



CANADIAN  
OPERA  
COMPANY

21 | 22 SEASON SPONSOR: BMO 

# FANTASMA

2022 SOCIAL STORY  
& VISUAL GUIDE



COMPOSER **IAN CUSSON**

LIBRETTIST **COLLEEN MURPHY**

DIRECTOR/DRAMATURG **JULIE McISAAC**

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## YOUR EXPERIENCE

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This is a step-by-step guide to walk you through your visit  
to the Canadian Opera Company Theatre.

It is designed to help you prepare  
if you are curious or anxious about your visit.



## GETTING TO THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY THEATRE

The opera will take place at the Canadian Opera Company Theatre, located at **227 Front St. E.**

The theatre is accessible by:

~ FOOT ~

~ PUBLIC TRANSIT ~

Get on a 504 streetcar and get off at the Ontario St. stop. Walk south to Front St. E.  
You can visit [ttc.ca](http://ttc.ca) to plan your trip.

~ CAR ~

There is no parking on site but street parking and parking lots are available nearby. Visit **Green P** to find the closest parking lot. Some parking lots in the area are currently closed due to construction, so it is best to plan ahead or take public transit if possible.





## ARRIVING AT THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY THEATRE

The Canadian Opera Company Theatre is a very old building that was refurbished to include office spaces, rehearsal spaces, and a performance space. The opera will take place in the performance space.

There are several doors to the building. Look out for a sign directing you to the appropriate doors.



The main doors will open one hour prior to each performance.

There may be people lined up when you arrive. They are lining up to show their proof of vaccination, or pick up or purchase their tickets to the opera.

**The Canadian Opera Company currently requires that everyone above the age of 12 shows proof of full vaccination in order to attend a performance.** “Proof of full vaccination” means showing staff your enhanced vaccine certificate (with QR code) along with a piece of identification that matches the name and date of birth on the certificate.

**Children ages 5-11 who are fully vaccinated must also provide proof of vaccination.**

**Children ages 5-11 who have only received one dose or are not vaccinated must bring proof of a negative rapid antigen test taken no more than 48 hours before the performance.** For more information about our COVID-19 admission policies and acceptable antigen tests, please click [here](#).

As everyone enters the theatre, masks are required to be worn at all times indoors except when actively eating and drinking.

While children under the age of 12 are welcome to attend the performance, a reminder that the recommended age for *Fantasma* is 12 and up.

When you arrive at the theatre doors, join the line, and have your proof of vaccination ready to show the usher.

If you already have your tickets, you can enter the lobby area. An usher will ask to see your ticket. If you need to pick up your tickets or have any ticketing issues, there will be a welcome desk once you enter the lobby, where a staff member can assist you.

Once inside the lobby doors you may notice a music stand wrapped in black velveteen with red velvet borders and tied together with white organza ribbon. This sculpture is called ***where the water meets the land*** and is a part of the COC's new Land Acknowledgement Commissioning Program. There will also be a speaker near the sculpture playing music. You may wish to pause and engage with this installation during your time at the theatre. You can also experience and learn more about this installation **on our website** before or after the performance.

Once inside the lobby doors. You will also notice QR codes which you can scan to download the *Fantasma* house program. If you do not have a smartphone, you may ask for a paper copy of the program from one of the ushers. They will be able to give you a house program which you can take and keep.

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## WAITING

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*Fantasma* is a new, original opera that will be performed for the first time at the Canadian Opera Company Theatre this month, which means you are attending the world premiere. It's exciting to see (and hear) a new opera come into the world, and we're delighted you can join us. The story of *Fantasma* takes place at a boisterous, old-fashioned carnival. There will be an engaging pre-performance installation in the lobby to help guests learn about the opera they are going to see and imagine that they, too, are at the carnival. You might see decorations and colours that remind you of a carnival, such as stripes, reds, and blues.



Food and drink will not be available for purchase, but a water fountain is available in the lobby.

COC staff and volunteers will be floating in the lobby area. You can easily spot them as they will be wearing name COC name badges. Please approach them if you have any questions!



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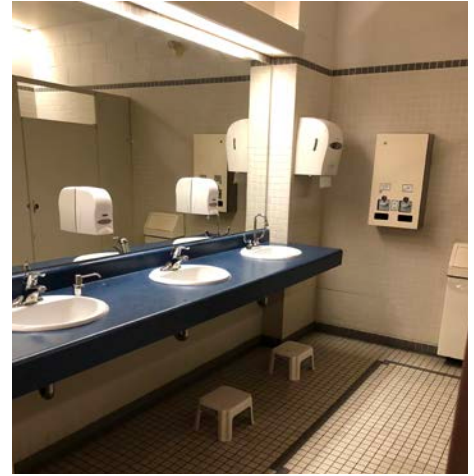
## WASHROOMS

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You can use the washroom at any time during your visit to the COC, even during the opera.

The lights are motion-activated, so if no one is in the bathroom before you enter, the lights may flicker on. This could be surprising.

Paper towels are available to dry hands after washing.



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## ENTERING THE THEATRE

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Ushers will open the doors to the theatre 30 minutes before the performance.

An usher will turn house lights on and off in the lobby as a reminder when the performance is 15 minutes away from beginning, and again when it's five minutes away from beginning.

Ushers will be standing inside the theatre doors. Ushers will be wearing black shirts, black pants, black shoes, and a name badge. The usher will ask for your ticket so they can scan it. Please hand your ticket(s) to the usher. You may also choose to show your ticket using your smartphone if your tickets have been emailed to you. They will return your ticket(s) or smartphone back to you.

Ushers will close the theatre doors at the start of the opera. But you're welcome to exit the theatre during the performance if you need to take a break.

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## INSIDE THE THEATRE

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The seating is general admission, which means that seating is not assigned and you may choose any seat that is available. If you are unsure of which seat to choose, ushers will be in the theatre to help you find the seat(s) that would be best suited for your group.

In the theatre, people will sit beside, in front, or behind you. There are 150 chairs in the theatre. It may be loud as people find their seats. You may need to stand up to let people reach their seats in the same row. You will be required to wear your mask for the entire duration of the performance, and at all times indoors except when actively eating and drinking.

If your seats are uncomfortable for any reason, please speak with an usher and we will do our best to assist you.



There will be two pianos in the theatre, one of which will be an upright piano onstage played by a character dressed in costume during the show. A grand piano will be partially out of view, located to the left of the stage. The Music Director (or the onstage pianist) will play the piano while the singers sing on stage. The Music Director may wave her hand from time-to-time during the performance. These gestures, called conducting, are meant to help the singers follow the music and sing together, especially in the tricky parts!

When the show is about to begin you will see a COC staff member standing on the floor to the right of the stage. They will wait for the audience to become quiet and then they will welcome you to the theatre. This will signal the start of the performance.

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## DURING THE OPERA

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During the opera you will see many singers come on stage to tell the story, with the two pianists playing along. The lights may change and there will be music and singing as well as talking. The singers will be portraying a lot of emotions but they are pretending.

If the singers are doing something you appreciate, it is okay to clap your hands or cheer. In operas, like the one you are going to see, people may clap after a song is finished if they like it.

You won't see any microphones used during the performance. The singers train for a very long time to learn how to project their voices without amplification.

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## WHAT WILL YOU SEE AND HEAR?

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**Spoiler Alert!** This document has been designed to prepare you if you are curious about your visit to the theatre, but does contain spoilers about some of the characters and the ending of the story. If you would prefer for it all to remain a surprise, please skip ahead to the section "Taking a Break."

Opera is a form of storytelling that uses music, drama, visual arts, and movement. All of these art forms come together to make opera. You will see singers dressed in costumes on the stage. They will be the ones telling the story through music.

In this story, best friends Léa and Ivy go to Palladino's old-fashioned carnival, where they meet Emile, a barker who urges them to '*Step right up!*'

But the carnival is deserted except for a sad clown, a guy dressed as a Bleeding Zombie, someone in a white sheet called Fantasma, and the boss, Mrs Palladino. Bored, Léa and Ivy wander off to a ride.

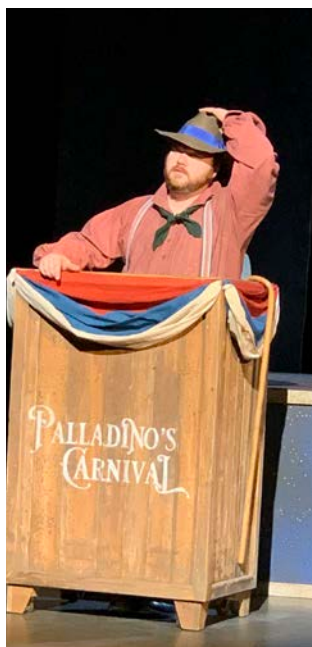
Meanwhile, Emile makes a plan to increase business: Fantasma will pop up in unexpected places and freak people out - that way folks will think there's a real ghost in the carnival and come check it out! But when Fantasma scares Ivy, she runs and hides in the Haunted Manor...where things begin to get serious.

The girls meet Marcel, a real, living, breathing ghost whose dark secret shocks them. Do they stick around and try to help him? And what will happen when they tell the adults the truth?

When the show begins, the first character you will see is **DANTE**, a piano player who works at Palladino's Carnival. You may find that his playing sounds slightly out of tune, or that it sounds a bit different from the grand piano to the left of the stage. Dante's music is cleverly composed in this way to give the effect of an old circus piano.



At the beginning of the show, you'll also see **TINO** the clown, another character at the carnival. He really wants to do a good job and entertain people, but he is always sneezing, which makes his clown nose fall off.



The next character you will meet is **ÉMILE**. Émile is an employee at the carnival, who welcomes guests to the attractions.

**JOHN** is a student. At the carnival, his main job is to surprise and scare the guests in the Haunted Manor.

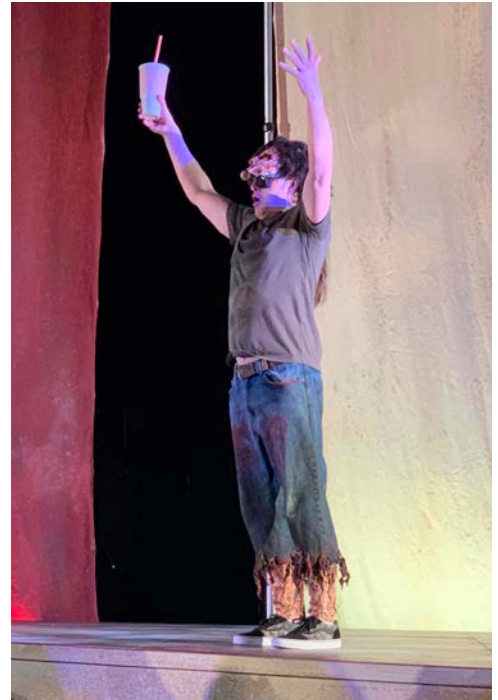


You will also meet **MS. PALLADINO** who is the owner of the carnival. She is very hard-working, and wants everyone to have a nice time at her carnival.





**NOAH**  
is another student, who plays the role of **BLEEDING ZOMBIE** at the carnival. You may find his costume a bit scary, but he is just pretending to be a zombie. His job at the carnival is also to scare guests. He even scares Léa and Ivy, but the girls soon realize he is one of their friends from school, dressed up in a costume.



**LÉA**  
and **IVY**  
are best friends. They are attending the carnival with Léa's mother, **MANON**. Manon is usually tending to Léa's baby brother **ANTOINE**. Antoine cries a lot! Léa finds that very annoying.

**MARCEL**  
is the last character you will meet in the opera. In this opera, we learn that Marcel is actually a ghost, who is trying to locate his grave. You will also learn that he was murdered many years ago. You may find hearing Marcel's story difficult, sad, scary, or troubling.



It's important to remember that no matter what your response to today's performance of *Fantasma*, it is ok to have a strong emotional reaction. The story of *Fantasma* touches on some powerful, difficult, and maybe even overwhelming topics like friendship, loneliness, life, death, grief, pain, and sadness.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by the story or the characters, you are not alone. No matter what you feel when you watch *Fantasma*, it's very likely that someone else has had the same or a similar reaction. You can always talk to a friend, family member, or teacher whom you trust, and let them know that you're experiencing these feelings.

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## TAKING A BREAK

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During the opera, if you find the performance to be overwhelming you can leave through the back of the audience. Ushers will help guide you to the doors. You're welcome to hang out in the lobby. When you feel like returning to the theatre you can come back in. You can ask an usher to help you return to your seat.

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## AT THE END OF THE OPERA

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The performance will last approximately 45 minutes with no intermission.

When the performance is over, the performers will bow and the audience will clap. It can become very loud in the theatre. You may also clap or you can cover your ears if this is too loud.

At the end of the performance, the lights will come back on and it will be time to leave the theatre. It may become a little hectic and loud again as everyone gathers their belongings and heads toward the doors. You will exit through another set of doors onto the sidewalk of Front Street East. This completes your experience at the COC, but you can continue to have fun with opera by listening to opera music, watching videos of operas online, or coming back for another visit on another day! We hope to see you again!

If you have any questions about your experience or performance, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Community Partnerships & Programs team at [education@coc.ca](mailto:education@coc.ca).

***Thank you for coming, and we hope to see you again soon!***