

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
Timothy Vernon

PACIFIC  
Opera  
VICTORIA

Patrick Corrigan  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# MARY'S WEDDING

WORLD PREMIERE

*An opera about us*

Music by Andrew P. MacDonald  
Libretto by Stephen Massicotte  
based on his award winning play *Mary's Wedding*

## Study Guide and Student Activity Guide for Pacific Opera Victoria's World Première Production of *Mary's Wedding*

Dress Rehearsal November 8, 2011, 7 pm

Performances November 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18, 2011, at 8 pm

November 20 at 2:30 pm

McPherson Playhouse, Victoria, BC

We are profoundly grateful to the following  
for their support of the  
commissioning and production of *Mary's Wedding*.



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada

Canadian Opera Creation Fund

Michael Morres  
Production Patron of the Première

The Koerner Foundation

ALACS Fund  
NRS Foundation

vancouver  
foundation

Joe & Linda Harvey

VICTORIA FOUNDATION

Larry Ryan

In memory of Con and Alice Ryan

PRODUCTION SPONSORS

JAWL & BUNDON  
Realtors & Solicitors

LONDON  
DRUGS

SEASON UNDERWRITERS

ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK  
MAKING MEMORIALS SINCE 1922

LUMINATIONS  
THEATRE COMPANY

YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM

Dr. Erika Kurth  
BA, MA, D.LITT.

DAVID SPENCER  
MEMORIAL FUND

EDUCATION UNDERWRITER

RBC  
Foundation

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Moss Rock Park  
FOUNDATION

CLUB OPERA SPONSOR

TELUS

OPERA IN SCHOOLS SPONSOR

RBC  
Dominion  
Securities

Pacific Opera Victoria  
500 – 1815 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8T 5A4  
Phone: 250.382.1641  
Box Office: 250.385.0222  
www.pov.bc.ca



**Pacific Opera Victoria  
November, 2011**

## **Study & Activity Guide**

**Dear Educator,**

Pacific Opera Victoria is proud to present the World Premiere of *Mary's Wedding*. This Activity Guide was prepared to help your students get even more out of their opera experience.

Check out our website at <http://www.pov.bc.ca/maryswedding.html> for inside information about *Mary's Wedding*. Please suggest that your students take advantage of our website. The more your students know about the production, the more they will enjoy it!

See you at the opera!

Jackie Adamthwaite  
Manager of Artistic Programs

# How to enjoy the show and be a great Opera Audience Member!

## Before the show:

- Eat before you come to the theatre. There is no food allowed in the Auditorium.
- Arrive on Time! Quite often we do not seat latecomers and you may have to watch the first-half of the show on one of the lobby TVs.
- Check to see how long the opera is; plan your trip to the bathroom.
- Read the story; the program includes the Synopsis and the Director's Notes.
- Turn your cell phone off – along with anything else that beeps or makes noise.

## During the show:

- Don't talk to your friends. The theatre is designed to carry sound from the stage to the audience and back. Remember, this isn't a Movie, the singers can hear you!
- No eating, or drinking during the performance.
- No cameras or recording devices of any kind can be used in the theatre.
- Please, no feet on seats or railings.
- No shouting or yelling out.

## At the end of the show:

- Clap as much as you like and yell "Bravo" at your favourite singers!
- You can even give a Standing Ovation if you really enjoyed the show!

# Opera Singers

## **What? No microphones?!**

Opera singers make themselves heard through the whole house, over a full orchestra – without amplification. There are no microphones hidden in the set! Instead, opera singers use their training and the acoustics of the theatre to project their voices. In order to do this, opera singers train for longer than doctors. This is partly because they are trying to isolate and train their vocal cords: a mechanism about the size of your little finger nail. This is made doubly hard by the fact that unlike other musicians, singers can't see their instrument, so all of their learning has to be by sensation.

## **Amazing feats of memory!**

Opera singers have to memorize several hours of music for each opera. Operas are usually performed in the language in which they were written, which means that opera singers must perform in – and understand – Italian, German, French, Russian; even Czech!

## **Phew!**

Opera singers do all of these things while they are onstage under hot lights, performing blocking that can be awkward or difficult. Opera singers have to be able to sing lying down, running, jumping, dancing and performing all kinds of other tricky moves. Period costumes like hoop skirts, cloaks and corsets and wigs can also be hot and uncomfortable.

## **Who sings what?**

Here is a very rough guide to the different voice types, starting with the highest (soprano), going right down to the very deepest (bass).

**Soprano:** Sopranos have the highest voices. They usually play the heroines of an opera. This means they have lots of show-off arias to sing, and get to fall in love and / or die more often than other female voice types.

**Mezzo-soprano, or mezzo:** This is the middle female voice, and has a darker, warmer sound than the soprano. Mezzos spend a lot of their time playing mothers and villainesses, although sometimes they get to play seductive heroines. Mezzos also play young men on occasion – these are called trouser roles, for obvious reasons.

**Contralto, or alto:** The lowest female voice. Contralto is a rare voice type. Altos usually portray older females or character parts like witches and old gypsies.

**Counter tenor:** Also known as alto, this is the highest male voice, and another vocal rarity. Counter tenors sing with about the same range as a contralto. Counter tenor roles are most common in baroque opera, but some more modern composers write parts for counter tenors too.

**Tenor:** If there are no counter tenors on stage, then the highest male voice in opera is tenor. Tenors are usually the heroes who get the girl or die horribly in the attempt.

**Baritone:** The middle male voice. In comic opera, the baritone is often the ringleader of whatever naughtiness is going on, but in tragic opera, he's more likely to play the villain.

**Bass:** The lowest male voice. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera, and basses usually play Kings, fathers, and grandfathers. In comic opera basses often portray old characters that are foolish or laughable.

# Mary's Wedding

Music by Andrew P. MacDonald

Libretto by Stephen Massicotte, based on his play *Mary's Wedding*.

November 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 2011, at 8 pm

Matinée November 20 at 2:30 pm

At the McPherson Playhouse

In English with English Surtitles

The performance will be given in two acts with one intermission,  
with a total running time of two hours and 50 minutes.

## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Charlie Edwards  
a rugged Canadian farm boy .....Thomas Macleay

Mary Chalmers  
a young lady recently arrived in Canada from England .....Betty Wayne Allison

Gordon Muriel Flowerdew (*Flowers*)  
a sergeant promoted to lieutenant.....Alain Coulombe

Canadian townspeople, workmen, Mary's mother, soldiers, an officer, wedding  
guests

Conductor ..... Timothy Vernon

Director ..... Michael Shamata

Set and Costume Designer ..... Ian Rye

Costume Design Associate ..... Nancy Bryant

Design Assistant..... Nathan Brown

Lighting Designer..... Alan Brodie

Fight Director..... Nicholas Harrison

Stage Manager ..... Sara Robb

Assistant Stage Managers ..... Sandy Halliday,  
Nicole Olszewski

Principal Coach & Répétiteur..... Robert Holliston

Chorus Master & Assistant to the Artistic Director ..... Giuseppe Pietraroia

Assistant Accompanist ..... Kim Cousineau

With the Victoria Symphony and the POV Chorus

Note: Strobe lights will be used during the performance.

This production of *Mary's Wedding* is being recorded by CBC Radio 2 for future  
broadcast on Saturday Afternoon at the Opera with host Bill Richardson

## **Background of the New Opera *Mary's Wedding***

In 2008 Pacific Opera Victoria commissioned composer Andrew MacDonald and playwright Stephen Massicotte to develop an opera from Stephen's award-winning play, *Mary's Wedding*.

Three years later, this new Canadian opera is about to make its world première, and we at POV are proud and exhilarated to share it with our community, for *Mary's Wedding* is very much an opera about us – about our history, our landscape, and our memories.

In the decade since its première at Alberta Theatre Projects playRites Festival, the play *Mary's Wedding* has seen many performances across North America and in the UK, including a 2002 co-production between Victoria's Belfry Theatre and the Vancouver Playhouse. One of the most successful Canadian plays of the 21st century, it has a strongly Canadian setting, yet the story is universal.

Stephen Massicotte has now transformed his play into an opera libretto, in collaboration with composer Andrew MacDonald, who has built on the poetry of the play and its non-linear structure to create a world where reality and dream merge into a singular musical landscape.

The final work is astonishingly operatic. Words and music conspire to create an experience that is compelling, dramatic, and very moving.

At every step over the opera's three-year gestation, Stephen and Andrew have been supported by a committed team from POV, beginning with Executive Directors David Shefsiek and Patrick Corrigan, who coordinated artistic and financial aspects of the project.

POV's artistic and production team shepherded the new opera through a series of workshops in Victoria, Banff, and Toronto, that let the creators hear excerpts performed by piano, by orchestra, and by soloists and a small chorus. Last June, a final staging workshop allowed additional fine tuning of details of timing and staging.

The workshops helped the creators to refine the opera, aided by the astute observations of the creative team – POV Artistic Director and Conductor Timothy Vernon; Michael Shamata, dramaturge for the project and director of the production; and Ian Rye, POV's Director of Artistic Administration, and designer of the sets and costumes.

A happy outcome of the workshop process was the fact that the three soloists engaged to perform during the workshops made an immediate impact. Their voices, their suitability to the roles, and their emotional intensity left us in no doubt: we were thrilled to engage all three for the world première production: Betty Wayne Allison as Mary; Thomas Macleay as Charlie, and Alain Coulombe as Sgt. Flowerdew.

A singer who performs the world première of a role is often said to have created the role. Certainly this can be said of Betty, Thomas, and Alain, whose involvement throughout the creation process allowed them not only to learn the opera in depth, but to contribute in very real ways to its final shape and sound.

Also important to the success of the workshops were soprano Robyn Driedger-Klassen, who filled in beautifully for Betty at some sessions; coaches Robert Holliston and Teresa Turgeon; conductor Joey Pietrarroia; pianist Kim Cousineau, the Victoria Symphony, and a host of POV choristers, including Kristy Gislason, Tamara Rusque, and Sam Marcaccini, who have sung the chorus for virtually every workshop.

At first blush, opera creation in the 21st century, with its long, carefully planned trajectory, and workshops and review at every stage, is quite unlike the way it worked in the first 400 or so years of opera. Yet in some ways it is very similar.

While we don't hear of Mozart or Verdi workshopping their operas, they did write with specific singers in mind. And if you aren't churning out opera after opera (full-time opera composers being an endangered species these days), the next best way to grasp the subtleties and colours of a singer's voice and to learn how your finished work will sound is through the workshop process.

## **Background of the New Opera *Mary's Wedding* continued**

The three years spent on *Mary's Wedding* may seem a prolonged labour when we remember that Rossini dashed off *The Barber of Seville* in around three weeks and repeated the feat with *Cinderella*. However, most opera composers held to a more sedate pace than Rossini: *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, and *Manon Lescaut* each took Puccini about three years from pen to production (and writing *Manon Lescaut* burned through some seven librettists and uncounted tantrums).

*Mary's Wedding* – as with many operas today – has come out of a collaborative process. There's no composer browbeating a succession of librettists à la Puccini or autocratically writing the whole shebang – music, words, and exhaustive stage directions – as Wagner did.

Operas often used to be cranked out like episodes of a television series. They were creatures of fashion and weren't expected to have a life into the next year or the next century. While many have lasted, many more are long forgotten.

We want this one to last. As with most operas, the process of creating *Mary's Wedding* has had its own rhythm and challenges. It represents a major – and, we believe, rewarding – investment of time, talent, and care.

Funding a new opera, like most performing arts activities today, requires a complex process of grant writing and engaging supportive donors in the project. POV is particularly grateful to the organizations and individuals who have shown their faith in this new opera through their generous financial commitments.

And we are deeply thankful to our patrons and audience, who have supported our growth and made

## Synopsis

*The setting is Saskatchewan, two years after the end of World War I.*

On the night before her wedding, Mary Chalmers dreams of her first love, Charlie Edwards.

She dreams of their first meeting as they take shelter from a prairie thunderstorm and Charlie gives her a ride home on his horse. Their shy love grows, even as Mary's English mother disapproves of the "dirty farm boy" as a match for her daughter.

When war is declared, Charlie joins C Squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment and sails for England. In his letters, he tells Mary of meeting the King of England, of volunteering to go over to France after the Second Battle of Ypres, in which the Germans first used chlorine gas as a weapon. He tells of his sympathetic Sergeant, Gordon Muriel Flowerdew (Flowers) and recounts his life as a soldier – the trenches, the lice, the mud, the thunder of artillery, and the terrible battle of Moreuil Wood in which Flowerdew, now a Lieutenant, leads his squadron against the German machine guns.

The fictional lives of the young lovers in the opera are intertwined with historical events and with the real-life character of Lieutenant Gordon Flowerdew, an Englishman who had emigrated to Canada and settled in Walhachin, BC. Flowerdew returned to Europe to serve in the Great War with Lord Strathcona's Horse. In the 1918 battle of Moreuil Wood, Flowerdew carried out one of the last great cavalry assaults in history, leading a squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse, armed with sabres, against German rifles and machine guns. The Canadians helped to stop the German offensive, but at enormous cost. Flowerdew himself died from his wounds and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

## **Some Thoughts on *Mary's Wedding*** by: Andrew Paul MacDonald, Composer

I started composing *Mary's Wedding* almost three years ago. I received a call from Timothy Vernon inviting me to write an opera for POV and to think about a subject. Busy working away at another piece, I had barely enough time to consider his proposal before he called back asking me what I thought of Stephen Massicotte's *Mary's Wedding*. I told him that although I wasn't familiar with it I was intrigued by his enthusiasm and that I'd like to see the script right away. I read the play, over and over, and just fell in love with Mary, Charlie and Flowers. Then a funny thing happened. Lines from the play suddenly popped into my head as tunes and the music just started flowing onto my page. Couldn't stop it. I think maybe it was the simple, poetic nature of Stephen's lines—the rhythms, the unforced quality of the sounds—that lent themselves so perfectly to my melodies. It was the ideas themselves, too. Sentiments which were worth setting to music.

It wasn't the kind of story that I was at first considering for an opera, but I soon discovered that it was a perfect story for my musical imagination. I wanted something surreal where it would seem normal that people sing to each other. What better setting for that than Mary's dream world? Often I've experienced dreams where all the inhabitants converse in song. Perfectly normal! A dream can be a chaotic place, too, but one in which profound things may come to the surface. Transforming this non-linear dream story into an opera was a challenging undertaking that couldn't have been achieved without the remarkable vision of Michael Shamata who acted as dramaturge throughout the workshop process.

I decided on three distinct musical voices for the character triangle that Stephen had originally created with two actors. He had cleverly combined Mary and Flowers into the female lead and infused each with a similar affection for Charlie. I decided to explore this further by separating this dual role into a soprano and bass for reasons of musical variety and to connect them through shared musical material. What resulted were two distinct personalities who each care deeply for Charlie and make him more real in the process. All three sing real arias—I think some of the tunes may stick with you. Remember the words, too. They're important. I also wanted to expand the vocal forces so as to include a chorus that would function as characters that are mentioned in the play, but could now have a voice. So the townspeople, workmen, mothers and children, tea party guests and, of course, the soldiers all come to life through the chorus, which also functions omnisciently as in Greek tragedy.

The arias, duets and choral numbers are embedded in a large-scale musical landscape divided into two acts. Both acts are formed of continuous music where one scene leads directly into the next, similar to the dream-like way the play itself unfolds. Although many musical themes wind their way through the opera, it is the love theme, a never-ending pentatonic melody rising through all the keys, that predominates. Occurring at a number of key moments, it also forms the foundation for a set of variations that accompany the dream wedding processional that concludes the work.

Although *Mary's Wedding* is a tale of love and war, it is also about dealing with sadness. Coping with grief through acceptance, a theme of my first symphony, *The Red Guru*, is also what makes Stephen's story so important. Mary cannot rest from her recurrent dream until she accepts that Charlie is dead. She must do this if she is to move on and marry someone else. Only then will the words "Wake up, Mary, wake up" have their true meaning.

Many workshops later and after many long hours at my desk you have the opera before you. Thanks to all who have contributed to make this a reality—Stephen, Timothy, Michael, Ian, Jackie, David, Patrick, Robert, Teresa, Kim, Giuseppe, Sandy and all the singers who participated in the workshops: the POV chorus, in particular Tamara and Sam, and especially our soloists Betty, Tom and Alain. Special thanks to my wife Eleanor who copied out my scores and parts from the manuscript, then copied my corrections after what seemed like endless proofreading—a gargantuan task! And to my mom and dad who gave me the inspiration to be a composer; always encouraging, no matter how strange my music sounded. And finally to all those whose families and relationships have been shattered by war, then and now. I hope this work helps to bring some peace.

## The Production Design for *Mary's Wedding*

As the only company in Canada to build all its productions, Pacific Opea Victoria offers eclectic repertoire choices that offer a unique experience – original, made-in-Victoria productions designed specifically for our audiences. As well, we offer a rare opportunity for Canadian designers to design for opera by exploring the art form from the ground up rather than re-creating existing productions.

With years of practice in building original productions, POV is ahead of the game when it comes to creating a new opera from scratch; in fact creating a new opera is a natural extension of what we've been doing successfully for years.

Ian Rye, POV's Director of Artistic Administration, has overseen our production activities since the 2006/7 season and has been part of the development of *Mary's Wedding* since it was a gleam in Timothy Vernon's eye.

Ian has shepherded the opera through the commissioning process, the workshops, and now, the final world première production. An experienced set designer in his own right (you may have seen his sets at the Belfry Theatre), it is fitting that he is undertaking his first mainstage opera design for POV's first full commission.

Many stage productions of the play have a barn-like setting which turns handily into a ship and the trenches at the front. But for the opera, Ian and director Michael Shamata have opened up the setting and placed it in a sculptural landscape under wide, beautiful prairie skies that go on forever and yet are as close as can be. Everything actually takes place right here, in Mary's back yard, far from the fields of battle, as she dreams about her first love.

Mary spends the opera in her nightgown. It is 1920; she is about to be married, and through the night, she dreams, remembering the Great War and Charlie.

We see the action through the lens of her dream as she imagines the war as described in Charlie's letters.

When soldiers enter the stage, they are slipping into Mary's back yard on a starlit night. Their uniforms are what Mary's imagination has conjured up; and the soldiers look just like her neighbours. The chorus appear as both soldiers and neighbours – but those soldiers are her neighbours; every one of them is someone's brother or cousin or boyfriend.

It's a universal story; it has happened uncounted times. But here it's also very personal.

Ian's design for the opera riffs off the non-linear, dream-like structure of the work. It is a memory play, the scenes shifting like light, moving like dreams, insubstantial and yet anchored in the most truly real things of all: the human heart and the whole wide universe.

Ultimately, it is not the design, but our imagination – and Mary's dream – that take us to all the other places in the opera – the ship, the trenches, the embattled forest. The design reinforces the theme of the play and opera: the force of memory and imagination, the power of the heart.



## **The History Behind *Mary's Wedding***

*Mary's Wedding* highlights the role of the Canadian Regiment known as Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). The battle described at the end of the opera is a real battle, the Battle of Moreuil Wood, which took place in 1918. The Battle of Moreuil Wood was one of the last great cavalry assaults in history. The real Lieutenant Flowerdew led a squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse and stopped the German advance, marking a turning point in the war.

Following Flowerdew's death, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, supreme commander of all Allies armies in Europe during 1918, reportedly commented that Flowerdew's charge at Moreuil Wood "...possibly deflected the whole course of history."

### **The Strathconas at Moreuil Wood**

*Robert W. Mackay recounts the true story of Lord Strathcona's Horse and the Battle of Moreuil Wood – a story he knows well, as his own father, Tom Mackay, was in C Squadron at the Battle of Moreuil Wood. Robert Mackay is the author of the new novel *Soldier of the Horse*, in which he tells his father's fictionalized story.*

When what later was called the Great War broke out, Canada had two regular force cavalry regiments, the Royal Canadian Dragoons based in Ontario, and Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) in the west. Originally raised privately by Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona, of CPR fame) for war in South Africa, the Strathconas were disbanded after the Boer War. The name lived on when it was adopted by the Canadian army's western cavalry unit before the war began in 1914.

The Strathconas went by ship to England along with the rest of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Standing by and hoping for mounted action, the cavalry trained there until 1915, frustrated because their brethren in the infantry were already at the front.

Early that year, things went badly for the Canadians in Belgium and France, where they were suffering under relentless artillery, infantry, and gas attacks. Responding to a desperate plea for help, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade left their horses behind in England and proceeded within days to the Continent to go to the aid of their comrades.

There followed miserable and deadly months in the trenches, until in early 1916 the Brigade was remounted. Often acting as mounted infantry, the cavalry troopers would spend two weeks at a time in the trenches, followed by two weeks in reserve, training and looking after their own horses and those of the other half of the regiment who would then be in the trenches.

That all changed when, on March 21st, 1918, the Germans mounted an all-out effort to finish the war, pounding the Allies with a monstrous artillery barrage and advancing over a forty-mile front. British and French troops were overrun or in retreat. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade, now composed of the Dragoons, the Strathconas, and the Fort Garry Horse, for nine days galloped from one firefight to another, horses and men exhausted and hungry. Midnight on March 29th found them encamped two valleys west of the village of Moreuil in Picardy, France.

"C" Squadron of the Strathconas was led by Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew, a one-time Saskatchewan homesteader and Thompson Valley fruit farmer. An English immigrant, Flowerdew had been an officer in a British Columbia militia regiment. On the outbreak of war he resigned his commission in order to get into the cavalry, joining the Strathconas as a sergeant. By 1918 he had his commission back, and was one of the regiment's sterling young leaders.

## The History Behind *Mary's Wedding* continued

The officer commanding the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was John E B Seely, and on March 30th, 1918, under heavy fire, he led his troops to the northwest corner of Moreuil Wood in response to a British plea to the Canadians to stop or delay the German advance. The Strathconas, Dragoons, and Fort Garrys were flung into a bloody fight in the forest.

Lieutenant Flowerdew led his squadron around the Wood, intending to cut off the escape of the retreating enemy. Rounding the northeast corner of the wood, his "C" Squadron encountered a double line of Germans armed with rifles, machineguns, and artillery.

Too late to retreat, Flowerdew drew his sword and shouted, "It's a charge, boys, it's a charge!" Plunging forward, many of the troopers were killed; others wounded; and a very few escaped death by swerving into the woods. My father, who was galloping hard on Flowerdew's heels as they pounded toward the enemy lines, was badly wounded.

Gordon Flowerdew, who died of his wounds the following day, was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

The real Lieutenant Flowerdew was among 70 Canadians who served in WWI and were awarded the Victoria Cross, the Commonwealth's highest award for valour.

### Here is the citation for Flowerdew's Victoria Cross:

"For most conspicuous bravery and dash when in command of a squadron detailed for special service of a very important nature. On reaching the first objective, Lieutenant Flowerdew saw two lines of the enemy, each about sixty strong, with machine guns in the centre and flanks, one line being about two hundred yards behind the other. Realising the critical nature of the operation and how much depended upon it, Lieutenant Flowerdew ordered a troop under Lieutenant Harvey, V.C., to dismount and carry out a special movement while he led the remaining three troops to the charge. The squadron (less one troop) passed over both lines, killing many of the enemy with the sword; and wheeling about galloped at them again. Although the squadron had then lost about 70 per cent of its numbers, killed and wounded, from rifle and machine-gun fire directed on it from the front and both flanks, the enemy broke and retired. The survivors of the squadron then established themselves in a position where they were joined, after much hand-to-hand fighting, by Lieutenant Harvey's party. Lieutenant Flowerdew was dangerously wounded through both thighs during the operation, but continued to cheer on his men. There can be no doubt that this officer's great valour was the prime factor in the capture of the position."

*(London Gazette, no.30648, 24 April 1918)*

Members of Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), the Canadian Regiment to which two characters in the opera, Charlie and Sergeant Flowerdew, belonged, will participate in the opening night world première of *Mary's Wedding*, in regimental dress and historic WWI uniforms. To this day the regiment holds an annual commemoration of the Battle of Moreuil Wood, to remember their fallen comrades and honour the spirit of perseverance that continues to inspire the Strathconas. They are already planning for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Moreuil Wood in 2018.



## Sharing an opera about us at a time of remembrance

Mary's Wedding is both a new Canadian opera and an invitation to remember our own past. History is all about remembering our stories. **The Mary's Wedding Memory Project** invites you to share stories of the impact of World War I on your family and community.

How did the 1914 to 1918 war affect your family? Perhaps you don't know. And perhaps you wonder who you can ask! After all, no Canadian who fought in the war is alive today. The last known Canadian WWI veteran died just over a year ago. He was John Henry Foster "Jack" Babcock who was born July 23, 1900, joined the military at the age of 17 (he had tried to join at 15 but was turned down). He died February 18, 2010 at the age of 109.

The only other veteran known to still be alive is Florence Beatrice Green, who was a member of the Women's Royal Air Force, and who still lives in England.

You might ask members of your family if they can tell you anything. Your parents and grandparents may remember stories they were told or things they saw or heard growing up. Perhaps someone in your family has done research on your family tree or can show you family photos or letters from that time.

And remember, your stories can be about soldiers at the front or about family members at home. No matter what they did or where they were, everyone at the time felt the effect of the First World War.

If you have a story about your family, please share it. Post your stories on POV's online forum (go to [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca) and follow the link to the Mary's Wedding Memory Project. Family photos, letters, and reminiscences from World War I are all welcome, and will be published on POV's web site. Some will be displayed at the McPherson Playhouse during *Mary's Wedding*. And after the opera is over, submissions to the Mary's Wedding Memory Project will be forwarded to the Canadian War Museum to share with all Canadians.

## The World of Mary's Wedding

### A Special Exhibit from UVic Archives and Special Collections

An inspired collaboration between Pacific Opea Victoria and the University of Victoria Libraries has resulted in the creation of exhibits and displays which draw us into the world of *Mary's Wedding*.

The University of Victoria Libraries present **The World of Mary's Wedding: Reminiscences of World War I from the University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections**. These exhibits and displays may be viewed:

- At the *Maltwood Gallery at the McPherson Library*, University of Victoria, October 22 to November 17
- In the *Archives & Special Collections Reading Room at the McPherson Library*, October 24 - December 16
- At the McPherson Playhouse during *Mary's Wedding*, and until Nov 20
- On a dedicated website at <http://worldofmaryswedding.library.uvic.ca>.

As we view the exhibits and through the act of remembering we honour those, both at home and abroad, who gave the ultimate sacrifice in a war that was fought almost a century ago.

This is a wonderful opportunity to examine first-hand the materials from the libraries' collections that chronicle the First World War. The exhibit is in three parts: Personal Remembering (letters, diaries, personal photographs, scrapbooks); Collective Remembering (the military artifacts of war); and the Art of Remembering (war art, drama, poetry and music).

Here is one of the photos from the exhibit.

**Embarkation from Victoria 1916**  
**Photo Credit: Archie Wills. AR 394\_03\_09\_72\_02**  
**Courtesy University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections**



Take a look at this photograph; see what you recognize; look at the people; can you imagine who they might be. Can you tell their story, maybe write a letter home from one of the soldiers.

# Review the Opera!

## *Mary's Wedding - My Thoughts*

Pacific Opera Victoria

October 4, 2011

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_



Conducted by  
Maestro Timothy Vernon

| The Artists                                  | Description of Character  | Description of Voice |
|--|---|----------------------|
| Betty<br>Wayne<br>Allison<br><br><b>Mary</b> |    |                      |
| Thomas<br>Macleay<br><br><b>Charlie</b>      |   |                      |
| Alain<br>Coulombe<br><br><b>Flowers</b>      |  |                      |



**Write your Review...**

After the Opera...

Re-draw your favourite moment from the Opera!



What is happening in this Scene?

Which Characters are depicted?

What would you change about this Scene?

## Glossary of commonly used Opera Terms

**ACT:** A portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own.

**ARIA:** A solo piece written for a main character, which focuses on the character's emotion.

**BACKSTAGE** - any area of the theatre behind the proscenium; can refer to the wings as well as the dressing rooms.

**BATON:** A short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

**BEL CANTO:** An Italian phrase literally meaning "beautiful singing." A traditional Italian style of singing that emphasizes tone, phrasing, coloratura passages and technique. Also refers to opera written in this style.

**BUFFO:** From the Italian for "buffoon." A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa).

**BLOCKING:** Directions given to actors for on-stage movements and actions.

**BRAVO (BRAH-voH):** Literally, a form of applause when shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. "Bravo" is for a single man, "brava" for a woman, and "bravi" for a group of performers.

**COLORATURA:** Elaborate ornamentation of vocal music using many fast notes and trills.

**CORD, VOCAL:** The wishbone-shaped edges of muscles in the lower part of the throat whose movements create variations in pitch as air passes between them.

**DIAPHRAGM:** A muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach which acts as a trampoline does, pushing the air from the lungs at a desired rate.

**DIVA:** Literally "goddess," it refers to an important female opera star. The masculine form is divo.

**DROP (n.)** - a flat piece of cloth that is flown – ie. It "drops" from the flies. Often it is elaborately painted. Some stage sets are made up entirely of painted "drops"

**ENCORE:** Literally means "again." It used to be the custom for a singer to repeat a popular aria if the audience called "encore" loudly enough. This is still done in the middle of an opera in countries such as Italy, but it is rare elsewhere. Soloists frequently give encores at the end of a concert but not an opera.

**ENSEMBLE:** Two or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.

**FALSETTO:** A method of singing above the natural range of the male voice. Often used in opera for comic effects such as a man imitating a woman.

**FLAT** - a piece of hard stage scenery that is flat. A wall can be made from a series of flats. Flats used to be made always of canvas stretched on a wooden frame. This made a good surface for painting and kept the flats very lightweight. Flats are now often made from very thin plywood instead of canvas.

**FLIES (n.)** - the area above the stage where scenery, lights, etc. are hung. Anything that goes up and down to/from the flies is said to fly or be flown.

**GREENROOM** - The lounge in the lower level where performers and crew can relax.

**HOUSE** - strictly speaking, the theatre. However, it is often used to refer to the audience seating area, the auditorium. Example: "The house is open" means the audience is or has been admitted.

**LEGS** - Draperies or flats that hang vertically, usually at the sides of the stage as masking.

**LIBRETTO** - the words or text. This is like the script of a play. Very often (almost always) the words will be in a foreign language.

**MAESTRO (mah-EHS-troh):** Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the conductor. The masculine ending is used for both men and women.

**PROSCENIUM** (pronounced pro-see'-nee-um) - the wall that separates the stage from the audience. The "proscenium opening" acts as a picture frame for the stage action.

**RAKE** - a slanted stage floor.

**RECITATIVE:** Words sung in a conversational style, usually to advance the plot. Not to be confused with aria.

**RÉPÉTITEUR (reh-peh-ti-TEUR):** A member of the music staff who plays the piano for rehearsals and, if necessary, the piano or harpsichord during performances. They frequently coach singers in their roles and assist with orchestra rehearsals.

**SITZPROBE (ZITS-proh-bah):** Literally, "seated rehearsal," it is the first rehearsal of the singers with the orchestra and no acting.

**STAGE MANAGER:** The person in charge of the technical aspects of the entire opera, including light changes, sound effects, entrances (even of the conductor) and everything else that happens.

**SUPER** - short for supernumerary; just a fancy operatic word meaning "extra".

**SYNOPSIS** - a short description of the plot or story-line of the opera.

**TROUSER ROLE:** A role depicting a young man or boy but sung by a woman.

**UPSTAGE (adv)** - the back of the stage.

**UPSTAGE (vb)** - to attract attention or distract the audience away from the proper focus.

**WINGS** - areas at either side of the stage where people wait to make entrances and scenery is stored.



## MARY'S WEDDING SCRAPBOOK PROJECT

*Mary's Wedding* is a new opera commissioned and developed by Pacific Opera Victoria. It is a love letter to the power of memory and innocence, and to a generation of Canadians who were caught in the crucible of the First World War. The story is eternal. Boy meets girl. They fall in love. But the year is 1914, and Mary and Charlie must surrender their love and their fate to the uncertainties of their tumultuous times.

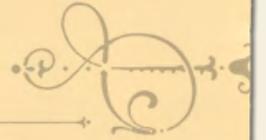
We invite you to engaged your students in a project of discovery. Pacific Opera Victoria would like to challenge local schools to create a scrapbook in time for Remembrance Day.

Here is how it works...

Ask your students to interview their parents, grandparents, neighbours or anyone else in the community who may have stories of how WWI affected their family and community. Have them bring in copies of letters, photos and newspaper clippings and build scrapbook pages as a class. Have all the classes that are participating in your school submit their pages and create a scrapbook for your school. Have them displayed in your library.



# MARY'S WEDDING SCRAPBOOK PROJECT

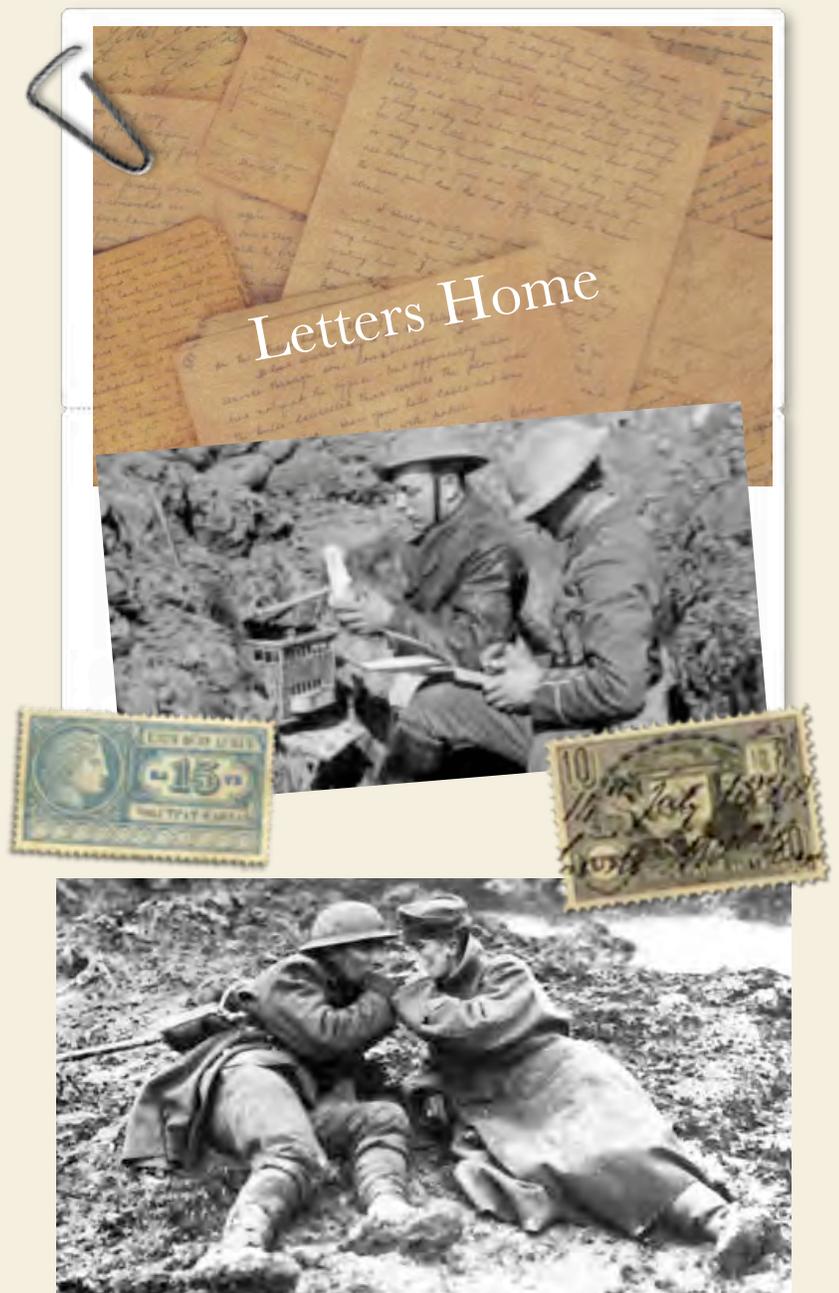


## How World War I impacted my family..

SHARE YOUR FAMILIES  
LETTERS, PHOTOS AND STORIES  
FROM WWI

### Themes for discussion

- relationships
  - communications
  - letters
- the home front
  - women's experience
  - marriage
- trench warfare
  - conditions
  - snipers
  - gas attacks
- western Canada
  - the prairies
  - farming
  - horsemanship
  - storms
  - barns
- the cavalry
  - charges, the charge of the light brigade (poem)
  - horses
  - combat
- the Atlantic crossing
  - U boats
- historic battles represented in the opera
  - Ypres
  - Moreuil Wood
- remembrance





# MARY'S WEDDING SCRAPBOOK PROJECT

Build you Scrapbook pages

## CANADA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR



Canada's contribution to the First World War led to growing autonomy and international recognition, but at great cost.



97





## Links for further reading

### Mary's Wedding: the Play

<http://rivendelltheatre.org/userfiles/file/Mary%27s%20Wedding/marysweddingdramaturgy.pdf>

A study guide for the play *Mary's Wedding*, with excellent information on aspects of the war mentioned in the play (and in the libretto of the opera).

### Composer Andrew Paul MacDonald

<http://www.ubishops.ca/andrewpaulmacdonald/>

Biography, discography, and catalogue of the composer's works, including some programme notes and audio excerpts.

### Librettist Stephen Massicotte

<http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Massicotte%2C%20Stephen>

Biography of playwright Stephen Massicotte, with links

## The real Lieutenant Gordon Flowerdew, Lord Strathcona's Horse and the Battle of Moreuil Wood

<http://www.readingandremembrance.ca/forms/RR2009/2009Minutes/VCOntarioGordonMurielFlowerdew.pdf>

**Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew:** An account of Flowerdew's charge and a photo from the July 4, 1918 *Canadian Daily Record* showing King George V with Lt Flowerdew's mother at the Victoria Cross investiture ceremony.

<http://www.oldframinghamian.com/article.php?story=20061204160820393>

**Walhachin: Death in the Desert:** Stephen Hume's fascinating and beautifully written essay about Gordon Flowerdew and Walhachin, the BC town where he lived before the war. Walhachin is a ghost town because of the First World War.

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem/detail/38211>

**Veterans Affairs Canada:** The Record of Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew, who died on March 31, 1918, including the citation for his Victoria Cross, and links to newspaper clippings, and photos of the Brigade Diary, including an account of the Battle of Moreuil Wood.

<http://www.strathconas.ca/>

**Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians).** This is the website of the Canadian Regiment who distinguished themselves at the Battle of Moreuil Wood. Flowerdew was a member of this regiment, and the Battle of Moreuil Wood is commemorated annually by Strathconas as a tribute to Fallen Comrades, and as a great symbol of Regimental pride.

<http://www.rusi.ca/The%20last%20cavalry%20charge.pdf>

**The last cavalry charge:** An account of the Battle of Moreuil Wood by John Boileau, who commanded Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) from 1985 to 1987.

[http://www.thedonovan.com/archives/historystuff/the\\_battle\\_of\\_moreuil\\_wood%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.thedonovan.com/archives/historystuff/the_battle_of_moreuil_wood%5B1%5D.pdf)

**The Battle of Moreuil Wood:** This detailed, 26-page account of the battle was published in 1993 on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle and written by Captain J.R. Grodzinski of Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). Dr. Grodzinski is now a Major in the Canadian Armed Forces and a professor at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston.

Here is a brief excerpt from the account, which mentions Sergeant Tom Mackay (whose son Robert Mackay fictionalized his father's story in the new novel *Soldier of the Horse*)

*'C' Squadron approached the Germans with sabres raised; sabres against rifles and machine guns. They rode into two lines of Germans. Steel cut into flesh; bayonets and bullets answered. Casualties were high on both sides. Once the two lines were passed, the surviving horsemen turned back toward the wood. There, through the smoke and enemy was Harvey and his men. The survivors fought furiously to get back to them. Sergeant Tom MacKay, MM, the Troop Sergeant of 1st Troop was acting troop leader since Lieutenant Harrower was on patrol. The flesh was practically stripped between the knees and thighs of both his legs. The doctors later counted some 59 wounds in one leg alone.*

## World War I History

<http://www.warmuseum.ca/home>

**The Canadian War Museum.** Click on the Education Link to find a history of WWI, letters, photos, teachers' resources, and much more.

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance>

**The Canada Remembers Program of Veterans Affairs Canada,** with extensive resources and links to information on Canada's military history and Canada's Books of Remembrance,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horses\\_in\\_World\\_War\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horses_in_World_War_I)

**Horses in World War I:** Although machine guns, artillery, and tanks were beginning to replace cavalry, horses were used extensively during WWI, and they suffered and died along with the soldiers. This is an interesting introduction to what horses did in the war, to the cavalry units deployed by the various nations in the war, including Canada's own Lord Strathcona's Horse, and to the logistics involved in the care and feeding of the horses.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_War\\_I\\_casualties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties)

**World War I Casualties:** The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I, numbered over 35 million, including over 15 million deaths and 20 million wounded. WWI was one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. This site is a summary of the casualties for each country involved in the conflict. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, nearly 65000 members of the Canadian military were killed during the war.

<http://www.cwgc.org>

**The Commonwealth War Graves Commission:** Established by Royal Charter in 1917, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission pays tribute to the 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two world wars. Visitors to this web site can search for the names of casualties of the war, historical information and educational resources. There's even a video on the horticultural challenges of caring for thousands of cemeteries and memorials around the world.

## World War I Literature

<http://www.robertwmackay.ca/index.html>

BC Author Robert Mackay has just published his first novel, *Soldier of the Horse*, inspired by the life of his own father, Sergeant Tom Mackay, who was badly wounded at the Battle of Moreuil Wood.

<http://www.abebooks.com/books/world-war-soldiers-reading-kipling/trench-literature.shtml>

**Trench Literature – Reading in World War I:** An introduction to some of the literature about World War I – and the kind of books and magazines soldiers read in the trenches. From AbeBooks.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/10/first-world-war-humour-wipers-times>

<http://www.penmon.org/page77.htm>

**Brief Extracts from *The Wipers Times*:** The *Wipers Times* was a satirical paper written and printed by members of the 12th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. In early 1916, the 12th Battalion was stationed in the front line at Ypres, Belgium and came across an abandoned printing press, which they salvaged. (The name "Wipers" reflects the difficulty soldiers had with the pronunciation of Ypres ... location of a battle that is mentioned in the opera *Mary's Wedding*). The *Wipers Times* included in-jokes, mock ads (for dugout insurance, among other things), and poems ... lots of poems, to the point where the editor complained:

*We regret to announce that an insidious disease is affecting the Division, and the result is a hurricane of poetry. Subalterns have been seen with a notebook in one hand, and bombs in the other absently walking near the wire in deep communication with the muse...The editor would be obliged if a few of the poets would break into prose as a paper cannot live by "poems" alone.*

<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit>

**The First World War Poetry Digital Archive,** an online repository of over 7000 items of text, images, audio, and video for teaching, learning, and research, by Oxford University. Some of the most profound poetry of all time came out of the First World War. This site is an excellent introduction to the lives and poetry of such poets as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves. There are also images of actual manuscripts, educational resources, and extensive links to multimedia artefacts from the Imperial War Museum.

## Teacher's Comments

Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and return it to the address below. Thank you for your comments and suggestions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade(s) you teach: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended other arts events with your students in the past year? Yes No

If yes, what were they? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you able to use the Teacher's Study Guide and Activity Guide in your classroom activities before attending the opera? Yes No

If not, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

If so, which sections of the Study Guide and Activity Guide did you find most useful? \_\_\_\_\_

How appropriate was the information provided in the Guides? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you add/delete: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you spend classroom time discussing the performance after your students attended the opera?  
Yes No

Do you have any comments about the performance itself? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive information on our future Student Dress Rehearsals? Yes No

How would you like to receive information? Fax Email Letters Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to:

Jackie Adamthwaite, Manager of Artistic Programs  
1815 Blanshard Street, Suite 500, Victoria, BC, V8T 5A4 or by fax: 250-382-4944