

NEWS RELEASE

**Wilfrid Laurier
University**



Theatre Laurier and Faculty of Music revive Purcell's *Indian Queen*
First time baroque piece performed in its original semi-opera form in North America

For Immediate Release

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WATERLOO – The Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty of Music and Theatre Laurier are partnering to present the first North American performance of *The Indian Queen* in its original semi-opera form. Two performances of this baroque restoration tragedy, with music by Henry and Daniel Purcell, will be held at 8 p.m. on January 28 and 29 in Laurier's Theatre Auditorium.

Staged by Michael Purves-Smith and Adam Qualter, this production of *The Indian Queen* provides a rare opportunity to hear a Purcell opera as people of the 17th century would have experienced it. Completed in 1695, it offers a complex and somewhat bizarre story full of melodrama, dancing and stage magic. As the reigning composer of his time, some of Henry Purcell's most beautiful and characteristic music is featured in this performance.

"Our approach has been to make this performance as much of a spectacle as it would have been in the late 17th century," says Purves-Smith. "Very few people worldwide work on historical acting, and we're also trying to recreate the choreography, speaking style, costumes and instrumentation of the time. This is a huge project and one that universities rarely try."

Almost 90 people are involved in this performance, from actors, singers, dancers and backstage crew to Laurier's WLU Baroque Orchestra and WLU Chapel Choir. Drawing heavily on the resources of the Stratford Festival, it features costumes by Helen Basson, choreography by well-known baroque dance specialist Edgar Tumak and set by Qualter.

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Delayed by disputes in the London theatrical world, the first known performance of the *Indian Queen* did not take place until April 1696. Like many other dramas of the period, it is set in the Spanish Indies and offers a bracing, exotic plot, a strong score, plenty of special effects and a great deal of variety.

The *Indian Queen* was Henry Purcell's last work. Originally written in semi-opera form, it features a spoken play with text by John Dryden and Robert, Earl of Howard, along with a series of interpolated sung masques, dances and instrumental numbers. Today, all that is left of the original creation is the excerpted concert music, which has remained popular over the centuries. The Laurier performance will offer true restoration theatre.

Tickets for the performances at Laurier cost \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors and \$7 for students and are available at the door.