

2025/26 SEASON LIVE AT THE ROYAL THEATRE

BRITTEN

The Turn of the Screw

OCTOBER 22, 24, 28 AT 7:30PM

OCTOBER 26 AT 2:30PM

HOST HOTEL



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Welcome to the Opera

Seeing *The Turn of the Screw* is a must for anyone who loves psychological thrillers and powerful music. Benjamin Britten's opera is a haunting ghost story, but like all good stories its complexity doesn't stop there. Not only does it blur the line between supernatural events and madness through intense musical dramatization, it also drives home the power and importance of our perceptions. How we perceive our reality plays a vital role in our understanding of ourselves and our place within society. In our modern world, full of screens and technology, the power and weight of our individual perceptions bear increasing scrutiny. What do we know to be true, and what are we simply perceiving as truth? I believe that great opera should not only transport us, but also resonate a part of our modern world back to us, creating reflection, which is an essential element of this piece.

BRENNA CORNER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Benjamin Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw* is renowned for its haunting and evocative musical language, which masterfully underscores the eerie psychological drama of Henry James's novella, all with a chamber orchestra of only 13 players. Britten employs a theme and variations form; a technique commonly associated with instrumental music. The twelve-note theme along with 15 variations act as a binding thread, both as interludes and as a device to delineate the passage of time between the scenes. In addition to the variations, Britten's key changes form a harmonic arc. Act One starts in "A" and ascends stepwise through the white keys of the piano up to "A-flat" and Act Two descends from "A-flat" through the black keys back to "A". With each change of key and variation Britten heightens the tension and "turns the screw" little by little.

GIUSEPPE PIETRARROIA, PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

The Turn of the Screw is about the loss of innocence. For some of the characters, that loss has already taken place. For others, it forms the journey of the opera. For the Governess, that begins with a literal journey—from the city to the country. From sheltered home life to first employment. Her fears that she might not be up to the job are alleviated once she arrives at Bly and meets the two charming children, Miles and Flora. Over the course of the opera, the Governess learns that appearances can be deceiving. She comes to recognize that the charm and innocence of Miles and Flora conceal their own secrets. They are in the midst of a tug-of-war between goodness and evil—an evil that the Governess must come face-to-face with if she has any hope of saving them.

MICHAEL SHAMATA, STAGE DIRECTOR

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SENIOR LIFESTYLES

Music by Benjamin Britten | **Libretto by** Myfanwy Piper, based on the 1898 novella *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James
First Performance on September 14, 1954, at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice

Dates October 22, 24, 28 at 7:30 pm
October 26 at 2:30 pm | The Royal Theatre
Sung in English with English surtitles

This performance is approximately two hours (including a 20 minute intermission)

CAST

Governess..... Kirsten MacKinnon
Peter Quint..... Isaiah Bell
Miles..... Mars Young
Flora..... Jake Apricity Hetherington
Mrs. Grose..... Catherine Daniel
Miss Jessel..... Jonelle Sills
Miles Understudy..... Scarlett Nicholson-Selly
Flora Understudy..... Maya Badel

With the Victoria Symphony

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor..... Giuseppe Pietraroia
Stage Director..... Michael Shamata
Set & Costume Designer..... Shawn Kerwin
Lighting Designer..... Leigh Ann Vardy
Principal Coach..... Kimberley-Ann Bartczak
Stage Manager..... Marijka Asbeek Brusse
Assistant Stage Manager..... Kelsey Cain
Assistant Stage Manager..... Katerina Sokyrko
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Cast and programme are subject to change

House Programme Design Trapeze Communications | **Synopsis** Robert Holliston

Production & Editor Rhonda Ganz

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*Scan for extended
notes and more
The Turn
of the Screw
content online.*

Synopsis

PROLOGUE

A governess accepts a post caring for two children, Miles and Flora, whose guardian, their uncle, does not wish to be troubled with them.

ACT ONE

The Governess, full of questions, travels through the English countryside to Bly, where the children and Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, eagerly await her arrival. The estate and children seem to be charming; her unease is dispelled and she begins to feel at home.

A letter arrives, revealing Miles has been expelled from school for “an injury to his friends.” Neither the Governess nor Mrs. Grose want to doubt Miles’ innocence.

Her optimism unshaken, the Governess goes out for a stroll and is startled by the appearance of an unknown man on the tower of the house. Her concern about the stranger increases when he appears a second time, staring at her through a window. In describing him to Mrs. Grose, the Governess learns of Peter Quint, the former valet fired for his involvement with Miss Jessel, the previous governess, and for his questionable influence over Miles and Flora. She also learns Quint and Miss Jessel are both dead. Now terrified, she resolves to protect her charges and carry on. Both children seem oppressed, however, and when Miss Jessel appears during a morning walk, the Governess begins to feel powerless to save them.

Peter Quint and Miss Jessel next appear at night, calling for the children to come to them. When the Governess and Mrs. Grose arrive on the scene, however, the ghosts disappear. As the act closes, Miles cries out, “You see I am bad, I am bad, aren’t I?”

ACT TWO

Both ghosts reappear to the Governess and reveal they are determined to dominate and corrupt Miles and Flora in order to compensate for their own positions of servitude in life.

Saving the children seems increasingly hopeless to her, but the Governess resists a direct challenge from Miles to write to his uncle, informing him of the situation, until Miss Jessel appears in the schoolroom and threatens her.

That night, with renewed determination, the Governess presses Miles to confess the cause of his expulsion from school, but Peter Quint intervenes, preventing the confession and prompting the boy to steal the letter the Governess has finally written.

Miles is next seen at the piano, enchanting the ladies with his musical skill. While he plays, Flora is able to lull Mrs. Grose to sleep with a song and slip out of the house. When the Governess suddenly realizes Flora has disappeared, she rouses the housekeeper and they both dash after her, leaving Miles to revel in this latest turn of events.

Flora is found at the lake, where Miss Jessel again appears. The Governess challenges little Flora to acknowledge the ghost, but she does not, and instead declares the Governess “Cruel, horrible, hateful, nasty!” The next morning, Mrs. Grose agrees to whisk the girl away to her uncle.

Left alone with Miles, the Governess again presses him to reveal his secret—his tormentor—but, warned by Quint, the boy holds out for some time until finally bursting out, “Peter Quint, you devil!”

The Governess, assuming she has triumphed, is horrified to realize Miles has collapsed in death.



Initial costume sketches by Set & Costume Designer Shawn Kerwin.

Artist Profiles



KIRSTEN MACKINNON | Governess

In her début with Pacific Opera Victoria as Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Canadian soprano Kirsten MacKinnon has captured the attention of audiences across North America and Europe. Recently, Ms. MacKinnon sang Christine in *La Reine-garçon* with Canadian Opera Company, Opéra de Montréal as the Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro*, returned to Vancouver Opera as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* as well as Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Opera Regio di Torino.



ISAIAH BELL | Peter Quint

Last at Pacific Opera Victoria: *The Book of My Shames* (autobiographical solo show). Premières: Rufus Wainwright and Daniel MacIvor's *Hadrian* (Canadian Opera Company); *La Reine-garçon* by Julien Bilodeau and Michel Marc Bouchard (Opéra de Montréal, Canadian Opera Company); Isaiah's original COVID-set translation/adaptation of Poulenc's *La voix humaine* (City Opera Vancouver); première recording of Mendelssohn's Matthew Passion transcription (Bach Choir of Bethlehem). Upcoming: *Jenůfa* at Opéra de Montréal, workshops for *The Seer* (original opera with composer Vanessa Chartrand-Rodrigue).



MARS YOUNG | Miles

Mars Young makes their Pacific Opera Victoria début as Miles in *The Turn of the Screw*. A lifelong performer, they are a local, classically trained singer and actor. Mars' recent credits include Kaleidoscope Performing Arts Studio's productions of *42nd Street*, *Anything Goes*, and *Sideshow*, as well as Claremont Secondary's productions of *Mamma Mia*, *Anything Goes*, *SpongeBob the Musical*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. They receive formal vocal training and have sung in multiple choral ensembles.



JAKE APRICITY HETHERINGTON | Flora

Jake Apricity Hetherington is the youngest performer to play the title role in *The Little Prince* (Pacific Opera Victoria, 2025). She has earned gold medals from the Royal Conservatory of Music, appeared on Netflix's *Virgin River*, and trained at Broadway Artist Alliance NYC. Jake has performed with Vancouver Opera and UBC Opera, and her dream is to inspire a new generation to fall in love with opera.



CATHERINE DANIEL | Mrs. Grose

Edmonton-based mezzo Catherine Daniel is thrilled to be making her début in Pacific Opera Victoria's production of *The Turn of the Screw*. Career highlights include: debuting Katie Allen at the Spoleto Festival and singing Emelda Griffiths with l'Opéra de Montréal. Ms. Daniel studied voice with coluratura soprano Tracy Dahl. She has completed two ensembles: Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal and Opera Studio Nederlands. Catherine recently completed her Master's in Vocal Performance with tenor John Tessier.



JONELLE SILLS | Miss Jessel

Jonelle Sills, named one of CBC Music's 30 hot classical musicians under 30, makes her Pacific Opera début with *The Turn of the Screw*. Recent and upcoming highlights include Mimi in *La bohème* (Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera), the National Ballet of Canada's *Anna Karenina*, and Roselinde in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (Edmonton Opera). With the Canadian Art Song Project, Jonelle was nominated for a 2025 Juno Award for *Known to Dreamers: Black Voices in Canadian Art Song*.



BENJAMIN BRITTEN | Composer

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) was one of the 20th century's foremost composers, renowned for his operas, orchestral works, and choral music. A master of lyricism and dramatic tension, he brought fresh vitality to English opera with works like *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, and *The Turn of the Screw*. His music often explores themes of innocence, morality, and human vulnerability. Britten left a lasting legacy as composer, conductor, and pianist.



MYFANWY PIPER | Librettist

Myfanwy Piper (1911–1997) was a distinguished British librettist, critic, and art historian. She is best known for her collaborations with composer Benjamin Britten, crafting the libretti for *The Turn of the Screw*, *Owen Wingrave*, and *Death in Venice*, works that shaped modern English opera. Beyond opera, Piper wrote perceptive art criticism and supported her husband, painter John Piper, in his creative career. Her refined literary voice and deep insight into storytelling left a lasting mark on 20th-century culture.



Creative Team



HENRY JAMES | Original Author

Henry James (1843–1916) was an American-born British writer, celebrated for his novels, short stories, and criticism. Renowned for his psychological insight and nuanced prose, he explored themes of consciousness and morality. His works include *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *The Wings of the Dove*. James's innovative narrative style profoundly influenced modern fiction, securing his place among the most important literary figures of his era.



GIUSEPPE PIETRAROIA | Conductor

Canadian conductor Giuseppe Pietraroia has earned a national reputation for his versatility, musicality, and leadership across both orchestral and operatic stages. Based in British Columbia, he is the Principal Conductor of Pacific Opera Victoria, where he has held leadership roles since 2003. He previously served as Associate Conductor with both Pacific Opera and the Victoria Symphony, and was Music Director of the Victoria Choral Society from 2005 to 2012.



MICHAEL SHAMATA | Stage Director

Michael Shamata returns to Pacific Opera Victoria, having previously directed *La bohème* in 2011. That same year, he directed the world première of Andrew MacDonald and Stephen Massicote's *Mary's Wedding*, commissioned by Pacific Opera. During the pandemic, he staged and filmed Jake Heggie's *For a Look or a Touch*. An award-winning director, he is currently in his 19th and final season as Artistic Director of the Belfry Theatre.



SHAWN KERWIN | Set & Costume Designer

Shawn is thrilled to return to Pacific Opera. Past productions include *The Barber of Seville*, *Eugene Onegin*, *La Cenerentola*, and *Il trovatore*. Recent set and costume designs include: *Playing Shylock* (Canadian Stage, opening in NYC in October); *The Goat* (Stratford Festival); *The 52* (Luminato Festival); *Come From Away* (Gander); *The Lehman Trilogy* (Belfry Theatre), and *Between Breaths* (Artistic Fraud). Upcoming: *You Always* (Canadian Stage); and *Casey and Diana* (Belfry Theatre). She is Professor Emeritus, Department of Theatre, York University.



LEIGH ANN VARDY | Lighting Designer

Leigh Ann Vardy has designed lighting for *For a Look or a Touch* with Pacific Opera Victoria, among many other acclaimed productions across Canada. Recent credits include *The Lehman Trilogy* (Belfry Theatre), *Controlled Damage*, *Frozen* (Neptune Theatre), *Fall on Your Knees* (Canadian Stage/NAC), and *Come From Away* (NL Arts & Culture Centres). She also designed the world première of *Noli Timere* in Princeton, NJ, with choreographer Rebecca Lazier and sculptor Janet Echelman.



MARIJKA ASBEEK BRUSSE | Stage Manager

Based in Vancouver, Marijka is delighted to return to Pacific Opera, having previously worked on *For a Look or a Touch* (ASM), *Flight of the Hummingbird* (SM, school tour, co-production with Vancouver Opera), and *Fidelio* (ASM). Other highlights include *Wozzeck* (ASM, Canadian Opera Company), *Take This Waltz* (SM, Ne.Sans Opera & Dance), *La traviata* (SM, Vancouver Opera), *Silent Light* (SM, Banff Centre for Performing Arts) and *The Overcoat* (ASM, Canadian Stage / Tapestry Opera / Vancouver Opera).



KELSEY CAIN | Assistant Stage Manager

Kelsey is thrilled to return to Pacific Opera Victoria as Assistant Stage Manager for *The Turn of the Screw*. A Victoria local and UVic BFA Theatre graduate, her Pacific Opera Victoria credits include *Odyssey* (SM), *La clemenza di Tito*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Die Walküre* (ASM). She looks forward to continuing with Pacific Opera this season as Assistant Stage Manager.



KATERINA SOKYRKO | Assistant Stage Manager

Katerina is thrilled to be returning to Pacific Opera. Her previous credits include *Rigoletto*, *The Little Prince*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Ainadamar*, *Die Walküre*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Birds*, *Don Giovanni*, *Flight*, *Il trittico*, *La traviata*, *La bohème*, *Les Feluettes*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Missing*. Elsewhere, recent shows include *1979* (Belfry Theatre); *A WONDERHEADS Christmas Carol* (WONDERHEADS); *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Jersey Boys*, *Anne of Green Gables* (Charlottetown Festival); *Hamlet-911* (Stratford Festival); and five seasons at the Blyth Festival.



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**playing in the chamber orchestra for The Turn of the Screw*

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A soprano, Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, is performing on stage. She is wearing a long, flowing, bright yellow gown and has her eyes closed in a moment of intense emotion. She is standing in front of a grand piano. The stage is lit with warm, golden light. In the background, there are large green plants and a floral arrangement with sunflowers and red flowers. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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Andrew Love as The Pilot with the cast and members of the Victoria Children's Choir, in *The Little Prince*. Pacific Opera Victoria, 2025. Photo by Tim Matheson.





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The Flight of the Hummingbird 2020. Sara Adèle Schabas as Dukdukdiya/Hummingbird. Photo: Tim Matheson
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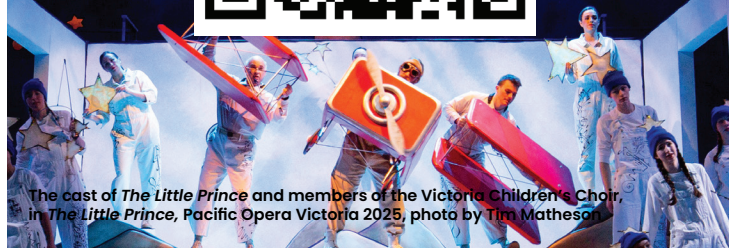
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The cast of *The Little Prince* and members of the Victoria Children's Choir,
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Kaidyn Robertson as Odysseus with the cast of *Odysseus*, Pacific Opera Victoria 2025, Photo by Arcade Pallot

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