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In the Penal Colony comes to the Cyclorama as Boston Lyric Opera's 2015 Opera Annex production

Boston, MA — October 15, 2015 – Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) premieres its Opera Annex production of **Philip Glass's** dark, thought-provoking *In the Penal Colony* at the Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts, directed by BLO Emerging Artist alumnus **R. B. Schlather** and running November 11-15, 2015. The one-act, three-character chamber opera (which Glass dubbed a "pocket opera" for its small cast and musical ensemble, and its 90-minute running time), is based on the 1914 Franz Kafka short story: a pitch-black fable about crime and a very unusual punishment.

Performed in English, with Glass's signature driving music composed for string quintet, *In the Penal Colony* tells the story of The Officer and The Visitor -- and an ominous machine designed to punish prisoners for their crimes. The opera debuted in 2000 at ACT Theater in Seattle, Washington (a co-production with Chicago's Court Theater, which also produced it that year), with direction by JoAnne Akalaitis and set design by John Conklin, who is now BLO's Artistic Advisor. *In the Penal Colony* premiered in New York City the following year, has had several productions in Europe and Australia, but hasn't been seen in the U.S. for 14 years.

BLO Opera Annex productions have been successful and popular additions to the company's programming for the past five seasons, reflecting a mission to build awareness of and support for opera through compelling, fully-staged chamber productions with wide audience appeal, in accessible settings. Previous Opera Annex programs have included well-received productions of Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (in 2010), Viktor Ullman's *The Emperor of Atlantis* (2011), Peter Maxwell Davies' *The Lighthouse* (2012), Jack Beeson's *Lizzie Borden* and James MacMillan's *Clemency*, which yielded a popular cast recording (both in 2013 – a year that saw the Annex schedule move from spring to fall), and Frank Martin's *The Love Potion* (2014).

"Placing Philip Glass's driving, dark and timeless opera in the center of the Cyclorama's historic 19th century industrial space is an exciting and daunting task," says Esther Nelson, BLO's Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director. "But if anyone can do it, R. B. can. I am thrilled that three of our Emerging Artist alumni return to mount this production, and I can't wait to bring Philip's work back to BLO. The company performed his stunning *Akhnaten* in 1999, which became one of our most successful productions." [NOTE: BLO announced earlier this month that its Emerging Artist initiative has been renamed the Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist initiative in honor of BLO's long-serving former board chair and his wife.]

Nelson says BLO's production location at the Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts is notable in Boston opera history, marking the first time a professional opera has been staged there since Sarah Caldwell's 1970 production of Gustave Charpentier's *Louise*.

ARTISTIC and CREATIVE TEAM

In the *Penal Colony* plays out in 16 scenes and features a libretto by **Rudy Wurlitzer**. Director R. B. Schlather was a BLO Emerging Artist in the 2014/15 season and has become an international rising star, with a specialty in staging alternative operas in unique spaces. His recent genre-bending experimental works at New York City's Whitebox Art Center -- staging opera performances and rehearsals as art exhibitions -- have drawn positive attention from visual art and music critics who called his production of Handel's *Orlando* "fascinating...a species of performance art" and his production of Handel's *Alcina* "affecting...[with] a gift for drawing out vivid performances."

Two BLO Emerging Artist alumni star in *Penal Colony*: tenor **Neal Ferreira** plays The Visitor and baritone **David McFerrin** plays The Officer. **Yury Yanowsky** appears as The Soldier. The quintet will be conducted by Emmanuel Music Artistic Director **Ryan Turner**. Set design is by **Julia Noulin-Mérat**, with costumes by **Terese Wadden** and lighting by **JAX Messenger**.

Through his operas, his symphonies, his compositions for his own ensemble, and his wide-ranging collaborations with artists ranging from Twyla Tharp to Allen Ginsberg, Woody Allen to David Bowie, **Philip Glass** has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact on the musical and intellectual life of his times. His operas – "Einstein on the Beach," "Satyagraha," "Akhnaten," and "The Voyage," among many others – play at the world's leading opera houses.

Glass has written music for experimental theater and Academy Award-winning motion pictures such as "The Hours" and Martin Scorsese's "Kundun," while "Koyaanisqatsi," his initial filmic landscape with Godfrey Reggio and the Philip Glass Ensemble, may be the most radical and influential mating of sound and vision since "Fantasia." His associations, personal and professional, with leading rock, pop and world music artists date back to the 1960s, including the beginning of his collaborative relationship with artist Robert Wilson. Glass is the first composer to win a wide, multi-generational audience in the opera house, the concert hall, the dance world, in film and in popular music – simultaneously.

CAST

Praised for a "rich, powerful voice" and "bravura-filled stage presence," Neal Ferreira is a nationally sought-after performer of opera and oratorio. The tenor recently received an Artist of the Year award from Syracuse Opera. He has appeared with Florida Grand Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Virginia Opera, Opera Colorado, Opera Boston, Boston Midsummer Opera and more.

Baritone David McFerrin has achieved critical acclaim in a wide variety of repertoire. He has sung with Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Boston, Sarasota Opera, Boston Midsummer Opera, and at the Rossini Festival in Wildbad, Germany.

Yury Yanowsky retired last spring after 22 years as corps de ballet member, as well as a soloist, principal and principal guest artist at Boston Ballet. He concentrates now on choreography, which has been a long-time passion. Throughout his career, Yanowsky danced many of the iconic lead roles in the canon. He has been a guest artist around the globe and worked with many of the world's top choreographers.

PERFORMANCE AND TICKET INFORMATION

Boston Lyric Opera's *In the Penal Colony* runs November 11-15, 2015 at the Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts, 265 Tremont Street in Boston, with evening performances Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinee at 3:00 p.m.

General Admission tickets are \$50, available online at blo.org, through BLO Audience Services at [617.542.6772](tel:617.542.6772) or by email at boxoffice@blo.org. Season subscriptions are available through blo.org/subscribe, or by contacting BLO Audience Services at [617.542.6772](tel:617.542.6772) or boxoffice@blo.org.

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ABOUT BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

BLO is New England's leading fully-professional opera company, reaching close to 30,000 people of all ages annually. Now in its 39th 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 team members about *Penal Colony* are available at BLO.org. Contact John Michael Kennedy at jmkennedy@goodmanmedia.com or [857-317-2964](tel:857-317-2964) (Boston), or Amanda Revman at BLO@goodmanmedia.com or [212-576-2700](tel:212-576-2700) x 251.