

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## at the University Center for the Arts

**Virtuoso Series Concert: Barbara Thiem, Cello**  
March 26, 7:30 p.m., Organ Recital Hall, UCA

**Virtuoso Series Concert: Guest Stephen Versaevel, Percussion**  
March 27, 7:30 p.m., Organ Recital Hall, UCA

**Wind Ensemble Chamber Music Concert**  
April 1, 2:00 p.m., Organ Recital Hall, UCA

**Virtuoso Series Concert: Special Guest Wesley Ferreira, Clarinet**  
April 2, 7:30 p.m., Organ Recital Hall, UCA

**Jazz Combos Concert**  
April 4, 7:30 p.m., Griffin Concert Hall, UCA

**Virtuoso Series Concert: Special Guests Borromeo String Quartet**  
April 6, 7:30 p.m., Griffin Concert Hall, UCA

**Student Dance Concert**  
April 6, 8:00 p.m. & April 7, 2:30 p.m. & 8:00 p.m., University Dance Theatre, UCA

**Virtuoso Series Concert:**  
**Special Guests Tiffany Blake, Soprano & Caleb Harris, Piano**  
April 9, 7:30 p.m., Organ Recital Hall, UCA

**Jazz Ensembles Concert**  
April 12, 7:30 p.m., Griffin Concert Hall, UCA

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# the TURN OF THE SCREW

by  
**BENJAMIN BRITTEN**



PRESENTED BY THE NEW  
CHARLES AND RETA RALPH OPERA CENTER

WITH THE CSU OPERA ORCHESTRA

MARCH 23, 30, 31, 2012 7:30 P.M.

MARCH 25, 2012 2:00 P.M.

GRIFFIN CONCERT HALL, UCA

# the TURN OF THE SCREW

A chamber opera composed by Benjamin Britten

Libretto by Myfanwy Piper

Based on the novella by Henry James

## CAST

FRIDAY, MARCH 23RD AND FRIDAY, MARCH 30TH

Narrator . . . . . Westin Sorrel

Governess . . . . . Kimberli Render

Miles . . . . . Anastasia Gray

Flora . . . . . Mira Madorsky

Mrs. Grose . . . . . Chaazi Munyanya

Peter Quint . . . . . Jacob Thompson

Miss Jessel . . . . . Carol Perry

SUNDAY, MARCH 25TH AND SATURDAY, MARCH 31ST

Narrator . . . . . Nathanael Alpers

Governess . . . . . Alexandra Diessner

Miles . . . . . Sarah Soltysik

Flora . . . . . Kristen Baumgartner

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Miss Jessel . . . . . Carol Perry

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<u>Violin II</u> Julianna Byess	<u>Oboe</u> Caleb Bradley	<u>Percussion</u> Colin Constance and Collin Sitgreaves
<u>Viola</u> Sabrina Romney	<u>Clarinet</u> Roxy Cortes	<u>Piano and Celesta</u> Karen Stody
<u>Cello</u> Kenny Martin	<u>Bassoon</u> Jessie Sawyer	
<u>Bass</u> Kenny Jones	<u>Horn</u> Molly Salika	

# SYNOPSIS

The action takes place in the mid-19th century at Bly, an English country manor.

## Act I

**Prologue:** A narrator relates the terms under which a young Governess is engaged to care for two children, Miles and Flora, by their uncle who is their legal guardian. Though she is reluctant at first, she is charmed by the dashing young man, and eventually agrees to his strange requirements, which includes the instruction that she never contact him.

**Scene 1, The Journey:** Apprehensive and full of questions, hopes and aspirations, the Governess travels to Bly.

**Scene 2, The Welcome:** The housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, along with Miles and Flora eagerly await the Governess’ arrival. The Governess is encouraged by the children’s charm, the beauty of the house and the friendliness of Mrs. Grose.

**Scene 3, The Letter:** A letter arrives: from Miles’ schoolmaster informing the Governess that Miles has been expelled, calling him “an injury to his friends”. The Governess questions Mrs. Grose. The children’s innocent singing of a nursery rhyme confirms the adults’ disbelief in the possibility that Miles could have committed any wrongdoing. The Governess declares her intention to say nothing to the children’s guardian or to Miles.

**Scene 4, The Tower:** As the Governess strolls through the grounds on a summer’s evening, her repose is interrupted by the sight of a strange man looking down at her from the tower of the house.

**Scene 5, The Window:** Miles and Flora are seen playing. The Governess’s concern about the stranger increases when she sees him again, now staring into the parlor through the window. She describes him to Mrs. Grose, who identifies him as Peter Quint, a former valet, who had formed a relationship with the previous governess, Miss Jessel. Both are now dead. The Governess resolves to protect the children.

**Scene 6, The Lesson:** Miles and Flora are at their lessons. The Governess begins to pry, trying to get Miles to reveal the reason for his expulsion from school. Miles sings a song, which reveals his troubled state.

**Scene 7, The Lake:** The Governess and Flora spend a quiet afternoon at the lakeside. After Flora sings a melancholy lullaby to her doll, Miss Jessel appears and is seen by the Governess. The Governess is shaken and begins to doubt her ability to protect the children from the outsiders.

**Scene 8, Night:** Quint calls for Miles, tempting him with exotic visions and unnamed secrets. Miss Jessel and Flora join them. When the Governess and Mrs. Grose enter, seeking the children, Quint and Miss Jessel vanish.

## Act II

**Scene 1, Colloquy and Soliloquy:** In a nightmarish scene, Quint and Miss Jessel declare their determination to dominate Miles and Flora. The Governess is mired in confusion and fear.

**Scene 2, The Bells:** On their way to church, Miles and Flora parody the Benedicite. The Governess is suspicious of the children, but Mrs. Grose is decidedly upbeat and positive. She suggests that the Governess write to the children’s guardian to enlist his help, but the Governess refuses to break her vow of silence. Miles asks the Governess why he has not been sent back to school, and challenges her to inform his guardian. The Governess is shaken and contemplates escaping Bly.

**Scene 3, Miss Jessel:** The Governess finds Miss Jessel in the schoolroom. Fighting her fear, she confronts the former governess, driving her away. The Governess loses her resolve and decides to write to the children’s guardian.

**Scene 4, The Bedroom:** The Governess tells Miles that she has written to his guardian. She urges him to tell her what happened at school and at Bly, claiming that she wants to “save” him. Quint appears and her interrogation ends.

**Scene 5, Quint:** Encouraged by Quint, Miles steals the letter that the Governess has written to his guardian.

**Scene 6, The Piano:** Miles entrances the Governess and Mrs. Grose by playing at the piano. Flora lulls Mrs. Grose to sleep, and the girl slips out. The Governess notices Flora’s absence, wakes Mrs. Grose, and they set off to find the girl.

**Scene 7, Flora:** The Governess and Mrs. Grose find Flora at the lake. When Miss Jessel appears, the Governess challenges Flora to acknowledge that she can see her, but Flora denies everything and accuses the Governess of being cruel. Mrs. Grose leads Flora home and the Governess concedes defeat.

**Scene 8, Miles:** The next morning, Mrs. Grose prepares to depart with Flora. She spent the previous night with the girl during which Flora revealed horrors that have convinced Mrs. Grose that she “must take her away”. They depart, leaving the Governess to confront Miles. The Governess re-affirms her intention to save Miles. Once again she presses the boy to confess, and once again Quint intervenes, leading to a climactic ending.

## NOTES:

Regarded by many as the finest of all his stage-works, *The Turn of the Screw*, Britten’s final chamber opera, was written in the incredibly short period of just four months in 1954. The work is based on the novel of the same name by Henry James, which Britten had known for many years: a tale of good versus evil, natural versus the supernatural, possession and exorcism, set within the domestic proprieties of the Essex country house of Bly - ingredients which would have had an obvious appeal for the composer. Above all, Britten’s favorite theme of the corruption of innocence must have attracted him more than any other. The story also lends itself to Britten’s gifts for apt and distinctive musical characterization.

The work is one of the most tautly constructed and tightly-knit of all Britten’s operas, the musical material almost wholly derived from the twelve-note ‘Screw’ theme heard near the work’s opening. However, this very concentration helps give this work its overwhelming feeling of intense claustrophobia and its astonishing dramatic power can have a shattering impact in the theatre.

-Britten-Pears Library

## DIRECTOR’S NOTES:

This is a work I have been waiting to direct since I first became fascinated by the novella in my high school studies. Once I was introduced to the operatic setting by Britten in college, I realized that Britten had created the musical equivalent of Henry James’ ambiguous characterization.

Britten crafted a twelve-tone theme (designated the “Screw Theme” in many analyses), which is first stated at the outset of “The Journey”, the first scene of Act I. This theme is fertile ground for Britten, and he derives many melodic motives from it, which are shared amongst several characters. This sharing of motivic material creates connections between The Governess and Quint in their desire to “save” or “posses” Miles, between Mrs. Grose bemoaning Quint’s “evil ways” and praising Miles’ “cleverness”, and in the overarching theme of the corruption of innocence. As stated by Quint and Miss Jessel, all “innocence is drowned” in this opera; the Governess, Miles, Flora, none are unscathed, and in the end we as observers are left to wonder who are the victims and who are the predators.