

BOSTONLYRICOPERA

WITH AN EXPANDED 2022/23 SEASON, BLO RETURNS TO STAGES – INSIDE, OUTSIDE AND ONSCREEN

Onstage performances include a free outdoor *Romeo & Juliet* this summer, a reverse take on *La bohème* this fall, a winter installation of *Bluebeard's Castle*, and a spring production of BLO's co-commissioned opera *Omar* by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels.

Opera artist Nina Yoshida Nelsen joins BLO as Artistic Advisor.

MacArthur "Genius Grant" winner Giddens and Boston poet laureate Porsha Olayiwola collaborate on a BLO-commissioned concert premiere.

Digital offerings grow on operabox.tv streaming service, including new ASL aria series.

Subscriptions on sale today.

BOSTON – Revised May 3, 2022 – In announcing its 2022/23 Season today, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) unveils an expanded, year-round return to stages throughout Boston, starting with a free outdoor production of **Charles Gounod's *Romeo & Juliet*** on the Boston Common this summer and culminating in a spring 2023 production of the new opera ***Omar***, co-commissioned by BLO from composers **Rhiannon Giddens** (below, l.) and **Michael Abels** at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre.



Rhiannon Giddens is part of two BLO-commissioned performances in the 2022/23 Season. Photo: Ebru Yildiz

This fall, BLO mounts a new time-flipped production of **Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème*** by visionary director **Yuval Sharon** that opens with the opera's tragic ending and moves backward in time to the carefree depiction of Parisian artists in love. The production, which BLO co-produced with Detroit Opera and Spoleto Festival USA, opens at the restored Emerson Colonial Theatre in an arrangement with Ambassador Theatre Group.

In early spring 2023, BLO presents a new production of **Béla Bartók's** one-act psychological thriller ***Bluebeard's Castle*** directed by **Anne Bogart**, whose 2019 production of *The Handmaid's Tale* for BLO received universal acclaim. *Bluebeard* will be produced at The Terminal @ Flynn Cruiseport Boston and combined with the dramatic work ***Four Songs (Vier Lieder)***, a song cycle by composer **Alma Mahler**.

The 2022/23 Season includes the premiere of another BLO-commissioned collaboration – this one between 2022 Grammy Award winner Rhiannon Giddens and **City of Boston Poet Laureate Porsha Olayiwola**. The concert builds on previous collaboration between BLO and the City of Boston that brings together the words of prominent, acclaimed poets and the music of contemporary composers to create entirely new works.

“In planning for this season, we felt a strong need to look at the impact BLO can make beyond the boundaries of a traditional season, and plan for an expanded artistic and programming footprint with a greater reach in our home community,” says **Acting Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director Bradley Vernatter**. “These works can enrich our lives every day in expanded ways, from free performances on Boston Common to operas in familiar theaters, public programming throughout the city, and cinematic works – making opera accessible year-round for everyone.”

[MEDIA: More info on BLO’s 2022/23 Season mainstage productions can be found below.]

DIGITAL OFFERINGS

BLO continues to create opera and opera-inspired online experiences for its operabox.tv streaming platform, this season and next. With this work, the company explores new ways of expanding the artistic expression of opera and access to the artform. The first in a new series of free digital shorts commissioned from the New York artist collaborative **UP UNTIL NOW** launched last week, centering American Sign Language (ASL) as both a medium and a new language through which to bring the artform to new audiences.

Called “**SOUL(SIGNS): OPERA**,” the series is developed by a diverse group of artistic collaborators from the Deaf and hearing communities whose work combines ASL, music and striking cinematic visuals to animate new recordings from three operas. “SOUL(SIGNS): OPERA” was commissioned by BLO with Opera Omaha, Opera Columbus and Portland Opera. More information about the ongoing series can be found [here](#).

FREE COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Boston Lyric Opera will continue producing free artistic programs in Boston-area communities and invite people to engage with the company in new ways. “Our Street Stage mobile performances will resume this summer,” Vernatter says. “And we have plans to invite audiences into BLO’s expanded studio space in Fort Point. I look forward to sharing announcements on those activities soon.”

PERSONNEL NEWS

Nina Yoshida Nelsen Joins BLO Artistic Team

Brad Vernatter announced that opera artist **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (r.) will join the company as an Artistic Advisor. In addition to her singing career (she was Mamma Lucia in BLO’s fall 2021 live production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*), the Boston University alum co-founded the Asian Opera Alliance, and is a featured artist in BLO’s “[The Butterfly Process](#)” initiative that explores and reconsiders Asian stereotypes in the traditional opera repertoire.



Along with Artistic Advisors **John Conklin** and **Vimbayi Kaziboni**, Nelsen will propose and weigh in on future artistic planning. She will contribute to the implementation of ideas that emerge from “The Butterfly Process” and from BLO’s commitment to increase representation of people and stories in its artistic, community-based, and administrative work.

“To me, joining Boston Lyric Opera means aligning myself with a team leading the change needed in our industry,” Nelsen says. “BLO is doing vital work to move opera forward – the right work, the groundwork that allows for thoughtful, intentional and socially responsible artistic decisions. It’s been amazing to see. This new position gives me the unique chance to work on my passion for opera and my passion for representation. I want diverse audiences to love the music they hear, and see people on stage they relate to.”

“I have been inspired by Nina’s work and her passion for opera since the moment we first met,” Vernatter says. “She is a wonderful artist, a leader for equity in our industry, and a force for real change. We are lucky to bring her onto our team.”

David Tompkins Becomes Chief Operating Officer

Vernatter announced today that David Tompkins (r.) will join BLO as Chief Operating Officer. A longtime nonprofit management consultant in New England with an extensive background in arts leadership, Tompkins served as Production Stage Manager for Sundance Film Festival, Executive Director at Ballet Arizona and General Manager of Boston Ballet for nearly six years, among other positions. Tompkins fills the role left vacant when Vernatter accepted the Acting General & Artistic Director position for the company.

“I am happy to welcome Dave to BLO,” Vernatter says. “His incredible resume complements the company’s leadership team, and his extensive experience in nonprofit arts operations makes him the ideal person to plan for and manage the day-to-day activities that support BLO’s ambitious artistic goals.”

MORE ON BLO’S 2022/23 MAINSTAGE SEASON



ROMEO & JULIET

August 11 and 13, 2022

FREE on Boston Common

Presenting in partnership with the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company (CSC) and the City of Boston, Boston Lyric Opera returns to the Boston Common for the first time since 2002, with a production of **Gounod’s** operatic version of Shakespeare’s most famous love story. With a

libretto by **Jules Barbier** and **Michel Carré**, this mid-19th Century take on the classic Montague-versus-Capulet story includes all the famous scenes, from the balcony to the sword fights to the fateful tombs. Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus supports the composer’s beautiful duets and arias.

This English language, English-surttitled production stars **Ricardo Garcia** in his company debut as Romeo and Boston Conservatory at Berklee alumna **Vanessa Becerra** making her

company debut as Juliet. BLO Music Director **David Angus** will conduct; CSC Artistic Director **Steve Maler** is the stage director.



LA BOHÈME

September 23 – October 2, 2022

Emerson Colonial Theatre

A startlingly simple idea yields a new perspective on a tried-and-true opera favorite. Director **Yuval Sharon's** production reorients Giacomo Puccini's story from tragedy back to love by transposing the final act to the beginning and running the acts in reverse order. Each act retains its music

as well as the Italian libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. In a nod to a season that follows two years of an international pandemic, Sharon's production tells a much-needed story that moves audiences from darkness to light. BLO Music Director **David Angus** will conduct. Stage design is by BLO Artistic Advisor **John Conklin**. Costume design is by **Jessica Jahn**.

Lauren Michelle (Nedda in 2019's *Pagliacci*) returns to BLO to sing the role of Mimi. **Matthew White** will portray Rodolfo. **Edward Parks** is Marcello. **Benjamin Taylor** is Schaunard, and **William Guanbo Su** is Colline. **David Angus** conducts the BLO Orchestra. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, *La bohème* is a co-production of Boston Lyric Opera, Detroit Opera and Spoleto Festival USA.



BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

March 22-26, 2023

The Terminal @ Flynn Cruiseport Boston

In spring 2023, BLO sheds fresh light on composer Bartók and librettist **Béla Balázs's** early 20th century expressionist opera about a new bride, Judith, who visits her husband's gothic home for the first time. Stage Director **Anne Bogart** (2019's *The Handmaid's Tale*) puts her distinctive stamp on

the tale of a woman who, in exploring seven forbidden rooms – each more disturbing than the last – sacrifices more than she bargained for. The one-act, English-sung *Bluebeard* is combined with composer **Alma Mahler's Vier Lieder (Four Songs)**, a song cycle that links thematically to Judith's plight, giving her an expanded world and a new voice. BLO Music Director **David Angus** will conduct.



OMAR

May 4-7, 2023

Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre

Inspired by an autobiographical essay of a Muslim man enslaved in America, *Omar* is the story of **Omar Ibn Said**, a prominent scholar of the Islamic faith and many other subjects, who was born to a wealthy West African family. Brought to South Carolina as a slave at 37 years old, Ibn

Said escaped his first place of enslavement and headed to North Carolina where he lived as a slave until his death in 1864.

Grammy and MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship winner **Rhiannon Giddens** (a founding member of Carolina Chocolate Drops and Artistic Director of the locally based Silkroad) composed the music and wrote the libretto, in partnership with film and orchestral composer **Michael Abels** (“Get Out,” “Us” soundtracks and BLO’s *desert in finale*), for a production conceived by **Kaneza Schaal**. *Omar* is co-commissioned and co-produced by Boston Lyric Opera with Spoleto Festival USA, L.A. Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and San Francisco Opera. Sung in English with English surtitles.

SUPPORT FOR THE SEASON

BLO’s 2022-2023 season is funded, in part, by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. BLO’s production of *La bohème* is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Rhiannon Giddens/Porsha Olayiwola project is commissioned with support from the Merrill Family Charitable Foundation.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ON SALE NOW

Subscriptions for Boston Lyric Opera’s 2022/23 Season start at \$60 and are available beginning April 27 [here](#) or by phone at 617-542-6772.

*** REVISIONS**

May 3 – revised description of music/poetry project

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MEDIA CONTACT:

- An embeddable teaser video about the season is [here](#).
- For photos, interviews or more information, reach John Michael Kennedy, jmk@jmkpr.com, 781-620-1761 (office) / 212-842-1752 (mobile/text).