

FALL **BRAVO!** 2015

PORTLAND ACTRESS
BETH MADSEN
BRADFORD IS MS.
GROSE IN EUGENE
OPERA'S *THE TURN
OF THE SCREW*

Creepy Spooks for Opera Folks

EUGENE OPERA LAUNCHES SEASON WITH *THE TURN OF THE SCREW*

BY WILLIAM KENNEDY

This year, Eugene Opera will be twice as nice, boasting an expanded production schedule.

The run kicks off with two performances of Benjamin Britten's classic *The Turn of the Screw*, Oct. 30 and Nov. 1, at the Hult Center.

"This is a new direction for us," director Mark Beaudert tells *EW*. "It's exciting to increase our presence in the community."

This season, Eugene Opera will present two chamber operas (*Little Women* runs May 14-15) in the Hult Center's smaller Soreng Theater — an appropriate venue for the more intimate style of opera.

"I'm looking forward to getting into the new space," Beaudert says, "and using it to its full extent in terms of staging."

The Turn of the Screw is based on Henry James' classic novella of the same name, published in 1898. "I'm very happy we're beginning this process with this particular opera," Beaudert says. "It's a gothic ghost story," he adds, perfect for Halloween.

"The doings take place in a remote country house," Beaudert explains. "A governess is hired to take care of two children." As time goes on, Beaudert says, things get more and more mysterious — and sinister.

Spoiler alert: "The house is haunted," Beaudert says, "by the ghosts of two former employees. Not everyone gets out alive."

University of Oregon voice instructor Laura Decher Wayte plays the role of the governess. "Halloween is a perfect date to present *Turn of the Screw*," Wayte says. "It is a creepy story where things are not clear or understood, so the mind makes assumptions."

Beaudert says *The Turn of the Screw* gives Eugene Opera an opportunity to explore things in a non-standard way.

"Opera's part of lyric theater," Beaudert says, noting that there are many ways to approach the genre. "When we're in the 'big house,' the 'big space,' the Silva Auditorium — that's appropriate for the big operas that everybody knows," he adds.

Turn of the Screw features 13 instrumentalists and six singers, including another Eugene local, Carolyn Quick, and Portland actress Beth Madsen Bradford. "*Turn of the Screw* was written as a chamber opera," Beaudert says, "which means [Britten's] original intention was to use smaller voices."

"It is a much more intimate experience," Wayte says of performing chamber opera. "We performers always feel closer to the ears and the emotions of the audience, and I have always enjoyed that."

"This is very welcoming," Beaudert says. "It's terrific drama. And that's what I would say to people who don't think of themselves as operagoers: Set aside that word opera and all its connotations." ■

The Turn of the Screw runs 7:30 pm Friday, Oct. 30, and 2:30 pm Sunday, Nov. 1, in the Soreng Theater at The Hult

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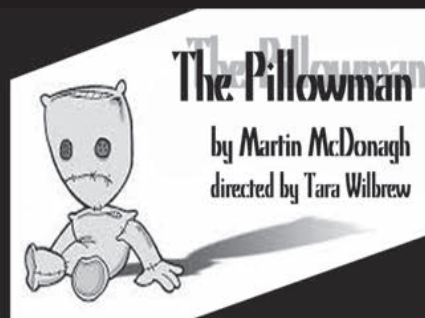
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