

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier Brantford brings Peking opera to Brantford

William Lau and visiting performers from China expose students to unique art form

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BRANTFORD – Brantford residents will have a rare opportunity to experience Peking opera when a new professor at Wilfrid Laurier University hosts a guest lecture and demonstration. One of the world’s finest performers of this unique art form, William Lau, and other performers will be at Laurier Brantford on October 5.

Peking opera synthesizes and harmonizes dance, song, theatre, mime, martial arts and poetry, and is often referred to as ‘total theatre’. Only men were allowed to perform in the operas prior to the communist revolution and female roles were played by males. Today, both traditional and contemporary plays are performed, and natural talent and artistic skills, rather than gender, determine the actor’s role.

Laurier Brantford professor Annette Chrétien is bringing Lau and his troupe, along with members who are visiting from China, to Brantford as guest lecturers and performers for her Music of the World course.

“It is a great honour and privilege to host these international performers here in Brantford,” says Chrétien. “Seldom do we have such an opportunity for an intimate performance and learning experience by such renowned teachers.”

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Lau is one of the premiere dan (male playing a female role) performers of Peking opera in Canada and the artistic director of the Little Pear Garden Collective, a cultural organization which develops and promotes Chinese performing arts in Canada. He will be joined by Lu Min, principal actor with the prestigious Shanghi Peking Opera Company, and Liu Nim Zhong, an award-winning performer. Zhang Lili, a graduate and former teacher at the Chinese Opera Academy, who now lives and performs in Toronto, will also perform.

The lecture will cover the history of Peking opera, its symbolic gestures and dance, stylized voice and singing, traditional and contemporary repertoires, orientation to makeup and costumes, and a performance demonstration. It will also explain the four major role categories, which are sheng or male, dan or female, jing or painted face, and c hou or clown.

Chrétien comes to Laurier Brantford from York University's doctoral program in ethnomusicology. She teaches contemporary studies, indigenous studies and music, and is one of 10 new faculty members hired this year to keep up with the growth of the downtown campus. Started in 1999 with 39 full-time students, Laurier Brantford now has approximately 1,000 students attending classes in the Carnegie building, The Odeon and Grand River Hall.

The Peking Opera lecture and performance demonstration will take place in The Odeon 4 to 6 p.m. This event is open to the public. Admission is \$5 for students and \$10 for non-students.

Chrétien will host two other open lectures in her course. November 2 will feature a workshop and lecture by Erynn Marshall, who will discuss fiddling styles from around the world and perform Appalachian fiddling. Judith Cohen will perform and conduct a workshop on Sephardic Jewish traditional music on November 23.