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FIRST PERSON

Boston Lyric Opera's 'La Traviata': 'sexy and risque'

Set designer Julia Noulin-Merat, a Boston University grad based in New York, is bringing a youthful, decadent vibe to the October production.

| AS TOLD TO JOEL BROWN SEPTEMBER 28, 2014

This *Traviata* is going to be different because the BLO has brought on a young creative team to produce it, and we want to put on a show that will actually attract a younger audience as well. This is definitely the most sexy and risque production of *Traviata* I have ever been a part of.

We've made Flora's party an after-after party. Lots of people have their clothes off and there are garter belts and corsets. It's kind of like when you go to a wedding and it's 2 a.m. and everybody's so drunk the truth comes out. We have this giant table and there's people crawling under it and walking over. It's basically a giant orgy. People expect a stereotypical production with chandeliers and beautiful ball gowns, and we're trying to have them look at the show differently.



ARAM BOGHOSIAN

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We are playing with perspective and scale. Everyone is going to look and feel much smaller than normal. The artistic goal we are exploring is that [main character Violetta's] fate was unavoidable, that she was doomed from the start. We want her world to feel much bigger than she is.

By the end of the production, we go back to her apartment, and she's sold everything and she's dying. There's nothing left in her world. We are slowly closing the world, bringing it closer and closer to her. We start the show using the entire depth of the Shubert [Theatre], and by the end of the show we've brought the entire sightline to a depth of 10 feet. It's very close and suffocating. And there, sadly, she dies.

I have a master's in set design from BU. What's amazing about Boston is it's such a composer town; there's so much new opera and new music—it's really incredible.

Interview has been edited and condensed.

SEE IT *The Boston Lyric Opera's performance of Verdi's "La Traviata" runs October 10 to 19. 617-542-6772; blo.org*

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