



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
School of Music

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Ahoy! UBC Opera opens 2024/2025 season with Gilbert and Sullivan's beloved comedic operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore*

Kurt Weill's American masterpiece *Street Scene* and Jules Massenet's most enduring opera *Manon* round out the academic year

Vancouver, BC — **UBC Opera** announced its 2024-2025 season today with three varied operas that highlight and challenge the burgeoning talents of the UBC Opera Ensemble. The 29th season invites audiences to experience the full spectrum of opera with the jubilant humour in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, the realist tragedy of *Street Scene*, and the opulence and passion of *Manon*.

"The UBC Opera season offers our students and audiences a wide variety of repertoire spanning from the beloved Gilbert and Sullivan favourite, *H.M.S. Pinafore* to Kurt Weill's American Broadway opera, *Street Scene*," says Nancy Hermiston, UBC Opera Ensemble Director. "Together with Opera West Society, we present a classic of the French repertoire, Massenet's *Manon*, which will feature international guest artists Emily Pogorelc and Frédéric Antoun in the leading roles, as well as our UBC Opera Ensemble. Massenet's soaring vocal lines and lush orchestral music will bring us to a celebratory end of a season filled with inspiration, learning and entertainment for all."

Opening the season is *H.M.S. Pinafore*, running **October 4 to 6** at the **Old Auditorium**. Gilbert and Sullivan's sharp satire is a comic operetta that explores themes of love, honour, and decency, all while skewering the British class system. Written in 1878, the opera was composed by Arthur Sullivan while W. S. Gilbert wrote the libretto. The story follows the lowly sailor Ralph Rackstraw and the Captain's daughter Josephine, who has been promised to the pompous Sir Joseph Porter by her father. With plenty of shenanigans, absurd characters and witty dialogue, *H.M.S. Pinafore* sends up the notions of social hierarchy and class with a smile and a laugh.

Bringing the heat to the middle of winter is *Street Scene*, which will be performed at the **Chan Centre for the Performing Arts** from **January 30 to February 2, 2025**. Composed by Kurt Weill with libretto by the revered writer Langston Hughes, Weill first saw Elmer Rice's play *Street Scene* in 1930. Rice later agreed to a musical adaptation, and in 1947, *Street Scene* opened on Broadway, earning it the very first Tony Award for Best Original Score.

The music masterfully merges the traditions of opera with musical theatre, featuring arias, show tunes, blues, jazz and spoken dialogue. The story is set over the course of two swelteringly hot days in a working-class immigrant community in a New York City tenement block featuring over 30 characters. The central narrative follows the Maurant family; Frank, the father, is a violent alcoholic who suspects his wife Anna is having an affair. Meanwhile, their daughter Rose longs for a better life. All of this comes to a boiling point in this tragic opera.

Closing the season is Jules Massenet's most popular opera, ***Manon***, to be performed on **March 28 and March 30** in the **Old Auditorium** in collaboration with Opera West Society. American soprano Emily Pogorelc plays the title role, while Quebec-born tenor Frédéric Antoun takes co-lead as Chevalier des Grieux. Pogorelc made her debut with the Metropolitan Opera last year as Lisette in Puccini's *La Rondine*, for which she was praised for her "fantastic lyric coloratura," and that "she lit up the stage every time she entered." (*Operawire*) Antoun is noted for the "quality of his phrasing, his use of chiaroscuro and his radiant high notes... equal to any heard on international stages today" by *Opera Canada*, with notable past performances with Teatro alla Scala, Opéra-Comique, and the Royal Opera House.

Premiered in 1884, *Manon* is set in 1721 during the reign of French King Louis XV. Manon is a beautiful young girl destined for a convent because of her love for material wealth, but instead instantly falls in love with the Chevalier des Grieux. They intend to elope but their happiness is threatened by des Grieux's father and the wealthy nobleman de Bretigny who conspire to separate them. Their tragic love story is fueled by passion, betrayal, and dramatic twists, all set to Massenet's lush and effervescent score.

Complementing the season are the beloved intimate Opera Teas, with two at the Old Auditorium and two at the UBC Botanical Gardens, as well as a holiday concert in November. Finally, **Singer Behind the Song** returns in collaboration with Opera West Society on **October 3 at 6PM** at the **Old Auditorium** featuring one of the world's greatest tenors, **Javier Camarena**. The Mexican tenor is known as the "King of the High Cs" and in 2021, was awarded 'Male Singer of the Year' by the International Opera Awards. He is the only singer in the history of the Metropolitan Opera to have sung encores in three different productions, and has repeated this feat in Madrid, Barcelona and London. The event will include a performance and interview and is a must-see for any opera fan.

Event Listings

Singer Behind the Song | OCT 3, 6PM, Old Auditorium

In collaboration with the Opera West Society, we are delighted to present this audience favourite, Singer Behind the Song. From the historic Old Auditorium, we are excited to present one of the world's greatest tenors, Javier Camarena, "King of the high C's." The Mexican tenor has performed in every major opera house in the world. In 2011, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and since has become the third singer to sing an encore on the Met stage in seventy years. He is also the second singer to sing multiple encores at the Met. He is known as a tenor with a rich, warm timbre, extraordinarily thrilling high notes and an astoundingly beautiful voice. In this rare event, you will experience a stunning performance from this international star, and an interview where you will get to know the person—as well as the singer. You do not want to miss this once in a lifetime event in this theatre. Get your tickets now!

H.M.S. Pinafore | OCT 4 – 6, Old Auditorium

H.M.S. Pinafore, a beloved comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan, hilariously explores themes of love, honour, and social class. The story follows Ralph Rackstraw, a lowly sailor, and Josephine, the Captain's

daughter, who secretly love each other despite her father's wish for her to marry the pompous Sir Joseph Porter. Filled with infectious tunes and witty dialogue, the opera's satire and romantic entanglements promise an evening of delightful entertainment. With mistaken identities, secret plans, and unexpected twists, *H.M.S. Pinafore* is a must-see for anyone who enjoys a captivating and humorous tale.

Street Scene | JAN 30 – FEB 2, Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* is a captivating two-act "American Broadway Opera" that masterfully combines operatic arias, show tunes, jazz, and blues. Set over two sweltering summer days, it portrays the intense emotions and struggles of a multi-ethnic, working-class community in New York City. The story focuses on Anna Maurrant, trapped in a violent marriage, and her affair with Steve Sankey, sparking neighbourhood gossip. Meanwhile, her daughter Rose navigates her own romantic and social challenges. With its rich musical variety and emotionally charged narrative, *Street Scene* offers an unforgettable glimpse into the dreams, tensions, and hopes of its characters.

Manon | MAR 28 & MAR 30, Old Auditorium

Jules Massenet's *Manon* is a captivating French Romantic opera that premiered in Paris in 1884 and became a mainstay of the Opera-Comique. The story follows the passionate and tumultuous romance between Chevalier des Grieux and the enchanting Manon Lescaut. Initially destined for a convent, Manon meets des Grieux and they instantly fall in love and decide to elope. However, their happiness is threatened by des Grieux's father and the wealthy nobleman de Bretigny, who conspire to separate them. Faced with difficult choices and intense emotions, Manon's journey is filled with love, betrayal, and dramatic twists. *Manon* promises an unforgettable experience with its riveting plot and beautiful music. With international guest stars soprano Emily Pogorelc as Manon and tenor Frédéric Antoun as Chevalier des Grieux.

Ticketing

Subscription renewals are now on sale. New subscription bundles go on sale August 7. Single tickets available from September 3 at noon.

Ticket Office: chan.tickets@ubc.ca or 604.822.2697
Website: ubcoperatickets.com

About UBC Opera

One of Canada's most ambitious student opera companies, the UBC Opera Ensemble was founded in 1995 by Canadian lyric coloratura Nancy Hermiston. The Ensemble educates and promotes gifted young opera singers and prepares them for international careers. Each season, UBC Opera performs three major productions, several Opera Teas, and special engagements with local community partners such as Vancouver Opera, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Bard on the Beach, and Vancouver Bach Choir. Ms. Hermiston is Chair of the UBC Voice and Opera Division.

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