



Kimberly Barber, Associate Dean: External
Faculty of Music, Wilfrid Laurier University
kbarber@wlu.ca

Lori Chalmers Morrison, Director: Integrated Communications
External Relations, Wilfrid Laurier University
lchalmersmorrison@wlu.ca

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Opera Laurier welcomes back live audiences for *History by Her*, a triple bill of historical shows by Canadian composers

WATERLOO – Opera Laurier, based at Wilfrid Laurier University’s Faculty of Music, is excited to welcome back live audiences with a triple bill, including productions of Monica Pearce’s *Etiquette*, Cecilia Livingston’s *Singing Only Softly*, and the exciting premiere of Ashley Seward’s *Borderless*, a new work co-commissioned by Opera Laurier and Loose Tea Music Theatre.

The performances will take place at the Maureen Forrester Recital Hall on the Waterloo campus March 4 and 5 at 7:30 p.m. and March 6 at 3 p.m. Tickets are available through [Eventbrite](#) on Feb. 24 and are free for all students and \$20 for adults and \$12 for seniors.

Directed by Loose Tea Music Theatre Founder and Executive Artistic Director Alaina Viau, these three works carry you through history from a female composer’s perspective. The performances will be conducted by Music Director Emily Hamper and accompanied by Opera Diploma piano student Marko Pejanovic. Set designer Holly Meyer-Dymny has partnered with Viau to create a versatile set, which seamlessly transforms into the three strikingly different points in history the show inhabits. With costume realizations done by Inez Khan, this show promises an immersion into history through a feminine lens.

The first show in the program, *Etiquette*, is a one-act opera composed by Monica Pearce in 2014, with a libretto by John Terauds. It portrays Dorothy Parker, Emily Post and Nancy Astor in a 1920s scandal: Parker has written a scathing review of Post’s *Etiquette* in the New Yorker. Post and Astor discuss the book and its rules against the backdrop of scandal and hardship, while Parker advises readers to disregard its advice.

Borderless, the second show, delves into the Caribbean and the story of non-binary/gender-defying pirate leaders Anne Bonny (Bonn) and Mary Reed (Mark). *Borderless* opens roles for non-binary and transgender singers while also allowing for different relationship dynamics on stage. By choosing the setting of the pirate society for this opera, students can explore a story in a progressive society supporting all genders, races, sexualities and relationships.

For the last show, Loose Tea Music Theatre is bringing their Dora Mavor Moore Award-nominated opera, *Singing Only Softly*, to the stage for the second time with Opera Laurier students. Inspired by the redacted entries and newly discovered pages of Anne Frank’s diary, this opera explores a more nuanced character than the one that is presented in the redacted diary. Contrary to Otto Frank’s version, which flattens his daughter’s character to that of an innocent child, *Singing Only Softly* showcases the more complex, self-aware and self-represented woman Anne Frank articulated herself to be.

The Opera Laurier cast is made of Laurier voice students who enroll in the Practice of Opera course. Each semester, students in the course produce a fully staged performance: in the fall semester, an evening of operatic scenes that share a central theme, and this winter, an exciting triple bill consisting of three smaller works, two of which include a small ensemble of instrumentalists and one accompanied by piano.

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The curriculum guides students through a hands-on experience of opera, learning the intricacies of operatic performance both on and off stage. Students learn at least one small to large role each semester and are provided one-on-one coachings with coach accompanists, where they explore arias and role studies to deepen their operatic studies. Students are also taught production skills, such as marketing, costuming, props, staging and stage management.

Laurier's production partner, Loose Tea Music Theatre was founded in 2013 and centres its creations on addressing critical social issues and curating ensembles that showcase the diversity of humanity. Opera Laurier's mandate is to create new and reimagined music theatre productions in an inclusive and compassionate environment that supports creators and welcomes diversity in creation.

Members of the media are welcome to attend Opera Laurier's dress rehearsals of *History by Her* on Feb. 28 and March 1 (afternoon and evening). Please email Kimberly Barber, administrative coordinator of the program, at kbarber@wlu.ca for details.

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