

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier music faculty takes *Street Scene* opera production to Guelph Tour marks first for River Run Centre and several firsts for University's opera program

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WATERLOO – The Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty of Music's production of Kurt Weill's Broadway opera *Street Scene* marks many firsts, not only for the opera program but for the City of Guelph as well – the program's first tour, its first partnership with the University Players, its first new director since 1995 and the River Run Centre's first opera performance.

Playing in Laurier's Theatre Auditorium at 8 p.m. on March 1 and 2, *Street Scene* moves to the River Run Centre for a special performance at 3 p.m. on March 4. Set on the Lower East Side of New York in the 1940s, *Street Scene* takes place outside a tenement and tells the story of a tumultuous day in the life of the Maurant family. The mother is frustrated by her husband and is having an affair, the daughter is frustrated with her parents and aspires to better things, the father learns of his wife's affair and reacts with tragic consequences.

"*Street Scene* has something for everyone – a variety of music from classical to jazz and an interesting mixture of comedy and tragedy. It's a very powerful show," says musical director Leslie De'Ath. "I've always wanted to do a touring show like this and *Street Scene* is the best choice because it not only plays to the Faculty of Music's strengths, but it's well-suited to the River Run Centre's stage and audience."

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Since most opera productions are mounted by much larger and more expensive companies, it's not usually feasible to bring opera to a venue the size of the River Run Centre. As a university with smaller opera productions, however, Laurier has the ability to fill a niche in the regional arts scene while reaching out to the community.

“We look at what are the genres of performing arts that we'd like to get on the stage and opera is the one that has eluded us,” says River Run Centre general manager Rob Mackay. “This will be our first time putting on opera and we're quite excited. I've always had the impression that there is a demand for it in Guelph.”

Taking a production on tour poses a number of unique challenges, especially with set design and costs. The opera program's partnership with the University Players not only met these challenges, but also brought in the extra actors needed to fill the opera's many walk-on roles. In addition to Laurier's opera students, the *Street Scene* cast also includes three alumni – tenor Mark Rowsom, baritone Kevin Bradshaw and tenor Brian Duyn who has performed in productions like *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Marilyn Powell directs Laurier's opera production for the first time this year and is only the third stage director at Laurier in the last 20 years. She has directed productions for the Manitoba Opera, the University of Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company (COC) Ensemble and the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus, in addition to assistant directing many main stage productions for the COC.

Tickets for the Laurier performances of *Street Scene* are \$10 for seniors and students and \$15 for adults and can be purchased at the door. River Run Centre tickets are \$10 and \$20 and are available through the Centre's box office at (519) 763-3000.