

# BOSTON ONLY RICO **PERA**

## BLENDING BARTÓK'S "BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE" WITH ALMA MAHLER'S "FOUR SONGS" AT A SOUTH BOSTON CRUISE TERMINAL

*Anne Bogart directs Bartók's one-act opera with Alma Mahler's romantic songs.  
BLO Music Director David Angus conducts.*

*Ryan McKinny and Naomi Louisa O'Connell star as Bluebeard and Judith.*

*Performances March 22-26 with an intimate audience experience installed  
inside the Flynn Cruiseport Boston.*

BOSTON – February 14, 2023 – A brand-new production that blends **Bela Bartók's** 1918 one-act opera [\*Bluebeard's Castle\*](#) with 1915's **Four Songs (Vier Lieder)** by his contemporary **Alma Maria Schindler-Mahler** – and immerses audiences in a multi-room installation including a pre-show musical salon – arrives at the Flynn Cruiseport Boston for four performances March 22-26. The experience is led by legendary stage director **Anne Bogart**, who wowed audiences in 2019 with BLO's production of Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*.

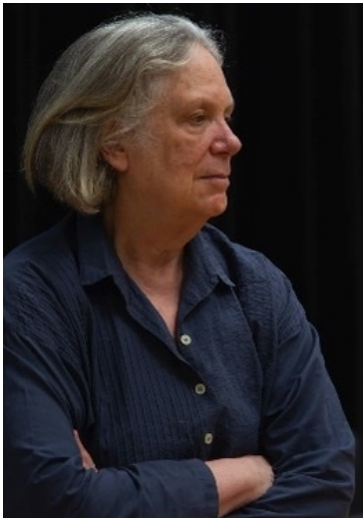


The production of *Bluebeard's Castle/Four Songs* stars American bass-baritone [Ryan McKinny](#) (far l.) as Bluebeard and Irish mezzo-soprano [Naomi Louisa-O'Connell](#) (l.) as Judith.

*Bluebeard's Castle* (**Béla Balázs**, librettist) tells a twisted folktale of the fictional Duke Bluebeard who brings his hastily wed wife Judith to visit his foreboding fortress of a home for the first time. In exploring the castle and her

new relationship, Judith begins to realize she faces the same desperate fate that befell Bluebeard's previous wives. Much has been made of whether Bartók, Balázs and the source material intended the castle's rooms of atrocities as literal or figurative. Either way, the opera explores the depths of an intense emotional and psychological relationship.

*Four Songs* is one of three song cycles Mahler wrote before her marriage to Gustav Mahler. The songs, "Licht in der Nacht," "Waldseligkeit," "Ansturm" and "Erntelied" ponder love both turbulent and passionate, and the healing beauty of nature. Mahler's composing career was quashed in deference to her husband's wishes; only 17 of her more than four dozen compositions survive.



“When I began thinking about how to approach *Bluebeard*,” Bogart says, “I realized Bartók’s music is extraordinary – dark and labyrinthine – some of the most dynamic, powerful music you will hear. But it clearly needed a companion piece – written by a woman. We are dealing with the stark differences between the male and female experiences inherent in Bartók’s work.”

Bogart says blending the two distinctly different works counterbalances Bartók’s “excitingly dynamic, powerful and very male” music with Mahler’s lighter, more humanistic songs. Bringing female-composed music into the production adds depth to the character of Judith, Bogart says, “giving her an agency not otherwise shown in the story.”

**BLO Music Director David Angus**, who conducts the performances, found a recently revised orchestration for Bartók’s opera created in 2020 by German conductor Eberhard Kloke; it makes its New England premiere with this production. Angus says this chamber orchestration retains the music’s power and allows for a more intimate experience into the psychological world that Bogart is creating. The settings for Mahler’s songs are re-orchestrated by contemporary arranger Julian Reynolds for a chamber orchestra; Angus describes them as “delicate and beautiful” and says “they deserve to have a much wider audience.”

## THE EXPERIENCE

The production itself takes the audience on a journey, starting at the street level from which huge escalators transport them up into the massive Cruiseport building. Once inside, audiences enter a curtained corridor leading to a cabaret/salon reminiscent of those Alma Mahler might have hosted as a leading New York City socialite. A pianist (Yukiko Oba) plays music by women composers including Amy Beach, Margaret Bonds, Lili Boulanger, Florence Price and Clara Schumann (a [Spotify playlist is here](#)). Audiences then move to a performance space where O’Connell as Judith opens the performance singing two of Mahler’s lieder.

“*Bluebeard’s Castle/Four Songs* illustrates a production and programming philosophy that has, for more than a dozen years, shaped the identity of Boston Lyric Opera,” says **Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO Bradley Vernatter**. “These site-specific installations – *Pagliacci* in a North End ice rink, or Anne Bogart’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* at the Harvard basketball stadium – have yielded some of BLO’s most rewarding artistic triumphs,” Vernatter says. “I’m so happy this production allows us to work again with the brilliant Anne Bogart, who knows well how to create a beautiful production and a memorable experience for audiences.”

The artistic team for *Bluebeard’s Castle/Four Songs* includes set designer **Sara Brown** (most recently for BLO, designed *Fellow Travelers*, 2019), costume designer **Trevor Bowen** (*Champion*, 2022), lighting designer **Brian H. Scott**, Boston-based movement director **Victoria L. Awkward** (*Romeo & Juliet*, 2022) and intimacy director **Angie Jepson**. For more information on the artistic team, click [here](#).

## **TICKETS**

Tickets to *Bluebeard's Castle/Four Songs* start at \$25 and are available through BLO Audience Services online at [blo.org](http://blo.org), by phone at 617.542.6772, or via email at [boxoffice@blo.org](mailto:boxoffice@blo.org).

## **ABOUT BOSTON LYRIC OPERA**

Now in its 46th Season, Boston Lyric Opera's programming remains faithful to tradition while blazing new ground, building audiences, and creating new ways to enhance the opera-going experience. Since its founding in 1976, Boston Lyric Opera continues to celebrate the art of the voice through innovative productions and public programming. BLO has produced world and U.S. premieres, commissions, and co-productions of note, ranging from live stage productions to films streamed worldwide on its platform, [operabox.tv](http://operabox.tv).

BLO has partnered with organizations such as San Francisco Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Detroit Opera and others, and continues to be a destination for leading artists, conductors, directors and designers from around the world. Alongside its main stage programming, BLO artists in our Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artists initiative work to hone their craft and prepare for the next step in their careers while BLO's wide-reaching community programming and education initiatives introduce opera to new audiences across generations.

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## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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