Giachomo Puccini’s
LA BOHÈME
SEP 23 - OCT 2 | Emerson Colonial Theatre

BRADLEY VERNATTER
Stanford Calderwood
General Director & CEO

DAVID ANGUS
Music Director

JOHN CONKLIN,
VIMBAYI KAZIBONI, &
NINA YOSHIDA NElsen
Artistic Advisors
OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

OUR MISSION
Boston Lyric Opera inspires, entertains, and connects communities through compelling opera performances, programs, and gatherings.

OUR VISION
To create operatic moments that enrich everyday life.

OUR VALUES
• Boldness
• Collaboration
• Belonging
• Connection
• Learning

To learn more, visit BLO.org

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In our telling of this classic story, the reverse order of the acts reorients Giacomo Puccini’s narrative from a story that is thrust toward tragedy to one that centers on the rich moments that make life worth living—one that moves toward love and hope.

This “flashback” La bohème presents a philosophy we can all strive for. As we reemerge from the pandemic, the new BLO season—which began with a free Romeo & Juliet on the Boston Common last month that drew nearly 7,000 audience members—mirrors how we embrace this new start. We too are choosing hope.

As I move into the role of General Director & Chief Executive Officer, I reflect on BLO’s “flashbacks” and am keenly aware of the Company’s rich legacy. I am grateful for the many inspirational and brave leaders, artists, and dedicated supporters who have contributed to BLO’s triumphs over the years. What the Company and our community have accomplished so far gives me hope and excitement for what we can achieve together in the years ahead.

I am energized by—and devoted to—our new organizational vision: our Company’s recently completed Strategic Plan is the culmination of a year-long effort I began upon stepping into the acting role. The company-wide and community process that brought us to this Plan found us reflecting deeply on what BLO means to our audiences, our artists, and our city—the people who know us and those who don’t yet. We thought about what the region’s largest and oldest opera company could be in 2022, our 46th season, and beyond.

In doing that, we built a new vision focused on community and our role in the civic fabric of Boston while maintaining a mission of presenting the best of opera that inspires, entertains, and connects us all.

I look forward to telling you more about BLO’s Strategic Plan as we continue through the season and hearing about what BLO means to you. I invite you to read a summary of the Plan at BLO.org. We’ve chosen hope for our Company’s future and the artform’s future. Having you in the audience here helps us know we are moving in the right direction.
JOIN BLO THIS SPRING
Save 10% with Our 2-Show Package

A Powerful Pairing

Bluebeard’s Castle | Four Songs

BY Béla Bartók
LIBRETTO BY Béla Balázs
BY Alma Mahler

MAR 22 – 26
The Terminal @ Flynn Cruiseport Boston

The New England Premiere
of a Compelling True Story

OMAR

BY Rhiannon Giddens & Michael Abels
LIBRETTO BY Rhiannon Giddens

MAY 4 – 7
Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE 2022/23 SPRING SEASON, VISIT BLO.ORG
It’s not often that I have breaking news to talk about in my program letter, but this is one of those rare times. If you have not already heard, the BLO Board of Directors recently voted on a consequential change for the future of Boston’s leading opera company.

With great enthusiasm, we voted to make Bradley Vernatter the General Director and Chief Executive Officer at Boston Lyric Opera, effective immediately. This is the top leadership position at BLO. Brad’s leadership through the past two years was a master class in helming a ship through unexpectedly troubled waters.

The economic and organizational consequences of the pandemic were difficult for all non-profit arts groups. Survival became the mode for many. But under Brad’s leadership and with significant support from the Board, BLO leveraged its artistic ambitions and emerged as a creative risk-taker and digital trend-setter.

BLO addressed complex issues of racial inequity headfirst by facing the issues and acknowledging the inherent challenges they exposed. Then, by opening its artistic doors wider, and putting more chairs and representative voices around the table where ideas are discussed, Brad and the team at BLO looked at the organization and the opera community through a lens of justice and equity, leading the way on how those values can be on a stage equally with operas from a century or more ago.

Brad led an intensive strategic planning process with board members, staff, community members, audiences and other important stakeholders through the uncertainty of the pandemic and many obstacles to look at the future of BLO. From that work, we now have a plan to become an organization firmly rooted in its community, guided by a spirit of openness, and led by a person who proved himself in the roughest of times, and assessed what was needed to keep Boston Lyric Opera moving forward.

At Brad’s suggestion, BLO’s board also moved to expand the leadership team to enact our ambitious goals, and begin the search for an Artistic Director. In a structure adopted by many companies, and one that should be of enormous benefit to BLO and our community, this role will partner with Brad and David Angus, BLO’s Music Director, to lead the artistic planning for each Season. It offers an opportunity to welcome a new artistic voice to an art form we know and love. We look forward to updating you as this exciting new chapter unfolds.

Michael J. Puzo | Chair, Board of Directors
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access at BLO

Boston Lyric Opera commits to becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization. We recognize that this work will take time, intentional actions, and accountability from our Board, employees, artists, patrons, and community. We commit to embrace individuals from all backgrounds and identities.

We acknowledge the history of operas and of those engaged in opera has not always been diverse or inclusive and we believe that we have the ability to address the necessary changes for opera to evolve and thrive in Boston.

Opera has the power to speak truth, broaden perspectives and invite empathy.

While we value the universality of themes in the work we produce, we acknowledge that the power held in these stories is different for different people. We will continue to ensure that the programs and productions we share will give voice and representation to diverse artistry and perspectives.

OUR VALUES

Boston Lyric Opera commits to exhibit the following values:

• We acknowledge and appreciate the inherent human rights of all individuals, without discrimination.
• We believe that our work must be based on mutual respect.
• We aim to examine our actions so that we may act without bias based on the differences we encounter during our work.
• We aspire to listen, learn, and seek diversity among the voices that join us in our work.
Watch our artists in a new six-part performance film series, B., that explores and celebrates the music of Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islanders, as well as works influenced by Asian culture.

Visit operabox.tv for more information.

CELEBRATING OUR 2022/23 JANE AND STEVEN AKIN EMERGING ARTISTS

Brianna J. Robinson  
Soprano

Fred C. VanNess, Jr.  
Tenor

Junhan Choi  
Baritone

Nicholas LaGesse  
Baritone
CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor
DAVID ANGUS
2022/23 Season Sponsor
Linda Cabot Black

Stage Director
YUVAL SHARON*

Set Designer
JOHN CONKLIN

Costume Designer
JESSICA JAHN*

Lighting Designer
JOHN TORRES*

Wig & Makeup Designer
EARON DIANNA*

Revival Director
JAMES BLASZKO*

Associate Costume Designer
SOPHIE SCHNEIDER*

Associate Lighting Designer
CHRISTOPHER GILMORE*

Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra
ANNIE RABBAT Concertmaster

Boston Lyric Opera Chorus
BRETT HODGDON† Chorus Master

VOICES Boston
DAN RYAN Music Director

Rehearsal Coach/Accompanist
NICOLAS GIUSTI

STAGE MANAGER
MICHAEL JANNEY

*Boston Lyric Opera Debut
† Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist
‡ Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alumnus/a

Composer Giacomo Puccini
Librettists Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa
Sung in Italian with English surtitles.

MUSIC DIRECTOR
DAVID ANGUS
2022/23 Season Sponsor
Linda Cabot Black

PERFORMANCES
FRI, SEP 23, 2022 | 7:30PM
SUN, SEP 25, 2022 | 3PM
FRI, SEP 30, 2022 | 7:30PM
SUN, OCT 2, 2022 | 3PM

Performance time is approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes with no intermission.

EMERSON COLONIAL THEATRE
106 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
CAST (in order of appearance)

The Wanderer
MARSHALL HUGHES

Marcello
EDWARD PARKS*

Rodolfo
JESUS GARCIA
Sponsored by Christine & Michael Puzo

Colline
WILLIAM GUANBO SU*

Schaunard
BENJAMIN TAYLOR*

Musetta
CHELSEA BASLER‡

Mimi
LAUREN MICHELLE

Sergeant
RASHAUN D. CAMPBELL

Custom-House Officer
DEVON RUSSO

Prune Man
WILLIAM LIM

Parpignol
FRED C. VANNESS JR.†

Alcindoro
JUNHAN CHOI†

La bohème is a co-production of Boston Lyric Opera, Detroit Opera, and Spoleto Festival, USA.

This production of La bohème is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Boston Lyric Opera dedicates these performances of Puccini's La bohème to Ernest A. Triplett Jr., BLO’s first Artistic Director.
La bohème follows the story of a group of friends and young lovers. On a fateful evening, romantic writer Rodolfo meets the seamstress Mimì. Painter Marcello falls in love and chases after Musetta, a singer. The ensemble is completed by Schaunard, a musician, and Colline, a philosopher. In this retelling of La bohème, directed by Yuval Sharon, the original acts are presented in reverse order.

Death: Paris, May 1850. Unable to concentrate, Rodolfo and Marcello struggle at their respective crafts in their small shared apartment. Each man’s mind is distracted, and they gossip of news of their love interests. Schaunard and Colline arrive with a paltry dinner to share. The four friends imagine themselves in a royal court, savoring a fine meal. Eventually, the revelry leads to a duel between Schaunard and Colline. The men are interrupted by Musetta with a very ill Mimì in tow. Musetta explains that she happened upon Mimì outside the garret, who wanted to be with her love, Rodolfo. Sending Marcello off for a doctor, Musetta leaves to retrieve Mimì’s muff. Alone, the lovers, Mimì and Rodolfo recount the story of how they met and their shared fond memories. When everyone returns, the friends give Mimì her muff to warm her hands, and Musetta sings a prayer. However, their efforts are in vain: Mimì dies, and Rodolfo is overcome by his grief.

Barière: Three months earlier. At the toll gate, peddlers and peasants pass into the city. Mimì, audibly ill with a terrible cough, asks the sergeant where she can find Marcello. She finds him outside the tavern and bemoans her relationship woes: Rodolfo’s jealousy has eroded their love. Rodolfo emerges from the tavern, and Mimì hides. She overhears Rodolfo tell Marcello that his jealousy is merely a front. At first, he claims that Mimì is a terrible flirt, but he soon reveals that he is concerned about Mimì’s health, since his poor living conditions will do little to help her recuperate. To give Mimì the best chance at recovery, he has decided to end their relationship. The combination of Mimì weeping and coughing reveals her presence. Marcello leaves them to speak and to pursue Musetta’s laughter ringing out from the tavern. As Rodolfo and Mimì discuss their relationship, Musetta and Marcello begin arguing. At long last, Rodolfo and Mimì persuade each other to remain together until spring, while Marcello and Musetta break off their liaison.

Momus: Two months earlier. It is Christmas Eve in the Latin Quarter. Rodolfo and Mimì shop for gifts while Colline, Schaunard, and Marcello order a feast. The lovers eventually join the others at Café Momus, and Rodolfo introduces Mimì to the rest of the group. Musetta arrives with her new suitor, Alcindoro, but ostentatiously flirts with Marcello, her former lover. She pretends to suffer from a painful shoe. While Alcindoro runs off to have the shoe mended, Musetta embraces Marcello shamelessly. The bill comes, and the party is pained to realize how much they owe. Musetta asks the waiter to add it to her bill. The party rushes off to admire a parading military band, leaving Alcindoro to pay for their meal.

Love: Earlier on Christmas Eve. Marcello and Rodolfo struggle to keep warm in their sparse apartment they share with Colline and Schaunard. Rodolfo decides to burn his latest manuscript as fuel for the stove. Colline returns home, angry that he is unable to pawn his books. Just then, Schaunard arrives with food, wine, and wood for the stove. He shares that he was recently hired by an Englishman to perform for his parrot. The friends decide to celebrate at Café Momus, but Rodolfo stays behind to finish writing his article. A little while later, there’s a knock at the door: it’s Mimì, who also lives in the building and has come to ask for a light for her candle. Once inside, she faints, dropping her key. Rodolfo revives Mimì with a splash of water, offers her some wine, and lights her candle. As the two search for her key, both Mimì and Rodolfo’s candles are extinguished. Rodolfo finds her key and pockets it, buying him some time to flirt with her. He grabs her hand, noticing how cold it is, and the two fall in love. Their exchange is interrupted by Rodolfo’s friends, who shout from the courtyard below. Mimì asks to come along, and they leave together, basking in their new blossoming love.
David Angus | Conductor
Now in his tenth year as Boston Lyric Opera’s Music Director, David Angus recently navigated new and innovative concepts of presenting opera online, serving as Music Director and conductor for the critically-acclaimed productions of desert in and The Fall of the House of Usher. In addition to his ongoing work with BLO, Angus’s upcoming projects this season include a return to the Wexford Festival and a rescheduled engagement with the London Philharmonic, with whom he regularly conducts concerts and recordings. Just before lockdown in 2020, he returned to Hawaii Opera Theatre for a run of Le Nozze di Figaro. Prior to his time at Boston Lyric Opera, where he has conducted the majority of performances since 2011, Angus was Music Director of Glimmerglass Opera in upstate New York and Chief Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Flanders in Belgium. He has led orchestras and choirs all over Europe, notably in Scandinavia where he has been a regular guest with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and several Danish orchestras. Born in England, he has conducted most of the major orchestras in Great Britain including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, most of the BBC orchestras and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In recent seasons, he made debuts at the Toscanini Orchestra in Parma in Italy and the Porto Symphony Orchestra in Brazil. He returned to Wexford Festival Opera, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Huddersfield Choral Society, as well as his former orchestra in Belgium for the world premiere of Piet Swerts’s Symphony of Trees. Born in England, Angus spent his early years in Belfast. He was a boy chorister at King’s College, under Sir David Willcocks, and read music at Surrey University. He finished his training with a Fellowship in Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he won several prizes for opera conducting.

Yuval Sharon | Director
Director Yuval Sharon has been creating an unconventional body of work that seeks to expand the operatic form. During the 2021-2022 season—his first full season as Artistic Director of Detroit Opera—Sharon leads new productions of Ragnar Kjartansson’s Bliss, staged in Michigan Building Theatre, and La bohème, presented in reverse order in the Detroit Opera House. Sharon founded and served as Artistic Director of The Industry in Los Angeles, a company devoted to new and experimental opera that has brought opera into moving vehicles, operating train stations, Hollywood sound stages, and various “non-spaces” such as warehouses, parking lots, and escalator corridors. From 2016-2019, Sharon was the first Artist-in-Residence at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, creating nine projects and was honored with a 2017 MacArthur Fellowship and a Foundation for Contemporary Art grant for theater.

John Conklin | Set Designer
John Conklin has designed for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theater of St Louis, Glimmerglass Opera and the opera companies of Houston, Seattle, Dallas, Washington and Minneapolis, among others. Abroad he has worked at the English National Opera, the Bayerische Staatsoper, and The Australian Opera. In addition, he served as Director of Production for New York City Opera, Associate Director of Glimmerglass Opera, and he is currently Artistic Advisor to Boston Lyric Opera. He recently retired from teaching at the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU.

Jessica Jahn | Costume Designer
Jessica Jahn’s previous design credits include Off-Broadway: Coal Country, (The Public Theatre); Gloria: A Life, (Daryl Roth Theatre); Die Mommie Die! (New World Stages); Monodramas (New York City Opera). Regional: American Repertory Theater, McCarter Theater, Kennedy Center, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera. International: The Gran Teatre de Liceu, Wexford Opera. Upcoming: Orfeo ed Euridice (San Francisco Opera). Jahn is currently a member of the steering committees of Opera America’s Women’s Opera Network (WON) and Racial Justice Opera Network (RJON), as well as OPERA America’s Board Membership Committee.
John Torres | Lighting Designer


Earon Dianna | Wig-Makeup Designer

Earon Dianna’s previous credits include Broadway: Macbeth (associate hair designer); Chicken and Biscuits (associate wig and makeup designer); Sweat (associate makeup designer). Other designs: Dames at Sea, Kinky Boots (Bucks County Playhouse); The Last Supper (SOPAC) Twelfth Night (Marcus Garvey Park) On Killing (Soho Rep); Fat Ham, Cullud Wattah, Mojada (The Public Theater); Little Girl Blue (Goodspeed, New World Stages); Meet Vera Stark, Matilda (Colorado University); On Sugarland (NYTW); Nina Simone: Four Women (Berkshire Theatre Group); Once on This Island (Pioneer Theatre Company); Little Women (Dallas Theater Center); Oklahoma!, Patsy Cline (Weston Playhouse); Memphis, Dream Girls (Cape Fear Regional Theater); Cadillac Crew, Twelfth Night (Yale Rep).

James Blaszko | Revival Director

A first-generation American raised in a Polish-Pakistani household, James Blaszko’s varied education in arts and culture began at an early age and has translated into diverse collaborations across the globe. Before the pandemic, Blaszko staged Puccini’s Il Trittico at Daegu Opera House (South Korea), the opening ceremony of the Harare International Festival of the Arts (Zimbabwe), and Britten’s Les Illuminations with selections of Debussy and Patti Smith at Bay Chamber Concerts (Rockport, ME). He returned to live performance in 2021 by devising and staging Puccini and Verdi Play Ball with Tulsa Opera in their city’s baseball stadium. Blaszko’s collaborations with Cuban filmmaker Adolfo Mena Cejas include Tell The Story, a documentary for John Doyle’s Classic Stage Company about the seminal New York productions of Sondheim’s Assassins over the past 30 years, and Zeno, which was selected by the New Haven Documentary Film Festival in 2020. His next digital work, a commission from Catapult Opera with composer Tamar-kali and writer Carl Hancock Rux, will premiere in late 2022. Blaszko is currently Tour Producer of The Peculiar Patriot by Liza Jessie Peterson, which will be next presented at Detroit Public Theater in 2023. He is also Creative Director of @beccahbogue on Instagram, a multimedia project promoting the forthcoming memoir of disabled dancer Rebecca Bogue.

Sophie Schneider | Associate Costume Designer

Sophie Schneider is a Manhattan-based costume and production designer for film, theatre, and opera. Sophie’s most recent design credits include Stephen Cognetti’s 825 Forest Road and Cameron Beyl’s The Veil, both feature films currently in post-production. She was also a member of the costume team for the HBO series The Gilded Age. Schneider’s work as a costume designer, associate, and assistant designer has graced many regional and off-Broadway stages including Glimmerglass Festival, the Guthrie Theater, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MetLiveArts), and American Repertory Theatre. Schneider is also committed to sharing her professional experience with younger generations through work as a designer and mentor in educational settings ranging from middle school to graduate level. She has worked with students at Brunswick School, Hofstra University School of Drama & Dance, James Madison University, and The New School of Drama. Schneider earned her MFA in Costume Design from Carnegie Mellon University and her BA in Fine Art from Alfred University.

Christopher Gilmore | Associate Lighting Designer

Christopher Gilmore designs for theatre, opera, live performance, and dance. Recent designs include Luke Hickey’s A Little Old, A Little New (Chelsea Factory/ The Joyce and American Dance Festival), With Care (92Y), Ensemble Connect Up Close: Through Movement (Carnegie Hall), CAGE (American Modern Opera Company), Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (New York Film Academy). Assistant/Associate: Trevor: A New Musical (Stage42), Assembly (Armory), The
with Boston Lyric Opera, followed by performances in the organization’s “The Voices of 2015” program, Parks made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the 2009-2010 season as Fiorello in Il barbiere di Siviglia. He also reprised Jack Torrance in The Shining with Opera Colorado and brought his Marcello in La bohème to Detroit Opera. A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artists Development Program, Parks made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the 2009-2010 season as Fiorello in Il barbiere di Siviglia and has since appeared as Schaunard in La bohème and as Larkens in La fanciulla del West, which was broadcast in HD around the world.

CAST

Marshall Hughes | The Wanderer
Marshall Hughes is founder and director of Opera unMet, an urban opera company which has performed in major venues over the past decades, including the Hatch Shell, Symphony Hall, and First Night. Marshall conducted SANS, an International Choral Exchange Choir, for over fifteen years, conducting in the former Soviet Union, Russia, The Balkans and China. He has performed extensively in the United States and internationally, and has directed major theater productions at colleges, including Emerson College, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston Conservatory of Music, and Wheelock College. He has been on the faculties of several colleges teaching theater, music and dance, including MIT, Wheelock, Roxbury Community College, Boston and New England Conservatories, and Emmanuel College. He has numerous awards for his critically acclaimed work with Roxbury Repertory Theater, including the Kenneth A. MacDonald Award for Theater Excellence, (A Soldiers Play, Alice, Othello). He was most recently seen on stage at A.R.T., Arts Emerson, Sleeping Weazel, and with unMet in Arias on the Steps on the green at UUUM in Roxbury, MA.

Edward Parks | Marcello
Recipient of a 2019 GRAMMY award, baritone Edward Parks was awarded third prize in Placido Domingo’s 2015 Operalia Competition and was presented in the organization’s “The Voices of 2015” concert in Hungary. Parks begins the 2022-2023 season with performances of Marcello in La bohème with Boston Lyric Opera, followed by performances of the title role in a new production of Peter Knell and Stephanie Fleischmann’s Arkhipov. He also reprised Jack Torrance in The Shining with Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Opera Parallele. In the 2021-2022 season, Parks joined Andrea Bocelli on national tour, performing in dozens of venues including New York City’s Madison Square Garden. Also in 2022, he reprieved Jack Torrance in The Shining with Opera Colorado and brought his Marcello in La bohème to Detroit Opera. A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artists Development Program, Parks made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the 2009-2010 season as Fiorello in Il barbiere di Siviglia and has since appeared as Schaunard in La bohème and as Larkens in La fanciulla del West, which was broadcast in HD around the world.

Jesus Garcia | Rodolfo
Tenor Jesus Garcia specializes in romantic roles of the French and Italian repertoires. His best-known performances include a debut in the title role of Charles Gounod’s Faust at the Savonlinna Opera Festival, La bohème with Tampere Talo in Finland, and as Count Almaviva in Rosetta Cucchi’s Boston Lyric Opera production of Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Garcia has performed in W.A. Mozart’s Requiem throughout Italy with Filharmonia Arturo Toscanini, conducted by Rinaldo Alessandrini. This past season he sang the role of Lus in Champion at Boston Lyric Opera. His recordings include the world premiere of Jorge Martín’s Before Night Falls, the Original Broadway Cast recording of Baz Luhrmann’s La bohème, and Laurent Pelly’s production of La Vie Parisienne. As part of the principal ensemble of Luhrmann’s La bohème, in which he played Rodolfo, Garcia received a 2003 Tony Honor for Excellence in the Theater. He has been seen on NBC’s Today Show, A&E’s Breakfast with the Arts, and the Tony Awards broadcast, has been featured in The New York Times, Vogue, Vanity Fair, New York and Opera News.

William Guanbo Su | Colline
William Guanbo Su is a 2019 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Finals winner. In the 2022-2023 season, he will return to the Metropolitan Opera stage as the Speaker in The Magic Flute, Austin Opera for Basilio in Il barbiere di Siviglia, and Houston Grand Opera for the First Nazarene in Salome. Last season, he completed his final year as a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio in which he sings Zuniga in Carmen, First Officer in Dialogues des Carmélites, Second Armed Man in Die Zauberflöte, and Duke of Verona in Roméo et Juliette. Also in the 2021-2022 season, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Jailer in Tosca. This summer he was a member of the Académie de la Scala’s Young Artists Program.
Vocal Residence at the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence. Other recent performances include Angelotti and the Jailer in Tosca (Austin Opera); Basilio in Il barbiere di Siviglia, Sarastro in Die Zauberflöte, and Garibaldo in Rodelinde (Aspen Music Festival); and Count Ceprano in Rigoletto (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis). He has joined the Cecilia Chorus of New York singing Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and Handel’s Messiah.

Benjamin Taylor | Schaunard
Baritone Benjamin Taylor began the 2021-2022 season with debuts at The Metropolitan Opera in Fire Shut Up in My Bones (Chester), and Spoleto Festival USA in La bohème (Schaunard), Cincinnati Opera for the world premiere of Castor and Patience (West), North Carolina Opera for Sanctuary Road (William Still), and Baltimore Concert Opera for Adriana Lecouvreur (Michonnet), and a return to Pittsburgh Opera for The Magic Flute (Papageno). Additionally, he will workshop Factotum (Garby) at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Last season included his return to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for Opera on the Go – Digital followed by debuts with Fargo-Moorhead Opera for Il barbiere di Siviglia (Figaro), Opera Orlando for The Secret River (Augustus), and Des Moines Metro Opera for Pique Dame (Tomsky), Platée (Satyre), and Fellow Travelers (Tommy McIntyre).

Taylor is a graduate of the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program and was previously an Apprentice Artist at The Santa Fe Opera, and Gerdie Young Artist and Richard Gaddes Festival Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Taylor received his Master of Music from Boston University, his Performer’s Certificate with Boston University’s Opera Institute, and his Bachelor of Arts at Morgan State University.

Chelsea Basler | Musetta
Grammy Award-nominated soprano Chelsea Basler continues to make her mark in an extensive array of operatic roles due to her unique combination of vocal appeal and artistry. During the 2020-2021 season, Basler was scheduled to return to the Metropolitan Opera to cover Micaëla in Carmen; perform the role of Julia Lowell in Borzoni’s The Copper Queen with Arizona Opera; perform with Emmanuel Music as Angela in Weill’s Firebrand of Florence; and perform as the soprano soloist in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Cape Symphony. She was proud to be part of Boston Lyric Opera’s virtual performance of The Fall of the House of Usher, singing the role of Madeline. In the summer of 2021, she returned to the Newport Music Festival for a recital and in the fall of 2021, and returned to Boston Lyric Opera as Lola in Cavalleria rusticana and the Providence Singers for Brahms’ Requiem. During the 2022-2023 season, Basler will return to the Metropolitan Opera, covering Blanche in Dialogues des Carmelites.

Lauren Michelle | Mimi
Soprano Lauren Michelle is an internationally recognized opera singer, some of her notable roles include Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro, Musetta in La bohème, Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi. She has performed at Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, La Scala Theatre, Carnegie Hall and more. She sang in concert under the baton of Plácido Domingo at LA Opera and made her debut with Washington National Opera to critical acclaim alongside Eric Owens. She was a prize winner of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition and has been awarded first prize in both the Lotte Lenya Competition and the Marcello Giordani International Vocal Competition. She is a graduate of UCLA and The Juilliard School.

Junhan Choi | Alcindoro
A native of South Korea, baritone Junhan Choi has performed with companies such as Boston Lyric Opera, Teatro Nuovo, Odyssey Opera, Boston Opera Collaborative, MassOpera, and Naples Philharmonic. Recent performances include role of Adonis in Venus and Adonis (Blow) with Cambridge Chamber Ensemble; baritone soloist for Durufle’s Requiem with Naples Philharmonic; BWV 140 and Hyden’s Lord Nelson Mass with Commonwealth Chorale, and Bach’s Mass in B minor with Upper Valley Baroque. Past operatic credits include title roles in Don Giovanni (Mozart) and Gianni Schicchi (Puccini); Count Almaviva in Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart); Dandini in La Cenerentola (Rossini); Marcello in La bohème (Puccini), Escamillo in Carmen (Bizet), Germont in La traviata (Verdi), Belcore in L’elisir d’amore (Donizetti); Papageno in Die Zauberflöte (Mozart), Guglielmo in Così fan tutte (Mozart), and Gregorio in Romeo and Juliet. Upcoming engagements include baritone soloist in Fractured Mosaics with White Snake Projects and Dad/Doctor in Her Alive[un]dead (Emily Koh) with Guerilla Opera. Choi holds a Master’s degree and a Graduate Diploma with Presidential Scholarship from New England Conservatory of Music.
Thank you to the over 6700 people who joined us for *Romeo & Juliet* this August. We had two beautiful evenings of free opera under the stars on the Common!

Clockwise from top left: Mercutio (Nicholas LaGesse, left) crosses swords with Tybalt (Omar Najmi), Vanessa Becerra (left) and Ricardo Garcia as the title characters, Stephano (Mack Wolz, right) taunts Gregorio (David McFerrin), and Vanessa Becerra as Juliet in the masked ball scene in BLO’s production of *Romeo & Juliet*. 
ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

PRODUCTION STAFF
Michael Janney Stage Manager
Alexandra Hartman Assistant Director
Carmen Alfaro Assistant Stage Manager
Kate Johnson Assistant Stage Manager
Una Rafferty Production Assistant
Duncan Kennedy Properties Master
Shane Cassidy Assistant Lighting Designer
Liz Perlman Costume Director
Gail Astrid Buckley Costume Supervisor
Brie Hall Wig and Makeup Artist Lead
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Sandro Veronesi’s line from his book *Il colibrì* (*The Hummingbird*) accompanies a story that hops back and forth in time, narrating a tender romance that ends in heartbreak. Veronesi’s goal is to “dismantle the tyranny of chronology” and to place more emphasis on how things happen, rather than what happens. Along the way, the reader is confronted with the unruly and indirect nature of memory, and she may come to understand what the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard summarized so perfectly: “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.”

Veronesi’s recent novel is a fitting point of departure for this production of *La bohème*, which begins at the end and works in reverse order, back to the first moment Mimì and Rodolfo met. The kind of narrative experiment undertaken in Veronesi’s novel seems hard to imagine in an art form like opera, where the “tyranny of chronology” seems fixed in the rigid architecture of the music. Most operas would not sustain this kind of approach, with arrow-like stories that move in only one direction.

But *Bohème* tells its story in a highly conventional manner: Puccini described the work as a piece in *quattro quadri*, or “four pictures.” Henri Murger’s original work, *Scenes from the Bohemian Life*, was published in serial form from 1845 to 1848, resulting in an episodic, impressionistic snapshot of a revolutionary underbelly of society. Atmosphere and color are more important than the narrative arcs we find in great novels of the time, and the resulting work resembles the nascent art of photography more than classic literature. If Murger’s writing was photographic, Puccini’s opera—written as the “moving image” was born—is powerfully cinematic. Simultaneous action, interspersed scenes, overlapping events—all of this creates a new and very modern sense of time that is barely contained by the musical meter.

There are few, if any, moments in opera that capture falling in love—with its anarchic rush of impressions and the psychedelic dissolution of time—as effectively as Act II. *Bohème* may be the most popular opera in the repertoire, but its radical qualities are paradoxically undervalued. (Is the opera too popular to claim it for the avant-garde?)

One of the remarkable discoveries we’ve made in preparing this production is how lightning-fast the entire opera plays out. Performed without intermission and with one discrete cut in the first act, *Bohème* clocks in at just over 90 minutes. This comes as a shock to most opera patrons, who think of *Bohème* as nearly three-hour affairs. Cumbersome scene changes—taking the notion of “four pictures” literally—usually necessitate at least one, if not two, intermissions. The pressure to “over-do” *Bohème* also creates uneasy contradictions: the starving artists describe their garret as “squalid”, “drafty,” and “cramped,” but most productions have them living in what looks like the most enviable penthouse in Paris. I wanted to create a production that emphasized the swiftness of the music and the brevity of these lives; all the myriad details that make up a typical *Bohème*—the stereotypes and clichés, as well as the pictorial expectations—have been sifted away in search of the work’s true gold. We are after the essence of this work, which I think of as the perfectly preserved energy of being young, full of hope, and in love with life.

There are big questions invoked when we perform a classic like *La bohème* in a non-traditional way, such as: how and why do we perform masterpieces in the here and now? What is to be gained by disrupting conventional listening? Is it possible to treat operatic masterpieces with the same interpretive flexibility that, say, Shakespeare plays demand? While those provocations offer a background to the work we’ve done with this opera, they are also, fittingly, not our endgame, but our point of departure. Likewise, I hope it offers you a point of departure to listen and experience the opera as if it is a world premiere.

More importantly, I hope it invites you to explore a personal meditation on life and love. To return to Veronesi: how do you tell your great love story? Do you start from the beginning, or do you chart a meandering path? Disaster, death, and loss will inevitably befall even the happiest lives and loves—but is that really the end of the story?

By Yuval Sharon
Since its premiere at the Teatro Regio in Turin in 1896 under the baton of the young Arturo Toscanini, Giacomo Puccini’s La bohème has become one of the world’s most frequently performed operas. It is the first of Puccini’s most celebrated works, which also include Tosca (1900), Madama Butterfly (1904), and Turandot (1924), and along with these helped secure his position as the leading Italian opera composer of the era and as Giuseppe Verdi’s presumed successor. In staging canonic operas like La bohème, a major challenge facing opera directors today is how to make these operas fresh, engaging, and relevant. One approach is that of Regietheater or director’s theater, in which an opera’s setting is updated by adding, removing, or altering non-musical elements—for example, situating La bohème in 21st-century rather than 19th-century Paris and transforming Rodolfo and Mimì from a painter and seamstress to graffiti and tattoo artists. Reactions to such approaches are typically mixed: some laud them as visionary ways to reframe familiar works for contemporary audiences, while others criticize them as “Eurotrash,” mere window dressings that privilege a director’s vision over the composer’s. However, Yuval Sharon has taken a different approach, one that will force us to hear and experience this canonic opera anew while lovingly retaining the traditional setting of Puccini’s beloved work. Rather than changing the setting, this new production changes how we progress through what is otherwise a traditional staging: La bohème’s familiar narrative is presented in reverse order, beginning with Act IV and moving through Acts III and II before concluding with Act I.

By rearranging La bohème’s constituent parts, Sharon’s production offers the opportunity to reframe our experience of La bohème without any details being added, removed, updated, or altered (aside from the order of the acts). In a sense, this comparatively minimal directorial intervention is in line with the opera’s verismo—or “realist”—spirit. At the turn of the 20th century, Puccini was among a group of young Italian opera composers whose aesthetic outlook was shaped by this artistic movement. Influenced by French literary circles, verismo composers considered the real world worth representing, and in their operas they strove to provide an artistic interpretation of things that someone might actually experience. Puccini worked with librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica—with whom he would also later collaborate on Tosca and Madama Butterfly—to create an opera that authentically represented the world it inhabited—including a relatively realistic portrayal of Mimì’s illness and the deleterious effects of the main characters’ poverty. Sharon thus retains the opera’s original 1830s Parisian setting, realistically recreating the locales, props, and costumes stylized after what one might have actually encountered at that time.

Beyond its verismo elements, La bohème lends itself particularly well to this reverse ordering for a variety of reasons. First, the source material on which the opera is based—Henri Murger’s 1851 Scènes de la vie de bohème—is less a traditional novel and more a collection of short stories romanticizing the bohemian life. This episodic construction carries over into Puccini’s opera, which has clear breaks between each act—Act I is set in the Parisian garret on Christmas Eve; Act II, though taking place that same evening, creates a decisive break from the tender love duet at the end of the previous act by opening amidst the chaos of the crowded Quartier Latin; Act III opens several months later outside a tavern on the edge of the city; and Act IV returns to the Parisian garret a few months after that. Puccini even used the term quadri (pictures) rather than atti (acts) to imply a different, less continuous relationship between them. Within each act, we experience particular, discrete moments of everyday life, reflecting the carpe diem attitude of the bohemians themselves.

The reverse-order concept also highlights Puccini’s compositional innovations, especially the musical and dramatic similarities between La bohème’s opening and closing acts. Set in the same Parisian garret, both
begin in medias res, without prologue or prior scene setting, with Marcello and Rodolfo engaged in their respective artistic endeavors. Both acts opening to the same heavily accented, dotted-rhythm figure, establishing what musicologists Arthur Groos and Roger Parker have called an atmosphere of restless energy. (It is worth noting that this opening theme was drawn from one of Puccini’s student compositions and perhaps served as a reminiscence of his own youthful artistic struggles.) In both acts, Schaunard and Colline’s later arrivals are marked in each act by identical musical themes, although the boisterous presentation in Act I and becomes more appropriately somber in Act IV. Finally, Mimì’s arias—her Act I “Sì, Mi chiamano Mimì” and Act IV “Sono andati?”—serve almost as two sides of the same coin, the latter complete with an extended musical and verbal reprise of the first, culminating in the opening of Rodolfo’s Act I “Che gelida manina,” sung in Act IV by Mimì until a sudden spasm cuts her short.

In a way, despite the novelty of the reverse-order production, today’s audiences have already experienced La bohème as disconnected from its own internal chronology. By listening to excerpted highlights such as the opera’s famous arias and duets (for example, Rodolfo and Mimì’s aforementioned arias, their duet “O soave fanciulla” from the end of Act I, or Musetta’s “Quando me’ n vo’” from Act II), we engage with specific dramatic moments, knowing their connection to the broader narrative but without the need to walk through the opera’s full narrative from start to finish. In fact, La bohème itself came to life at almost the precise moment when opera was first being mechanically reproduced via sound recording and cinema. Films were first projected in Italy in March 1896, roughly one month after La bohème’s premiere, with operas being adapted to the screen soon thereafter. The ensuing years marked the emergence of commercial classical recordings, which became vehicles for popularizing operatic excerpts in particular. When these technologies were new, they were often understood as enabling us to see and hear those no longer with us. Think of this technological ability to recall lost moments or voices as you watch this production. By experiencing the last moments of Mimi’s life before moving back in time to watch the lovers’ immortal meeting and courtship, it is as if we are experiencing past moments quite literally brought back to life after the heroine’s death—much as La bohème’s first audiences would have experienced with the fascinating new technologies of sound recording and film.

In depicting the unconventional lives of nineteenth-century Parisian artists, La bohème in another way is perfectly suited to an unconventional, artistic, and—in a word—bohemian approach of rearranging the order of the acts. In the true spirit of bohemianism, this production focuses on the essence of the artistic and communal experience, without the expectation of replicating established norms. Yet at the same time, by progressing through the acts in reverse order, we nevertheless still experience the timelessness of Puccini’s opera, simply in a way that allows us to see and hear the beloved verismo opera and its characters from a new perspective.

Christy Thomas Adams is an Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of Alabama School of Music. Her scholarship focuses on the intersection between Italian opera and emerging media technologies at the turn of the twentieth century, centered particularly on Casa Ricordi and the operas of Verdi and Puccini.
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Do you know a child who loves to sing? VOICES Boston is a nationally acclaimed youth performing arts program with multiple ensembles, classes, and workshops in the Greater Boston Area!

For info on registration, auditions, and more scan the QR code!

Join us for our 2022/23 Season!

15% off your meal with a same-day opera ticket
272 Boylston Street, off the Public Gardens | www.bistrodamidi.com

A five minute walk from the theatre

Treat yourself to Boston’s best Bistro
15% off your meal with a same-day opera ticket

WE’LL SAVE YOU A SEAT AFTER THE SHOW
Get 15% off your meal with a same-day show ticket
406 Stuart Street, Boston, MA 02116 | www.thebanksboston.com

Join us for seafare and seafaring spirits in the heart of Boston
This production of La bohème is supported by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The 2022/23 season is supported in part by the Cabot Family Charitable Trust, the Amphion Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation, Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation, the Reopen Creative Boston Fund, administered by the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture, and Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.
PERFORMANCE AND VENUE INFORMATION

All performances begin on time. To respect the enjoyment of others, BLO observes a no late seating policy. While we understand that traffic conditions, public transportation, weather, and other factors can have unexpected effects on your arrival, we wish to minimize disruptions for our seated patrons and for our artists on stage. Additionally, if you must leave during the performance, reentry may be prohibited.

As a courtesy to the artists and for the comfort of those around you, please turn off mobile phones, watch alarms, and other devices with audible signals prior to the start of the performance. The use of cameras or recording devices in the theater is strictly prohibited.

For BLO productions, subscriptions & tickets, visit BLO.org or call BLO Audience Services at 617.542.6772, M - F | 10 - 5.

EMERSON COLONIAL THEATRE

VENUE INFORMATION
Emerson Colonial Theatre
106 Boylston St, Boston, MA 02116
888.616.0272 | emersoncolonialtheatre.com

ACCESSIBILITY
• Wheelchair access is available at the main entrance to the building at 106 Boylston Street.
• Please request wheelchair seating from a sales representative at time of purchase. Designated ADA seating locations are located on the Orchestra level of the theatre.
• An ADA accessible restroom is also located on the Orchestra level.
• There is no elevator access in the building.

COVID-19 POLICY
Patrons are encouraged, but not required, to wear face masks inside the venue. Face masks will be available for patrons that arrive at the venue without one but would like to wear one.