



BOSTON LYRIC OPERA ANNOUNCES 2017/18 SEASON

**PUCCINI'S MASTERPIECE -- "PUCCINI'S MASTERPIECE" WITH U.S. DEBUT of
ELENA STIKHINA**

***BURKE & HARE* -- A WORLD PREMIERE BY GRANT & CAMPBELL**

***THE THREEPENNY OPERA* -- A RARE OPERA COMPANY STAGING**

***TROUBLE IN TAHITI* -- FOR BERNSTEIN'S 100TH**

Company to present these four timely operas in four distinctive venues.

BOSTON, MA -- March 9, 2017 -- Boston Lyric Opera's Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director **Esther Nelson** announced today an eclectic 2017/18 Season designed to please die-hard opera fans as well as newcomers to the art form. Each of the Company's productions will be presented on a different area stage, starting October 13-22, 2017 with a new production of Giacomo Puccini's ***Tosca*** featuring the American debut of award-winning rising global star **Elena Stikhina** in the title role. The World Premiere of ***The Nefarious, Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*** (a.k.a. ***Burke & Hare***) by composer **Julian Grant** and librettist **Mark Campbell** follows November 8-12, 2017. From March 16-25, 2018, BLO presents **Kurt Weill** and **Bertolt Brecht's** pivotal early-20th century work ***The Threepenny Opera***. BLO closes its Season in May with **Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti***, paired with his ***Arias and Barcarolles***, to mark the Lawrence, Mass.-born composer's centennial.

"We have a Season of captivating stories that exemplify the human condition and spirit with a compelling range, from a popular Puccini classic to a brand new opera, as well as two significant works from composers who shaped 20th century music and musical theater," Nelson says. "To me, the lineup speaks to our core mission of creating curiosity and enthusiasm for opera by presenting works that were definitive in their times and are just as powerful today."

TOSCA

Set in early 1800's Rome against a backdrop of war, chaos and corruption, Puccini's quintessential opera ***Tosca*** tells the dramatic and sweeping story of three strong-willed characters who are both masters and victims of their own fate: Floria Tosca, a young singer of grit and determination; the artist and revolutionary Mario Cavaradossi; and the power-hungry police chief Baron Scarpia. **Crystal Manich** (BLO's 2016 ***Werther*** and 2014 ***I Puritani***) returns to direct a powerful, accessible and highly theatrical new production that uniquely incorporates the orchestra alongside some of opera's most archetypal characters. One of the best works for those experiencing opera for the first time or those returning to a beloved classic, BLO's ***Tosca*** – a co-production with Opera Omaha – will be performed at the ornate, history-rich Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theatre.

In addition to Stikhina, the rising Russian star who has amassed significant credits in her home country and more recently throughout Europe, the *Tosca* cast includes American tenor **Jonathan Burton**, **Daniel Sutin** (BLO's *Macbeth*), as well as **James Maddalena** who recently was seen in BLO's *La Bohème*. The design team includes **Julia Noulin-Mérat** as Set Designer, **Paul Hackenmueller** as Lighting Designer, and **Deborah Newhall** as Costume Designer. *Tosca* will be conducted by **David Stern** in his BLO debut. The son of acclaimed violinist Isaac Stern, he is founder of Opera Fuoco in Paris, chief conductor of Florida's Palm Beach Opera, and music director/opera for the Crested Butte Music Festival in Colorado.

"*Tosca* is one of the most galvanizing, popular works in the opera canon," Nelson says. "Its title role has been a showcase for opera stars since its premiere, and Elena is a star indeed. We are excited to welcome both Elena and David to Boston for their BLO debuts."

BURKE & HARE

With its opening line, "The people of Edinburgh are not dying ... quickly enough," composer Julian Grant and librettist Mark Campbell's *The Nefarious, Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare* set the stage for a highly theatrical, brutally funny chamber opera based on real events. Set in 1820s Scotland – when the city's famed schools of anatomy faced a severe shortage of fresh cadavers for their lectures – the opera follows William Burke, William Hare and their accomplices who discover a money-making opportunity by murdering disenfranchised citizens and selling their corpses to Dr. Robert Knox at his renowned medical academy.

The World Premiere of *Burke & Hare* is the inaugural full-length opera in BLO's expanded New Works program, the commissioning-focused arm of its Opera Annex initiative. This initiative aims for broader access to opera by opening the creative process to the public, with free workshops of new works, digital and social opportunities to follow development milestones, and more. Commissioned by Music-Theatre Group with support from BLO, *Burke & Hare* will be staged at the Boston Center for the Arts Cyclorama, an historic building whose neoclassical Victorian style reflects the story's 19th century time period, and whose circular interior recalls early operating theaters where observers watched medical procedures.

An ingenious narrative involving five of Burke and Hare's victims propels the chronicle of Dr. Knox's downfall and the apprehension of his suppliers. Nelson says the work's focus on the forgotten victims of the sensationalistic murders puts questions of morality and science front-and-center, echoing modern concerns about the ethical costs of knowledge, advancement and discovery.

The cast of *Burke & Hare* includes renowned tenor **William Burden** (who recently appeared in the national broadcast premiere of *Bel Canto* on PBS) and Scottish soprano **Marie McLaughlin** who has enjoyed a major international career. Additional cast members include **Chelsea Basler**, **Jesse Blumberg**, **David Cushing**, **Heather Gallagher**, **David McFerrin**, **Mark Schnaible** (BLO debut), **Michael Slattery** (who recently appeared in an OPERA America-sponsored New York showcase of the piece), **Emma Sorenson** and **Michelle Trainor**. **David Schweizer**, who helmed BLO's acclaimed 2014 production of *The Love Potion*, will direct. **Caleb Wertenbaker** will design sets, **Nancy Leary** will design costumes, and **Robert Wierzel** will design lighting. A 12-member orchestra will be under the baton of Music Director **David Angus**.

A benefit performance of *Burke & Hare* will be held November 10, 2017 as part of BLO's annual fundraising gala to support the New Works program.

THE THREEPENNY OPERA

BLO kicks off its spring 2018 Season with composer **Kurt Weill** and librettist **Bertolt Brecht's** iconic *The Threepenny Opera*, making a return to Boston for its first professional production since 2004.

(Performed in recent years by theatre companies, *Threepenny*'s last production by a local professional opera company was in 1988, when it was produced by Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston.)

The satirical piece was adapted from John Gay's 1728 work, *The Beggar's Opera*, which itself was a parody of Handel operas. *Threepenny* premiered in Berlin in 1928, not long before Weill and Brecht both fled to the U.S. to escape the Nazi seizure of power. A vaudevillian view of life in a Victorian slum, the work critiques capitalism, self-interest, and the meaning of morality. With its evergreen story of rich-vs-poor dynamics, and an opera-meets-cabaret score, *Threepenny* remains extremely popular around the world as it nears its 90th anniversary. BLO will mount the production at the Huntington Theatre Company's Huntington Avenue Theatre, a historic venue that opened three years before *Threepenny* premiered in Europe.

Casting for the production includes **Kelly Kaduce** (BLO's *La Bohème*) as Polly Peachum, and her *Bohème* co-star **James Maddalena** as Mr. Peachum. **Daniel Belcher** makes his BLO debut as Tiger Brown/Street Singer, the character who delivers the enduring hit "The Ballad of Mack the Knife." Additional cast and creative team for *Threepenny* will be announced at a later date.

"Of *The Threepenny Opera*, Weill himself said 'the ambiguous and captivating distinctions between entertainment and politics, play and morality, are at the heart of this work,'" Nelson notes. "He knew this indictment of the bourgeoisie – a satiric cry to acknowledge the less-fortunate people in society – would remain strikingly relevant. I'm thrilled to be producing this on the Huntington's stage."

TROUBLE IN TAHITI/ARIAS AND BARCAROLLES

To mark the 100th birthday of American composer Leonard Bernstein, BLO closes its Season with Bernstein's one-act opera *Trouble in Tahiti*. Bernstein wrote the music and the libretto for the piece, which premiered in 1952 at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., and was revised that same year for a second performance at Tanglewood. The relatively short work (35 min.) will be paired with Bernstein's *Arias and Barcarolles* for a cabaret-style evening. Singers **Heather Johnson** (*Lizzie Borden*, upcoming *The Rake's Progress*), **Neal Ferreira** (*In the Penal Colony*), **Vincent Turregano** and **Mara Bonde** return to BLO for this performance. **David Schweizer** returns as Stage Director, **Nancy Leary** is Costume Designer, Jeff Adelberg makes his BLO debut as Lighting Designer, and **David Angus** conducts. Dates and location for the production will be announced later.

Both *Tahiti* and *Arias* explore the timeless topic of relationships, in intimate productions sung by a small cast: *Tahiti* is a candid portrayal of a troubled young marriage, with music by a jazz trio; *Arias* is a cycle of songs about love and marriage with musical accompaniment by piano four hands, featuring BLO Music Director David Angus and Principal Coach Accompanist **Brett Hodgdon**. Bernstein began writing *Tahiti* on his honeymoon in 1951, between successes with *On the Town* and *West Side Story*. It focuses on the domestic conflict of a young couple who, in contrast to their seemingly perfect mid-century suburban life in Wellesley, Mass., are desperately unhappy. *Arias* was Bernstein's last major work; it was completed in 1988 but existed in various forms since Bernstein began it in 1955. It has been described as "eclectic, exciting, jazzy...it reflects Bernstein at his multi-faceted best."

"Massachusetts takes great pride in its native son Leonard Bernstein, who is among the most American of composers," says Nelson. "At his centennial, we celebrate how he brought together musical influences indigenous to this country, including jazz, and combined it with stories and topics that enlighten our common experiences," says Nelson. "*Trouble in Tahiti* and *Arias and Barcarolles* are cut from the same cloth, musically and emotionally, and they work beautifully together. It's the first time these two works have been performed together on the same bill."

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Season subscriptions for each production are now on sale for current subscribers and go on sale to the public April 24, 2017. Subscriptions can be ordered online at blo.org/tickets, by phone through BLO Audience Services at 617.542.6772 or by email at boxoffice@blo.org.

Individual performance tickets will go on sale on June 15, 2017. They will be available online at blo.org/tickets and by phone through BLO Audience Services at 617.542.6772

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MEDIA NOTE: Esther Nelson, David Angus and others are available to talk about BLO's 2017/18 Season. For images, additional information or interviews, contact John Michael Kennedy or Chelsey Saatkamp, Goodman Media/Boston at blo@goodmanmedia.com, 781-874-1803 (Boston) or 212-576-2700 (NYC).