

# desert in



## AWARD-WINNING COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS ANNOUNCED FOR "DESERT IN" -- AN ORIGINAL OPERATIC MINISERIES COMING JUNE 2021 ON OPERABOX.TV

*Grammy Award-nominated four-time "Jazz Artist of the Year" Vijay Iyer,  
Grammy nominee Nathalie Joachim, stage and screen composer  
Nico Muhly, and Pulitzer Prize winner Ellen Reid among eight to score the  
groundbreaking work.*

*Performers in a variety of musical styles join the cast including  
Three-time Grammy winner Isabel Leonard, Grammy nominee  
Talise Trevigne, and Tony Award nominee Justin Vivian Bond.*

*Commissioned and produced by Boston Lyric Opera.  
Produced in association with Long Beach Opera.*

LOS ANGELES and BOSTON -- March 23, 2021 -- The team behind the operatic miniseries "[desert in](#)," now in production for a June 2021 debut on [Boston Lyric Opera's operabox.tv](#) streaming service, announced today an award-winning roster of composers and performers working on the project.

Co-created by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Ellen Reid** ("p r i s m"), playwright and screenwriter **christopher oscar peña** ("Jane the Virgin," "Insecure"), and film and opera director **James Darrah** ("[The Fall of the House of Usher](#)" for operabox.tv; "Close Quarters" for L.A. Chamber Orchestra), "desert in" is a groundbreaking, eight-part series full of colorful and mysterious characters who populate a supernatural story of love, loss, and the price of memories we struggle to keep.

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## COMPOSERS FOR "desert in"

Composers being announced for "desert in" include the following (in alpha order):

- **Michael Abels**, a composer/producer who scored Jordan Peele's Academy Award-winning films "Get Out" and "Us." The hip-hop-influenced "Us" score won the World Soundtrack Award and the Jerry Goldsmith Award, received a Critic's Choice Award nomination, and was called "Score of the Decade" by The Wrap. Abels is co-composing an opera, "Omar," with Carolina Chocolate Drops founding member Rhiannon Giddens.
- Grammy-nominated composer, jazz pianist and MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship Award-winner **Vijay Iyer**, who has released two dozen jazz albums leading various musical groups, including the critically acclaimed "Historicity," several narrative-driven works with poet-producer Mike Ladd and a live film score.
- Haitian-American composer, flutist and vocalist **Nathalie Joachim**, who received a Best Global Music Album Grammy Award nomination for the recording of her full-length work "Fanm d'Ayiti," which celebrates some of Haiti's under-recognized female artists.
- **Nico Muhly**, who has written more than 100 works, including the operas "Two Boys" and "Marnie," both of which premiered at English National Opera and were commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera. Muhly's stage and screen work includes music for the Broadway revival of "The Glass Menagerie" and the Academy Award-winning film "The Reader," for which he won a World Soundtrack Award.
- Irish composer and vocalist **Emma O'Halloran**, whose work has been featured at the international Classical NEXT Conference in Rotterdam and at New York's Prototype Festival, and who won numerous awards including National Sawdust's inaugural Hildegard competition.
- **Ellen Reid**, who received the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her opera "p r i s m." Reid is the first composer commissioned by -- and to have world premieres at -- all four of Los Angeles' major classical music institutions. Reid's film scores include "The Midnight Swim" and "Buster's Mal Heart." Her site-specific "Soundwalk" installations in New York and Los Angeles have drawn critical acclaim.
- **Wang Lu**, a composer and pianist who serves as Vanguard Emerging Opera Composer at the Chicago Opera Theatre and received the Berlin Prize in Music Composition in 2019. Wang is a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and Assistant Professor of Music at Brown University.
- Composer and performer **Shelley Washington**, whose string quartet piece "MIDDLEGROUND" appears on the 2019 Grammy-nominated album "Freedom and Faith." Washington recently recorded with Justin Vernon of Bon Iver and is creating a new work for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

## PERFORMERS FOR "desert in"

Musical performers for "desert in" are an eclectic mix of artists who work in a wide array of genres. Some of the performers below appear and sing on screen; others lend their voices to the soundtrack as on-screen actors embody the characters whose words and thoughts are being sung.

The musical performers include:



### *Onscreen performers --*

- Grammy Award-winning mezzo soprano **Isabel Leonard** (singing and portraying Cass) made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2007 before going on to international fame. Leonard's recordings of Thomas Adès's "The Tempest" and Maurice Ravel's "L'enfant et les sortilèges" netted her two Grammy wins. Along with conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard won a 2020 Best Classical Compendium Grammy Award (her third) for Thomas's "From the Diary of Anne Frank & Meditations on Rilke."
- Soprano **Talise Trevigne** (singing and portraying Sunny) received a Best Classical Solo Vocal Album Grammy Award nomination for her recording of Christopher Rouse's "Seeing & Kabir Padavali." Trevigne appeared in the 2018 World Premiere cast of Missy Mazzoli's opera "Proving Up" and on the opera's original cast recording released in 2020.
- Tony Award-nominated actor, alt-cabaret singer, and trans activist **Justin Vivian Bond** (singing and portraying The Lounge Singer) has a stage and screen career that includes: Olga Neuwirth's 2019 opera "Orlando"; "Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway"; the Netflix series "Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City"; the Hulu series "Difficult People"; and the films "Shortbus" and "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" Bond's accolades include a GLAAD Award, an Obie Award, a Bessie, and the Ethyl Eichelberger Award.

### *Vocal performers --*

- Baritone **Edward Nelson** (singing Ion) won the 2020 Glyndebourne Opera Cup and is a fast-rising young singer. This season he returns to Norwegian National Opera in the title role of "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" and makes his Opera Theatre of St. Louis debut as the title character in "Harvey Milk."
- Tony Award-winning tenor **Jesus Garcia** (singing Rufus) received acclaim for his turn as Rodolfo in the Baz Luhrmann-directed opera "La Bohème" on Broadway. Garcia performs operatic roles across the country and around the world, and debuted his solo song-cycle performance "Manifest Destiny by Jesus G" in 2019.
- Renowned tenor **Alan Pingarrón** (singing Federico) studied at the National School of Music in Mexico City and won the Gabino Barreda Medal for outstanding achievement. He appeared as a special guest in the National Opera Singing Competition of San Miguel and was a Jette Parker Young Artists for 2019/20 with the Royal Opera House.
- Bass-baritone **Davóne Tines** (singing Old Man/Derek) received the 2018 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, collaborated with American theatre and opera directing legend Peter Sellars, and was named a TIME magazine "Next Generation Leader" in 2019.
- Singing a ghostly Greek-chorus-like trio known as "Vapors" are soprano **Brianna J. Robinson**, mezzo-soprano **Emma Sorenson** and tenor **Neal Ferreira**.

Additional on-screen performers will be announced later.

### **WRITERS/LIBRETTISTS FOR "desert in"**

The artists above join a robust Writers Room team that crafted the story and wrote the libretti with Lead Writer **christopher oscar peña** and Deputy Lead Writer **Joy Kecken** (writer/director for



HBO's "The Wire", Supervising Producer on Marvel's "Cloak and Dagger," co-Executive Producer on Freeform's "Motherland: Fort Salem"), and whose members were [announced previously](#). They include (in alpha order):

- Obie Award-winning "Milk Like Sugar" playwright **Kirsten Greenidge**;
- "Hi, Are You Single?" playwright and actor **Ryan J. Haddad**;
- "Amputees" playwright **Quentin Nguyen-duy**;
- "Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them" playwright **A. Rey Pamatmat**;
- Sundance Playwright Fellow and librettist **Roxie Perkins**; and
- Composer and playwright **Jesse J. Sanchez**, "SUEÑOS."

#### **MUSIC TEAM FOR "desert in"**

Music Director for "desert in" is **David Angus**, leading members of the Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra (**Annie Rabbat**, violin and Concertmaster; **Leowi Lin**, cello; **Jan Halloran**, clarinet/bass clarinet; **Linda Toote**, flute/alto flute; **Richard Flanagan**, percussion; **Craig McNutt**, percussion; and **Brett Hodgdon**, keyboard player/operator.) Audio Recording Engineer and Music Mixing is by **Daniel Neumann**. Studio Recording Engineering is by **Immersive Music Project**.

#### **DESIGN TEAM FOR "desert in"**

**Michael Elias Thomas** is the Director of Photography for "desert in." Production Designer is **Yuki Izumihara**. Costume Designer is **Molly Irelan**. Gaffer/Lighting Designer is **Pablo Santiago**.

#### **PRODUCER TEAM FOR "desert in"**

Executive Producers for "desert in" are **Bradley Vernatter**, **Esther Nelson** and **Jessica Johnson Brock** for Boston Lyric Opera. Co-Executive Producers are **Jennifer Rivera** and **James Darrah** for Long Beach Opera. Consulting Producer is **Joy Kecken**. Producer is **Theory & Practice Productions** (**Tony Shayne**, **Pranav Shah**; Assistant Producer **Kerstin Heinrich**). Associate Producer is **Bailey Costa**.

"**Desert in**" is commissioned and produced by Boston Lyric Opera, and produced in association with Long Beach Opera.

"**Desert in**" debuts on BLO's operabox.tv streaming service in June 2021. Pricing starts at \$5 per episode. Operabox.tv is available at the [operabox.tv website](#) and through branded apps on Apple, Google, Amazon and Roku platforms.

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#### **MEDIA INFORMATION**

- Additional information on, and interviews with creative principals are available.
- Photo and film assets will be available soon.
- Preview screeners of several episodes will be available in May.

*For photos from the film, embeddable trailers, screener access and other assets, contact John Michael Kennedy, JMKPR, [jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com) or 781-620-1761.*



## **ABOUT BOSTON LYRIC OPERA**

Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) celebrates the art of the voice through innovative programming and community engagement that redefines the opera-going experience. BLO is the largest, oldest opera company in New England. 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, Scottish Opera and San Francisco Opera. BLO continues to be a destination for leading artists, conductors, directors and designers from around the world. BLO's productions have been described by national media as "part of the national dialogue" for their role in creating entry points for new audiences. BLO's programming remains faithful to tradition while blazing new ground, building audiences, and creating new ways to enhance the opera-going experience.

## **ABOUT OPERABOX.TV**

Operabox.tv is the opera and classical-music streaming service created by Boston Lyric Opera – a new home for traditional content aimed at longtime opera lovers, as well as new commissioned works, opera-inspired original content and projects designed to bring opera to broader audiences. There is a variety of free and paid content on operabox.tv. Season subscriptions with early access to paid content are \$99. Paid content is available on-demand after subscriber access. Operabox.tv is available at [www.operabox.tv](http://www.operabox.tv) and via streaming apps through Apple, Android, Amazon and Roku. To begin accessing free and paid content, visit [www.blo.org/operaboxtv](http://www.blo.org/operaboxtv).

## **ABOUT LONG BEACH OPERA**

Long Beach Opera (LBO) is internationally known for cutting-edge interpretations of unconventional repertoire. LBO creates immediate, inventive and often boldly avant-garde productions for an adventurous audience, and stands apart from most opera companies in the number of world, American and West Coast premieres it has staged. Founded in 1979, it is the oldest professional opera company in the Los Angeles/Orange County region with a performance history of more than 110 operas, ranging from early works of the 17th century to operas of the 21st. LBO's growing repertoire has provided stimulus for the subsequent founding of other local opera companies, catapulting Southern California into the spotlight as a major opera epicenter. LBO is a recognized and respected member of the U.S. cultural community, receiving funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the County of Los Angeles and the City of Long Beach, along with generous support from individual donors, local businesses, public corporations and private foundations.

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