

Peninsula Opera Bus

Take the Opera Bus to our matinée performances.

POV is making it easier to come to the opera this season! Available to those in the Saanich Peninsula, our Opera Bus will pick opera goers up from

- Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal (1 pm pick up)
- Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney (1:30 pm pick up)
- St. Mary's Church, Central Saanich (1:50 pm pick up)

Parking is available at these locations.

2:30 pm arrival at the Royal Theatre for the 3 pm show.

\$25 return per person (plus the cost of your ticket).

Please call Heather to book: 250.382.1641, ext 28.

Pacific Opera Victoria

OPERA IN SCHOOLS PRESENTS

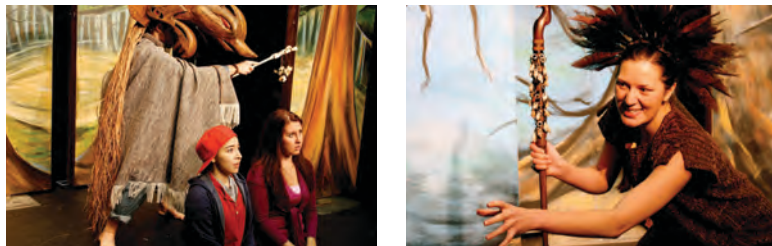
Engelbert Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel

A Coast Salish interpretation of the traditional tale.

45-minute Touring Opera for Young Audiences

Brought to schools on southern Vancouver Island, October 18 to November 9.

Spaces are still available. If you're interested, contact your child's school. School representatives may contact Jackie Adamthwaite, Manager of Artistic Programs at 250.382.1641 or jackie@pov.bc.ca



Scenes from Hansel and Gretel. Left: Alex Granat as St-Kaa-Ya; Tamara Rusque as Hansel; Elizabeth Humphries as Gretel. Right: Eve Daniel as Jennii. Photo: Jackie Adamthwaite.

Give It Up for Opera

An Antiques Roadshow-style event to benefit Pacific Opera Victoria
Saturday, February 5, 2011, noon to 4pm
Leonardo da Vinci Centre, 195 Bay Street
Tickets \$35 – includes afternoon tea for you and a guest, appraisals for up to three items and musical performances.

Many people have already told us they have valuables such as jewelry, china, silver, antiques, etc., that they would gladly consider donating to Pacific Opera Victoria. This exciting new event invites you to bring three items for appraisal by our team of experts, with the request that you leave at least one item as a donation. Proceeds will support opera in your community, and you'll receive a tax receipt for the purchased amount when it is sold.

This event is supported by generous local appraisers who have offered to donate their services, and by Kilshaw's Auctioneers Ltd.

PUBLIC FUNDING



1815 BLANSHARD ST., SUITE 500 VICTORIA BC V8T 5A4 BOX OFFICE: 250-385-0222 ADMIN: 250-382-1641 F: 250-382-4944 E: boxoffice@pov.bc.ca

Events Calendar

RODELINDA At the Royal Theatre
OPENING NIGHT: November 11, at 8 pm
SATURDAY MATINÉE: November 13, at 3 pm
PLAYING November 16, 18, and 20, at 8 pm
Pre-performance lobby lecture at 6:45 pm (2 pm on November 13)
Sung in Italian with English surtitles

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

INSIDE OPERA with Robert Holliston.

Sunday, October 31. TWO SESSIONS: 10 am and noon

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, MacLaurin Music Wing, University of Victoria. Robert Holliston and guests present a guided tour of *Rodelinda*. Discover this gripping opera about love and espionage in 7th century Lombardy. Bring your friends. It's free.

Please reserve before noon October 29, specifying which session you plan to attend. 250-382-1641 or rsvp@pov.bc.ca

Sense of Occasion

Thursday, November 11, 6:30 pm.

East Lobby, the Royal Theatre. Pre-Performance Reception to celebrate the opening night of *Rodelinda*. Gourmet finger foods and wine. Space is limited. Dress is festive.

\$25 per person. Call 250-382-1641 to reserve with payment.

Monday Masters

Monday, November 15, 7 pm. West Lobby, the Royal Theatre.

Selected members of the POV chorus are coached by a member of the cast of *Rodelinda*. Free.

Contact 250-382-1641 or rsvp@pov.bc.ca to reserve.

DONOR EVENTS

President's Circle Working Rehearsal

Tuesday, November 9, West Lobby, The Royal Theatre

6:30 pm: Discussion with members of the creative team, followed by coffee and cookies.

7:30 pm: Dress Rehearsal begins. President's Circle members can share the opera experience with young people as they enjoy one of our most popular education programs – the Student Dress Rehearsal Program.

For all President's Circle members. Invitations will be sent by mail.

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE & IMPRESARIO CIRCLE SPONSOR



President's Circle Reception

Saturday, November 13, 6:30 to 9 pm.

The Union Club, 805 Gordon Street

A wine and hors d'oeuvres reception to welcome the principal cast of *Rodelinda*, featuring short performances by members of the Young Artist Program.

For all President's Circle members. Invitations will be sent by mail.

Bravo Society Event

Thursday, November 25, 5 pm.

Victoria Golf Club, 1110 Beach Drive

The Bravo Society honours those who have left a charitable gift in their wills to benefit Pacific Opera Victoria. If you are interested in this event and the Bravo Society, please contact us at 250-382-1641. *Invitations will be sent by mail.*

POV Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 29, 5 pm. Chateau Victoria, Salon B

Open to all members of the Society. RSVP to 250-382-1641 or rsvp@pov.bc.ca

Writers: Robert Holliston, Maureen Woodall
Editor: Maureen Woodall



OPENING THE WORLD OF OPERA TO PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA SUBSCRIBERS

OCTOBER 2010

Key Notes

Rodelinda

HANDEL

Handel's London

Rodelinda is an Italian opera, written by a German, for English audiences. It was first staged at the King's Theatre, London, in February of 1725.

The year before Handel arrived in London, St. Paul's Cathedral had been completed; Sir Isaac Newton was still at work, and the country was well into a century of commercial and cultural prosperity. Despite their ingrained dislike of foreigners – particularly successful ones – Londoners had developed an insatiable appetite for fashionable Italian opera. To an ambitious and entrepreneurial young composer like Handel, the English capital must have seemed like the one place in Europe where fortune and fame awaited.

As elegant and prosperous as London appeared, however, it was also squalid, filthy, crowded and disease-ridden. Smallpox was a constant fear, and infant mortality was as high as 75%. Prosperous Londoners could escape by ferry to the Vauxhall Spring Gardens (London Bridge was the only bridge across the Thames until Westminster Bridge opened in 1750), but ordinary city-dwellers turned to gin as an anaesthetic to their daily horrors.

If 18th-century London was a bastion of free enterprise, so was it a magnet for every conceivable kind of crook. Fortunes were made and lost with bewildering rapidity. Even Handel, not immune to the temptations of easy money through shady investments, lost a tidy sum in the South Sea Bubble speculation of the 1720s.

Political and social unrest smouldered under the city's fashionable veneer. To maintain a semblance of law and order, the authorities dangled the noose. Throughout the 18th



century well over a hundred felonies were punishable by death, and the criminal law of England was as inconsistent as it was ferocious in its administration of capital punishment. Prisoners were not given access to evidence or council, and trials lasted on average only eight and a half minutes. Handel lived close enough to the Oxford Road, along which the condemned were taken from Newgate to Tyburn Hill, that the roar of the crowd attending the eight hanging days each year would have been within easy earshot of his house.

The theatres in which Handel operated were in what we might call the red light district, full of *thieving shops for the reception of highwaymen, bullies, and common assassins*. London was the worst-lit capital

in Europe, and although "linkmen" were employed to help pedestrians avoid potholes and dunghills, they had a bad reputation for taking their customers down dark alleys and robbing them. Handel himself probably hired a hackney coach or sedan chair to go home after an opera performance – he did not keep his own carriage.

In 1723 Handel took a lease on 25 Lower Brook Street, a modest house in a prosperous district near Grosvenor Square where he lived until his death 36 years later. The Handel House Museum now occupies that address; the house next door was also inhabited by a celebrated musician – albeit for a much briefer time and many years later – named Jimi Hendrix.

Robert Holliston



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A Star Vehicle

The first performance of *Rodelinda* featured two of the composer's favourite singers, both imported from exotic Italy. The wildly popular soprano Francesca Cuzzoni was Rodelinda, and the Sieneese contralto castrato Francesco Bernardi, better known even today by his stage name Senesino, performed the role of Bertarido.

Operatic superstars like these enjoyed adulation that goes beyond what rock stars receive today; they commanded exorbitant fees, were given lavish gifts by their admirers, and behaved like thoroughly spoiled divas and divos.

Any composer eager to please his public had first to write carefully for his stars. Handel was no exception, but he was made of sterner stuff than most. His biographer, John Mainwaring, recounts what happened when Cuzzoni refused to sing a particular aria for her London debut, apparently because it had originally been composed for another singer. Handel told her, *Oh! Madame I know well that you are a real she-devil, but I hereby give you notice that I, I am Beelzebub, the Chief of Devils.* Mainwaring continues: *With this, he took her up by the waist, and, if she made any more words, swore that he would fling her out of the window.*

For *Rodelinda*, Cuzzoni wore a brown silk dress trimmed with silver. According to historian Charles Burney, this scandalized the older ladies of the audience with its vulgarity and indecorum, but among fashionable young girls it became all the rage for the remainder of the season.

Rodelinda is unusual in that it casts a tenor in the villain's role – there are few important tenor roles in Handel's operas, the heroic roles having been customarily taken by castrati. Today the castrati roles are usually performed by countertenors (sometimes by mezzo sopranos and contraltos). *Rodelinda* features not one, but two countertenor roles: Bertarido, the beloved husband of Rodelinda, and Unulfo, his faithful friend, who is a double agent within the court of the usurper Grimoaldo.

While every role in the opera has superb musical moments, Rodelinda and Bertarido are two of the most splendid in the repertoire, with arias that include Rodelinda's touching lament *Ombre, piante*, the hair-raising virtuosity of Bertarido's *Vivi tiranno* and the couple's stunningly beautiful love duet, *Io t'abbraccio*.

Although *Rodelinda* was staged several times in Handel's lifetime, it was then neglected for nearly 200 years, save for performances of a few hits (notably the aria *Dove sei*, known in England as *Art thou troubled*). All Handel's operas met the same fate: after 1754 they were simply not performed.

The first modern staging of a Handel opera was a production of *Rodelinda* in Germany in 1920 – the first *Rodelinda* since 1736! For the 1920 version, the opera was rearranged, rescored, truncated, and translated into German; nevertheless, it marked the beginning of a long overdue Handel opera revival, leading to a new appreciation of the composer's superb dramatic and musical skill.

Today *Rodelinda* is more popular than ever, with performances by some of today's operatic superstars, including Renée Fleming, David Daniels, and the late Joan Sutherland.

The Story

Rodelinda, Queen of Lombardy
Libretto by Nicola Haym

In the mid-7th century, Lombardy had been torn apart by war. The former king had divided his kingdom between his sons, giving Milan to Bertarido and Pavia to Gundeberto. But brother warred against brother, and Gundeberto enlisted Duke Grimoaldo as an ally, promising him the hand of his sister Eduige.

As the opera opens, Gundeberto has been killed through Grimoaldo's treachery. Bertarido has fled and is presumed dead, leaving his wife Rodelinda and son Flavio in the power of Grimoaldo, who has seized the throne. The only person who knows Bertarido is alive is his friend Unulfo, who also happens to be an advisor to Grimoaldo.

Egged on by his treacherous henchman Garibaldo, Grimoaldo jilts Eduige and pressures Rodelinda to marry him. Garibaldo, who has his own designs on the throne, worms his way into Eduige's affections; she is open to his advances – if he will help her punish Grimoaldo.

Garibaldo delivers an ultimatum to Rodelinda: if she won't marry Grimoaldo, her son will die. She capitulates, unaware that Bertarido has secretly returned and is a shocked witness to her apparent disloyalty.

However, Rodelinda sets one condition: Grimoaldo must personally kill her son in front of her; after all, she can't be both the wife of the usurper and the mother of the rightful king. It's a breathtakingly audacious bluff that sends Grimoaldo into an emotional tailspin. He can't bring himself to kill the child, and Rodelinda's implacable fidelity makes her more attractive to him than ever.

Meanwhile Eduige chances upon Bertarido and recognizes him. Once she learns that her brother wants only to rescue his wife and child, not to reclaim his kingdom, she resolves to help him.

Unulfo reassures Bertarido that Rodelinda is loyal, but just as the couple are reunited, Grimoaldo appears. Not recognizing Bertarido, he accuses Rodelinda of taking a lover. To save her honour, Bertarido discloses that he is her husband, but Rodelinda, desperate to protect him, insists he is lying. Grimoaldo declares that whether lover or husband, the man must be executed. He tells the couple to make their final farewells.

Eduige and Unulfo help Bertarido escape from prison, while Grimoaldo agonizes over his feelings of jealousy, love, and remorse. After Grimoaldo falls into an exhausted sleep, Garibaldo tries to assassinate him, but Bertarido intervenes and kills Garibaldo.

As Grimoaldo wonders who his rescuer was, Bertarido returns and challenges the tyrant to kill him. Grimoaldo restores the throne of Milan to Bertarido and announces he will marry Eduige and rule with her in Pavia. All rejoice.

Passion and politics are inextricably linked in *Rodelinda*. The lines between ambition, love, and hate are continually redrawn, and

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love triangles and family relationships are reshaped by political motives and personal emotions. The characters are not black and white (save perhaps for the Iago-like Garibaldo), and this is what makes them so fascinating. Even the adamantly loyal Rodelinda has a streak of ruthlessness that makes her a force to reckon with.

The Production

Milan in the 7th century was a dangerous place, and Director Oriol Tomas and designer Nancy Bryant are creating a production that reinforces the disquieting emotions and perilous, shifting alliances that haunt the opera.

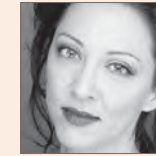


Nancy Bryant's costume sketches for Rodelinda, Bertarido and Eduige

A structure inspired by the tower of Babel hints at repeated battles to achieve and hold power. As Tomas notes, the towering set *gives the impression that the characters stagger on the brink of an abyss; they can fall at any moment.* He points out that the opera is steeped in espionage. *On several occasions, either because they are hidden or because they arrive at an appropriate time, the characters hear the confessions of others.* Semi-enclosed interior spaces suggest that at any moment a character may be caught unawares, overheard, or spied upon.

The costumes have the look and weight of clothing of the Middle Ages, but also reflect the turbulent historical influences of the time – the centuries-long decline of the Roman Empire and the endless waves of invading tribes – with touches of antique drapery and barbarian elements such as animal bones, leather, and furs.

About the Artists



Nathalie Paulin (Queen Rodelinda) has performed in several POV productions, most recently *The Tempest* and the title role of *Semele*. Praised as a *theatrical and vocal tour de force*, she has sung throughout North America and Europe, including leading roles with Chicago Opera Theatre, Dallas and Arizona Operas, and opera companies across Canada.



Gerald Thompson makes his POV debut as Bertarido, the deposed king – a role he has sung with the Canadian Opera Company in what the *Globe and Mail* called a *spectacular feat of virtuoso singing [that] brought the house down.* The acclaimed countertenor has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and San Francisco Opera.



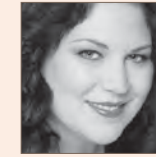
Benjamin Butterfield returns to POV as Grimoaldo, the conflicted tyrant. He has performed at POV since 1990, most recently as Jupiter in *Semele*. He has sung throughout Europe, in New Zealand, and with the Canadian Opera Company, Arizona Opera, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass, and Vancouver Opera.



Bruce Kelly (Garibaldo, the evil henchman) recently impressed POV audiences as Germont in *La traviata*, the High Priest in *The Magic Flute*, and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. He has appeared in Nice, Strasbourg, Liège, Avignon, Moscow, and across Canada on stage and in concert.



Matthew White is Unulfo, the double agent – a role he has sung with Glyndebourne Festival Opera. He performed the title role in POV's *Julius Caesar* and has been engaged by New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Cleveland Opera, and Opera Atelier. He has sung all over the world in concert, and has made over 30 recordings.



Megan Latham makes her POV Debut as Bertarido's estranged sister Eduige – a role she has covered with the Canadian Opera Company. She has sung throughout Canada and the US, made her Carnegie Hall debut for the Marilyn Horne Foundation, and was Marcellina in Vancouver Opera's *Le nozze di Figaro*.

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