the same rhythmic start to the introduction, as well as the expansive melody.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXEjZqYhgQQ>

Jonas Kaufmann as Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo_K6PcFJ-k

Cristian Mogosan as Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress*

The scene in the churchyard in *The Rake's Progress* is strongly reminiscent of the finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (another tale of a rake). In *Don Giovanni* of course, it is the rake himself who is taken to hell. In *The Rake's Progress* Nick Shadow sinks into the grave.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK1_vm0FMAU

Samuel Ramey as Don Giovanni and Kurt Moll as the Commendatore in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIN9OB1fsjg>

Samuel Ramey as Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*

Monteverdi

The final scene of *The Rake's Progress* owes a great deal to the 16th century operas of Monteverdi. The free recitative, the references to gods and the hope of rescue are common to both.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8V0Y6wSLIqU>

Vittorio Prato in the title role in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_EHY6CQ43Q

Edward Randall as Tom in *The Rake's Progress* (in German)

POV's Production

Through its music, its structure, and its story, *The Rake's Progress* is an intriguing fusion of time and place. It inhabits at once the 18th century of Mozart and Hogarth, the 19th century in which this production is set, the 20th century of its creators, and the 21st century of here and now – not to mention those places outside time – Heaven and Hell, Bedlam, and the peculiar alternate universes in which Baba is suspended in time and Tom roams in his madness.

POV's original production of *The Rake's Progress* is being built in our own production shop. Director Glynis Leyshon has set this production in the Regency period of the very early 19th century. Nancy Bryant's costumes will bring elegance and the ambience of old London to the production, along with touches of the exotic and decadent in the costumes for Baba and Mother Goose.

Allan Stichbury's simple set allows a colourful canvas for the theatrical shenanigans, fantastic baroque machine, giant fish, and other wonders of this opera. The set design uses a series of frames which impart a deep sense of perspective to each scene, allowing a rich opportunity to play with time and place throughout the opera.

At right are photos of models for the set designed by Allan Stichbury. Below are Nancy Bryant's costume sketches for Anne Trulove (left) and Baba the Turk (right).



Photo of set model for Chapter 6: Inside Tom's Townhouse. Nick enters, wheeling in a *fantastic baroque machine*, and demonstrates how, through a hidden compartment, the machine can appear to turn a broken piece of china into a loaf of bread.



Photo of set model for Chapter 6: Inside Tom's Townhouse.

Tom is bankrupt. Sellem the auctioneer directs the bidding as his possessions are auctioned off, including including a stuffed auk, a mounted pike, and Baba herself.

Links

The Rake's Progress

http://www.teatroallascala.org/includes/doc/2008-2009/libretto/rakes_libretto.pdf

Libretto in English with Italian translation

Igor Stravinsky

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Stravinsky

Biography of Stravinsky, discussion of his work and links

http://www.archive.org/details/lullaby_and_final_hymn

Video of Stravinsky conducting 'Lullaby and Final Hymn' from the "Firebird Ballet Suite" in a 1965 performance with the New Philharmonia Orchestra

<http://www.archive.org/details/conversationswit000800mbp>

Conversations with Igor Stravinsky (1959), a book by Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft

<http://www.archive.org/details/igorstravinskyan002221mbp>

Igor Stravinsky An Autobiography (1962)

W.H. Auden

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._H._Auden

Biography of Auden, discussion and links

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPLHOOtIcnM>

Night Mail: Excerpt from the famous 1936 GPO documentary with music by Benjamin Britten and the poem by W.H. Auden.

<http://audensociety.org/>

The W. H. Auden Society: Links to information about W.H. Auden, and to some of his poems

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/120>

Brief Biography of Auden, links, and text of some of his Poems

<http://www.npr.org/programs/death/readings/poetry/aude.html>

Two more poems by Auden (*Funeral Blues* and *Johnny*)

<http://www.nytimes.com/1954/10/31/books/tolkien-fellowship.html>

Auden's 1954 review of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (first volume of *The Lord of the Rings*) From the *New York Times* Archives

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9507EFDE113BF935A35751C0A9639C8B63>

Genius and High Jinks At 7 Middagh Street: Article by Sherill Tippins in the *New York Times* about the house on Middagh Street, which Auden shared with Carson McCullers, Benjamin Britten, Gypsy Rose Lee, and others

Chester Kallman

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester_Kallman

Biography of Kallman with links

William Hogarth

<http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/William-Hogarth>

Biography and overview of Hogarth's works

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Rake's_Progress

A Rake's Progress: Detailed descriptions and large images of the series of eight paintings by Hogarth that inspired Stravinsky's opera, as well as images of the series of eight engravings that Hogarth created later.