



BOSTON LYRIC OPERA'S 40th SEASON TO SPAN FOUR ICONIC VENUES

Season opener *Carmen* will be a mammoth production staged in the historic Boston Opera House

BOSTON, MA -- March 23, 2016 -- Boston Lyric Opera's Stanford Calderwood General and Artistic Director Esther Nelson announced today that each of the company's 40th anniversary season productions will be presented on a different, iconic Boston stage, starting with its largest-ever undertaking—a spectacular international production of the beloved Georges Bizet opera *Carmen* in a provocative staging by director **Calixto Bieito**, co-produced with San Francisco Opera and making its American East Coast premiere at the **Boston Opera House** on September 23, 2016.

The season also includes the New England premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Greek* at the **Emerson/Paramount Center** November 16-20, 2016; Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at the **Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theater** March 12-19, 2017; and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at **John Hancock Hall at the Back Bay Events Center** April 28-May 7, 2017.

"Our anniversary season celebrates some of the most venerated theater venues in Boston, and underscores our commitment to be the leading opera company for this city," says **Esther Nelson**. "Each theater provides the best artistic environment for the different demands of the individual operas, offering our community the full range of the opera experience, from the grand to the intimate."

"We are proud of Boston Lyric Opera for coming up with an exciting, creative solution to its facility challenges, and grateful to the theater operators who worked with them to help ensure this season," says **Mayor Marty Walsh**. "BLO's commitment to hiring local artists is strong and reflects the City's commitment to the sector."

Last fall Boston Lyric Opera announced it was leaving its nearly two-decades-old home at the Shubert Theater, citing a desire to create better patron experiences. While the company's ultimate goal is a permanent home in a purpose-built or strategically renovated building, Nelson says showcasing some of the city's best performance spaces next season brings an invigorating energy to the company and its patrons, including streamlined customer service for all BLO subscribers and single ticket buyers.

The 2016-2017 season-opener is a staging of *Carmen* by director **Calixto Bieito**, a Spanish director making his long-awaited U.S. opera debut. BLO is co-producing with San Francisco Opera in a bicoastal American premiere, with San Francisco offering the American debut in May 2016. Set in the arid earthiness of post-Franco Spain, Bieito's cinematic *Carmen* is a powerful account of a defiantly free-spirited woman and her obsessive lover. **Jennifer Johnson Cano**, critically acclaimed for her star turn in last year's *Don Giovanni*, returns to Boston as the fiery, seductive gypsy who destroys the naïve soldier Don José, played by **Roger Honeywell**. **Michael Mayes** will sing the role of Escamillo, and **Chelsea Basler** will sing the role of Micaela. Revival Director for this production is **Joan Anton Rechi**; Scenic Designer is **Alfons Flores**. *Carmen* runs September 23-October 2, 2016.

Nelson says opening the 40th Season with Carmen underscores another exciting turning point for BLO. Carmen has been staged during significant moments in the Company's history, most notably in 2000 when a free outdoor production – Carmen on the Common – surpassed attendance expectations by the thousands and launched BLO to greater city-wide awareness and a broader audience.

"We are genuinely excited about hosting BLO and this new production at the Boston Opera House," said **Don Law**, Principal Owner of the Boston Opera House. "It's been 25 years since professional opera has been produced here, and we look forward to seeing great opera performances return to our stage."

"Anywhere BLO stages an opera is sure to yield an exciting production, and next season we will have four of the best venues in the city," said **Michael Puzo**, Board Chair for Boston Lyric Opera. "We are energized by this move -- a sound plan that makes good artistic sense and brings us further into the community we call home. This is a milestone year for us, and the new season proves our agility, our dedication to the art form and our strong financial footing."

After Carmen, the annual Opera Annex production brings audiences to London's East End during the tumultuous 1980s as Boston Lyric Opera mounts the political, foul-mouthed and indelible 1997 opera, **Greek**, by Mark-Anthony Turnage November 16-20, 2016 at the **Emerson/Paramount Center**. Greek received an Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera and has become a cult classic. Based on Steven Berkoff's 1980 play (a retelling of Sophocles' tragedy, "Oedipus the King"), Greek is directed by **Sam Helfrich** and conducted by **Andrew Bisantz** -- a reunion of the team that launched BLO's acclaimed Opera Annex series. Greek features four singers sharing 11 roles: award-winning baritone **Marcus Farnsworth** makes his BLO debut as Eddy alongside BLO favorite **Caroline Worra**.

From March 12-19, 2017, Boston Lyric Opera sets up shop at the historic **Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theater** for a new production of Stravinsky's **The Rake's Progress**. A.R.T. Resident Director **Allegra Libonati** directs her first BLO production, after serving as assistant director for Don Giovanni (2015). BLO Music Director **David Angus** conducts. With a libretto by W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman, based loosely on William Hogarth's series of paintings depicting the decline and fall of a materialistic playboy, The Rake's Progress follows Tom Rakewell as he abandons his stable home life to cavort in the pleasures of London with a devilish valet at his side. The Rake's Progress features award-winning tenor **Ben Bliss** making his BLO debut in the lead role, **Kevin Burdette** (acclaimed for his role in 2015's Don Giovanni), **Anya Matanovic**, **Heather Johnson**, and a star turn by soprano and New England Conservatory instructor **Jane Eaglen**.

"Boston's arts community is wonderfully collaborative and supportive," said Emerson College President **Lee Pelton**. "I'm very pleased that BLO's 2016-2017 season will bring two productions to Emerson's Paramount and Cutler Majestic theaters. BLO's magnificent global performances are a vital part of the City's rich and innovative arts offerings, and complement the diverse productions that take place on our campus year-round."

Closing the season April 28-May 7, 2017 is Mozart's **The Marriage of Figaro**, staged in the intimate **John Hancock Hall at the Back Bay Events Center**. The Marriage of Figaro reunites BLO's La Bohème creative team with **Rosetta Cucchi** directing, BLO Artistic Advisor **John Conklin** designing and **David Angus** conducting. The comedic opera, a sequel to Rossini's The Barber of Seville, recounts the antics and schemes of Count Almaviva as he attempts to upend the wedding day of Figaro. **Evan Hughes** makes his BLO debut as Figaro, and **Emily Birsan** is his betrothed, Susanna, with **Emily Fons** as Cherubino. Soprano **Nicole Heaston** makes her BLO debut as Countess Almaviva.

“Back Bay Events Center eagerly welcomes Boston Lyric Opera’s The Marriage of Figaro to John Hancock Hall as the crowning event of its next season,” says **Douglas Tillinger**, President of Tillinger’s Concierge. “We think Hancock Hall is a perfect match for BLO as one of city’s great spaces for music and a warm, inviting, Art Deco space audiences will enjoy before and after the show.”

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MEDIA NOTE: Esther Nelson, Michael Puzo and others are available to talk about the BLO’s 40th Season. For images, additional information or interviews, please contact John Michael Kennedy or Nisa Kiang, Goodman Media/Boston at blo@goodmanmedia.com , 781-874-1803 or 212-576-2700.