

## CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

**BLO RETURNS WITH MASCAGNI'S ONE-ACT CLASSIC;  
PRODUCTION MOVES TO OPEN-AIR LEADER BANK PAVILION**

*Featuring fully live performances by Boston Lyric Opera's Orchestra and Chorus*

**MICHELLE JOHNSON, ADAM DIEGEL, NINA YOSHIDA NELSEN, JAVIER ARREY  
AND CHELSEA BASLER LEAD THE CAST**

**DIRECTED BY GISELLE TY, CONDUCTED BY BLO MUSIC DIRECTOR DAVID ANGUS**

**TWO PERFORMANCES ONLY: OCTOBER 1 & 3, 2021**

BOSTON -- September 8, 2021 -- Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) opens its new season October 1 @ 7:30 PM and October 3 @ 3 PM with the company's first production of "Cavalleria Rusticana," composer **Pietro Mascagni's** one-act *verismo* tale of love, betrayal and death in a small Sicilian village. In a change from its previously announced plans, and to ensure the safest possible performances for audience members, artists, staff and backstage workers, BLO's "Cavalleria" will open at the Leader Bank Pavilion in Boston's Seaport District. The Pavilion's open-air structure allows BLO to produce large-scale live performances, with full live orchestra and chorus; the venue's larger capacity means BLO will have two performances instead of the previously announced four.

BLO Music Director and Conductor **David Angus** will lead BLO's Orchestra and Chorus. **Giselle Ty**, who served as Assistant Director on BLO's 2016 production of "Werther," returns as stage director, replacing previously announced stage director Sarna Lapine.

In reflecting on BLO's return to full performances, Acting Stanford Calderwood General and Artistic Director **Bradley Vernatter** saluted not only the resilience of the company's artists, staff, board and supporters, but also a shared belief in the power of music and storytelling. "We're aiming to make 'Cavalleria' a thrilling return to live opera with full musical forces," Vernatter says. "The work required to pull off a production of this scale is monumental; it requires an accomplished team and a supportive community. I've been proud that BLO has kept artists employed through our digital projects and Street Stage performances during the roughest days of the pandemic. But it's especially rewarding to provide so many opportunities for artists and production personnel to join us for our first full-length opera, with a complete orchestra and chorus for a live audience, since the pandemic began."

Vernatter also announced the company will implement COVID safety protocols that align with other area performing arts organizations returning this fall and its own Health Task Force for

Opera Artists, the high-profile panel of health-care professionals formed last year to provide medical knowledge and protocol guidance. BLO patrons attending “Cavalleria” at the Leader Bank Pavilion are required to show either proof of full vaccination, a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of the performance, or an antigen test taken within the previous 24 hours. Face masks are required for all patrons except when eating and drinking.

## CASTING

The full cast for BLO’s “Cavalleria Rusticana” includes:

- Soprano **Michelle Johnson**, known for a powerful voice and commanding dramatic presence -- and an alumna of New England Conservatory and the Boston University (BU) Opera Institute -- will sing the role of Santuzza;
- Tenor **Adam Diegel**, who has received international critical acclaim for his powerful performance of Cavaradossi in Tosca at Glimmerglass Opera, will sing Turiddu.
- Mezzo-soprano **Nina Yoshida Nelsen**, a singer equally at home on opera and symphonic stages who has performed world premieres at Houston Grand Opera and Seattle Opera, and a Boston University graduate with a Bachelor’s in violin performance and a Master’s in Music (Opera), returns to Boston to sing Lucia;
- Chilean-American baritone **Javier Arrey** holds a Congressional Medal of Honor from the Chilean government both for his career and his work bringing opera to people without access to live performances. A veteran of opera productions and concerts alike, Arrey performs here as Alfio; and
- Grammy-nominated soprano **Chelsea Basler**, who has enjoyed a strong relationship with the company since debuting as an Emerging Artist in 2014 most recently voiced the ethereal Madeline in BLO’s [operabox.tv](http://operabox.tv) production of “The Fall of the House of Usher” for BLO’s groundbreaking operabox.tv streaming service earlier this year, sings Lola.



*L-r: Michelle Johnson; Adam Diegel, Nina Yoshida Nelsen; Javier Arrey; Chelsea Basler. Photos courtesy of the artists.*

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Cast changes have occurred since BLO announced “Cavalleria” in May: Michelle Johnson replaces J’Nai Bridges; Javier Arrey replaces Alfred Walker.

## **ABOUT “CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA”**

With a score by Pietro Mascagni, and a libretto by **Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti** and **Guido Menasci**, “Cavalleria Rusticana” tells a story of four lovers that centers on a returning soldier who finds his fiancée has married a different man. “Cavalleria” is loved for its passionate story and classic score, whose swooning “Intermezzo” will be familiar to audiences, having been heard on numerous cinematic soundtracks.

Young soldier Turiddu learns upon his return home that his betrothed, Lola, has married another man while he was away. Seeking revenge, he seduces Santuzza, who suspects him of having an affair with Lola when he disappears after their time together. She in turn takes her own revenge, telling Lola’s husband Alfio that his wife had been unfaithful with Turiddu. Seeing his rage, Santuzza immediately regrets the revelation. But it’s too late; Alfio challenges Turiddu to a duel and Turiddu accepts, asking his mother Lucia to care for Santuzza if he should not return. The unsurprising news of Turiddu’s death nevertheless shakes his mother, his once-betrothed, and his lover to their cores. They respectively weep, collapse in the arms of others, and faint away.

“Cavalleria” will be sung in Italian, with English surtitles. The approximate run time of this performance is 70 minutes, with no intermission.

## **PRODUCTION AND ARTISTIC TEAM**

Stage Director for “Cavalleria Rusticana” is **Giselle Ty**. **David Angus** conducts the Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus, whose members are listed [here](#). Announcement of additional artistic team members will be made soon at [blo.org](http://blo.org).

## **VENUE AND TICKETS**

Boston Lyric Opera’s “Cavalleria Rusticana” will be performed Fri., Oct. 1 @ 7:30 pm and Sun., Oct. 3 @ 3 pm at the Leader Bank Pavilion, 290 Northern Avenue in Boston’s Seaport District. **Individual tickets range from \$10 to \$180 plus fees, and will be available Fri., Sep. 10 at [blo.org/tickets](http://blo.org/tickets).**

Information about “Cavalleria Rusticana,” next spring’s “Champion: An Opera in Jazz,” access to a new digital production of “Svadba” this winter, and all streaming content on BLO’s [operabox.tv](http://operabox.tv), is available at [blo.org](http://blo.org).

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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOL DETAILS**

“Cavalleria Rusticana” will be presented in an intermission-free production designed to ensure the safest possible artist and audience experience, which Vernatter says is BLO’s top priority. The company uses recommendations from its Health Task Force for Opera Artists alongside CDC, City of Boston and venue protocols, and artist union recommendations to develop plans for audience, staff and artists. Boston Lyric Opera COVID-19 Policies can be found [here](#).

- BLO will continue to monitor public health conditions, refine protocols as situations change, and send updated details to patrons in advance of their performance dates.
- BLO is committed to institutional flexibility this season and will provide accommodations for patrons who are feeling sick or need to pause their return to the theater.
- BLO will provide updated COVID and health protocol information on its website, [blo.org](http://blo.org).

## **ALSO: NEW ADDRESS, NEW NEIGHBORHOOD**

Boston Lyric Opera has moved its headquarters to a new office at Midway Artist Studios in the [Fort Point Arts Neighborhood](#), joining the many artists and cultural organizations that comprise that section of the city.

Acting General and Artistic Director Bradley Vernatter says “BLO is excited and proud to join this arts neighborhood, which is recognized as one of largest communities of artists in New England. Making Fort Point our home, alongside so many other creators, contributes to the vibrancy of one of Boston’s creative centers.”

Previously, BLO mounted productions of “Clemency” and “The Rape of Lucretia” in the neighborhood, at the Artists For Humanity EpiCenter, located near Midway Artist Studios.

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## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Additional information about “Cavalleria Rusticana” and all of BLO’s season productions, as well as available photo assets, press review ticket reservations, and interviews with artists, production and BLO team representatives, are available through John Michael Kennedy, [jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com) or 781-620-1761.