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## Astrolabe Musik Theatre presents a 'taste' of opera

By [Matthew Hoekstra - Richmond Review](#)

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Forget about the Chan Centre, Heather Pawsey has turned some of the most unusual places into concert halls.

The aquarium, a mine shaft, a winery, a rail station and even a crematorium have turned into places of music thanks to the Vancouver soprano.

"I really want the audience to be a part of the performance," said Pawsey in an interview with *The Review*. "It's not about you sit in a chair, and I'll stand on a stage and I'll make music at you. There is a time and a place for that...but when I can I really want to bring the audience in."

Next Wednesday, she'll turn the more traditional venue of Minoru Chapel into an opera house. Her new company [Astrolabe Musik Theatre](#) is presenting "Tasting Notes," a concert of two short chamber operas both linked to the "pleasures of the glass."

Through Astrolabe—a name borrowed from the historical navigation instrument—Pawsey pushes the traditional boundaries of song, opera and chamber music through integrating diverse artistic practices. Spending one year at the Banff Centre, where artists of a variety of disciplines collaborated, made her think differently about presenting classical music.

"It really really profoundly influenced me. I love classical music, but a lot of people I think are still a little hesitant about it, or afraid of it or they don't know much about it. To me, you can inform classical music by bringing in other art forms."

It begins with the music, said Pawsey, who decides what the composer is trying to say and then how best to illuminate that—lighting, dance and video projection being just some examples.

Astrolabe's show at Minoru Chapel is approximately 90 minutes. Pawsey will first present Gabriel Charpentier's chamber opera *A Tea Symphony or The Perils of Clara*



Soprano Heather Pawsey is the brandy-loving musician Clara in Gabriel Charpentier's chamber opera *A Tea Symphony or The Perils of Clara*.

*Tim Pawsey photo*  
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along with pianist Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa and flautist Kathryn Cernauskas. The English opera focuses on the troubled Clara, whose lifelong goal was to play the cello, but her mother ruined her life by forcing the flute on her daughter. So Clara humourously drinks nine glasses of brandy while performing in a grand hotel.

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The second piece is a surprise, said Pawsey. Featuring four singers, the work is from the “obscure sibling of a famous composer,” whose story is also a little, well, intoxicating.

•Astrolabe’s next concert is Animal, Vegetable, Mineral on Sunday, May 15, 3 p.m. at the Britannia Mine Museum in Britannia Beach (Highway 99, just south of Squamish). Admission is free, but seating is limited. Call 1-800-896-4044, ext. 244, or e-mail [scott@bcmm.ca](mailto:scott@bcmm.ca) to reserve.

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**Astrolabe Musik Theatre**

- Wednesday, May 4, at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. at Minoru Chapel (6540 Gilbert Rd.)**
- Tickets, \$15 to \$20, at 604-276-4300 (quote #125351 for 2:30 p.m.; #125352 for 7:30 p.m.)**
- A presentation of the [City of Richmond’s Chapel Opera Nights](#) series**

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• **James Richardson** Chiming in on this...This is right next to the Steveston Playground at 1 Road and Moncton. Before I question the legitimacy of this spend, I'd like to know much of the overall Richmond budget has...

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• **whatnow101** I agree with Duncan. Is this an appropriate use of public funds? Why not have private funds pay for this. Have a funding drive.....if this is important to Richmondites I'm sure the funds could be...

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