



BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

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**Fresh Psychological Approach to Audience Favorite Launches  
Boston Lyric Opera's 2009-2010 Season**  
*Expanded season opens with new production November 6 that elevates the essentials  
and includes souvenir from Jersey Boys!*

**Boston, MA** — Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) kicks off its exciting 2009-2010 Season with a fresh take on an audience favorite: Bizet's passionate [Carmen](#), which opens November 6 at the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre in Boston. "By re-introducing dialogue originally specified by the composer (the recitatives sometimes used were composed posthumously and not sanctioned by Bizet) and by streamlining the libretto and the scenery to showcase the central themes of the story, BLO intends to pay tribute to, and offer a unique interpretation of the composer's original vision," notes General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson. The Company anticipates this approach will catch the attention of both *Carmen* traditionalists and first-time audiences.

Along with this new approach, BLO is thrilled to introduce mezzo-soprano [Dana Beth Miller](#) to Boston audiences in her role debut. *The New York Times* heralded Ms. Miller's "rich, substantial voice, along with a winning stage presence." *Opera Today* applauded her "sizable and richly colored mezzo" and audiences across the country have embraced the control, finesse, power and emotion that she brings to each performance.

BLO's new production is directed by [Nicholas Muni](#), designed by the Company's Artistic Advisor [John Conklin](#), and conducted by **Keith Lockhart**. One of the most famous operas of all time, *Carmen* has become known for elaborate sets and massive crowd scenes that frame the fiery relationship between the two main characters, the soldier Don José and the gypsy Carmen. "Big, grand opera meets small, intense, passionate intrigue among four central characters," notes Mr. Muni. "By clearing out the unnecessary 'decoration,' we get to the heart of the story – an approach which is very much in tune with contemporary social trends. The scenery, costumes and lighting will be rich, large scale and to the point but beyond that, the detail will be in the performances of the singers ... and what is happening between the characters. This type of approach is only possible because of the intimacy of the Shubert Theater – which is very similar in size to the theater for which Bizet wrote the opera in the first place. That intimacy is a wonderful gift."

Mr. Conklin has worked closely with fellow designers **Gabriel Berry** (costumes) and **Tom Hase** (lighting) to exploring the nuances as well as the overall sweep of this great opera. "The piece itself is so rich in drama, in music, so infinite in its power to evoke joy, excitement and exhilaration in its creative team,

More ...

performances, and audiences over and over again. We are deliberately keeping the period to the late 19th century—the period of its composition. That cultural milieu is an integral part of the psychological make up of the characters and is so vividly and unforgettably expressed in the music, it need not be duplicated in a literal way in the scenic environment.”

A souvenir from the recent run of *Jersey Boys* at the Shubert will also influence dimension in BLO’s production. The large black portal that completely covers the ornate white and gold columns that make up the familiar proscenium has a very compelling effect in breaking down the visual and psychological divide between the performers and the audience.

**Bizet’s *Carmen*: November 6, 8m, 11, 13, 15m, 17, 2009** at the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre. Sung in French with French dialogue and projected English translation. **More insight from Mr. Muni and Mr. Conklin is available here: [http://www.blo.org/2009-2010\\_carmen\\_production.html](http://www.blo.org/2009-2010_carmen_production.html), as are interviews with leads Dana Beth Miller and [John Bellemer](#).** *Carmen* is co-sponsored by The Calderwood Charitable Foundation.

<b>CREATORS</b>	<b>Composer:</b>	Georges Bizet
	<b>Librettist:</b>	Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, after Prosper Mérimée’s novel
<b>PRODUCTION</b>	<b>Conductor:</b>	Keith Lockhart (2008 <i>Les Contes d’ Hoffmann</i> , 2006 <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , 2004 <i>Tosca</i> )
	<b>Stage Director:</b>	Nicholas Muni (1993 director of BLO’s <i>I Puritani</i> Neapolitan premiere)
	<b>Set Designer:</b>	John Conklin
	<b>Costume Designer:</b>	Gabriel Berry
	<b>Lighting Designer:</b>	Thomas C. Hase*
<b>CAST</b>	<b>(In order of vocal appearance)</b>	
	<b>Moralès/A Guide:</b>	Gregory Gerbrandt*
	<b>Micaëla:</b>	Hanan Alattar* ( <i>The Denver Post</i> notes, “She brought dimension and personality to her character and her distinctive voice with its dark hues and dramatic weight seemed ideal.” Performed at Salzburg and Ravinia Festivals as well as in title roles across country and Europe.)
	<b>Don José:</b>	John Bellemer (2002 Don José in <i>Carmen</i> on the Common; San Jose Metro noted, “Be it through mere physical presence, or via his radiant tenor voice, Bellemer evolved in perfect step with Don José’s tragic situation.”)
	<b>Zuniga:</b>	Darren Stokes*
	<b>Carmen:</b>	Dana Beth Miller* (“It is clear: Dana Beth Miller is a force to be reckoned with on the operatic scene.” <i>Classical Music Magazine</i> )
	<b>Frasquita:</b>	Meredith Hansen*
	<b>Mercédès:</b>	Stephanie Chigas
	<b>Escamillo:</b>	Daniel Mobbs* (Frequent performer in Caramoor International Music Festival; <i>Opera News</i> applauded his “lightning-quick presence and bright, clean sound”)
	<b>Remendado:</b>	Darren Anderson
<b>Dancaïro:</b>	Andrew Garland	

With BLO’s Orchestra and Chorus.

\*BLO debut

*Carmen* opens a season that is bursting with inspiration: New programming includes the [Signature Series](#), a partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston that offers a lively one-hour exploration of the operas in BLO's 2009-2010 Season. On November 7, BLO hosts its first free [Open House](#) at the Shubert for all ages which includes backstage tours of the set of *Carmen*, demonstrations, and performances by finalists for the [aria contest](#) for teens. In February, the Company presents its first [Opera Annex, Britten's \*The Turn of the Screw\*](#) at The Castle at Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers in Boston. BLO then returns to the Shubert in March for the North American premiere of Welsh National Opera's [Ariadne auf Naxos](#), followed by a new production of Mozart's [Idomeneo, re di Creta](#). In addition to the productions detailed below, school children and families will also enjoy BLO's annual Opera for Young Audiences, which this year will be a one-hour English production of Rossini's [The Barber of Seville](#) that travels throughout New England.

## **ADDITIONAL 2009-2010 PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS**

### **NEW: BLO's first Opera Annex: Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*: February 3, 5, 6, 2010**

A Governess arrives at a lonely English country house to care for two parentless children, but there is something terribly wrong. Wire-taught tension mounts as she gradually senses the truth—Evil has corrupted the children. Britten's chamber opera promises to glue the audience to their seats. *The Turn of the Screw* is a devastating story with riveting music.

- **The Governess:** Met regular Emily Pulley, *soprano*\* (Covent Garden debut as Mimi in *La boheme*)
- **Mrs. Grose:** 40-year opera veteran Joyce Castle, *mezzo-soprano*\* (132 role repertoire)
- **Conductor:** Andrew Bisantz\* (sought-after American conductor)
- **Director:** Sam Helfrich\* ("best production of the year," Boston Baroque 2005 *Agrippina*)

\*BLO debut

***The Turn of the Screw* experience:** BLO's Opera Annex are fully-staged productions designed for a found space outside traditional theatre, this season, The Castle at Boston Park Plaza & Towers.

### **Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*: March 21, 14m, 17, 19, 21m, 23, 2010**

An unseen producer makes changes to an opera just before the curtain rises. That is how the clowns creep onstage. And where is the composer? Backstage, tearing his hair out. Through this compelling half farce, half *opera seria*, Strauss beautifully weaves voice and orchestra together, creating a true masterpiece.

- **Ariadne:** Marjorie Owens (Met National Council Audition Grand Finals; *Opera News* hailed her "commanding presence as Ariadne, filling out 'Es gibt ein Reich' with a grand-scaled tone that sounded just as clear and effortless at the end of the work as at the beginning. Owens sounded like a major Straussian in the making.")
- **Bacchus:** Brandon Jovanovich (Sings in Met's new *Carmen* this Season)
- **Conductor:** Erik Nielsen\* (high profile young Maestro who filled in for James Levine at 2008 Tanglewood performances of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*)
- **Director:** Broadway's Neil Armfield\* (directed Geoffrey Rush in *Exit the King* revival)
- **Revival Director** Denni Sayers (2005 *The Little Prince*; choreographs and directs through Europe and

- /Choreographer: U.S.)
- **Set/Costume Designer:** Dale Ferguson\*
- **Lighting Designer:** Tim Mitchell\*

\*BLO debut

**The *Ariadne auf Naxos* experience:** The North American premiere of the 2004 Welsh National Opera production is directed and designed by Neil Armfield's critically acclaimed team prior to being seen in Toronto.

**Mozart's *Idomeneo*: April 23, 25m, 28, 30, May 2m, 4, 2010**

Idomeneo, King of Crete, makes a promise to Neptune, God of the Sea. When the king realizes the terrible price it will exact, vows and hearts are broken. Longing pours into arias and ensembles as only Mozart writes them. Audiences are transported to another world.

- **Idomeneo:** Jason Collins\* (Sings Idomeneo in Bologna prior to BLO; recently performed in Seattle Opera's *Ring Cycle*)
- **Idamante:** Sandra Piques Eddy (2001 Met debut, BU Opera Institute alum)
- **Conductor:** David Angus\* (Glimmerglass Musical Director)
- **Director:** Actress/writer/director Lillian Groag
- **Designer:** John Conklin (BLO's Artistic Advisor)
- **Costume Designer:** Constance Hoffman\*
- **Lighting Designer:** Robert Wierzel (2009 *Don Giovanni*, 2008 *Rusalka*, 1994 *Werther*, 1992 *Lost In The Stars*; received a 2005 Obie Award-Special Citation; on Broadway, designed David Copperfield's "Dreams and Nightmares" and "The Deep Blue Sea"

\*BLO debut

**The *Idomeneo* experience:** This brand new BLO production bestows its quality touch on Mozart's first operatic masterpiece. Lillian Groag confers a fresh perspective on the timeless work.

**Performance Location Information**

All 2009-2010 mainstage productions will be performed in the Company's home, the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre, 265 Tremont Street in Boston's Theatre District. The Opera Annex production, *The Turn of the Screw* will be performed at The Castle at Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers, 130 Columbus Avenue in Boston. Evening performances are at 7:30pm; Sunday matinees at 3pm. In spring 2010, BLO will present Rossini's [The Barber of Seville](#) for young audiences at venues throughout New England.

**Subscription and Ticket Information**

- Season tickets are on sale now and start at \$96. Subscribe online at [blo.org/subscribe](http://blo.org/subscribe) or call Audience Services at 617.542.6772.
- Single tickets go on sale to the public on October 1, 2009 with prices starting at \$34, and will be sold exclusively at 866.348.9738, [citicenter.org](http://citicenter.org), or in person at the Citi Performing Arts Center Box Office, 270 Tremont Street in Boston.

- Discounts on group tickets are available to groups of ten or more by calling Audience Services at 617.542.6772.
- Half price student tickets are available in advance and day of show at the Shubert Theatre box office with a valid student ID.

For more information and updates on Boston Lyric Opera's 2009-2010 Season, adult education programs and special events, please visit [blo.org](http://blo.org).

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Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) is New England's largest opera company. Founded in 1976, BLO is recognized for its artistically excellent productions of a diverse repertoire that entertain and inspire audiences and feature emerging operatic talent. BLO produces three mainstage productions at the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre in Boston, an Opera Annex production in a found space, and a fully staged, one-hour English version of a popular Opera for Young Audiences throughout New England. BLO's programs are funded, in part, by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. [blo.org](http://blo.org)