

BLO

BOSTONLYRICOPERA

IN BLO'S 2020/2021 SEASON: A NEW BUTTERFLY; A HOMETOWN HANSEL & GRETEL; A CHAMPION JAZZ OPERA; AND GLASS'S GOTHIC USHER

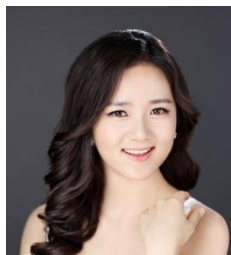
BLO offers four new productions next season, including three company premieres.

This fall, Puccini's Madama Butterfly brings company debuts in key roles; The Fall of the House of Usher recounts Poe's tale of a house inspired by a Boston mansion.

Spring 2021 brings BLO's first mainstage version of Hansel and Gretel, newly set in 19th century Boston, and the northeast premiere of Champion: An Opera in Jazz.

Season tickets on sale now at blo.org.

BOSTON – March 6, 2020 – Boston Lyric Opera's (BLO) 44th Season brings four new productions including three company premieres and a northeast premiere. Season selections include a new production of **Giacomo Puccini's** inimitable **MADAMA BUTTERFLY**, the company debut of **Philip Glass's** setting of Edgar Allen Poe's **THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER**, a 19th-century-Boston-set new production of **Engelbert Humperdinck's HANSEL AND GRETEL**, and the northeast U.S. premiere of **Terence Blanchard's CHAMPION: AN OPERA IN JAZZ** about the life of boxer Emile Griffith. Season tickets are available now for current and renewing subscribers at blo.org.



Yulan Piao

For its first production of Puccini's heartbreaking masterpiece **MADAMA BUTTERFLY** in eight seasons, BLO presents a cast that includes soprano **Yulan Piao**, who makes her company and role debut as Cio-Cio San, tenor **Zach Borichevsky** (BLO's *The Magic Flute*) who returns to BLO as Lieutenant Pinkerton, mezzo-soprano **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** in her company debut as Suzuki,



Nina Yoshida Nelsen

baritone **Levi Hernandez** as Sharpless, and BLO Emerging Artist alumnus **Omar Najmi** (BLO's *The Handmaid's Tale*, 2019) as Goro.

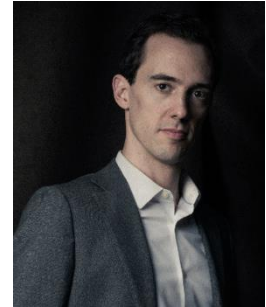
In-demand opera and theater director **Sarna Lapine**, who helmed BLO's acclaimed 2019 *The Rape of Lucretia*, will direct. Sets are by **Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams**, who designed the *Lucretia* production. Costume design is by **Robert Perdziola** (*Lucretia*). Lighting design is by **Yi Zhao**. BLO Music Director **David Angus** conducts the BLO orchestra and chorus in

Puccini's stirring score. MADAMA BUTTERFLY runs five performances at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theater from October 16-25, 2020.



Chelsea Basler Photo: Liza Voll

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER marks the company debut of this work, which premiered in 1988 at Cambridge's American Repertory Theater and features a libretto by **Arthur Yorinks**. This is BLO's third production by Glass, having previously produced *Akhnaten* in 1990 and *In the Penal Colony* in 2015. BLO Emerging Artist alumni **Chelsea Basler** and **Jesse Darden** (seen together in last fall's *Fellow Travelers*) play siblings Madeline and Roderick Usher. **Daniel Belcher** (Tiger Brown in 2018's *The Threepenny Opera*) plays the narrator, William, who is summoned by his friend Roderick to the mysterious house. Poe is said to have taken inspiration for the story from a gothic-style house not far from the Boston Common.



Jesse Darden Photo: Liza Voll

James Darrah (*The Threepenny Opera*) directs the production. Costumes are by **Camille Assaf**; lighting is by **Pablo Santiago**. **David Angus** conducts a chamber ensemble of the BLO orchestra. THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER plays four performances from November 18-22, 2020 at a location to be announced later.

In BLO's new Boston-set production of Humperdinck's 1893 opera HANSEL AND GRETEL, the brother and sister of the title are late-19th-century immigrants to the city. Their father is a soused factory worker; their mother is an abusive parent. When sent out to forage for food, the siblings get lost in the Boston Public Garden where they meet a fearsome witch. **Emily Fons**



Shura Baryshnikov

(Cherubino in 2017's *The Marriage of Figaro*) returns to the BLO stage as Hansel; **Nicole Haslett** makes her company debut as Gretel; **Dana Beth Miller** (Offred's mother in *The Handmaid's Tale*) plays mother Gretchen and the Witch; and BLO Emerging Artist Alumnus **David McFerrin** (*Fellow Travelers*) plays Peter, the father.

Shura Baryshnikov, Movement Director under Anne Bogart for BLO's *The Handmaid's Tale* and under Stephanie Havey for this spring's *Norma*, takes the reins of this production as Stage Director. Set design is by BLO Artistic Advisor **John Conklin**. Costume designer is **Nancy Leary** (2018's *Schoenberg in Hollywood*) and lighting will be designed by **Bailey Costa** who has served as assistant lighting designer for several BLO productions. **David Angus** again leads the BLO orchestra. HANSEL AND GRETEL runs four performances at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theater from March 12-21, 2021.

Terence Blanchard's CHAMPION: An Opera in Jazz, with libretto by Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning playwright **Michael Cristofer**, tells the story of boxer Emile Griffith, a welter-weight prize fighter born in the U.S. Virgin Islands, whose early life and career as a hat-maker are upended when he is drawn into boxing by a promoter. Living a double life as a married

athlete and closeted gay man, Griffith is taunted at a pre-fight meeting by opponent Benny Paret. In the ring, Griffith pummels Paret fiercely, winning the fight but later learning his opponent has died from his injuries. Cristofer later turned his libretto into a play with music, *Man in the Ring*, which had its East Coast premiere in 2018 at Boston's Huntington Theatre Company.

Cast members in CHAMPION include **Gordon Hawkins** as Emile, **Chris Kenney** as Young Emile, **Tichina Vaughn** as Griffith's mother Emelda, **Todd Thomas** as Howie Albert, and **Ariana Wehr** as Cousin Blanche and Sadie Griffith. **Renee Tatum** (*The Threepenny Opera*) returns to BLO as Kathy Hagen, **Vimbayi Kaziboni** conducts the score, which blends jazz and operatic elements. CHAMPION plays three performances in May 2021 (location and final dates to be announced).



Chris Kenney

Gordon Hawkins

"This coming season embodies the powerful and gripping experiences that audiences expect from BLO," says General and Artistic Director Esther Nelson. "I'm personally thrilled we will reflect our community, not only by shows with elements inspired by Boston, but also by bringing diverse stories and artists to the stage."

SUBSCRIPTION TICKETS

Season subscriptions for BLO's 2020/21 Season are on sale now, 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 and interviews about the BLO 2019/20 Season, contact John Michael Kennedy at jmk@jmkpr.com or 781-620-1761.