

**BOSTON
LYRIC
OPERA**

by Béla Bartók
Libretto by Béla Balázs

Bluebeard's Castle

Four Songs

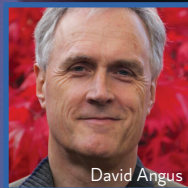
by Alma Mahler

MAR 22 - 26 | The Terminal @ Flynn Cruiseport Boston

BRADLEY VERNATTER
*Stanford Calderwood
General Director & CEO*

DAVID ANGUS
Music Director

JOHN CONKLIN
VIMBAYI KAZIBONI
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Artistic Advisors



▲ SCAN TO WATCH OUR PRE-SHOW LECTURE

Listen to Boston University professor **Allison Voth** speak about the history and music of *Bluebeard's Castle* | *Four Songs* in this half-hour lecture.

▶ STAY FOR THE TALKBACK

Dive deeper into the musical experience with BLO Music Director and Conductor **David Angus**, who will be hosting a half-hour discussion immediately following each performance.

PROGRAM CONTENTS

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WELCOME



Boston Lyric Opera has spent over a dozen years shaping its artistic identity through bold and adventurous productions that inspire new thinking and expand the boundaries of what opera is. From *The Lighthouse* at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum to a circus tent for *Pagliacci* in a North End ice rink, to the Harvard basketball stadium inspired by the source material for Anne Bogart's production of *The Handmaid's Tale*, each production showcases the company's artistic ambition. *Bluebeard's Castle* | *Four Songs* is no exception to this tradition.

The level of talent and artistry on display here at the Flynn Cruiseport demonstrates the creative heart of BLO. This immensely skilled group of artists, musicians, directors, production crew, and staff have yet again transformed a space into a one-of-a-kind experience that will only exist for this suspended moment in time. It's a privilege to work alongside the amazing people who make it happen.

Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* is a psychological opera about two people experiencing the tension that comes with profound intimacy. The character of Judith, who in our version is inspired by the gregarious, contentious, and complicated Alma Mahler, expands her story through Mahler's own music. Anne Bogart's juxtaposition of their intersection invites us to wrestle with ourselves alongside Bluebeard and Judith.

The transformation of an empty space into an extraordinary experience reminds me how opera, too, has the power to change us. Through the emotionally resonant music and storytelling, we are transported to another world, leaving us with new perspectives and understanding of ourselves and the world around us. As Judith tells us:

*The music starts.
Watch carefully.
Listen to it.
Wonder at it.
The flame burns.
The castle is old.
Let the story unfold.
Observe.
And take care.*

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Bradley Vernatter | *Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO*



UPCOMING BLO EVENTS

April 15

OPERA STORIES:
Hansel & Gretel at the
Boston Public Library

April 26

SCHOLAR
ROUNDTABLE at
Islamic Society of
Boston Cultural Center

May 4-7

OMAR at the Emerson
Cutler Majestic Theatre

May 25

OPERA NIGHT at the
Boston Public Library

**For additional details
and event times, visit
blo.org/events**

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Boston Lyric Opera's new mission, vision, and values were created with extensive participation by the leadership team and staff of the Company and represent the first time the organization has adopted a clear set of shared values to guide the work of our team.

Mission

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

Vision

To create operatic moments that enrich everyday life.

Values

BOLDNESS | We tell evocative stories through music and drama on a large scale and in unexpected settings. We celebrate the rich history of opera and promote adventurousness, which advances the art form, accesses our imaginations, and inspires new thinking.

CONNECTION | We nurture a vital ecosystem of relationships and exchanges that elevate the human experience and impact people. These connections are the force that strengthens us and our communities.

COLLABORATION | Opera is deeply interconnected storytelling, music, and design on an ambitious level that requires many people's artistry, technical skill, passion, participation, and support. We nurture creative people and partnerships that are diverse in thinking and experiences, and we provide structure and support for everyone to thrive.

LEARNING | We seek opportunities to learn new ideas and expand our minds, which drives progress. We create time and space to listen, engage, and grow together.

BELONGING | We are committed to storytelling that reflects a wide variety of perspectives and identities and invites everyone to participate. We create welcoming and accessible spaces that celebrate the uniqueness of our communities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & ACCESSIBILITY

To fulfill our mission, we must engage people of all backgrounds — meaningfully and respectfully — throughout our organization. For Boston Lyric Opera, advancing the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is a moral priority and a necessity for our success. As adopted by the Board in the 2021/22 Season, we commit to becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization and fostering healthy, vital communities. To that end, this work underscores all that we do and is embedded in our strategic priorities.

We recognize that this work will take time, intentional actions, and accountability from our Board, employees, artists, patrons, and community. We commit to embracing individuals of all backgrounds and identities.

Opera has the power to speak the truth, broaden perspectives, and invite empathy. We acknowledge that the history of operas and those engaged in opera has not always been diverse or inclusive. We believe that we can address the necessary changes for opera to evolve and thrive.

DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION ACCESSIBILITY

OUR DEIA 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 to, learn from, and seek diversity among the voices that join us in our work.



For more information, scan
the QR code or visit us at:
BLO.org/deia

Top left: Zaray Rodriguez and Bradley Vernatter, BLO Street Stage Performance on The Greenway, 2021; Above Summit

OPERA
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NOTEWORTHY PROJECT (FINALIST)



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ANNE BOGART

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



On behalf of the Directors and Advisors of Boston Lyric Opera, welcome to the Company's production of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, accompanied by *Four Songs* by Alma Mahler. As we begin tonight's voyage together, it is fitting we do so here in the Terminal at the Flynn Cruiseport, overlooking Boston Harbor, a site from which so many have embarked on voyages of a more traditional type.

These are the moments when art, music and drama combine with the human voice to create the immersive experience that is opera. How good it is to be back in person this season...to have presented *Romeo & Juliet* to so many on the Boston Common, and to have shared the timeless story of Puccini's *La Bohème*. We welcome back Anne Bogart, last with us for BLO's acclaimed production of *The Handmaid's Tale*, as she brings her directorial creativity to this psychological thriller under the baton of BLO's music director, David Angus.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to serve on BLO's Board. For me, board service at BLO enriches my life. It allows me to enjoy the beautiful music and singing that has attracted so many to opera over the years. It introduces me to new voices, new stories, new audiences, and new friends.

Being part of the BLO family today gives me confidence that the essence of opera, its powerful, thought-provoking stories, propelled by music, movement, drama, and the unparalleled beauty of the human voice, is an ideal medium of the present and the future, one we are mission-driven to bring to the wide and wonderful community that is today's Boston and beyond. On behalf of the Board, I thank you for your presence, for supporting this Company and this art form, and I invite you to develop a deeper engagement with Boston Lyric Opera.

Allow me to end with a quote from the British artist and poet Heather Phillipson. Of the drawings of her grandfather Charles Phillipson, created for Charles's son Michael, Ms. Phillipson said they allow her to see that "art was something breathing...that they landed with dynamism and tenderness...and with permission to make the world come alive...which is perhaps the most important thing art can do." May our work at BLO make the world come alive for each of us.

Michael J. Puzo | Chair, Board of Directors

BOARD

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° Deceased
As of March 15, 2023

Bluebeard's Castle | Four Songs

Bluebeard's Castle

By Béla Bartók

Libretto by Béla Balázs

Arranged by Eberhard Klohe

Four Songs

By Alma Mahler

Arranged by Julian Reynolds

Text by Otto Julius Bierbaum,

Richard Dehmel, and Gustav Falke

Translations of songs by Naomi O'Connell

*Sung in English and German
with English surtitles*

MUSIC DIRECTOR

DAVID ANGUS

2022/23 Season Sponsor

Linda Cabot Black

PERFORMANCES

WED, MAR 22, 2023 | 7:30PM

FRI, MAR 24, 2023 | 7:30PM

SAT, MAR 25, 2023 | 7:30PM

SUN, MAR 26, 2023 | 3PM

Performance time is approximately
90 minutes with no intermission.

THE TERMINAL @ FLYNN CRUISEPORT BOSTON

1 Black Falcon Ave
Boston, MA 02210

*Boston Lyric Opera Debut

†Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin
Emerging Artist

‡Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin
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Conductor

DAVID ANGUS

2022/23 Season Sponsor

Linda Cabot Black

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Set Designer

SARA BROWN

Costume Designer

TREVOR BOWEN

Lighting Designer

BRIAN H. SCOTT

Wig & Makeup Designer

PRISCILLA BRUCE*

Movement Director

VICTORIA L. AWKWARD

Intimacy Director

ANGIE JEPSON*

Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra

ANNIE RABBAT *Orchestra Leader*

Associate Conductor

BRETT HODGDON†

Rehearsal Coach/Accompanist

BRENDON SHAPIRO‡

Stage Manager

CARMEN CATHERINE ALFARO

CAST

Judith

NAOMI LOUISA O'CONNELL*

Bluebeard

RYAN MCKINNY*

Wives

VICTORIA L. AWKWARD

OLIVIA MOON

MARISSA MOLINAR

SASHA PETERSON

ALIZA FRANZ*

CASSIE WANG*

Solo Pianist

YUKIKO OBA

CONTENT WARNING

Bluebeard's Castle | *Four Songs* is a psychological thriller and may not be suitable for all audiences.

Throughout the show, there are depictions of weaponry, armor and restraints, and blood. There are both implied and overt instances of violence, including implied violence against women and the depiction of a murder.

While not explicit, there are implied moments of intimacy between Judith and Bluebeard.

SYNOPSIS by Allison Chu

The following synopsis represents a brief literary summary of the original libretto for Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and its framing by Alma Mahler's *Four Songs*. BLO's production presents a new abstract reimagining of this story.

From the darkness of the woods, Judith emerges, singing of beauty and light. She meets Bluebeard, who has summoned her to his castle. She has come to live with him, leaving her family and home behind. Judith marvels at the castle's darkness and gloom. Despite her fear, she proclaims her love for Bluebeard, hoping that her declaration will encourage him to allow light into his lair. As Bluebeard leads her deeper into the castle, she demands that the doors to seven rooms be opened to let in the sunshine. Bluebeard refuses, requesting that Judith love him without question. However, Judith is persistent, and eventually he relents.

At the first door, Judith discovers shackles, daggers, and weapons — instruments of a torture chamber. She notices that the walls are blood-stained but is not deterred from her desire to open all the doors. Bluebeard asks her if she is frightened, and she responds by requesting the keys to the other doors. The second reveals the armory, with piles of cruel

arms and armor. As Judith opens the third door, she is delighted by the sight of gold and riches; it is the treasure chamber. The fourth door leads Judith to the garden, which is filled with flowers. However, her joy is interrupted as she realizes that the treasure and the flowers are stained with blood. The fifth door allows Bluebeard to show his kingdom to Judith. Bluebeard asks Judith to embrace him, but she makes no move; there are two more doors still to open.

The sixth door opens to a lake of tears, and Judith begins to understand Bluebeard's secret. She stands before Bluebeard, asking about his past loves, but he merely repeats his request for her to love him without question. At the final door, Judith reveals his secret: the door hides Bluebeard's former wives, now made immortal. There are three wives, one each for dawn, noon, and dusk; it is their blood that stained the castle and their tears that filled the lake. Judith is meant to be the wife of the night, and Bluebeard begins adorning her with jewelry. Horrified, she begs Bluebeard to stop, but she surrenders under the weight and takes her place among the other wives. In spite of her ordeal at Bluebeard's castle, Judith goes on to sing again, retaining her sense of self and her romantic worldview.

Allison Chu is a PhD candidate in music history at Yale University. Her research focuses on the intersection of identity and opera in the twenty-first century.



ANNE BOGART IMMERSES AUDIENCES IN THE CONTRAST OF FEMALE & MALE

By R. Scott Reedy

Not long after theater and opera director Anne Bogart was approached by Boston Lyric Opera about staging Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, she came to a realization about the Hungarian composer's 1911 expressionist opera that helped shape her approach to it. "I had not given it much thought, but I was excited to do it because I love Bartók. His music is so dynamic and powerful, and this is his only opera. And it's so dark and labyrinthine," explained Bogart by Zoom recently from London. "But as I looked into it, it occurred to me that it is also the most male-centered opera ever written."

Looking to leaven what she calls Bartók's "extremely male" approach to the story of *Bluebeard's Castle* — based on the 17th-century French folktale *La Barbe bleue* by Charles Perrault — Bogart offered a suggestion. "The opera is only around an hour long, so it's usually done with a companion piece," says the director. "I said to the folks at BLO that I felt the other composer should be a woman, so that there is a balance between male and female." According to Bogart, BLO Music Director David Angus came up with the "ingenious idea" of Alma Mahler being the other composer. "Mahler, a contemporary of Bartók's, was extremely talented as a composer and in many other ways. She was married to famous men — Gustav Mahler, Walter Gropius, and Franz Werfel — and had affairs with others, including Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, and Oskar Kokoschka. She sublimated her own talent to these men, and it seemed to me that there's something in that relationship between Alma Mahler and the Judith character."

"In the original tale, there are six wives of Bluebeard, and in the opera there are only three. But I thought, what if we go back to six? So, as the audience is coming in, they enter a kind of Viennese café with a pianist playing works by other female composers, and while the crowd is mingling, six women dressed in beautiful Viennese gowns process through to the main performance space, with the audience following them." Set in the early 20th century, the BLO production will feature Mahler's 1915 *Four Songs* sung in German, while *Bluebeard's Castle* will be performed in English. "The woman who plays Judith then goes to a piano and sings the first three Mahler songs," says Bogart. "At the end of the third number, she speaks to the audience directly, welcoming them and inviting them into the story as the opera's overture begins. Suddenly, the bass-baritone voice of Bluebeard rings out, inviting her into his castle. She hesitates, but then goes into the castle. We will see that Judith clearly really loves [Duke] Bluebeard, but she may also be heading to a kind of doom — like Alma, whose brilliance was extinguished by her relationships with famous men."

Bogart's own particular brand of brilliance first gained notice four decades ago, when she began blazing new trails in theater — in one instance quite literally. While teaching at New York University, she set *South Pacific* in a mental institution for veterans where the patients perform the musical as therapy — a production that remains a vivid memory for the director. "During one performance, there was a fire under the stage. We called the fire department and five or six fire trucks responded. I went to the lobby and all these firemen were coming



David Angus conducting and Jennifer Johnson Cano as Offred in BLO's production of *The Handmaid's Tale*, 2019.

LIZA VOIL

in with their hoses," says Bogart. Not sure that the axiom "the show must go on" applied in the case of fire, Bogart sought out the fire captain.

"I kept running after him, saying, 'We're doing *South Pacific*, should we stop? Should we get the audience out?' He finally said, 'You don't need to stop the performance.'" And so, in the middle of 'Bali Ha'i' in act one, six or seven firemen walked onto the stage with their hoses and wandered around looking at the space. Thankfully, the fire below was extinguished. And at intermission, an audience member came up to me and said, 'That was genius. How did you do that?'" recalls Bogart with bemusement. "The production had heft, so they went with it, although I still can't believe people thought it was part of the show."

Audiences have long marveled at Bogart's groundbreaking artistry. In 1992, she co-founded and became co-artistic director of the New York-based Saratoga International Theater Institute (SITI), where she directed some 30 works at venues worldwide. An ensemble group, SITI took innovative approaches to original creations and the re-imagining of classics, often by ancient Greek playwrights. Late last year, SITI ended its producing activities. With her three-decade tenure at SITI at a close, Bogart — a recipient of honorary doctorates from the Cornish School of the Arts, Bard College, and Skidmore College, as well as a Duke Artist Fellowship, a United States Artists Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller/Bellagio Fellowship, and a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency Fellowship — says the company will always be a significant

part of her legacy. "I'm most proud of our ensemble. For 30 years, people wouldn't leave SITI. They just felt great ownership of it. And I'm talking about the actors, the designers, and the administrators," says Bogart. "They were incredibly loyal. I think the way we were able to work collaboratively with each other and to work out issues together was something that I hope is a model for other companies — a way to be together based in respect."

A professor at Columbia University and head of the school's MFA directing program, where her students have included Diane Paulus, Rachel Chavkin, and Darko Tresnjak, Bogart has staged numerous operas, including Handel's *Alcina*, Dvořák's *Dimitrij*, Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*, Verdi's *Macbeth*, Bellini's *Norma*, and Bizet's *Carmen*. Born in Newport, RI, Bogart now divides her time between homes in New York and London with her wife, Rena Fogel. "We lived together for 12 years in New York City, and one day Rena just literally woke up and said 'I miss London. That's where I grew up.' And also my stepdaughter, Rena's daughter, lives in London," explains Bogart. "Rena wanted to be near her, so I said, 'We'll just go back and forth.'"

For Bogart — the author of five books, including *The Art of Resonance*, released by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2021 — that travel schedule has often included stops in Boston where, in spring 2019, she directed BLO's production of the highly acclaimed East Coast premiere of *The Handmaid's Tale*, an opera by composer Poul Ruders and librettist Paul Bentley, based on Margaret Atwood's best-selling



Stage director Anne Bogart, left, with mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano (Offred), author Margaret Atwood, and movement director Shura Baryshnikov during a curtain call for BLO's *The Handmaid's Tale*, 2019.

novel. For her current BLO engagement, Bogart collaborated with set designer Sara Brown, who created a set and pre-show performance spaces that work in conjunction with the director's vision, exploring how spaces can be gendered — a "feminine" salon that's light and bright juxtaposed with a "masculine" VIP room that feels like a traditional gentleman's club. Well acquainted with immersive theater, Bogart praises BLO for being "very adventurous" in selecting locations for its installation operas. These have included the Steriti Memorial Ice Rink, Cyclorama, and the JFK Presidential Library in Boston, and Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline. "What BLO took on when they chose to stage *The Handmaid's Tale* in a basketball gymnasium, and now with *Bluebeard's Castle*, is massive," points out Bogart. "It takes so much more to be able to produce something like that than it does to do it in just a normal theater. So I'm really thrilled to be back with them."

She also finds great appeal in her current venue, Flynn Cruiseport Boston, previously known as Black Falcon Cruise Terminal. "We're thinking of the whole experience, including the fact that the audience goes up an escalator to get there. There's a huge sign that says, 'To the Ships.' It's gorgeous. So the audience's journey is quite interesting and we take it all into consideration," she says. It was during her research that Bogart became aware of

the role this particular setting would play in her work. "I was studying the piece, and then I went to see the site and realized that a lot of decisions had to be made around what that specific architecture is, down to the fact that the audience is on three sides. That's a huge consideration, as are the length of the space, the ceiling height, the angle the singers stand at, and where the tables are placed for the six wives. Really, what a director does is translate ideas into time and space. That's what you try to do, and you have to translate this particular piece into the real dimensions of a special reality," explains the Bard College and New York University graduate. "How a production sits for an audience, from where they are looking at it, determines pretty much all of your decisions."

Bogart says that when it comes to directing opera, she is usually drawn to "chestnuts," but she believes Bartók is worth making an exception for. "I like dealing with something that has a history that the audience knows. The audience at *South Pacific* knew the source material, but they didn't know what they were going to see in our production. People don't necessarily know *Bluebeard's Castle* that well, but it does have some of the most beautiful music of any opera ever written. "And here, the merging of Mahler with Bartók also leads in the end, when one last song from *Four Songs* is sung, to a surprising outcome."

R. Scott Reedy is an arts writer based in Braintree, Massachusetts. His features and reviews appear regularly in The Patriot Ledger, MetroWest Daily News, and Telegram & Gazette, across the Gannett Media/USA TODAY Network, and at Yahoo.com.

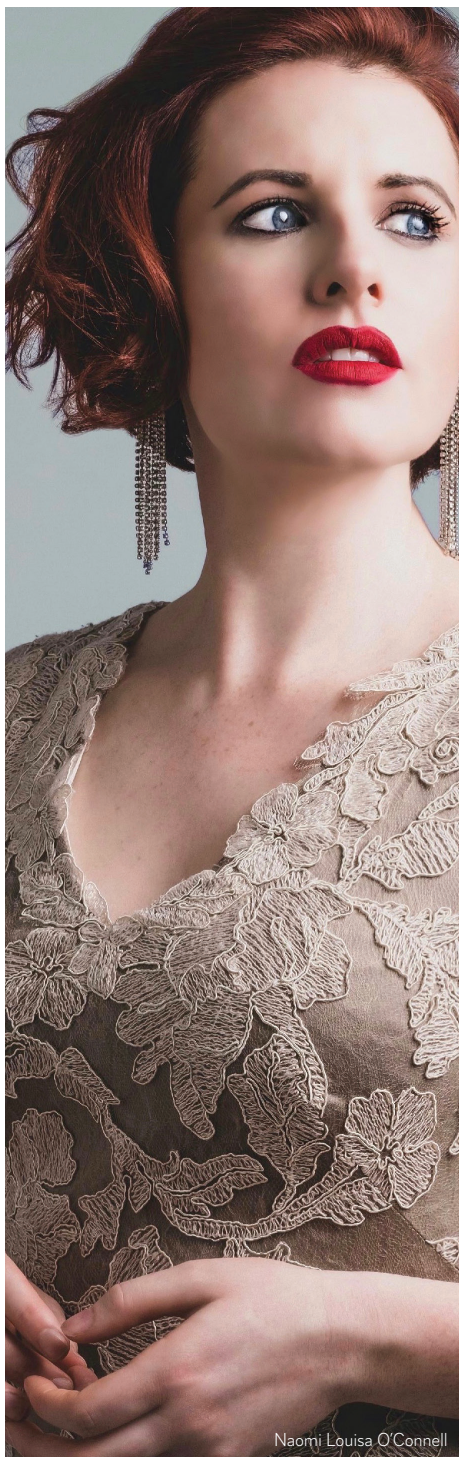
DRIVING TO 'SIEGFRIED' IN TEARS

By Naomi Louisa O'Connell (Judith)

How much of a person can one ever really know? Our language struggles to grasp it: "I know you inside and out, backwards and forwards, tell me everything, I love every inch of you... All of me, why not take all me?"

As a child, I suppose the first image that the word "muse" conjured for me was of some hovering, half-nude female floating in a shell. I don't remember where I might have seen it — possibly a Monty Python cartoon. I do remember the first time I learned what the word actually meant; I remember the struck-between-the-eyes obsession of it when it happened to me. A muse is like a new love. Bring to mind the endlessly fascinating conversations we have at the beginning of getting to know somebody and the remarkable thing it is to feel yourself suddenly recognized, reflected, and enlarged by looking into another person's eyes... the desire to know everything, the itch to do something, make something, to shout about it. Think of that strange almost-mirror effect when we recognize ourselves and others in the broader strokes of stories, horoscopes, archetypes, characters...

In researching the life of Alma Mahler and the characters in *Bluebeard*, this is what strikes me as the strongest link that binds the two — the nature of the strength of a muse, like the nature of a new love — an obsessive need to know it all. Judith has to learn what lies behind each door in Bluebeard's castle. Bluebeard needs her to ask. There is an irresistible pull towards the grisly end, the two characters entwined in their co-dependent isolation. As for Alma? Acting as a muse was almost her profession.



Naomi Louisa O'Connell

DARIO ACOSTA

In Alma's autobiography, she begins with a strong focus on her father, and quickly skips through memories of her childhood, moving almost directly from her father's early death to reminiscences of her first crushes. Her first kiss was with the artist Gustav Klimt, who followed her on a family trip to Italy when she was seventeen. She writes:

"Gustav Klimt was the first great love of my life, but I was a clueless child at the time, drowning in music and far removed from real life. The more I suffered from this love, the more I sank into my own music — thus my unhappiness became the source of my greatest joys."

Later, at the ripe old age of twenty-one, and frustrated with two songs she was composing at the time, she wrote in her diary:

"Have just played through my earlier pieces. Where did I find all that feeling at that time? Yes — that time — Klimt... I set my hopes on the spring."

Her love of music as a teenager is clear, and the intense swings of her diary entries from depressive to ecstatic seem in line with most artists I have met. (Also, most teenagers.) There doesn't seem to be much middle ground in her. Both Alma's diaries and her songs — these *Vier Lieder* were written in 1901 and 1911, though published in 1915 — have an adolescent quality to their outpourings. You almost feel the need to excuse her for it — the brash, all-in quality of both writings. But why make an excuse? The hormonal cry of teenage love is valid. Her compositions scratch the surface of what she considers her deepest, truest self; if she had continued to compose, we would likely have seen them mature. This was not to be.

Most singing students know the story of Gustav Mahler's letter to Alma during their courtship in December 1901, when he told her that if their marriage was to work, she must give up composing. He wrote to her:

"One thing is certain and that is that you must become 'what I need' if we are to be happy together, i.e. my wife, not my colleague. Would it mean the destruction of your life and would you feel you were having to forego an indispensable highlight

of your existence if you were to give up your music in order to possess and also to be mine instead?"

The role of 'composer,' the 'worker's' world, falls to me — yours is that of the loving companion and understanding partner! Are you satisfied with it? I am asking a great deal, a very great deal — and I can and may do so because I know what I have to give and will give in exchange."

I know, I know... it's enough to make those of us with the benefit of a hundred years' hindsight throw the book across the room! More frustrating than that, though, is the swift turnaround in Alma in just three days — from initial outrage to acceptance of the stipulated conditions. On Dec 19, the day before she receives the letter, she writes:

"If it ever comes to marrying him, I must do everything now to stake my rightful claim... particularly in artistic questions. He thinks nothing of my art — and much of his own. And I think nothing of his art and much of my own. — That's how it is!"

She receives the letter on the morning of Dec 20, and writes:

"Give up my music — abandon what has until now been my life? My first reaction was — to pass him up. I had to weep — for then I understood that I loved him. Half-crazed with grief, I got into my finery and drove to 'Siegfried' — in tears!"

Admittedly, that last sentence is kind of hilarious; yet even more revealing of her personality is how swiftly she makes peace with the idea. The very next day, she writes:

"This morning I reread his letter — and suddenly I felt such warmth. What if I were to renounce [my music] out of love for him? Just forget all about it! I must admit that scarcely any music now interests me except his."

Alma was a product of her time: the limits she perceived in her society locked her into a very specific role and — important to note — she embraced it. In her wealthy position, she could have made the choice not to do so. It's also important



Detail of *The Bride of the Wind* (*Die Windsbraut* or *The Tempest*), a self-portrait by the artist, Oskar Kokoschka, with his lover Alma Mahler (1914), Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland

to remember that a few years later, after an affair (Alma's) and a brief interlude on Freud's couch (Gustav's), Alma did in fact have the option of returning to her music seriously, this time with the encouragement and support of her husband, but she didn't. We can wish it differently. It would be nice to hop back in time and shake her by the shoulder to tell her there is another way open to her. But without the benefit of a time machine, we have instead these beautiful songs left to us as a small window into her passion as a composer. We also have a mass of works by the men who lived in her orbit — works which, one could argue, would not exist without her.

Alma the professional muse! Even in her own words, she sees her life through the achievements and greatness of the men who were with her. Though she often flip-flops in her diary entries and cries out for something of her own, it is clear that she loved to be near genius. She kept her men hungry. In her marriage to the writer Franz Werfel, she consistently sent him away to work in isolation until he finished his next big project. But perhaps the most striking of the co-dependent muse relationships in Alma's life is that with visual artist Oskar Kokoschka. In Oskar's early letters to Alma, he would sign off with an amalgamation of both their names and (if we are to believe Alma's version of history) wanted her entirely to himself.

Oskar wrote:

"I want you very much when you find your own being, your peace and your freedom in my existence... I warn you to decide whether you want to be free from me, or in me. I would have loved you incredibly strongly, Alma Oskar Kokoschka"

Their relationship lasted three years. Alma told him she would not marry him until he created a masterpiece. *Die Windsbraut* is the result — an image that has long been pinned to the mood board of the creatives of tonight's production. In 1913, Alma wrote in her diary, "The stronger a man is, the more he wants to reach out and possess everything. And I too am very strong..." In my research of the pieces, this struck me as a prominent feature of the *Bluebeard* story. Possession. Sublimation.

The poetry of the *Vier Lieder* plays on the themes of light and dark, which also pervade *Bluebeard*: dawn, the breaking through from darkness to light. "Muss es heraus — ans Licht, ans Licht! / It must burst forth — to the light, to the light!" The passion of a young composer shines through the songs — eager, impulsive — an easy link to Judith's character. How much these pieces will play for and against each other remains to be seen on the stage. I am fascinated by the prospect.

Naomi Louisa O'Connell, is an Irish-German mezzo-soprano who is performing the role of Judith in BLO's production of Bluebeard's Castle | Four Songs. She is a versatile artist who delights in bringing compelling stories to life on stage. naomilouisaoconnell.com
References: Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Mein Leben*, S. Fischer Verlag, 1960. | Antony Beaumont, *Alma Mahler-Werfel Diaries 1898 – 1902*, Faber and Faber, 1997. | Karen Monson, *Alma Mahler: Muse to Genius*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983.

MEET THE ARTISTS

CREATIVE TEAM



David Angus | Conductor

Now in his thirteenth 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' upcoming projects include *Sweeney Todd* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm, *The Marriage of Figaro* in Prague (in the theater where Mozart conducted it himself!) and further CD recordings of new American works with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Prior to his time at Boston Lyric Opera, where he has conducted the majority of performances since 2011, Angus was music director of The Glimmerglass Festival 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, the Hallé Orchestra, most of the BBC orchestras, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In recent seasons, he made debuts at the Toscanini Orchestra in Parma, Italy and the Porto Symphony Orchestra in Portugal. He returned to Wexford Festival Opera, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, and the Huddersfield Choral Society, as well as to his former orchestra in Belgium, for the world premiere of a major choral work. Angus spent his early years in Belfast. He was a boy chorister at King's College, Cambridge 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.



Anne Bogart | Stage Director

Anne Bogart last worked with BLO directing Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*. A professor at Columbia University, where she runs the graduate directing program, Bogart is the author of six books: *A Director Prepares*; *The Viewpoints Book*; *And Then, You Act*; *Conversations with Anne*; *What's the Story*; and *The Art of Resonance*.

Recent theater works with SITI Company include *Falling and Loving*; *The Bacchae*; *the theater is a blank page*; *Persians*; *Steel Hammer*; *A Rite*; *Café Variations*; *Trojan Women*; *American Document*; *Antigone*; *Freshwater Under Construction*; *Who Do You Think You Are*; *Radio Macbeth*; *Hotel Cassiopeia*; *Death and the Ploughman*; *La Dispute*; *Score*; *bobrauschenbergamerica*; *Room*; *War of the Worlds: The Radio Play*; *Cabin Pressure*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *The Medium*; *Hay Fever*; *Private Lives*; *Miss Julie*; and *Orestes*. Opera credits include Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (Croatian National Theatre), Verdi's *Macbeth* (The Glimmerglass Festival), Bellini's *Norma* (Washington National Opera) and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (The Glimmerglass Festival), Bizet's *Carmen* (The Glimmerglass Festival), Brecht/Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* (New York City Opera), and three operas by Deborah Drattell: *Nicholas and Alexandra* (Los Angeles Opera), *Marina: A Captive Spirit* (American Opera Projects), and *Lilith* (New York City Opera).



Sara Brown | Set Designer

Sara Brown is a set designer for theater, opera, and dance. Selected designs include *The Day at Jacob's Pillow*; *Hagoromo* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; *Fellow Travelers* and *La Rondine* at Minnesota Opera; *World of Wires* at The Kitchen in NYC and Festival d'Automne in Paris; *Prince of Providence* at Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, RI; *Der Freischütz* with Heartbeat Opera in NYC; and *The Mother of Us All* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Upcoming projects include *Common Ground Revisited* at the Huntington Theater and *Letters That You Will Not Get* produced by American Opera Projects as part of the On Women Festival curated by Irondale Ensemble Project. Brown is an assistant professor of music and theater arts at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Trevor Bowen | Costume Designer

Trevor Bowen is a costume designer based in the Twin Cities. BLO credits include *Champion* and *Fellow Travelers*. He has worked at various Twin Cities and regional houses, including Asolo Repertory Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Arena Stage, McCarter

Theatre Center, Seattle Children's Theatre, Jungle Theater, The Glimmerglass Festival, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Contemporary American Theater Festival, FIAF, The Sheen Center for Thought & Culture, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Children's Theatre Company, and The 5th Avenue Theatre.

Brian H. Scott | *Lighting Designer*

Brian H Scott, a lighting designer based in New York City, recently designed *The Handmaid's Tale* with Anne Bogart and Boston Lyric Opera, *the theatre is a blank page* with Ann Hamilton and SITI Company, *Lost In The Stars* with LA Chamber Orchestra, *Falling and Loving* with Elizabeth Streb and SITI Company, as well as a number of projects with Kronos Quartet. He created lighting for *Tears become...Streams become*, *Bound to Hurt*, and *Neck of the Woods* with artist Douglas Gordon. With Ann Hamilton, he worked on *habitus* and *The Event Of a Thread*. He designed lighting for Laurie Anderson and Kronos Quartet's *Landfall*. As a SITI Company member, he designed lighting for *Chess Match No. 5* and *Steel Hammer* with Bang on a Can All-Stars and *American Document* with The Martha Graham Dance Company, as well as *bobraschenbergamerica*, *The Bacchae*, *Trojan Women*, and many other productions for various groups.



Victoria Awkward | *Movement Director/Wife*

Recently honored by WBUR as one of 15 artists of color making an impact in Boston, Victoria L. Awkward is the director of VLA DANCE, an emerging dance organization. She aims to celebrate the talents and artistries of Boston through contemporary dance. Originally from Massachusetts, Awkward was trained at Impulse Dance Center by LuAnn Pagella and has worked with Boston-based artists such as Karen Krolak. She graduated from Goucher College with honors in Dance, Visual Art and Education. While there, she danced for the Goucher Repertory Dance Ensemble and performed in works by Sidra Bell, Christian von Howard, Helen Simoneau, Iyun Ashani Harrison, Iquail Shaheed, and others. Awkward is also a freelance artist and recently choreographed *Romeo and Juliet* with Boston Lyric Opera & Commonwealth Shakespeare Company. She has performed with Shura Baryshnikov, Levi Marsman, Ashani Dances (now Ballet

Ashani), Attn: Dance, The Davis Sisters, Heather Stewart, Jenna Pollack, and Ruckus Dance. She has been a guest teacher at Salem State University, the head dance coach at Middlesex School in Concord, and the visual arts coordinator at West End House. She continually deepens her teaching practices through her work as a mentee with the Cambridge-based Middy Movement Series.



Priscilla Bruce | *Wig-Makeup Designer*

Priscilla Bruce is an East Coast-based wig, hair, and makeup artist. She has spent over 15 years in nearly

every corner of the industry from opera and theatre design, to wig building, commercial print work, film, photoshoots, bridal hair, and makeup. Priscilla holds a BA in theatre arts from Salisbury University and received her license and training in cosmetology from Aveda Institute Chicago. Notable engagements include: *Il Trovatore*, Washington National Opera; *Into The Woods*, Annapolis Opera; *The Mortification of Fovea Munson* (World Premiere) and *Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie* (World Premiere), The Kennedy Center; *Bluebeard's Castle* | *Four Songs*, Boston Lyric Opera; *Fellow Travelers*, *The Fix* (World Premiere), *Elektra*, *Carmen*, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, and *Don Giovanni* (upcoming production), Minnesota Opera; and *Faust* (upcoming production), Wolf Trap Opera.



Angie Jepson | *Intimacy Director*

Angie Jepson is an intimacy director, fight choreographer, actress, and professor based in the Boston area.

Her fight and intimacy work has been seen onstage at theaters including the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Huntington Theatre Company, Trinity Repertory Company, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Gloucester Stage, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, Central Square Theater, and at several universities in the Boston area. She is currently on the faculty of the Brown/Trinity MFA Acting program, and at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where she teaches in the theatre and opera departments. She is a certified intimacy director with Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, and a certified teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors. She holds an MFA in acting from Brandeis University.

MEET THE ARTISTS



Yukiko Oba | *Pianist*

Yukiko Oba has performed extensively as an accompanist for recitals, choruses, master classes, and composers' projects. Ms. Oba is a graduate of Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo. She began playing piano at the age of six in her native Japan. She has been a member of the accompanying staff at Boston Conservatory at Berklee since 1996 and has performed with many acclaimed Boston area singers. As a professional accompanist, she has participated in the MIT Concert Choir since the fall of 2016 beside conductor Dr. William Cutter, worked with the Worcester Schubertiad (now VOX New England), and has been working with the Metropolitan Opera Guild for several years. Most recently, she performed Nico Muhly's pieces for countertenor with the Beth Morrison Project at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Ms. Oba resides in Weymouth, MA with her daughter and husband, with whom she frequently plays four-hand piano pieces. In her leisure, she enjoys running, particularly marathons.

CAST



Ryan McKinny | *Bluebeard*

This season, Ryan McKinny brings his commanding bass-baritone and incisive characterization to stage dramas spanning three centuries.

At LA Opera, he makes his first appearance as Scarpia in *Tosca*. Also in Los Angeles, McKinny re-teams with composer and conductor John Adams, reprising his role as Clarence in *Girls of the Golden West* at LA Philharmonic. He returns to Seattle Opera as Kurwenal in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and to Houston Grand Opera as Jochanaan in *Salome*. McKinny concludes the season with a three-city tour of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's newest opera, commissioned by Music of Remembrance, with performances in Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago. Offstage, McKinny continues to adapt the beauty of his art form to the film screen, collaborating on a documentary with Jamie Barton and Stephanie Blythe. Through his work with Helio Arts, he has commissioned artists to write, direct, and film original stories, leveraging his personal power to help elevate new voices and visions in the classical performing arts world. During the pandemic, he has partnered with artists like J'Nai Bridges, Russell Thomas, John Holiday, and Julia Bullock to create stunning and

innovative performances for streaming audiences at Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, On Site Opera, and The Glimmerglass Festival. McKinny continues this mission at Marquee TV, where he now serves as Head of U.S. Content Partnerships.



Naomi Louisa O'Connell | *Judith*

Naomi O'Connell made her professional debut in 2012, starring on the West End in Terrence McNally's play *Master Class*.

Her work encompasses both theatrical and operatic repertoire, ranging from plays, operas, and recitals to cabarets, sound sculptures, and virtual reality performance art. Sought after for her interpretations of contemporary opera, she recently created the role of Mrs. Van Buren in *Intimate Apparel* by Ricky Ian Gordon and Lynn Nottage at Lincoln Center Theater, now available to stream on PBS Great Performances. Notable roles include Poppea, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Oper Frankfurt; Cherubino, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Welsh National Opera, Atlanta Opera; La Pêrichole, *La Pêrichole*, Garsington Opera; and Mélisande, *Pelléas et Mélisande* — both Maeterlinck's play and Debussy's opera — with the Cincinnati Symphony. She recently recorded Ireland's first virtual reality opera, *As an nGnách* by Finola Merivale, which is currently touring European festivals. Her ongoing collaboration with composer Emma O'Halloran sees world premiere performances of monodrama *Mary Motorhead* this year at Prototype Festival in New York, LA Opera, and Irish National Opera. As a 2022 recipient of Ireland's Music Network RESONATE Award, O'Connell is currently developing the libretto for a new opera in partnership with O'Halloran.



Aliza Franz | *Wife*

Aliza Franz is a Boston-based dancer, collaborator, and arts manager. She graduated from Skidmore College, where she earned a double major in dance (performance and choreography) and psychology, with a minor in gender studies. While in school, Franz had the pleasure of working with artists such as Sidra Bell, Erika Pujic, and Stephen Petronio. Since she began freelancing in Boston, Franz has danced with various artists and companies, including Ilya Vidrin, Lorraine Chapman The Company, and Eliza Malecki Dance. She is currently a company member of VLA Dance, in residence with Jessi Stegall, and a part of the next installment of Rachel Linsky's ZACHOR project. In

addition to doing freelance work, Franz is a passionate dance teacher, working with students ranging in age from 5-18 in a variety of styles. Outside of dance, Franz is the Creative Director of Zamana Art, a company that provides team building and fosters interpersonal connection through the lens of art and creativity. Franz is excited to dance in her first production with Boston Lyric Opera.



Marissa Molinar | Wife

Marissa Molinar is a contemporary dancer, arts administrative activist, and the founder/director of Midday Movement Series, a grassroots initiative cultivating a new, diverse generation of dance leaders through professional development, mentorship, and advocacy. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Brown University with a focus in urban conservation and environmental justice, and a certificate in contemporary dance from the Professional Certificate Program at Gibney Dance, NYC. Molinar was previously a company member with nathan trice/RITUALS dance theater in Brooklyn NY, and Boston-based Ruckus Dance directed by Michael Figueroa, in addition to working as a freelance performer. Most recently, she performed in Dara Capley's *f.-.r.-o — n.-t.-i.-e.-r.-.* at the Dance Canvas Performance Series in Atlanta, Georgia, and with Laila J. Franklin as a part of her Dancemakers Laboratory Residency at the Boston Center for the Arts.



Olivia Moon | Wife

Olivia Moon is a Boston-based multidisciplinary artist with specific passions in photography, movement, and pole dance. Her work, in all mediums, is greatly centered around her self-identity. As a queer, Asian-American person, Olivia uses her artistic platforms to highlight underrepresented voices. This year, she was one of 15 BIPOC artists selected for WBUR's *The Makers* series. She currently teaches at Boston Pole Fitness and dances with KAIROS Dance Theater and VLA DANCE, as well as working on several independent projects.



Sasha Peterson | Wife

Sasha Peterson currently lives and grew up dancing in the Boston area. In 2016, she completed a dance major at Connecticut College, through which she had the privilege of learning from and performing works by renowned dance faculty and guest artists. Sasha has danced at Ali Kenner Brodsky & Co., Betsy Miller Dance Projects, and Jessy Zizzo & Dancers. She has danced with Lisa Race, apprenticed at David Dorfman Dance, and is a company member at Grant Jacoby & Dancers, Ruckus Dance, and VLA DANCE. She currently teaches at Midday Movement Series and is also a licensed massage therapist.



Cassie Wang | Wife

Cassie Wang is a multidisciplinary artist exploring contemporary dance, design, technology, and everything in between. She calls Kansas City home and is currently based in Boston. Wang graduated magna cum laude with a BA in computer science and minors in dance and media studies from Pomona College in 2021, where she had the opportunity to originate works with Derion Loman, Becca Lemme, Iyun Ashani Harrison, and Ronit Ziv. She has also trained with San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, BODYTRAFFIC, GagaLab, and the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, and was the recipient of the DanceJerusalem Scholarship and the Virginia Princehouse Allen Dance Award. Currently, Wang is dancing with VLA DANCE and KAIROS Dance Theater and freelances with local choreographers — most recently with Rachel Linsky, Jessi Stegall, Dara Capley, and Chavi Bansal. Her choreographic works have been presented by the Solstice Dance Project, ACDA Baja, NACHMO Boston, Dunamis, and RESILIENCE Dance Company in St. Louis. In her professional development, Wang is grateful to be supported by organizations that uplift artists of color as a 2022 Emerging Artist Fellow with Dunamis and as a part of the inaugural cohort of the MIDDAY BIPOC Professional Dancer Mentorship Program.

ARTISTIC & PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

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Carmen Catherine Alfaro *Stage Manager*
Mikhaela Mahony *Assistant Stage Director*
Makenzie Wright *Assistant Stage Manager*
Una Rafferty *Assistant Stage Manager*
Steven Doucette *Properties Master*
Matt Cost *Assistant Lighting Designer*
Liz Perlman *Costume Director*
Gail Buckley *Costume Supervisor*
Seth Bodie *Costume Design Associate*
Melinda Abreu *Wig-Makeup Artist*
Natalia St Jean *Surtitle Creator & Operator*

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Weston Lant *First Assistant Production Carpenter*
Michael Geoghegan *Second Assistant
Production Carpenter*
Michael Gottke *Head Production Electrician*
Sumner Ellsworth *Lighting Programmer*
Donald King *First Assistant Production Electrician*
Maxx Finn *Second Assistant Production Electrician*
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David Picot *First Assistant of Production Properties*
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Joshua DeChristopher *First Assistant Production Audio*
Chris Norman *Head Production Video*
Anthony Norman *First Assistant Production Video*
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Nicholas Brown *Music Librarian & Orchestra Contractor*

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The artists and stage managers employed on these productions are members of the American Guild of Musical Artists. All musicians are members of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada.

Many of the scenic, costume, and lighting designers are members of United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). Stagehands are represented by Local #11 of IATSE. Wardrobe crew are represented by Local #764 of IATSE.

BLO is a member of OPERA America, the national service organization for opera in the US and Canada.

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VIOLIN I

Annie Rabbat
Orchestra Leader
Colin Davis
Rohan Gregory

VIOLIN II

Sarah Atwood *Principal*
Stacey Alden
Yonah Zur

VIOLA

Abigail Kubert-Cross
Acting Principal
Joan Ellersick
Don Krishnaswami

CELLO

Loewi Lin *Principal*
Jan Pfeiffer-Rios

DOUBLE BASS

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Acting Principal

FLUTE

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OBOE

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ABOUT BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

Now in its 46TH Season, Boston Lyric Opera's programming remains faithful to tradition while exploring 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 opera through innovative productions and public programming. BLO has produced world and US premieres, commissions, and co-productions of note, ranging from live stage productions to films streamed worldwide on its online platform, operabox.tv.

BLO has partnered with organizations such as Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, Detroit Opera, and more, and continues to be a destination for leading artists, conductors, directors, and designers from around the world.

Alongside its mainstage 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 taking part in BLO's wide-reaching community programming and education initiatives that introduce opera to new audiences across generations.

BLO launched a new five-year strategic plan in 2022, prioritizing four strategic pillars: Programming, Community, Space, and Leadership alongside a renewed commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility.

BLO employs nearly 500 artists and creative professionals annually — vocalists, instrumentalists, artisans, stagehands, costumers, scenic designers, administrators, and beyond. The Company is proud to play a significant and meaningful role in Boston's vibrant arts community.

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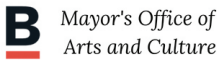
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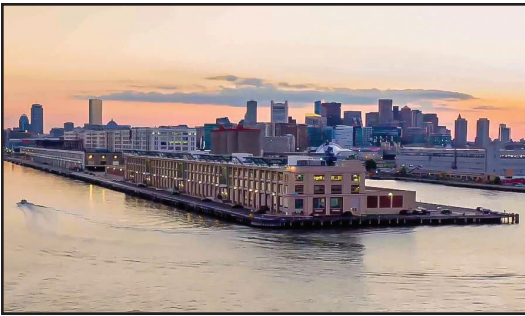
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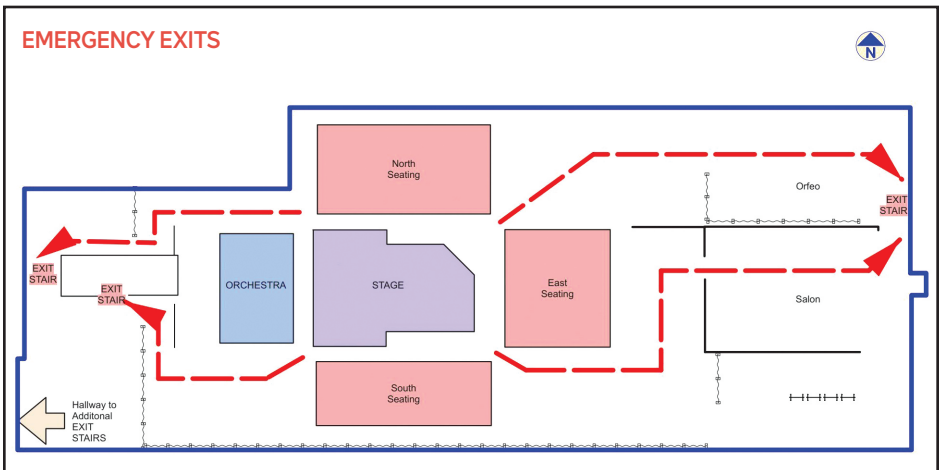
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We extend our utmost gratitude to our frontline workers for their effort in providing a safe work environment for BLO's administrative staff and artists.

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Jamez McCorkle in Omar, courtesy of Leigh Webber | Spoleto Festival USA