



## **BOSTON LYRIC OPERA AT 50** **18-MONTH CELEBRATION INCLUDES NEW CREATIVE STUDIOS,** **MORE PROGRAMS, AND A LANDMARK 50TH SEASON**

*The 2026/27 50th Anniversary Season mixes grand mainstage and intimate productions including company premieres, recitals and community performances:*

*Rossini's WILLIAM TELL / Previn's A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE / Tchaikovsky's THE QUEEN OF SPADES / Mozart's THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO / WORLD PREMIERE COMMUNITY OPERA inspired by Boston, from BSO Composer Chair Carlos Simon and former U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith / Boston composer Osvaldo Golijov's AYRE*

*50th Anniversary Gala honors Deborah Voigt, Michael Bobbitt and Linda Cabot Black, and includes a performance by Michael Fabiano.*

*50th Season artists include David Angus, Anne Bogart, Daniela Candillari, George Gagnidze, Thomas Glass, Konu Kim, Madison Leonard, Anya Matanovič, David Adam Moore, Dean Murphy, Nina Yoshida Nelsen, Ailyn Pérez, Sun-Ly Pierce, Elkhanah Pulitzer, Patricia Racette, Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha, Brittany Renee, Brianna J. Robinson, Brenton Ryan, Nadine Sierra, Michael Sumuel, Vita Tzykun and Angela Yam.*

*BLO Opera + Community Studios – a transformed facility with rehearsal, performance and public spaces – opens in March 2026.*

*BLO's growth and 2026/27 budget lands it in the U.S. top tier for the first time.*

*Board renews General Director & CEO Bradley Vernatter's contract through June 2030.*

*50th Season subscriptions on sale April 2026.*

**BOSTON** – February 26, 2026 – **Boston Lyric Opera** (BLO), New England's largest and most enduring opera company, celebrates its 50th anniversary with an expansive 18-month observance that spans calendar year 2026 (its 50th year) and the 2026/27 programming season (its 50th Season). Collectively, the anniversary includes the company's most extensive year-round onstage and community programming in its history, a deepened commitment to community engagement throughout the city, and a reimagined creative space in one of Boston's most historic and culturally significant neighborhoods.

The 50th Anniversary follows a period of extended success for the company, including a five-year-plus growth in budget size and a significantly diversifying audience demographic. During its 2024/25 Season, BLO welcomed more than 22,000 audience members — its highest figures in more than a decade, marking a 14 percent boost in ticket buyers. Between 2019 and 2025, audience members 18-34 years old have tripled in

number and audience racial diversity has increased by 70 percent, with notable growth in attendees who identify as AAPI and Black or African American.

Since 2021 BLO co-commissioned and co-produced the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Omar* (Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels) and the Grammy-nominated opera *An American Soldier* (Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang), and supported the creative economy by creating more than 3,000 paid artist engagements. In the same period, the company strengthened its governance by expanding its Board of Directors from 23 to 30 members, and reinforced its financial and operational stability, positioning BLO for continued growth and innovation in its next chapter.

With a board-approved 2026/27 fiscal year budget that exceeds \$15 million, the company moves into Budget One status, a designation by national service organization OPERA America that places BLO among America's eleven largest opera companies, including **San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, Seattle Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Los Angeles Opera, The Metropolitan Opera**, and others. In a move to ensure BLO's ongoing stability and growth, the Board of Directors has renewed Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO Bradley Vernatter's contract through June 30, 2030. Vernatter has led the company since 2021 and began his tenure with BLO in 2013.

A cornerstone of BLO's anniversary is the opening of its **Opera + Community Studios** next month. The renovated and repurposed space at Midway Artist Studios in Boston's Fort Point neighborhood will serve as a rehearsal center and administrative headquarters, and operate as a shared creative hub available to regional arts organizations and community groups. The opening is marked by a new production of **Gustav Mahler's SONG OF THE EARTH (DAS LIED VON DER ERDE)**, reimagined and staged by **BLO Artistic Associate Anne Bogart**, and conducted by **BLO Music Director David Angus, March 20-29, 2026.**



“Celebrating 50 years is a milestone that speaks to the remarkable legacy of Boston Lyric Opera, and to the enduring role opera plays in civic life,” Vernatter (l.) says. “For five decades, BLO has created spaces where people gather, collaborate and create shared cultural experiences. This anniversary is both a celebration of the company’s legacy and a recognition of what sustained cultural investment makes possible: artists and audiences growing together, generations connecting through music and storytelling, and a region strengthened by vibrant creative expression. Celebrating 50 years reminds us that opera’s greatest value lies in sharing creative, multicultural experiences that inspire, nourish and expand our hearts and minds”

### **2026/27 SEASON – BLO'S 50TH YEAR OF PROGRAMMING**

Boston Lyric Opera will launch its 50th Season this fall. Artistic and programming highlights below.

- **Gioachino Rossini's WILLIAM TELL (GUILLAUME TELL)** (new production) -- **Sep. 25-Oct. 4, 2026** at Emerson Colonial Theatre. Conducted by **David Angus**, in a production by **Vita Tzykun** and **David Adam Moore**, this epic opera – Rossini's final – has one of the most well-known overtures. It tells a story of resistance, freedom, and the triumph of a united people over a tyrannical ruler. Cast includes **George Gagnidze** (r.), a leading baritone at the Metropolitan Opera, Semperoper Dresden and Opéra National de Paris, makes his BLO debut as William Tell, **Konu Kim** (as Arnold), **Anya Matanovič** (Mathilde), **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (Hedwige), **Brianna J. Robinson** (Jemmy), **Morgan Mastrangelo** (Ruodi) and **James Demler** (Melchtal), with the **BLO Chorus and Orchestra**. Additional casting to be announced.



-more-

- **50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA** -- **Oct. 16, 2026** at the Opera + Community Studios. Celebrating the legacies of BLO and opera in the region while honoring the company's ongoing impact and deep investment in the community, this 50th Anniversary Gala recognizes three honorees whose contributions have shaped BLO past and future. Honorees are: internationally acclaimed opera artist **Deborah Voigt**, whose professional breakthrough came in BLO's 1991 *Ariadne auf Naxos*; **Michael Bobbitt**, former Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council and now President and CEO of OPERA America; and **Linda Cabot Black**, a longtime opera and arts education patron in Boston. The evening features performances by leading American tenor **Michael Fabiano**, with pianist/BLO Head of Music **Brett Hodgdon**. Funds raised will support BLO's community and education programs.
- **André Previn's A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE** (new production) – **Nov. 5-8, 2026** at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre. This adaptation of Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize-winning American theater classic is a lyrical, intimate and emotional work that explores brutal class conflict, and collisions between illusion and harsh reality. Conducted by **Daniela Candillari** and directed by **Patricia Racette**, a New Hampshire native who had an early-career highlight at BLO singing all the female leading characters in a 1992 production of *The Tales of Hoffman*, and now leads Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Cast includes **Brittany Renee** (near r., as Blanche), **Thomas Glass** (Stanley), **Angela Yam** (far r., Stella) and **Brenton Ryan** (Mitch), with the **BLO Orchestra**. Additional casting to be announced. Designed by **Andrew Boyce** (Scenic), **Amanda Gladu** (Costumes) **Eric Southern** (Lighting) and **Kylee Loera** (Projections). Co-produced with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.
 
- **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's THE QUEEN OF SPADES (PIQUE DAME)** – **Jan. 29 and 31, 2027** at Symphony Hall. BLO continues its annual partnership with the **Boston Symphony Orchestra** for a collaborative semi-staged opera event featuring the **BLO Chorus**. Casting, other details to be announced.
- **W. A. Mozart's THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO (LE NOZZE DI FIGARO)** (new production) – **Mar. 12–21, 2027** at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre. Conducted by **David Angus** and directed by **Anne Bogart**, this enduring favorite heralds the triumph of wit over aristocratic privilege, the complexities of love and infidelity, and the power of forgiveness. Cast includes **Michael Sumuel** (r., as Figaro), **Madison Leonard** (far r., as Susanna), **Dean Murphy** (Count), **Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha** (Countess), and **Sun-Ly Pierce** (Cherubino) with the **BLO Chorus and Orchestra**. Additional casting to be announced. Designed by **Sara Brown** (Scenic), **Constance Hoffman** (Costumes), and **Brian Scott** (Lighting).
 
- **LAWRENCE BROWNLEE & ERIN MORLEY IN RECITAL** – **April 16, 2027** at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall. Two of America's most in-demand singers – the multiple award-winning tenor Brownlee (near r.), and Morley (far r.), who draws global praise for her coloratura soprano – lead a concert centered on their hit 2025 album "Golden Age" with arias from 19th century French and Italian operas. Presented by **Vivo Performing Arts** in association with Boston Lyric Opera.
 

-more-

- **A WORLD PREMIERE COMMUNITY OPERA** – **May 8, 2027** at Symphony Hall in Boston. Co-commissioned by BLO and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), this as-yet-untitled work from Grammy-nominated BSO Composer Chair **Carlos Simon** (far r.) and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer/former U.S. Poet Laureate **Tracy K. Smith** (near r.) celebrates and tells the stories of Bostonians, is produced in collaboration with the City of Boston and dozens of community organizations and members, and features hundreds of youth performers. With Smith, BLO has launched a series of public workshops to gather Boston stories that will inform the opera's narrative. In the coming months, community meetings across the city will shape the text, drawing on the stories, language, memories and hopes of Bostonians to create a work that reflects the city's richness, complexity and spirit. Casting an creative team to be announced. 
- **NADINE SIERRA IN RECITAL** – **June 2, 2027** at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall. A one-night performance by internationally celebrated soprano **Nadine Sierra** (r.), marking her first appearance in Boston since her 2014 BLO performance as Gilda in *Rigoletto* (save for a 2018 appearance with Andrea Bocelli at TD Garden). Sierra's early career milestones with BLO include an acclaimed portrayal of Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2011), performed while she was still a student at The Mannes College of Music. She will be joined by pianist **Bryan Wagorn**. Presented by Boston Lyric Opera in association with Vivo Performing Arts. 
- **Oswaldo Golijov's AYRE** (new production) – **June 17-20, 2027** at BLO's Opera + Community Studios. BLO closes its 50th Season with four fully staged, theatrical performances of this genre-defying work that draws on Jewish, Arab and Christian traditions to illuminate their connections -- and their tensions. Featuring texts in multiple languages alongside spoken English passages drawn from contemporary poetry, the piece reflects on memory, loss and coexistence. Starring **Ailyn Pérez** (r.), who returns to BLO after her debut as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* during BLO's 30th Anniversary Season -- before she became one of the world's leading lyric sopranos. Featuring the **BLO Orchestra** and directed by **Elkhanah Pulitzer** with design by **MASARY Studios**. 

*50th Season subscriptions go on sale in April 2026. Details and on-sale alerts available at [blo.org](http://blo.org).*



“Our 50th season is a celebration of where Boston Lyric Opera has been and a declaration of where we are going,” said **Artistic Director Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (l.). “From the epic to the intimate, to our collaborations and continued commitment to new works and the communities we live in, this season reflects our belief that opera is a living, civic art form. With four women directors in this forthcoming season, we are seeing a continued diversity of the stories being told and the people telling them. It’s also a nod to BLO’s commitment to putting women leaders and artists at the forefront of our work. As we honor five decades of artistry, we are also investing deeply in new partnerships, new works, and new ways of bringing people together for a shared experience.”

-more-

## **MORE PROGRAMS IN BLO'S 50TH YEAR**

BLO's 50th year programming includes the launch of its "IN RECITAL" SERIES that showcases world-class artists in the intimate setting of the Opera + Community Studios. The series opens **March 24, 2026**, with acclaimed mezzo-soprano **Rachann Bryce-Davis**, a lead performer in **SONG OF THE EARTH**.

In April 2026, BLO's contributions to the regional Massachusetts 250 celebration include several programs under the **VOICES OF REVOLUTION** banner. The mainstage production **DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT** runs **April 24-May 3**; it reimagines the original story of a young Frenchwoman raised among soldiers, transposing it to late-1700s Boston and drawing inspiration from Massachusetts woman **Deborah Sampson** who disguised herself as a man to fight in the American Revolution. Boston playwright **Kirsten Greenidge** supplies a new book.

VOICES OF REVOLUTION includes **SHE WAS THERE**, running **June 13, 2026** at **The West End Museum** and **June 14, 2026** at the **Museum of African American History**. This program brings together film, music and dialogue to illuminate overlooked stories of Black revolutionary women throughout history.

- The June 13 program includes a screening of **Joy Davenport's** documentary "Fannie Lou Hamer's America" followed by a conversation that explores the enduring impact of the human rights activist.
- On June 14, artists from BLO and **Castle of Our Skins** present a concert of opera, spirituals and contemporary works, featuring soprano **Kearstin Piper Brown** (above, r.).



**SHE WAS THERE** is presented in partnership with **Castle of Our Skins**, the **Museum of African American History**, the **Roxbury International Film Festival**, **The West End Museum** and **Everyone250**.

BLO's **Opera Night at the Boston Public Library** event (April 7, 2026) also carries the **VOICES OF REVOLUTION** mantel, with a music and discussion program moderated by Artistic Director **Nina Yoshida Nelsen**.

## **COMMUNITY EVENTS AND FREE/LOW-COST PROGRAMS**

For its 50th Anniversary, Boston Lyric Opera plans free and low-cost community activities that bring opera to nearly every corner of the city. Details of all events below are available at [BLO.org](http://BLO.org).

- Free public events include **Opera Night at Boston Public Library (BPL)**, **Concert in the Courtyard** (August 28, 2026 @ BPL), and **Street Stage** summer 2026 outdoor performances returning to numerous locations. Free student and family-friendly performances of **THE BARBER OF SEVILLE** – part of BLO's **Opera on Tour** program – take place in February 2027 in schools and public libraries city-wide.
- Free Boston-area school events include the **Create Your Own Opera** series that brings teaching artists into elementary schools to help students develop original songs and stories inspired by favorite books or key curricula. At the college level, BLO presents **Opera Innovators** with **Boston Conservatory at Berklee (BoCo)**, which presents free public master-class-style events led by prominent opera artists for BoCo students and participants in the BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artists initiative.
- BLO also produces summer-intensive programs like **Musical Theatre Audition Workshop**, which helps students enhance their singing and dancing talents; and **Opera Bootcamp**, which offers learning and creation in a day-camp style program during school breaks.

- Opera lovers and the opera-curious can engage with BLO artists through the **Deconstructing Opera** series of discussions with artists appearing in mainstage shows, and **Pre-Performance Lectures** offered to ticket holders during the season and online.

### **BRINGING THE COMMUNITY INTO BLO'S NEW STUDIOS**

In addition to an administrative and creative hub with rehearsal and intimate performance space, BLO's Opera + Community Studios will welcome a variety of artistic and event activities. The 16,000-square-foot facility has a soaring, two floors-high, flexible space that accommodates small and mid-size performances in a black-box-style setting. The space also transforms into a vibrant community, corporate and private function space available to community members.

BLO General Director & CEO Bradley Vernatter says the opening of the Opera + Community Studios marks a turning point in the company's artistic and civic life. "These new studios become a place where our artists and artists across the city can feel at home, free to experiment, play, and build new alliances," he says. "This is also a destination that our neighbors and our larger community will see as an asset to the neighborhood – a fun place to experience art of all kinds and a welcoming public space. We have invested in a creative new civic space for the city."



Massachusetts-based catering, function and community event company The Catered Affair, which partners with numerous cultural organizations to provide food, event planning and retail dining options, is BLO's partner in the development, booking, catering and event planning aspects of the Opera + Community Studios.

"From the outset, this venue aligned with our long-term vision—supporting growth, consistency, and meaningful connection while reinforcing our role within the cultural community," says **Alex Marconi, CEO of The Catered Affair**. "From the beginning, this venue felt rooted in purpose. It's a space that brings people together in a way that feels authentic and meaningful, aligning with our belief that events should foster connection, not just celebration. Choosing this venue was about investing in a place that reflects our values and our commitment to community"

# # #

**MEDIA CONTACT:** For additional details about BLO's 50th Anniversary and Season, contact **John Michael Kennedy** at JMKPR, [jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com), cell/text 212-842-1752.