



BLO 2019/20 SEASON

FOR A NEW “NORMA,” BLO BRINGS A STELLAR CAST AND A RETURNING STAR

Bellini’s masterpiece opera runs March 13-22, 2020 at Emerson Majestic Theater

Elena Stikhina returns to the company—and the theater -- of her 2017 American debut.

BOSTON – rev. January 16, 2019 – For its first production of **Vincenzo Bellini’s** 1831 masterwork, **NORMA**, in nearly 40 years, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) brings back the international star it introduced to the U.S. just over two years ago. Elena Stikhina makes her debut in one of opera’s most technically demanding roles – a powerful Druid priestess whose affair with the general of a warring Roman faction brings personal grief and despair. The Russian-born soprano made her American debut in BLO’s 2017 production of *Tosca*. Her subsequent national and international acclaim includes a lauded 2018 Metropolitan Opera debut in Puccini’s *Il Trittico*. Best known for its star-making aria “Casta Diva,” BLO presents Bellini’s dramatic *bel canto* opera for five performances from March 13-22 at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre. Tickets are on sale now at BLO.org. [[MEDIA PHOTOS/DETAILS](#)]



Elena Stikhina

Stikhina performs alongside **Sandra Piques-Eddy** (BLO’s *Werther*, 2016 and *Katya Kabanova*, 2015) as Norma’s priestess/confidante Adalgisa. (Norma and Adalgisa’s Act 2 duet, “Mira o Norma” marks another musical highpoint.) **Jonathan Burton**, who played Cavaradossi opposite Stikhina’s *Tosca*, stars as Pollione, the Roman general whose secret affair with Norma sets off a crisis that envelops them both. **Alfred Walker** (who recently performed to critical acclaim as Crown in the Metropolitan Opera’s acclaimed *Porgy and Bess*, and was previously seen in BLO’s 2013 *The Flying Dutchman*) is Oroveso. **Robyn Marie Lamp**, part of BLO’s current class of Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artists sings the role of Norma’s maid, Clotilda. **Omar Najmi**, a 2015/16 Season Emerging Artist most recently seen as Beppe-Harlequin last fall’s *Pagliacci*, sings the role of Pollione’s companion, Flavio.

Stephanie Havey makes her directorial debut at BLO (she served as Assistant Director for BLO’s 2014 *Rigoletto*); BLO’s **David Angus** conducts the BLO Orchestra. **Shura Baryshnikov**, recognized for her work on BLO’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* last season, serves as Movement Director.

The physical production of NORMA will be realized by set designer **Julia Noulin-Mérat**, costume designer **Charles Neumann** and lighting designer **Pablo Santiago**. The three recently worked together on BLO's acclaimed 2019 *Pagliacci*, designed as a production by a band of traveling circus performers, including a pre-show with a full midway carnival.

With a libretto by Bellini's most frequent collaborator, Felice Romani, and set in first-century B.C., NORMA recounts a love triangle among the title character, Pollione the general who leads a war against Norma's people, and Adalgisa, a Druid-temple priestess who is Norma's confidante and whom Pollione takes as a lover. Against the background of civil uprising that she instigates against the Roman aggression, Norma works to convince Pollione to leave Adalgisa and return to her.

The frequently conflicting emotions of the Norma character—a proud representative of her tribe who nevertheless betrays her people for love, a woman torn between her friend and her lover whose children are a daily reminder of her love and transgressions—make it one of the opera canon's most complex parts to play. The athletic vocal stamina required to sing Norma have made, or broken, many singers' careers. The late mezzo-soprano-turned-soprano Shirley Verrett sang the role twice in Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston, in 1976 and 1983, both times to enormous critical acclaim. Beverly Sills famously sang the role in Boston in the early 1970s. Maria Callas, Dame Joan Sutherland, Montserrat Caballé, Cecilia Bartoli and Renata Scotto (who called it "the Everest of opera") all logged famous performances of the role.

"Bellini's perfect union of words and music, with his long flowing melodic lines and dramatic intensity, are as hypnotizing now as they were nearly 190 years ago," says Esther Nelson, BLO's General & Artistic Director. "The story comes from antiquity, but the emotional conflicts experienced by the characters—their desire for love and power, and their fear and abuse of it—is as pertinent today as it was thousands of years ago. But the headline here is the singers! Elena will be electrifying in this role. To have her, Alfred Walker, Jonathan Burton and Sandra Piques-Eddy on stage together will thrill audiences."

TICKETS

Boston Lyric Opera's NORMA runs for five performances only; March 13, 15, 18, 20 and 22 at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theater, 219 Tremont Street. Tickets are \$25-\$282, and available online at www.blo.org or through BLO Audience Services (Mon-Fri, 10 AM-5 PM) at 617.542.6772 or boxoffice@blo.org.

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MEDIA INFORMATION

For additional information, photo and video assets, advance interviews access to rehearsals or press review tickets, contact John Michael Kennedy at jmk@jmkpr.com or 781-620-1761.
PHOTOS/DETAILS