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**“Nothing is more truly entertaining than high passion”  
BOSTON LYRIC OPERA ANNOUNCES ITS 2015/2016 SEASON  
Premiere productions celebrate Paris; Opera Annex to feature Philip Glass**

**Boston, MA** — With a distinct French flavor, spiced by influences from New Wave films to student revolutionaries, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) announced today its productions for the 2015/2016 Season, the company’s 39<sup>th</sup>. The four operas – Giacomo Puccini’s **La Bohème**, Philip Glass’ **In the Penal Colony**, Jules Massenet’s **Werther** and Franz Lehár’s **The Merry Widow** – comprise all-new BLO productions of both popular classics and works not seen often in Boston.

“More than most other cities and countries in the world, Paris and France inspire intense passion for their beauty, romance, opulence, and history,” says BLO General and Artistic Director **Esther Nelson**. “Who wouldn’t want to be swept away there with ravishing music and passionate stories? The 2015/2016 Season is one of our strongest in years ... with stories that are resonant about real people dealing with war, crisis, love realized and love unrequited. These new productions rethink the stories we know and love, putting them into new places and reinterpreting them in exciting new ways.”

**LA BOHÈME**

The season opens October 2-11 with **La Bohème**, at the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre, conducted by BLO’s Music Director **David Angus** and set amidst the 1968 Paris student revolts that reflected generational unrest and supported strikes that brought the city to its knees. The production’s influences include French New Wave films (particularly Jean-Luc Godard’s “Masculin Féminin”) and place Puccini’s familiar story of ragtag artists and tragic illness in a graffiti-laden student flat, in the revolutionaries’ gathering place Café Momus, and alongside a barricade erected during the conflict. **La Bohème** is directed by **Rosetta Cucchi** with set design by BLO Artistic Advisor **John Conklin**, costume design by **Nancy Leary** and lighting by **D.M. Wood**.

The cast is led by BLO audience favorite **Kelly Kaduce**, a Boston University graduate making her long-awaited Boston return as the doomed Mimi. Kaduce is receiving strong notices for her work in Lyric Opera of Chicago’s premiere production of Mieczyslaw Weinberg’s **The Passenger**. **Jesus Garcia**, makes his BLO debut as Rodolfo, a role he played in Baz Luhrmann’s acclaimed 2002 Broadway production. Other notable cast members include **Jonathan Beyer** as Marcello, **Emily Birsan** making her company debut as Musetta, and **James Maddalena** as Benoit/Alcindoro.

“This new production is not the traditional, sentimentalized Bohème,” says Nelson, “but it remains one of the world’s greatest love stories, with a fresh new perspective in a mythological Paris, full of both idealism and stark reality.”

As is the company’s tradition, Opening Night of **La Bohème** includes the annual season gala and a post-performance reception.

## IN THE PENAL COLONY

Glass' **In the Penal Colony** is BLO's brand-new **Opera Annex** production, running **November 11-15** at The Cyclorama at the Boston Center for the Arts. Emmanuel Music Artistic Director **Ryan Turner** conducts for this contemporary two-character opera that premiered in 2000. Dark, thought-provoking and disturbing, **In the Penal Colony** is adapted from the 1914 Franz Kafka dystopian short story in which two males face torture for their crimes while staring down an ominous machine. The work features Glass' signature driving music, this time composed for string quintet. BLO's John Conklin worked alongside Glass and director JoAnne Akalaitis as set designer for the opera's 2000 world premiere at Seattle's ACT Theatre.

BLO Emerging Artist alumni **Neal Ferreira** as Visitor, and **David McFerrin** as Officer star in the production, which is directed by 2014/15 Emerging Artist **R.B. Schlather** with set design by **Julia Noulin-Mérat**, costumes by **Terese Wadden** and lighting by **JAX Messenger**.

"Nowhere else but in this **Opera Annex** production can audiences explore the breakdown of civil society in 90 minutes, set to the dark and driving music that Philip Glass is famous for," says Nelson.

**Opera Annex** programs, a successful addition to BLO programming for the past five seasons, reflect the Company's mission to build awareness and support for opera through compelling, fully-staged chamber operas with wide audience appeal in accessible settings.

## WERTHER

In spring 2016, BLO returns to the Shubert Theatre March 11-20 with a new production of Jules Massenet's **Werther**. Based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's loosely autobiographical novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther and typically set in Germany, this premiere production gets a transfer to an arrondissement outside Paris, honoring the French roots of composer Massenet's and librettists Édouard Blau, Paul Milliet and Georges Hartmann.

With a stylized set inspired by French cinema, specifically the films of director Jean Renoir, **Werther** tells the story of a young poet tortured by unrequited love. Director **Crystal Manich** and set designer John Conklin turn the tables on the story's narrative, placing the action as a dying memory after the titular character shoots himself. In a seemingly blown-apart room, featuring projections that evoke both narrative locations and the epistolary nature of the novel, **Werther** has costumes by **Deborah Newhall**, lighting design by **Paul Hackenmeuller** and video design by **Greg Emetaz**. David Angus conducts.

Tenor **Joseph Kaiser** makes his BLO debut as **Werther**. Kaiser completes his run this week as the male lead Michel in Opernhaus Zurich's production of Bohuslav Martinu's **Juliette**. He also starred in Kenneth Branagh's 2006 film version of "The Magic Flute." **Sandra Piques Eddy** returns to BLO as **Charlotte**. **Rachele Gilmore**, last seen here in BLO's **Ariadne auf Naxos** and who stepped into the role of **Olympia** to great acclaim in Metropolitan Opera's 2010 production of **The Tales of Hoffmann**, sings the role of **Sophie**. The **Werther** cast also includes tenor **Jon Jurgens**, who sang **Tristan** in BLO's highly praised 2014 **Opera Annex** production, **The Love Potion**.

"**Werther** is another extraordinary love story," says Nelson. "And what I love about this production is its subjective, almost surreal take on how the story unfolds. The production design is cinematic, with great movement; it creates a fitting space for the artists and the story."

## THE MERRY WIDOW

Closing BLO's season **April 29-May 8** is a spectacular new production of composer Franz Lehár's classic operetta **The Merry Widow**, set in Paris and other locations. Conducted by **Alexander Joel** in his company debut, with an updated book by director **Lillian Groag** based on the original libretto by Viktor Léon and Leo Stein, this nostalgic Merry Widow recalls Europe at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – perhaps the last time the continent could be a place for trivial frivolity, with disregard for the political and social problems bubbling under the sheen of the times.

Serious yet full of exuberance, this production retains the traditional narrative tale of rich widow Hannah Glawari and her countrymen's attempts to find her a suitable husband so that she (and her money) remain in Pontevedro. BLO's production boasts magnificent, colorful sets of the Pontevedrian Embassy's Grand Hall and garden, as well as a stunning recreation of Paris' opulent Art Nouveau restaurant and nightclub, Maxim's. Acclaimed Boston costume designer **Gail Astrid Buckley** takes on her first full BLO production with The Merry Widow. The production's set design is by **John Conklin**, lighting design is by **Robert Wierzel**, and choreographer **Kyle Lang** makes his company debut.

Soprano **Susannah Phillips** returns to BLO as Hannah Glawari, after starring in the company's 2011 production of A Midsummer Night's Dream and its 2009 Don Giovanni. Baritone **Roger Honeywell** makes his company debut as Count Danilo. Opera Annex alumnus **Andrew Wilkowske** (2011's The Emperor of Atlantis) appears as Baron Zeta. Tenor **John Tessier** as Camille de Rosillon and BLO 2014/15 Emerging Artist soprano **Chelsea Basler** as Valencienne also star.

"We are thrilled to bring The Merry Widow to BLO audiences for the first time," says Nelson. "While the look and sound of this production is typically rich and eye-popping, the underlying threat of a soon-to-change world gives it a grounding that allows us to look afresh at a seemingly lighthearted story."

"Although our three main stage operas originally were written no more than 20 years apart, they couldn't be more different," says BLO Music Director David Angus. "From the gorgeous and familiar strains of Puccini's passionate tragedy, to the ravishing romance of Massenet and the brilliance of Lehár's operetta, juxtaposed with the brilliant Phillip Glass' contemporary take on classical form, I know our patrons will be in opera heaven next season."

## PERFORMANCE AND TICKET INFORMATION

All 2015/2016 operas except for In the Penal Colony will be presented at the Citi Performing Arts Center<sup>SM</sup> Shubert Theatre, 265 Tremont Street, Boston, with evening performances at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinees at 3:00 p.m. The Opera Annex production of In the Penal Colony will be mounted at a location to be announced.

New season subscriptions will be available in May through [blo.org/subscribe](http://blo.org/subscribe), or by contacting BLO's Audience Services at 617.542.6772 or [boxoffice@blo.org](mailto:boxoffice@blo.org).

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## ABOUT BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

Boston Lyric Opera is the largest opera company in all of New England. Now in its 38<sup>th</sup> season, BLO celebrates the art of the voice through its mission of building curiosity, enthusiasm and support for opera by creating musically and theatrically compelling productions, events, and educational resources for the Boston community and beyond. Since its founding in 1976, the company has staged world premieres, U.S. premieres, co-productions and co-commissions of note with organizations such as The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and Scottish Opera, and continues to be a destination for some of the leading artists, conductors, directors and designers from around the world.

**MEDIA NOTE:** Photos of featured performers and interviews with artistic staff about the Boston Lyric Opera's 2016/2016 Season are available. For more information [click here](#) or contact Amanda Revman or Nisa Kiang, Goodman Media for BLO at [BLO@goodmanmedia.com](mailto:BLO@goodmanmedia.com) or 212-576-2700 (New York).