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BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

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Welcome

Welcome to our sixth Opera Annex production, *The Love Potion*, one of the most magical, interesting, and rarely-performed creations of the Swiss composer, Frank Martin.

As a Brookline resident, I am particularly thrilled that we are able to bring our Annex production to the Town of Brookline — a first! As always, our Annex choices are inspired by particular locations that we find intriguing and suitable for telling a certain story. We believe that the historic and beautiful Temple Ohabei Shalom, which is modeled on themes from the Hagia Sophia, is especially suggestive of a spiritual and human tale of love. Even the name Ohabei Shalom, or “lovers of peace,” evokes the striving for an ideal.

The transformation of a non-theater into a performance space requires the installation of a staging area, lighting, seating, and technical equipment, but it is always our aim to allow the character of the existing space to dominate the performance environment. Such installations are always complicated and complex, and they require the partnership of the venue organization. We are very grateful for the assistance, help, and encouragement of Rabbi Sonia Saltzman and her team, President Lawrence Green and his fellow Board members, as well as the administration and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Brookline. Also, our special team of experts who continue to offer their services *pro bono* in the process of bringing Annex productions into unusual venues.

We were initially able to create our Opera Annex series with the help of a special fundraising challenge: the *EnVision Opera Challenge*. I am happy to announce that we have successfully completed the Challenge with the extraordinary help of many of you who are at this performance. We hope that you enjoy the art that we are able to bring to our community, and the wider audience that we are now able to reach.

As we look forward to Thanksgiving, the entire BLO staff joins me in reflecting gratefully on all that we owe to those whose generosity supports the success of Opera Annex.

With best wishes for you and your family for the holidays,

Esther Nelson
General & Artistic Director
Both locally and beyond, Boston Lyric Opera leads the way in celebrating the art of the voice through innovative programming and community engagement that are redefining the opera-going experience.

Under the vibrant leadership of General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson, BLO’s Opera Annex productions have been described by the magazine Musical America as “part of the national dialogue” because of their role as entry points for new audiences, and The New York Times observed that BLO “clearly intends [its productions] to catch the interest of operagoers around the country.”

This view is shared by the nearly 40,000 people who experience BLO through both the Company’s dynamic, fully-staged productions at the Citi Performing Arts Center® Shubert Theatre and in found spaces throughout Boston, and through its extensive partnerships with such leading cultural organizations as the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Boston Symphony Orchestra; Handel and Haydn Society; Boston Public Library; American Repertory Theater; and many others. The Company’s involvement with Boston extends far beyond the walls of the performance hall, embracing the schools, churches, neighborhood centers, and cultural destinations of our vastly diverse and exuberant community.

BLO’s wide-reaching education initiatives introduce opera to new audiences and new generations. Thousands of high school students attend final dress rehearsals of BLO productions at the Shubert Theatre each year for free. Through its in-school education programs for children and youth, Music! Words! Opera!, BLO takes its place among a network of organizations that provide Boston and surrounding communities with services that are available nowhere else and that help make Boston unique among U.S. cities.

In addition, BLO audiences can enjoy free pre-performance lectures, which highlight the productions and music, prior to Shubert Theatre performances. BLO’s commitment to opera in all forms — classic masterworks to contemporary explorations — is evident in its programming, which remains faithful to tradition while blazing new ground, building audiences, and creating new ways to enhance the opera-going experience.

This commitment is further made manifest in the Company’s unwavering support for the artists — both established and emerging — who bring the art of opera to you, our valued audiences.

BLO provides each year’s class of Emerging Artists with extraordinary opportunities to develop their craft and grow. Many BLO Emerging Artists expand their careers to other world-leading stages, including New York’s Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago, while others choose to remain in Boston and influence future generations through performance and teaching.

Through your support and attendance, BLO is able to employ nearly 500 artists and creative professionals each year — vocalists, artisans, stagehands, costumers, and scenic designers — many of whom are members of our own community and our neighbors. The Company is proud to play a significant role in the livelihood of these individuals and to provide meaningful employment for our vibrant arts community.

Since its founding in 1976, BLO has staged significant world premieres, U.S. premieres, as well as a co-commission with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Scottish Opera, and Britten Sinfonia. BLO continues to be a destination for some of the leading artists, conductors, directors, and designers from around the world.

“Over the last few years, under the general and artistic direction of Esther Nelson, BLO has become a less predictable place. The company has been quietly reinventing itself, reaching broader audiences, rethinking its theatrical values, deepening its community involvement, and pushing the boundaries of its repertoire.”


“…This midsize company has a welcome new tempo, new ambitions, and new capacities. It should be fascinating to see, as BLO approaches its 40th anniversary in 2017, where it goes from here.”


Above, Michael Wade Lee and Anya Matanovic in La Traviata (2014), photo by Eric Antoniou.
A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Welcome to our sixth Opera Annex. What started five years ago as a bold outreach initiative to bring opera to the community has scored a major success in attracting newcomers to this fabulous art form.

When the Opera Annex was launched, it inspired audiences and one foundation in particular. This anonymous family foundation pledged $1 million over four years in support of Opera Annex and encouraged another $3 million in matching gifts from you — our donors and Annex attendees. What a privilege and opportunity to work with the foundation and you to realize this goal over four years.

It is my pleasure to share the story of this successful challenge. In tribute to all who participated, in the pages of this Program Book, we recognize your four-year contributions.

Thank you for your extraordinary achievement.

Our thanks also to the community of Temple Ohabei Shalom for welcoming BLO’s Opera Annex to Brookline.

Enjoy The Love Potion!

Steven P. Akin
Chair, Board of Directors

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At the heart of BLO’s mission is building curiosity and support for opera through theatrically compelling productions and programs. Now in its sixth season, BLO’s Opera Annex has achieved that goal by taking productions out of the traditional performance hall and placing them in unique, evocative spaces throughout greater Boston. From Viktor Ullmann’s *The Emperor of Atlantis*, a work written at the Terezín concentration camp, to Peter Maxwell Davies’ *The Lighthouse* at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, to commissions including the U.S. premiere of James MacMillan’s *Clemency* (a co-commission with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Scottish Opera, and Britten Sinfonia), and the world premiere of BLO’s commissioned chamber version of Jack Beeson’s riveting masterpiece, *Lizzie Borden*, which was reprised at Tanglewood this past summer, Opera Annex has become “increasingly essential” to Boston (according to *The Boston Globe*) and is fulfilling the early prediction by *The New York Times* that the program would, “catch the interest of operagoers around the country.”
This Season, we celebrate the successful completion of the EnVision Opera Challenge — a 4 year $4 million endeavor to support Opera Annex, new productions, and new works. This Challenge — Boston Lyric Opera’s largest as of the launch date — elicited tremendous support throughout the community, both from institutions and individual donors.

We are grateful to the anonymous family foundation, whose $1 million gift launched the Challenge, and to you, our Challenge donors, listed below.

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Written by Switzerland’s greatest composer, Frank Martin (1890–1974), in the late 1930s, Le Vin Herbé was initially conceived as a 30-minute piece in response to Robert Blum’s commission for his Züricher Madrigalchor. Wanting to distance himself from Wagner and his operatic version of the myth (and, thus, also from the Nazis, who glorified Wagner’s music), Martin based the story instead on Joseph Bédier’s 1900 philological novel, Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut. Bédier’s work was intended for general, not scholarly, audiences, and it drew on diverse medieval sources. In a short note following Gaston Paris’ preface to the romance, Bédier himself described his text as “très composite” (quoted in Gallagher 426).

Readable and succinct, Bédier’s version provided the perfect blueprint for Martin’s opera, offering an alternative storyline to Wagner’s. In her book, Eroticism and Death in Theatre and Performance, Karoline Gritzner notes that, “in the medieval novel, whose traces both Bédier and Martin follow, it is the love potion alone that awakens the love between Tristan and Isolde. This love does not already exist beforehand” (89). In this, Martin further departed from Wagner. “In Wagner, it is only the supposed death potion which makes possible the complete confession of love” (Gritzner 90).

This first, early version of Le Vin Herbé (often called Part I) was titled Le Philtre, and it was first performed in a concert version on April 16, 1940, by the Züricher Madrigalchor in Zürich, with Robert Blum conducting. The libretto focused on the love between Tristan and Iseut, steering away from the theme of death. Following the premiere of the first version, Martin decided to expand it further, and he included two more chapters of Bédier’s book (“La forêt du Morois” and “La mort”), which made the work fuller and more complex, while focusing on both the theme of love and the theme of death (Sealey). Martin finished the piece in 1941, and the first complete concert performance took place on March 28, 1942, at the same theatre, with Blum again conducting.

The staged premiere had to wait until August 15, 1948, in Salzburg (under the German title, Der Zaubertrank), conducted by Ferenc Fricsay, and with Julius Patzak as Tristan and Maria Cebotari as Isolde.

Although the opera is rarely performed, it has had a couple of memorable stagings. Twenty years after its premiere, in April 1961, Frank Martin’s Le Vin Herbé received its first New York performance by Hugh Ross and the Schola Cantorum. In 1982, Le Vin Herbé received three performances by the Park Lane Music Players, conducted by Simon Joly, and in 1993, another performance by the Netherlands Radio Choir and Chamber Orchestra under Bernhard Klee. In 1981, the John Oliver Chorale performed the concert version of Le Vin Herbé in Boston. In 1990, the group performed it again in a concert at Old South Church (Maestro John Oliver founded the Tanglewood Festival Chorus in 1970 and has since prepared it for over 1,000 performances). The 1990 concert of Martin’s opera was deemed “enthralling.”

The music of Martin’s maturity, from Le Vin Herbé onward, is marked by elegance of gesture, an extraordinary formal command, remarkable grace, energy, and lyricism. Its emotion is restrained yet intense, at times even haunting, its scoring economical yet sensuous, reflecting Martin’s keen ear for sonority. Few composers of the 20th century succeeded so well at writing music that was suave, expressive, and modern, and at the same time, utterly original. (465)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15
This Season’s Opera Annex production of The Love Potion marks the work’s fully-staged Boston premiere. It also marks another important date — that of the 40th anniversary of composer Frank Martin’s death, on November 21, 1974.

This spring, I traveled to Naarden, Holland, where Martin lived and wrote many of his most important works; in fact, he composed there up until ten days before he passed away at home. Today, it has been preserved as the Frank Martin House, an archive and musicological center for scholars. During the course of my research into the piece, I was honored to meet with Martin’s widow, Maria Martin, and learn more about his work and life.

The best-known opera on the subject of Tristan and Isolde is by the German 19th-century composer Richard Wagner, written for a large orchestra and large voices. Frank Martin considered his version, Le Vin Herbé, to be the opposite of Wagner’s 19th-century grand opera spectacle. Musically, it is completely different since it was composed for an intimate 12-person madrigal choir, where soloists blend in and out of a choral fabric. Martin has his own definitive, almost hypnotic and atmospheric musical language, which is polyphonic and harmonically dense with an air of the sacred and medieval. Le Vin Herbé is based on chapters of Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut, written ca. 1900, by the French medievalist Joseph Bédier. Bédier traced 12th-century French sources of the Celtic myth, which are earlier than the 13th-century poem by Gottfried von Strassburg, on which Wagner’s opera is based.

In 1938, Martin immersed himself in the Tristan myth, particularly in Bédier’s Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut, and the 1936 novel Sparkenbroke by the English writer Charles Morgan, which is a contemporary version of the Tristan motive of love and death. It was at that time that Martin was approached by Robert Blum, Director of the Zurich Madrigal Choir, to write a piece for his choir of 12 soloists. While Martin worked on the initial version of Le Vin Herbé, a 30-minute tableaux on the “Love Potion” chapter of Bédier’s book, two events profoundly overshadowed his life: Germany invaded Poland, reawakening Martin’s horror from his days as a soldier during WWI, and his beloved young wife, Irene, suddenly became ill and died.

His second wife and widow, Maria Martin, describes this scene in her autobiography, Treasured Moments – My Life with Frank Martin, as he completed Le Vin Herbé, following the death of his wife: “It was at night, in stifling hot weather, that Frank wrote those nostalgic last bars that incarnate the total surrender to fate, to the unknown aspects of his life, to love.”

Following the immediately enthusiastic audience response at the premiere in 1940, Martin did not relinquish his fascination with the piece and expanded it to include two more chapters: “The Forest of Morois” and “Tristan’s Death.” The eagerly anticipated premiere of the full version in 1942 was greeted with the same enthusiastic audience reaction.

I championed the inclusion of The Love Potion in our Season because it is beautiful music and fascinating theater. It is a truly timeless work, which is modern and old at the same time. It is music that is unfamiliar but quickly gets under your skin. It tells the story of ideal love that is pure but also deadly. We at BLO look forward to living Tristan and Isolt’s emotional journey through Martin’s enduring music.
Le Vin Herbé by Frank Martin; Based on the novel Tristan et Iseut by Joseph Bédier

Sung in a new English translation by Hugh Macdonald, with projected text Translation commissioned by Boston Lyric Opera with support from The Netherland-America Foundation

This production is made possible through the generous support of The National Endowment for the Arts; the Opening Night performance is generously sponsored by Boston Private Bank & Trust Company

PERFORMANCES:
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19 AT 7:30 P.M.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 7:30 P.M.
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 7:30 P.M.
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23 AT 3:00 P.M.

Performance running time is approximately one hour and 45 minutes without intermission.

Each performance will be followed by a brief talk-back with the artists

A NEW BLO PRODUCTION AT TEMPLE OHabei SHALOM 1187 BEACON STREET BROOKLINE, MA

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SET DESIGNER
JAMES NOONE*
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LIGHTING DESIGNER
ROBERT WIERZEL
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JASON ALLEN

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SANDRA KOTT Concertmaster

REHEARSAL COACH/ACCOMPANIST
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SANDRA KOTT, Concertmaster

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ANNIE RABBAT, Principal

VIOLA
KENNETH STALBERG, Principal
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JAN PFEIFFER-RIOS, Acting Principal
    STEVEN LAVEN

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ROBERT LYNAM, Principal

PIANOFORTE
BRETT HODGDON‡

* Boston Lyric Opera Debut
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‡ Boston Lyric Opera Emerging Artist Alumnus
CAST & SYNOPSIS

CAST

TRISTAN ........................................................................ JON JURGENS†
Sponsored by Ms. Abigail Mason

ISOLT, THE FAIR .......................................................... CHELSEA BASLER†
Sponsored by Willa and Taylor Bodman

BRANGAIN ............................................................... MICHELLE TRAINOR‡
Sponsored by Larry and Beverly St. Clair

KING MARK ............................................................... DAVID MCFERRIN‡
Sponsored by Ms. Ann Beha and Mr. Robert A. Radloff

ISOLT’S MOTHER ......................................... HEATHER GALLAGHER†

DUKE HOËL ................................................................ DAVID CUSHING‡
Co-sponsored by Linda Cabot Black

KAHEDIN ................................................................. OMAR NAJMI†
Sponsored by The Susan A. Babson Fund for Emerging Artists,
Part of the Paul and Edith Babson Foundation

ISOLT OF THE WHITE HANDS ......................... RACHEL HAUGE†
Sponsored by Miguel and Suki de Bragança

YVON ........................................................................... MARA BONDE

TREASA ................................................................. TANIA MANDZY INALA*

DENOLENN ............................................................ BRAD RAYMOND**

ANDRET ................................................................. DAVID WADDEN†

SYNOPSIS

PART 1
Tristan carries the bitterly reluctant Isolt, the Fair back to marry his uncle, King Mark. When a maid mistakes a love potion (brewed by Isolt’s mother and meant for the King) for wine, Tristan and Isolt drink and immediately fall passionately in love, albeit tormented with guilt and remorse.

PART 2
Their love is revealed to the King and he vows vengeance. They escape from his wrath into the forest, where he discovers them asleep. The King refrains from killing them, as they lie apart “chaste and pure.”

PART 3
Separated from Isolt and hearing nothing from her, Tristan marries Isolt of the White Hands. Wounded in battle by a poisoned lance, Tristan nears death. He asks his friend Kahedin to bring Isolt back. His new wife tricks Tristan into believing that Isolt will not return and he dies. Isolt arrives and soon follows Tristan in death.
ARTISTS

DAVID ANGUS  Conductor (ex November 22)
Recent Highlights: Concerts, London Philharmonic, Symphony Orchestra of Flanders, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Salome, Wexford Festival
Upcoming: Kátya Kabanová, Don Giovanni, Boston Lyric Opera; Concerts, London Philharmonic, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Messiah, Huddersfield Choral Society, Opera North (UK)

RYAN TURNER  Conductor (November 22)
BLO: Debut
Recent Highlights: John Harbison’s The Great Gatsby, Jordan Hall and Tanglewood, Rake’s Progress, La Clemenza di Tito, A Little Night Music, Emmanuel Music, Candide, Boston College; Artistic Director of Emmanuel Music
Upcoming: Abduction from the Seraglio, Emmanuel Music

DAVID SCHWEIZER  Stage Director
BLO: Macbeth, The Emperor of Atlantis
Recent Highlights: Giovanna D’Arco, Chicago Opera Theater, Fiddler’s Tale/Soldier’s Tale, Long Beach Opera; Next to Normal, Center Stage, Baltimore
Upcoming: Beth Henley’s Laugh and The Long Walk, Saratoga Opera

JAMES NOONE  Set Designer
BLO: Debut
Recent Highlights: Broadway: Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill, A Time To Kill, Off-Broadway: In Masks Outrageous and Auster, While Yet I Live, Juno and the Paycock, Sweeney Todd, New York Philharmonic; Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glimmerglass, Washington National Opera, LA Opera; Houston Grand Opera; Canadian Opera
Upcoming: Marriage of Figaro, Lyric Opera of Chicago; Sweeney Todd, English National Opera

NANCY LEARY  Costume Designer
BLO: The Magic Flute, Clemency, Macbeth, The Emperor of Atlantis, The Turn of the Screw
Recent Highlights: The Pittsburgh Symphony, Virginia Opera, Opera Boston, Chautauqua Opera, Mobile Opera, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Boston Theatre Works, Boston Conservatory. Full-time faculty member in the Boston University CFA School of Theatre Design & Production

ROBERT WIERZEL  Lighting Designer
BLO: Rigoletto, The Magic Flute, Madama Butterfly, A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Recent Highlights: Broadway: Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill, Fela!, Off-Broadway: India Ink, Roundabout Theatre Company; Productions with opera companies of Paris, Garnier; Tokyo; Bergen National, Norway; Folk Opera, Sweden; Glimmerglass Festival; New York City Opera; Minnesota; Seattle; San Francisco; Houston; Washington National; Virginia; Chicago Lyric; Atlanta, among others.
Upcoming: Luna Gale, Center Theatre Group, LA; Semele, Seattle Opera; Man of La Mancha, Shakespeare Theatre Company, DC

JASON ALLEN  Wigs and Makeup Designer
BLO: Resident Designer since 2003
Recent Highlights: La Fancuilla del West, Minnesota Opera; Tosca, Mill City Summer Opera; Swan Lake, Boston Ballet
Upcoming: Awake and Sing!, The Huntington Theatre Company
ARTISTS

JON JURGENS Tenor
TRISTAN
BLO: Gastone de Le Torieres, La Traviata
Recent Highlights: Steuermann, Der Fliegende Holländer, Raymond, Jérusalem, Sarasota Opera; Fenton, Falstaff, Bob Boles, Peter Grimes, Chautauqua Opera
Upcoming: Prince Guidon, The Golden Cockerel, Sarasota Opera

HEATHER GALLAGHER Mezzo-Soprano
ISOLT’S MOTHER
BLO: Debut
Recent Highlights: Asakir, Sumeida’s Song, Boston Opera Collaborative; Carmen, Carmen, Metro West Opera; Cherubino, Le Nozze di Figaro, Vero Beach Opera; Mallika, Lakmé, Lowell Opera House; BLO Resident Teaching Artist
Upcoming: Charlotte, Werther, Boston Opera Collaborative; Dinah, Trouble in Tahiti, Metro West Opera; A Woman, Kátya Kabanová, Boston Lyric Opera

CHELSEA BASLER Soprano
ISOLT, THE FAIR
BLO: Flora Bervoix, La Traviata, Soloist, Boston Landmarks Orchestra concert 2014; Margret Borden, Lizzie Borden, Countess Ceprano, Rigoletto; Papagena, The Magic Flute
Recent Highlights: Josephine, HMS Pinafore, Curley’s Wife, Of Mice and Men, Opera Sarasota
Upcoming: Glascha, Kátya Kabanová, Zerlina, Don Giovanni, Boston Lyric Opera, Soloist, Exultate Jubilate, Atlantic Symphony Orchestra; Recital at the National Opera Center, New York

MICHELLE TRAINOR Soprano
BRANGAIN
BLO: Second Lady, The Magic Flute; Hagar, Clemency; Bombalina, The Inspector; Lady in Waiting, Macbeth
Recent Highlights: Soloist, Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, Canterbury Choral Society at Carnegie Hall; Soloist, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Boston Ballet
Upcoming: Future BLO Production

DAVID CUSHING Bass
DUKE HOEL
BLO: Doctor Grenville, La Traviata, Count Monterone, Rigoletto; Sarastro, The Magic Flute; The Bone, Madame Butterfly; Adolfo, The Barber of Seville
Recent Highlights: The Speaker, The Magic Flute, Opera Tampa; Dulcamara, L’Elisir d’Amore, Opera North; The Great Gatsby, Emmanuel Music; Tom, Un Ballo in Maschera, Opera Tampa
Upcoming: Masetto, Don Giovanni, Boston Lyric Opera; Sparafucile, Rigoletto, Opera Tampa, Tom, Un Ballo in Maschera, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra

OMAR NAJMI Tenor
KAHEDIN
BLO: Giuseppe, La Traviata; Soloist, Boston Landmarks Orchestra concert 2014; Reverend Harrington, Lizzie Borden; Bruno, I Puritani; Borsa, Rigoletto; Second Priest, The Magic Flute
Recent Highlights: Bill, Flight, Opera Fayetteville; St. Brioche, The Merry Widow, Opera Providence; Don Curzio, Le Nozze di Figaro, Opera North
Upcoming: Kudrjasch, Kátya Kabanová, Boston Lyric Opera; Kaspar, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Opera North

RACHEL HAUGE Mezzo-Soprano
ISOLT OF THE WHITE HANDS
BLO: Annina, La Traviata
Recent Highlights: Mercédès, Carmen, Flora, La Traviata, Alisa, Lucia di Lammermoor, Rosine, Die Walküre, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Clotilde, Norma, Teatro Regio Torino
Upcoming: Ekelusch, Kátya Kabanová, Boston Lyric Opera; 2nd Boy/2nd Twin, The Canterville Ghost, Oper Leipzig

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA THE LOVE POTION 2014 | 11
ARTISTS

MARA BONDE Soprano
YVON
BLO: Echo, Ariadne auf Naxos
Recent Highlights: Hanna, The Merry Widow, Imperial Symphony Orchestra, Adina, L'Elisir d'Amore, Sarasota Opera
Upcoming: 2014 Holiday Pops Tour, Boston Pops

TANIA MANDZY INALA Mezzo-Soprano
TREASA
BLO: Debut
Recent Highlights: Zerlina, Don Giovanni, La Zelatrice, Suor Angelica, Opera San Jose; Guest Artist, Midsummer Mozart Festival; A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Boston Ballet; Lazuli, L’etoile, Ohio Light Opera
Upcoming: Ruggiero, Alcina, Pocket Opera, Music from the Gilded Age, Longfellow Chorus & Orchestra

BRAD RAYMOND Tenor
DENOLENN
BLO: Debut
Recent Highlights: The Dancing Master, Manon LeCiaut, Chautauqua Opera; Kaspar, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra
Upcoming: Don Basilio, Le Nozze di Figaro, Columbus Opera; Kaspar, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra

DAVID WADDEN Bass-Baritone
ANDRET
BLO: Marchese d’Obigny, La Traviata
Recent Highlights: Soloist, Boston Landmarks Orchestra concert 2014
Upcoming: Gerdine Young Artist, Opera Theatre of St. Louis

Above: The Marriage of Tristan and Isolde Les Blanches Mains, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, stained glass window, 1862

BLO’S VERSION
By Magda Romanska, Ph.D., BLO Dramaturg

One of the most prominent characteristics of The Love Potion is the opera’s structure: 12 singers tell the story, which is constantly flowing, while supported by haunting and almost hypnotic music. That type of dramatic structure closely follows the tradition of the Greek Chorus, in which the plot is driven by chorus members who assume different dramatic roles, while also providing background and commentary on the action of the story. Called a “secular oratorio,” The Love Potion also alludes to the religious origins of the Greek Chorus and its format: at its beginnings, theatre was a sacred ritual performed to honor the gods, and it evolved into a dialogic format only when the first actor, Thespis, stepped out and engaged his fellow chorus member in direct dialogue. All of these elements combine to create a work that crosses the boundary between secular and sacred, while providing commentary on its subject matter: eternal love as a spiritual journey that doesn’t end with death, but continues throughout the otherworldly dimension.

Regardless of one’s religious orientation, anyone who has lost a loved one knows the spiritual feeling of longing and loss … But the mythology of eternal love that is also an erotic love is a complicated matter: love that has no bounds (not even death) is fundamentally self-destructive, but it is also, as poets have always claimed, a spiritual experience. The cult of such love has something that is both mythical and mysterious, but also seductive and dangerous. To lose oneself in such love can be at once the most engrossing and the most destructive experience of one’s life.

By staging The Love Potion at the Temple Ohabei Shalom, we tried to capture that grand, overwhelming, spiritual feeling evoked by boundless love that the opera explores. The spatial grandeur of the Temple, with its magnificent golden dome, is a fitting setting for Frank Martin’s music, illustrating and illuminating both the grandeur of the music and the complexity of the myth that the opera explores. Finally, it is also perhaps a fitting setting for another reason: one of Judaism’s most celebrated texts is Song of Songs, also known as Song of Solomon, which celebrates sensual love as the highest expression, culmination, and extension of a deeply spiritual experience.
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LATE SEATING: All performances begin on time. At the request of our patrons, Boston Lyric Opera observes the national opera standard of a no late seating policy. Additionally, if you must leave during the performance, reentry may be prohibited. While we understand that traffic conditions, public transportation, weather and other factors can have unexpected effects on your arrival, we wish to minimize disruptions for our seated patrons and for our artists on stage.

As a courtesy to the artists and for the comfort of those around you, please turn off all mobile phones, pagers, watch alarms, and any other device with audible signals prior to the start of the performance. The use of cameras or recording devices in the theatre is strictly prohibited.

ACCESSIBILITY: The performance venue can accommodate both wheelchair and companion seating. Patrons unable to use the stairs should enter the venue on Kent Street with the accessible ramp. For special requests or assistance, please contact Boston Lyric Opera’s Audience Services department.

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VENUE INFORMATION: Temple Ohabei Shalom, 1187 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02446 | 617.277.6610 | ohabei.org
by *The Boston Globe*, and it was attended by the legendary Swiss tenor Ernst Haefliger, who sang Tristan in the first performance in 1940.

In 1985, the opera was staged by New York Lyric Opera Company in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The *New York Times* critic at that time, Bernard Holland, wrote, enchanted:

That *Le Vin Herbé* was absolutely gripping in this setting—filled with dignity, mystery and a simplicity born of true sophistication—goes without question, though I am still not sure exactly where the impressive beauties of this evening had their roots.

In 1980, the opera was staged by New York Lyric Opera Company in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The *New York Times* critic at that time, Bernard Holland, wrote, enchanted:

That *Le Vin Herbé* was absolutely gripping in this setting—filled with dignity, mystery and a simplicity born of true sophistication—goes without question, though I am still not sure exactly where the impressive beauties of this evening had their roots.

In 2010, Ardente Opera staged Martin’s masterpiece in Hawksmoor’s St. George’s Bloomsbury church. Martin Kettle of *The Guardian* wrote of Martin’s score:

The fact that Martin should write a medievalist Tristan for an orchestra of just eight players and a chorus of 12 ... is a powerfully defiant statement of his individuality. In operatic historical terms, it’s a bit like standing in front of a tank in Tiananmen Square.

In 2013, the opera was staged at Staatsoper im Schiller Theater in Berlin. *Opera News* reviewed the production, commenting on Martin’s score:

The score, a key work for the composer’s mature style, shows the influence of serialism, but Martin never abandons the tonal. Martin’s self-avowed wish was to become a master of tonal chromaticism, and in *Le Vin Herbé*, he succeeded in concocting a harmonically dense potion that, for all its dissonances, also goes down easy. The music unfurls with a hypnotic, often chant-like urgency.

---

MAGDA ROMANSKA, Ph.D., BLO Dramaturg, is an award-winning theatre scholar and writer. She is Associate Professor of Theatre and Dramaturgy at Emerson College, and Research Associate at Harvard University’s Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, and Davis Center for Eastern European Studies.

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WINTER CALENDAR

DECEMBER
Youth Music-Drama Workshops with Wheelock Family Theatre
*Getting The Gig: A Guide to Navigating Auditions and Callbacks for the Singing Actor*
December 6 – 7 | 11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. daily
Ages 11 – 15 years
Wheelock Family Theatre | Tuition: $200 per workshop; some scholarships available
Auditions can make even the most seasoned performers nervous, but there are ways to conquer those challenges! This workshop will help students make the most of their audition packages and callback chances by assessing their individual strengths and learning how to market themselves in an audition setting.

FEBRUARY
Boston Lyric Opera Signature Series in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
*The Artist Sings*
Sunday, February 22 | 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Remis Auditorium | $16 member/$20 non-member
Opera is full of fascinating working artists – composers, painters like Cavaradossi, poets like André Chénier. As they tell their intriguing stories and sing their music, we also listen to dramatic words evoking the hypnotic power of the performer from those such as Walt Whitman, James Joyce, Leo Tolstoy, and Willa Cather, and look at paintings and images from the MFA collections that portray singers and artists in their full passionate glory.

*Opera Night at the Boston Public Library*
*Musical Nationalism and Folklore in Opera*
Tuesday, February 24 | 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Themes of nationalism, folklore, and folk music weave a rich musical texture with a deeply moving storyline to make *Kátya Kabanová* one of Janáček’s most enthralling operas. This 20th-century opera is not only a musical and dramatic response to Janáček’s nationalistic pride and heritage, but also his own unrequited love. Join us for this special musical presentation and lecture that will explore the fascinating personal and cultural influences that inspired this powerful Czech work.

LECTURE PROGRAMS
Learn more about the production with BLO’s engaging pre-performance lectures at the Citi Performing Arts Center℠ Shubert Theatre.
Visit blo.org/learn for the schedule and more information. Free to ticket holders.

For additional information about BLO Community Engagement visit blo.org/learn, email education@blo.org, or call 617.542.4912.

From top: Students at a BLO/WFT workshop explore performance, Ben Gebo Photography; Boy Singing, Hendrick ter Brugghen (Dutch, 1588–1629), 1627, Oil on canvas; All Souls’ Day, Joža Uprka, 1897

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“Clemency, a chamber opera composed by James MacMillan with libretto by Michael Symmons Roberts, was performed by BLO, with the inclusion of Schubert’s “Hagar’s Lament,” and recorded in February 2013 at the Artists for Humanity EpiCenter in Boston. The production was led by Stage Director Andrew Eggert, BLO Music Director David Angus, and was further enhanced by the immersive set design of Julia Noulin-Mérat. It featured compelling performances by Christine Abraham and David Kravitz in the roles of Sarah and Abraham; Michelle Trainor in the role of Hagar; and David McFerrin, Neal Ferreira, and Samuel Levine as the three Travelers. This recording was made possible through the generous support of Jane and Steven Akin.

“Baritone David Kravitz and soprano Christine Abraham were outstanding ...”
— LLOYD SCHWARTZ, THE BOSTON PHOENIX, FEBRUARY 20, 2013

“The intensity of the 45-minute piece lies in Mr. MacMillan’s fierce, harmonically tense writing for the trio of travelers, tightly rendered by tenors Neal Ferreira and Samuel Levine and baritone David McFerrin, who sang as one, with an otherworldly character that befit the voice of God.”

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