

The Turn of the Screw An opera by Benjamin Britten

April 25-28, 2019

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This production will run approximately 2 hours with one 15-minute intermission.

Special thanks to

- · Norcostco, for costumes
- · Altius Quartet, for playing in the orchestra



Content note

This production explores themes of physical and sexual abuse.

Cast

	Thursday/Saturday	Friday/Sunday
Role	Name	Name
The Prologue/Quint	David Starry	Alex King
The Governess	Elza Picasso-Hobin	Sabina Balsamo
Miles	Megan Pryor	Tyler Vinnola
Flora	Sophia Zervas	Mara Riley
Mrs. Grose	Natalie Simpson	Rebecca Myers
Miss Jessel	Emily Skeen	Erin Hodgson

Orchestra

Violin	Ì
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Andrew Giordano Joshua Ulrich

Viola

Andrew Krimm

Cello

Robert Erhard

Double bass

Andrew Sproule

Flute

Colleen White

Oboe

Heather Macdonald

Clarinet

David Leech

Bassoon

Kaori Uno-Jack

Horn

Katherine Smith

Percussion

Christopher Martin

Piano

Nathália Kato

Harp

Janet Harriman

Production staff

Stage Director Leigh Holman

Music Director and Conductor Jeremy Reger

Scenic Designer
Bruce Bergner

Assistant Scenic Designer Veronica Rodriguez **Projection Designers** lain Court, Teri Wagner

Assistant Projection Designer Erin Carlson

Lighting DesignerMark J. Gabriel DeBell

Costume Designer Tom Robbins **Technical Director**

Ron Mueller

Assistant DirectorDominic Aragon

Opera TA Erin Hodgson

Production Assistant Christie Conover

Production and technical staff

Assistant Technical Director Jeff Rusnak

Production Stage Manager Joel Atella

Assistant Stage Managers

Alaina Brown Brandon Tyler Padgett

Carpenters

Andrew Koenig, Ben Smith, Dan Sjaastad, Justin Tamplin

Scenic Artist Jennifer Melcher

Assistant Scenic Artist Lelah Radostis Makeup Designer Jeanette Hickok

Hand Properties & Wig Designer

Tom Robbins

Hair Stylist Chad Boltz

Costume Stitcher Alison Milan

Costume Assistant
Yvonne Hines

MUSIC STAFF Head Vocal Coach/Chorus Master Jeremy Reger Vocal Coach Mutsumi Moteki

Rehearsal Pianists Sam Bachelder, Nathália Kato, Barbie Noyes

STAGE CREW Light Board Operator Reed Otto

Projections Operator Andrew Taylor

Deck Crew Ben Smith Kristianne Ibsen

Supertitles Creator/OperatorBarbie Noyes

Synopsis

ACT I

Prologue: A narrator introduces the story of young woman who is offered a position as the Governess of two children: a niece and nephew of a handsome, bold businessman working in London. The Governess is tasked with "doing everything" for the children and is expressly told never to write or to worry their uncle. Despite some concerns, she accepts the position.

The coach ride: On her coach ride to their country home, Bly House, the Governess ponders what awaits her. In a moment of foreboding, she asks herself, "What could go wrong?"

Bly House: Two beautiful and charming children—Miles and Flora—are just as excited and anxious to meet their new Governess as she is to meet them. Once she arrives, she is welcomed by Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, who shares that the children are good and bright but a bit too lively for an old housekeeper to care for alone. Later, a letter arrives and informs the Governess of Miles' expulsion from school because of "an injury to his friends..." Initially, both Mrs. Grose and the Governess find the news shocking, as they both believe Miles to be generally gentle and even angelic. They decide the letter must be a "wicked lie," and decide not to discuss it further or contact the children's uncle. As summer progresses, the Governess becomes more comfortable in her position. She walks through the grounds, lamenting that her employer can't see how well she does his bidding. When she reaches a tower on the grounds, she sees a stranger in the window. The unknown man vanishes before the Governess can identify him.

A few days later, while the children play together, the Governess sees the same mysterious man peering into a window at Bly. Mrs. Grose finds the Governess in her shocked state. When the Governess shares what she has seen, Mrs. Grose reveals that the unknown man resembles the old valet of the estate, a man named Peter Quint. Mrs. Grose confesses she always feared Quint and felt he was too "free" with both the children and the previous governess, Miss Jessel. Finally, she shares that both Peter Quint and Miss Jessel have died. Upon hearing Quint's history, the Governess swears to protect the children from his ghost. Strange things begin to happen around the house. During a Latin lesson, Miles sings an unnerving song which the Governess does not recall teaching him. While Flora plays with her doll near a lake on the Bly estate, the Governess sees a woman watching them across the lake who she believes is the deceased Miss Jessel. When both Quint and Jessel lure the children out of bed one night, the Governess interrupts their connection to the children and confronts Miles. Miles cries, "You see! I am bad! I am bad, aren't !?"

ACT II

Quint and Jessel discuss their intentions regarding the children. The Governess, in distress, questions what to do next, as she fears she is lost and surrounded by evil.

A church: As Mrs. Grose, the Governess and the children walk to church, the two women debate whether or not to write to the uncle. The Governess isn't sure what she'd say—she fears she or the children might be going mad. Mrs. Grose urges her not to worry. Out of earshot of the others, Miles reveals to the Governess his knowledge of "the others" and insinuates she do something about it.

Bly House: The Governess discovers Miss Jessel seated at her schoolroom desk. After commanding Miss Jessel to leave, the Governess finally writes to her employer and urges him for help. The Governess tells Miles she has written to his uncle for help and pleads with the boy to open up to her about both his past and present. When Quint overhears, he coerces Miles to steal the Governess' letter.

While Miles plays piano in the schoolroom, Flora tricks Mrs. Grose into falling asleep so she can slip away. The Governess gathers Mrs. Grose to rescue Flora from Miss Jessel, leaving Miles indoors. She fears that he is already lost to Quint. The women find Flora by the lake. Miss Jessel appears to the Governess but not to Mrs. Grose. When Flora, too, aggressively denies seeing Miss Jessel, the Governess is left broken and defeated. Back in the house, Mrs. Grose informs the Governess that she will take Flora away from Bly after Flora confessed unspeakable horrors in her dreams. The Governess then confronts Miles about her missing letter, but it is too late. Miles dies in her arms after speaking Peter Quint's name.

Notes from Leigh Holman Stage director

Novelist Henry James is not new to opera at CU. Writer Colm Tóibín spent a CU NOW (CU New Opera Workshop) season with us as we workshopped his multi-award winning novel turned libretto, *The Master* (with composer Alberto Caruso) in summer of 2014. Since reading Tóibín's novel about the inner life of author Henry James and workshopping *The Master* (the opera) with director Ron Daniels, I have longed to bring James' *The Turn of the Screw* back to our stage. Not the first production presented here (last produced in 2004 by my esteemed predecessor Bill Gustafson), this opera is a haunting, brilliantly composed masterpiece perfectly fitting for our students' voices and our intimate Music Theatre venue.

This year, we bring a new production inspired by German expressionism—and created by artistic team scenic designer Bruce Bergner, projection designers lain Court and Teri Wagner, and lighting designer Mark Gabriel DeBell—to Eklund Opera. I have long wanted to direct this piece and with projected images to further highlight the Gothic feel of Bly House, the supernatural and the haunting whole tone music of Britten. This is truly a dream come true, and I am grateful to conductor Jeremy Reger for proposing the idea last year.

When directing *The Turn of the Screw*, two questions always emerge: Is the Governess insane and imagining the supernatural goings on at Bly House—or are we truly haunted by former governess Miss Jessel and valet Peter Quint? Throughout our process of bringing this piece to the stage, we have found our way into this chilling story and together with our student actors, we have discovered answers through intense work in rehearsals, creating backstories for these characters and making artistic choices based on the music and words that Benjamin Britten, Myfanwy Piper and the novelist himself, Henry James, offer us.

Why is it that we as audiences of TV, movies, plays and operas want to be scared stiff? Why do these haunting psychological journeys pique our interest? The mystery of the supernatural and the human psyche seem to be the focus of much of our art throughout time—the mind loves the puzzle, the body loves the feel of the heartbeat and the spirit longs for the unexplainable. Enjoy your journey.

Notes from Jeremy Reger Music director

Benjamin Britten was my gateway drug into the opera world. I remember watching the giant crowd scene from *Peter Grimes* for the first time when I was but seventeen. The entire chorus hunts Peter down and screams his name, "Grimes! Peter Grimes!" It is such an invigorating and exciting moment in music, and I knew I had to be part of whatever I was witnessing.

The Turn of the Screw is one of the most chilling and disturbing operas in the repertoire. We start with Henry James' ambiguous and horror-filled short story of the same name. The librettist, Myfanwy Piper, and Britten transformed the tale into a musical composition that leaves the audience with few answers. Are the ghosts real? Is the Governess mad? Truth is concealed, and innocence is lost. The only line not inspired by Henry James, but rather by poet W.B. Yeats, is the Act II opening: "The ceremony of innocence is drowned." In our modern society, with truth always being questioned, what is the importance of innocence?

Britten uses every note in this score to take the audience on a rollercoaster ride of ambiguity and terror. Early 20th century extended compositional techniques can often be difficult for an audience to take, but with Britten's master hand, everything serves the dramatic action. After the opening prelude, the orchestra enters with a 12-tone theme that is manipulated in between each of the 16 scenes by a set of variations that create the atmosphere for the scene to come. Each dramatic scene also features a different instrument in the ensemble. And what an orchestra score! This is an exceptional tour de force for the instrumentalists. With only 13 in the orchestra, every player needs a soloistic approach to tell this fascinating story.

Within this tightly controlled compositional architecture, Britten weaves his fascinating characters in and out of the music, never clarifying who is the actual protagonist and antagonist. Is the Governess really protecting the children, or is she leading the descent into madness? How can the ghosts be evil when their music is often times the most lyrical, the most beautiful? Britten invites us to board this unstable ride and enjoy the ever-shifting perspectives of this tragic and tormented tale. In our contemporary society where we are so often asked to choose sides, isn't it exciting, even a little bit scary, to live in the gray area of mystery and murkiness for a few hours? Whether this is your first experience with opera or you have been bitten by the Britten bug, I hope that our love of this piece is as infectious and eye opening as my first experience with his music.

The company

Sabina Balsamo-The Governess

Sabina Balsamo is a first-year master's student studying vocal performance at The University of Colorado Boulder. Balsamo grew up in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, and began singing with local groups in Pittsburgh such as the Pittsburgh Savoyards and Pittsburgh Festival Opera where she performed Mabel in The Pirates of Penzance, Elsie in The Yeomen of The Guard, Rose in Ruddigore, Fredrika in A Little Night Music and Mickey in Damn Yankees. As an undergraduate at Baldwin Wallace University, she sang Blanche in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Polly in The Threepenny Opera, Pitti-Sing in The Mikado, and has participated in The Bach Choir. She has also premiered the role of Anne in Verlorene Heimat and has been involved in the workshop for The House of Bernarda Alba, which will premiere next year with the Cleveland Opera Theater. Last semester, Balsamo performed the role of Maria in West Side Story and now she is thrilled to be a part of The Turn of the Screw with the Eklund Opera. Balsamo is a student of John Seesholtz.

Erin Hodgson-Miss Jessel

Erin Hodgson has appeared with the Minnesota Opera in *Turandot* and *Rusalka*. Hodgson graduated with a bachelor's degree in music from Oberlin Conservatory studying under Salvatore Champagne. Hodgson is a second-year master's student at CU Boulder. She premiered with Eklund Opera as the role of Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* in spring of 2018. Hodgson has three directing credits with Eklund Opera—her

assistant directing premiere with Eklund Opera was *The Merry Widow*, she was the associate director of *Ariodante*, as well as the assistant director of *West Side Story*. Hodgson is a student of Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson and Matthew Chellis.

Alex King-The Prologue/Quint

Alex King moved to Boulder to pursue graduate studies in vocal performance. He received his bachelor's degree in double bass performance from Minot State University in North Dakota. He has had the opportunity to perform in productions of Carmen, The Magic Flute, The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, The Merry Widow, Sweeney Todd, and most recently, Eklund Opera's production of Ariodante. King has also served as principal bassist for the Minot Symphony Orchestra and Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra. Originally from the Northwoods of Wisconsin, he has a passion for the outdoors, and in his free time he enjoys hiking and fishing. King also has a passion for teaching voice and is a studio teacher at the Lesson Studio in Boulder. He will be continuing his education by pursuing a DMA in vocal performance and pedagogy starting in fall 2019. King is a student of Matthew Chellis.

Rebecca Myers-Mrs. Grose

A second-year master's student at University of Colorado Boulder, Rebecca Myers earned her bachelor's degree from Eastern Michigan University. Myers debuted with Eklund Opera last April as the title role in Handel's *Ariodante*, and had the pleasure of participating in the Composer's Fellowship Initiative of CU NOW last May. Other role credits include: Cherubino (Le Nozze di Figaro), Prince Orlofsky (Die Fledermaus) and Zita (Gianni Schicchi). Most recently, Myers performed as Olga in Eklund Opera's production of Eugene Onegin. Myers is very excited to be part of this ghost story as Mrs. Grose. Myers is a student of Abigail Nims.

Elza Picasso-The Governess

Elza Picasso, a Colorado native, is a first-year master's student studying with Abigail Nims. Picasso graduated from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Rochester with a dual degree in vocal performance and ecology and evolutionary biology. Through Eastman Opera she performed the roles of Esmeralda (*Bartered Bride*), Geraldine (*A Hand of Bridge*), Clara (*Signor Deluso*) and Sara Jane Moore (*Assassins*). The Governess is Picasso's first role with Eklund Opera and is thrilled to be a part of this story.

Megan Pryor-Miles

Megan Pryor is currently a sophomore from Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She is studying vocal performance in musical theatre and is thrilled to have the opportunity to work on her first real operatic role! Past roles include Anybodys in *West Side Story*, the Beggar Woman in *Sweeney Todd* and JouJou the grisette in *The Merry Widow*. She had her first professional role at 15 as the second sprite in Opera Colorado's *Die Zauberflöte*. She is a student of Matthew Chellis.

Mara Riley-Flora

Mara Riley is pursuing a double BM in flute and vocal performance, in the respective studios of Christina Jennings and Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson. She has performed with the CU Wind Symphony, Symphony Orchestra, Undergraduate Woodwind Quintet and University Singers. This is her second role with the Eklund Opera Program; she played Clarice/A Girl (singing "Somewhere") in West Side Story. She was named winner of the Undergraduate Vocal Scholarship Competition in both 2018 and 2019 and winner of the Young Musicians Foundation of Colorado competition in 2019. This summer she will attend SongFest at the Colburn School as part of the Young Artist Program.

Natalie Simpson-Mrs. Grose

First-year master's student Natalie Simpson holds a bachelor's degree in cello performance from Adelphi University. Having returned to her hometown to continue her musical education in voice, she is delighted to be studying with John Seesholtz at CU Boulder. Roles performed include Madame Larina in Eklund Opera's recent *Eugene Onegin*, the title role in Handel's *Xerxes*,

Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Alma March (cover) in *Little Women*. Last fall she appeared in Eklund Opera's Scenes showcase, in which she also enjoyed her directorial debut with a scene from Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

Emily Skeen-Miss Jessel

Emily Skeen is a native of the Pacific Northwest and a secondyear master's student in vocal performance. She holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from Portland State University, and has received awards from such organizations as the Metropolitan National Council Auditions and the Viola Vestal Coulter Foundation. This is Skeen's second role with Eklund Opera, having played The Bird Seller in Sweeney Todd last year. Other highlights include: Despina (Cosi Fan Tutte), Marcellina (Le Nozze di Figaro), Suzanne (Un Mari a la Porte), Veronique (Dr. Miracle), Soeur Mathilde (Dialogues des Carmelites), and Bianca (La Rondine). Skeen is a student of Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson.

David Starry—The Prologue/Quint

David Starry is a first-year master's student from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His first appearance at CU was as Arab in West Side Story. Other roles include Tamino in Die Zauberflöte and Hoffmann in The Tales of Hoffmann. Additionally, he is a member of CU's outreach ensemble, Eklund Opera Theater Singers. He is a student of Matthew Chellis.

Tyler Vinnola-Miles

Tyler Vinnola is a sophomore at the University of Colorado Boulder pursuing a BM in vocal performance and a BME, studying with Professor Matthew Chellis and John Seesholtz. Vinnola has been performing consistently for a number of years including appearing with Central City Opera in shows such as Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Verdi's *Tosca*. At CU he has been involved in the Henry Purcell Concert, Songs of East Asia Concert and *Eugene Onegin*. He is very grateful for this chance to perform in his second CU Boulder production and is looking forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Sophia Zervas - Flora

Sophia Zervas is a senior double majoring in voice and piano performance. *The Turn of the Screw* is her fourth production with Eklund Opera. She recently appeared at Cupid in *Ariodante*, First Boy in *Die Zauberflöte* and in the choruses of *West Side Story* and *Die Fledermaus*. Zervas has a special interest in vocal coaching as well as in early and new music. She is a student of Abigail Nims and David Korevaar.

Technical and production staff

Dominic Aragon - Assistant Director

A native of Wichita, Kansas, Dominic Aragon is a first-year artist diploma student. This is his first assistant directing experience with the Eklund Opera Program. Onegin (*Eugene Onegin*), Bernardo (*West Side Story*) CU Boulder, Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*) Opera Fort Collins, Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) Colorado State University, Ariodate (*Serse*) CSU, Fredrik (*A Little Night Music*) CSU, Falke (*Die Fledermaus*) CSU, Escamillo (*The Tragedy of Carmen*) Baldwin Wallace University, Tio (*La Vida Breve*) Ohio Light Opera, Nardo (*La finta giardiniera*) BWU. First Prize, NATS CO/WY Regional Competition, Graduate Division 2017.

Joel Atella-Production Stage Manager

Joel Atella is a native of Fort Collins and is thrilled to be working his first season with the Eklund Opera Program.

Atella graduated with distinction from the Eastman School of Music with a degree in voice performance. Since 2008 he has maintained a freelance career as a stage manager, assistant director and tour manager. Highlights include tour managing for Itzhak Perlman and his *In the Fiddler's House Tour*, two seasons as the resident assistant director for San Diego Opera and working as stage manager for *Yuletide Celebration* with the Indianapolis Symphony. Other companies include Santa Fe Opera, Opera Colorado, Chautauqua Opera, Opera Omaha, Opera Southwest and Syracuse Opera. A 2005 Presidential Scholar in the Arts, Atella is a passionate advocate of the power of music, live theatre and opera.

Bruce Bergner - Set Designer

Bruce Bergner has been an award-winning stage designer in professional theatre and opera for more than 25 years.

With a resume boasting 130 realized designs at reputable companies across the United States, he now is expanding his research into the realm of experience design: the design of live, human experiences such as those found at theme parks, museums, attractions, monuments, in retail and entertainment establishments and at site-specific performance events. He also recently published a theory book on design—*The Poetics of Stage Space: The Theory and Process of Theatrical Scene Design*—to strong reviews. Bergner teaches stage design in the Department of Theatre & Dance at CU Boulder.

Chad Boltz-Head Hair Stylist

Chad Boltz is a Denver-based hair stylist and award-winning National Educator for John Paul Mitchell Systems. He holds a degree in vocal performance from the College of Music and credits his ease on the hair stage to the lessons he learned at CU. Boltz is thrilled to work with Tom, Leigh and the cast and crew of this production.

Christie Conover-Production Assistant

Christie Conover wears many hats, having returned to her alma mater as production assistant for Eklund Opera. Her active solo performance schedule includes appearances this season with the Colorado Symphony, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, Opera Colorado, Longmont Symphony and Opera Steamboat, among others. With Margot Crowe, her CU Adopt-a-Student sponsor from years past, she co-founded and runs the Fine Tuned Society of Colorado, a house concert series providing performance opportunities to CU Boulder music alumni and area musicians. Conover fondly remembers her many roles with CU Opera and singing in the inaugural CU NOW.

Iain Court-Projection Designs

lain Court has lit works in medieval churches, caves, circus tents, on riverbanks and in haunted houses, as well as many theatres. His lighting in dance and other genres has toured Australia, Asia, Europe and North America. He is particularly interested in collaborative new media performance, exploring these areas with Igneous and other companies. He is also a director and performer working with devised performance and musicals. Court has a passion for mentoring new artists. He is currently the Director of Dance Production for the CU Department of Theatre & Dance.

Mark J. Gabriel DeBell-Lighting Designer

Mark J. Gabriel DeBell is a north Denver native and holds a BA from Loretto Heights College. He was a member of the Tony Award-winning Denver Center Theatre Company for 20 years as a stagehand. As a lighting designer, his credits include productions for Opera Colorado, Eklund Opera, Augustina Arts, Swallow Hill Music and Hawaii Performing Arts Company. DeBell joined the SMG Theatrical Services team in July of 2013 as a production manager at the Denver Performing Arts Complex and has advanced over 285 shows in that time. Between his work with the Denver Center Theatre Company, production involvement in the complex with various companies and now with SMG, Mark has worked in the DPAC venues for 35 years.

Leigh Holman-Stage Director

Leigh Holman balances a teaching and professional stage directing career in the United States and abroad. In recent years, she has made directing debuts at the Pafos Aphrodite Festival in Cyprus, L'Opéra de Montréal and Florida Grand Opera. Recent CU Boulder productions include West Side Story, Eugene Onegin, Sweeney Todd and Ariodante. As well-suited to new operatic works as she is to traditional works, Holman has produced and directed workshops of operas in association with composers and librettists, including Jake Heggie, Gene Scheer, Mark Campbell, Mark Adamo, Colm Toibin, Kirke Mechem, Libby Larsen, Lori Laitman, Herschel Garfein, Robert Aldridge, Daniel Kellogg, Alberto Caruso and

Dave Mason. As the founder and artistic/general director of CU Boulder's New Opera Workshop, she continues to passionately promote the creation, collaboration and production of new American works.

Ron Mueller-Technical Director

Ron Mueller has been with Eklund Opera for 20 seasons. His past Eklund Opera productions include *The Rake's Progress*, *La Traviata*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Dead Man Walking*. His other professional credits include Skylight Opera, Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company, Crested Butte Music Festival, Colorado Shakespeare Festival and Boulder Dinner Theatre.

Jeremy Reger-Music Director

International pianist and educator Jeremy Reger maintains an active performing and coaching career. He has served on the music staff of Virginia Opera, Eugene Opera, Hawaii Opera Theater, Mill City Opera, Minnesota Opera, Skylark Opera and Aspen Opera Theater. He recently joined the CU Boulder faculty as a vocal coach. Previously, he taught at the Music Academy of the West, at Christopher Newport University, in Recife, Brazil, and at Indiana University. He has played in the Virginia Symphony, the Williamsburg Symphonia, the Carmel Symphony and the Terre Haute Symphony. Reger earned a doctorate in collaborative piano from the University of Michigan under Martin Katz.

Tom Robbins - Costume Designer

Tom Robbins has been with Eklund Opera for 29 seasons. His past Eklund Opera credits include *Sweeney Todd*, *Don Giovanni*, *Anything Goes*, *Susannah*, *Carousel* and *The Rake's Progress*. His other professional credits include Bonfils Theater, Opera Colorado and Colorado Ballet.

Teri Wagner-Projection Designs

Teri is a multi-disciplinary artist and educator. Her work has been shown and she has taught at the university level in the United States, Europe and Australia. She has collaborated with lain Court and others on many performance design projects, most recently on the CU production of *HAIR*. She is currently faculty and program coordinator of the Experience Design MFA at CU Boulder.

2019-20 season now on sale at cupresents.org