IN THE NEW FILM SVADBA,
A BRIDAL PARTY PREPARES FOR A WEDDING
GUIDED BY TRADITIONS ON A DREAMY, IDYLLIC BEACH

A Boston Lyric Opera production, co-produced with Opera Philadelphia,
“Svadba” debuts January 28, 2022 on BLO’s operabox.tv and the Opera Philadelphia Channel.

Director Shura Baryshnikov and conductor Daniela Candillari create a timeless, magical world based on composer Ana Sokolović’s music and libretto.

BOSTON – January 7, 2022 -- The power of unadorned human voices meets the rustic, expansive beauty of a dreamy oceanside cottage, where six women celebrate the eve of a wedding -- with all its ritual, emotion, fun and reflection -- in Svadba, a new cinematic opera experience co-produced by Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) and Opera Philadelphia.

Premiering January 28 on both BLO’s operabox.tv and the Opera Philadelphia Channel (operaphila.tv), the film combines Serbian composer Ana Sokolović’s striking acapella music and text with a new dance-led visual interpretation by film director Shura Baryshnikov and screenwriter Hannah Shepard. Slovenia-born Daniela Candillari conducts the music.

A FRESH NARRATIVE ON AN INTIMATE STORY

Ana Sokolović’s original score includes text drawn from several sources, including Serbian poetry and Balkan folk music. Collectively, the libretto suggests story elements of a woman leaving her family, conversations about marriage and allusions to ceremonial preparations.

Live productions of “Svadba” have had artists sing and embody the six characters onstage; a film brings opportunities for added story dimensions. Six dancers and actors are on screen as the story’s main characters, while six singers who create the film’s music with voices and spare instrumentation also appear, suggesting ancestral spirits who watch over the action. Reflecting the alternately serene and hectic moments of wedding preparations, Svadba unfolds in non-linear ways.
Characters include bride-to-be Milica, maid of honor Ljubica, and family elder Lena who leads the events of the day. Bridesmaids Danica, Nada and Zora carry out the celebratory rituals with friendship and enthusiasm. The women make the most of the wedding eve, adorning the bride’s dress, dyeing her hair, making food, picking flowers for the procession, and taking time for carefree fun on the beach where the wedding will be held. Sokolović describes the group as “distilling magic and fantasy from ordinary moments.”

Sokolović was intrigued to write about a wedding and its prenuptial rituals because they occur in nearly every country. “Weddings are an important turning point in many women’s lives, with emotional and joyful moments,” she says. “I wanted to explore these themes, in a place where we are privy to private and ancient rituals between a bride and her girlfriends.”

**ARTISTS AND PRODUCTION TEAM**

Shura Baryshnikov serves as the film’s director. Daniela Candillari conducts the music. Hannah Shepard is screenwriter. Ana Novačić is Production Designer, Katherine Castro is Director of Photography and Lena Borovci is Costume Designer. Full creative team biographies are available [here](#).

Artists providing vocals and musical accompaniment include Chabrelle D. Williams singing the role of Milica the bride-to-be, Brianna J. Robinson as Lena the elder, Maggie Finnegan as Danica, Mack Wolz as Zora, Vera Savage as Nada, and Hannah Ludwig as Ljubica. Full biographies of the music artists are available [here](#).

Artists embodying the characters include dancer Victoria L. Awkward (Milica), actor Jackie Davis (Lena), dancer Jay Breen (Danica/attendant), dancer Sarah Pacheco (Zora/attendant), dancer Emily Jerant-Hendrickson (Nada/attendant), and dancer Sasha Peterson (Ljubica, the maid of honor). Olivia Moon makes a special appearance as The Betrothed. Full biographies of the onscreen artists are available [here](#).

Acting Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director Bradley Vernatter says Svadba offers another distinctive take on the company’s aim to bring new perspectives to opera storytelling, and expand its audiences. “Ana’s music creates a transcendent sound world unlike anything else I’ve heard in contemporary opera,” Vernatter says. “We had the opportunity to interpret this sweet, emotional and universal story through the intersection of music, dance, design and film. ‘Svadba’ lets us escape into a whole other world and celebrate the beauty of togetherness.” Vernatter says the partnership with Opera Philadelphia expands BLO’s reach and “gives us a chance to co-produce with a sister organization doing equally forward-thinking work for the screen.”

David B. Devan, General Director & President of Opera Philadelphia says his company had an artistic triumph with a live U.S. premiere of Svadba several seasons back, and was eager to revisit it in this new form. “When we presented a site-specific production of Svadba in 2013 it was the sold-out hit of that season,” Devan says. “Audiences marveled at its intimacy, and how the singers use their voices -- individually and in unison -- to create a unique, intoxicating work
of art. We are so happy BLO invited us on the journey to bring Svadba to our audiences once again in this stunning cinematic production."

WHERE TO WATCH SVADBA
Svadba debuts January 28, 2022 on BLO's operabox.tv and the Opera Philadelphia Channel (operaphilly.tv) streaming services. Both services are available on branded apps found on Apple, Google, Amazon and Roku platforms.

On-demand viewing is $15. Subscribers to either service can access the film two days earlier on January 26.

#  #  #

MEDIA INFORMATION
• Media review access to Svadba will be available in January.
• Shura Baryshnikov, Daniela Candillari, Hannah Shepard, Ana Sokolović, and the music and dance artists are available to discuss their roles in Svadba.
• On-set photos of Svadba, including high-res images from the musical recording sessions and the Cape Cod film set are available here.
• For interviews, screener access, and other information, contact John Michael Kennedy (jmk@jmkpr.com or 212-842-1752) or Jennifer Astin (ja@jmkpr.com or 424-333-1718).