



OPERA FOR THE MODERN WORLD BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

Annual Report

For the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Seasons



PHOTO BY LIZA VOLL PHOTOGRAPHY.

It's interesting how some experiences so vivid and electric in the moment can collapse into a bit of a blur and be difficult to recall, at least with precision, just a short time later. I think the phenomenon has more to do with the unexpectedness of the challenge – like an understudy going into a lead role last minute, nailing the performance, then remembering none of it after the curtain goes down. Such is the case with things that happened in the world from fall 2019 through spring 2021.

But in preparing to write this letter, the memories rushed back and became clear once again. The fall of 2019 started with a bang – maybe it was a kazoo chorus? – as BLO's Big Top-inspired *Pagliacci* brought a verismo production of the one-act opera preceded by a fully realized circus fairway to a historic ice rink in the North End. Two months later we moved from red noses to the Lavender Scare with Greg Pierce and Gregory Spears's "Fellow Travelers," a searing drama of the McCarthy era – a time still relevant in a divided country.



In February 2020, following a fantastic gala where my BLO tenure was movingly honored, hopes were high for a new production of *Norma* that would feature a title role debut by Elena Stikhina, who wowed us the previous season as Tosca. But this *Norma* was never to be seen, as theaters (and most of society) shut down before opening night. Fortunately, we were able to organize a recording of the dress rehearsal for many of our patrons to enjoy. Suddenly, the balance of the Season was canceled, and from our homes we sought ways to keep our team and artists working.

BLO went into overdrive on an Autobahn of challenges. But we managed to make art and do good off the stage. Digital creation became our main artistic outlet, with BLO's website and the new operabox.tv streaming service delivering music in a variety of forms, hosting groundbreaking cinematic experiences and discussion series on important topics, as well as seasonal specials.

We found a path back to live performance in late 2020 with the launch of the BLO Street Stage mobile performance venue, fashioned from a tractor-trailer, retrofitted with state-of-the-art audio equipment, and providing a stage where solo singers and small-ensemble musicians performed outdoors for eager audiences. Challenges remained the rest of that season, but a light glimmered at the end of a long tunnel. Steeled by the hope of a resurgent future for BLO, that next spring I announced my long-planned retirement.

Making room for new leadership at the right time is part of the bargain for the head of a performing arts organization – especially one as vital, flexible, and ambitious as Boston Lyric Opera. Bradley Vernatter's deft, dauntless work with BLO from his time as Chief Operating Officer, through his time as Interim General and Artistic Director (and now in his new role as General Director & CEO) assured me BLO would be in the right hands for a next chapter and beyond.

Revisiting these milestones crystallized some extraordinary memories – they were an unexpected capstone to my career at BLO, but a time in which the company showed its strength, its community leadership, and its worth in the industry.

– Esther Nelson



The story of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Seasons was about resilience, innovation, and compassion.

Working in a community of artists means being surrounded by boundless creativity, imagination, and resourcefulness that inspires new thinking and empathy. This is true when things go as planned, as they did at the beginning of the 2019/20 Season; and equally true when they don't, as when the pandemic hit the following spring. In the wake of uncertainty, BLO's extraordinary artists, staff, board, and supporters across the community galvanized our collective resources to help each other and the company navigate through these two years. The results were incredible.

We presented outdoor performances, produced the first full-length opera in Boston after the pandemic began, created new cinematic opera experiences, and nurtured a community of belonging. These successes are a testament to our passion for this art form and the vital and healing role it plays in our lives. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all for your support, participation, and dedication to BLO during these two years.

When Esther Nelson stepped down from her leadership role in the spring of 2021, I was honored to step forward as Interim General & Artistic Director for the place I call home. Esther's decade-plus impact on BLO cannot be overstated: she brought bold artistic leadership and administrative strengths to BLO and pushed the company to bring its work further into the community. My goal was to build on Esther's formidable legacy and lead the company into its next chapter as we look toward our 50th anniversary in the 2026/27 Season.

My appointment as Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO would become formalized later. But looking back, I am deeply proud of what we accomplished during this time. Our BLO community rose to the occasion. We found ways to keep making opera through ever-changing circumstances. We supported our community, our artists locally and afar, and contributed to the national conversation about the future of opera. We are strong and vibrant today for our perseverance and vision during these two Seasons.

– Bradley Vernatter

Interim General & Artistic Director (2021-2022)

Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO (2022-present)

WELCOME

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA'S 2019/20 AND 2020/21 SEASONS WERE TWO LIKE NONE THAT HAVE COME BEFORE. INTERRUPTED BY THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BLO EMERGED FROM THESE TWO YEARS WITH **CREATIVITY, RESILIENCE, AND JOY.**

DURING THESE TWO SEASONS, BOSTON LYRIC OPERA:

- Reached more than **10,000 audience members** through live performances before and during the pandemic
- Reached more than **29,000 viewers** through opera made for the screen on operabox.tv
- Engaged over **9,500 people** through community events, including more than 1,450 youth and families through our education programs and student initiatives
- Launched **BLO Street Stage**, our first mobile performance stage
- Established **our first streaming platform, operabox.tv**
- Produced **three full-length film projects and many short films**
- Supported **8 BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artists**
- Offered more than **500 job opportunities** for singers, musicians, artists, technicians, administration, and staff

We are grateful for the wide community who made these seasons possible – from our neighbors to our Board members to the artists, technicians, and creators, and beyond. The art we brought to life would not have been possible without your support.

- Boston Lyric Opera

THE LEADERS OF BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

2019/20 SEASON BOARD

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael J. Puzo, **Chair**
Miguel de Bragança, **Vice-Chair**
Susan W. Jacobs, **Treasurer**
Dr. Irving H. Plotkin, **Clerk**

Linda Cabot Black	Jeffrey E. Marshall
Willa Bodman	Abigail B. Mason
Alicia Cooney	Anne M. Morgan
Wayne Davis	A. Neil Pappalardo
Alan Dynner	E. Lee Perry
Robert Eastman	William Pounds
Andrew Eisenberg	David W. Scudder
Mimi Hewlett	Susan R. Shapiro
Amelia Welt Katzen	Ray Stata
Maria J. Krokidas	

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA BOARD OF ADVISORS

L. Joseph LoDato, **Co-Chair**
Samuel Parkinson, **Co-Chair**
Lawrence St. Clair, **Co-Chair**

James Ackerman	Jane Pisciotoli Papa
Kimberly Balfour	Susanne Potts
Elizabeth Barker	Steven Ricci
Edward Bell	Carl Rosenberg
Richard M. Burnes, Jr.	Carol Rubin
Ellie Cabot	Allison Ryder
David Campbell	Alex Senchak
Carol Deane	Wendy Shattuck
JoAnne Walton Dickinson	Wynne Szeto
Jessica Donohue	Frank Tempesta
Timothy Fulham	Richard Trant
David Hoffman	Amy Tsurumi
Kathleen Hull	Lydia Kenton Walsh
Amy Hunter	Robert Walsh
Ernest Jacob	Peter J. Wender
Louise Johnson	George Yip
Ellen Kaplan	Tania Zouikin
Stephen T. Kunian	
Louis Lévy	EMERITI
Russell Lopez	Steven P. Akin
Anita Loscalzo	J.P. Barger
David Manning	Horace H. Irvine II (deceased)
M. Lynne Markus	Sherif A. Nada
Jillian McGrath	
Kate Meany	

2020/21 SEASON BOARD

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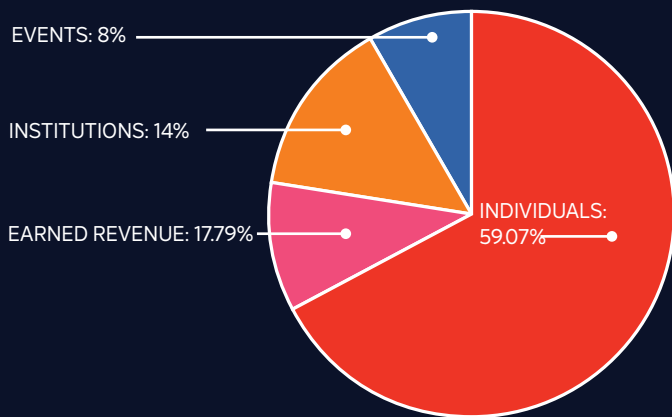
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Lydia Kenton Walsh, **Co-Chair**

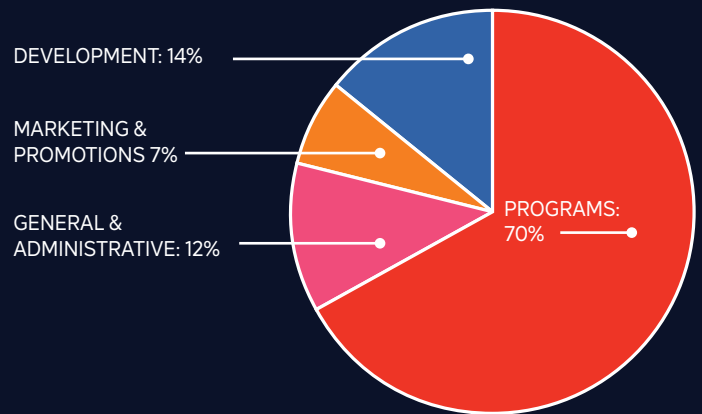
James Ackerman	Jo Frances Meyer
Kimberly Balfour	Jane Pisciotoli Papa
Richard M. Burnes, Jr.	Samuel Parkinson
Ellie Cabot	Susanne Potts
David Campbell	Stephen Ricci
Carol Deane	Carl Rosenberg
Larry DeVito	Allison Ryder
JoAnne Walton Dickinson	Alex Senchak
Jessica Donohue	Tricia Swift
Timothy Fulham	Wynne Szeto
David Hoffman	Frank Tempesta
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Joe Mari	Sherif A. Nada
M. Lynne Markus	
Jillian McGrath	
Kate Meany	

BLO FINANCIAL SUMMARY

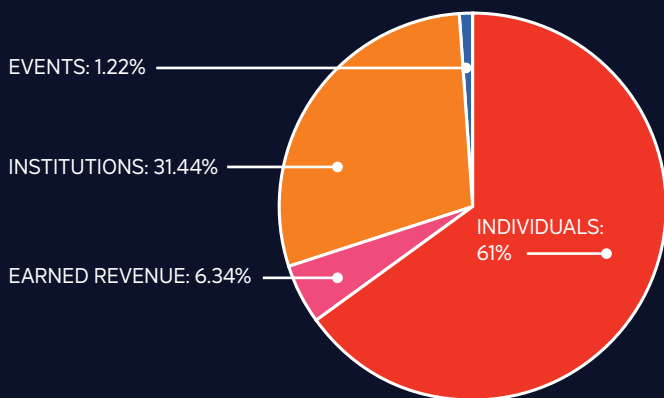
FY20 OPERATING REVENUE:



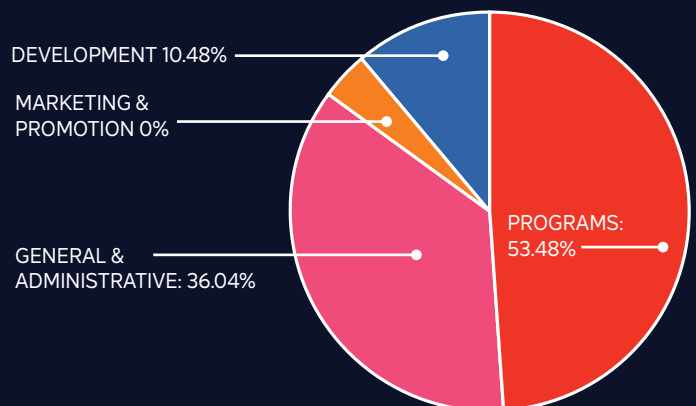
FY20 OPERATING EXPENSE:



FY21 OPERATING REVENUE:



FY21 OPERATING EXPENSE:



FISCAL YEARS 2017-2021

OPERATING RESULTS | \$THOUSANDS

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
OPERATING REVENUE	\$8,953.6	\$8,251.5	\$8,912.0	\$7,523.9	\$5,348.9
OPERATING EXPENSES	\$8,891.1	\$8,222.7	\$8,838.7	\$7,497.3	\$5,248.9
% EXPENSES SPENT ON PROGRAMS	66%	67%	68.5%	70.32%	53.48%
SURPLUS	\$62.5	\$28.8	\$73.3	\$26.6	\$99.9

BALANCE SHEET | \$MILLIONS

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL ASSETS	\$18.8	\$20.6	\$22.3	\$20.5	\$24.5
NET ASSETS	\$17.3	\$19.5	\$20.3	\$18.5	\$23.3

ADDITIONAL REVENUE

\$118,655.26*

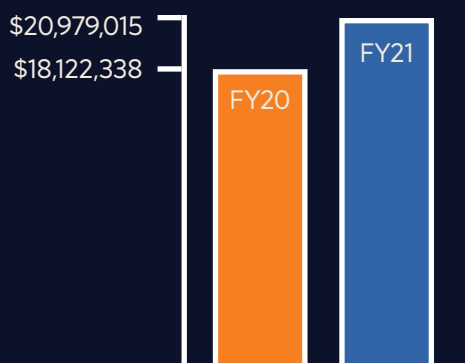
*Includes turnbacks for the previously announced 2020/21 *Main Stage* Season

2020/21 OPERABOX.TV REVENUE

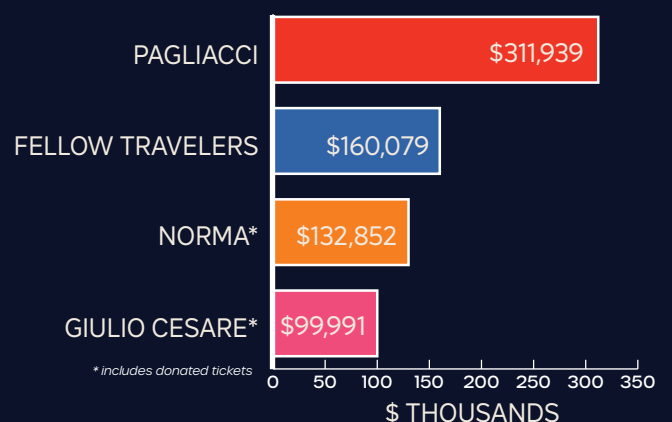
\$36,847.16*

*Includes *A Winter's Evening*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and *desert in*

TOTAL ENDOWMENT:



REVENUE BY PRODUCTION 2019/20:



BLO ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

BLO LEADERSHIP & STAFF

Esther Nelson *Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director*

Bradley Vernatter *Interim General & Artistic Director*

David Angus *Music Director*

John Conklin *Artistic Advisor*

Vimbayi Kaziboni *Artistic Advisor*

Nicholas G. Russell *Director of Artistic Operations*

Karen T. Frost *Chief Financial Officer*

Eileen Nugent Williston *Managing Director*

Amy Advocat

Steven Atwater

Patricia Au

Melanie Bacaling

Olivia Begos

Sarah B. Blume

Jessica Johnson Brock

Zachary Calhoun

David J. Cullen

Ashley Daugherty

Catherine Doyle

Andrew Eggert

Cathy Emmons

Madison Florence

Jayne Gallagher

Lydia Jane Graeff

Reingard Heller

Frank Impelluso

Bailey Kerr

Rebecca Kirk

Rebecca Kittredge

Elisabeth Layne

Rachel Lucas

Lizabeth Malanga

Sydney Mukasa

Julia Noulin-Mérat

Sara O'Brien

Ashley Shea

Micaela Slotin

Sophie Urquhart

Michele Walls

Kara Wasilauski

Noah Stern Weber

Sarah Zimmer

IRN Internet Services Website

JMK PR Public Relations

Leapfrog Arts Graphic Design

RADAR Nonprofit Solutions

OUR 2019/20 SEASON

From an electrifying performance by Elena Stikhina in the tour de force title role of Norma to the “poignant depth” (*The Boston Globe*) of Jesse Blumberg and Jesse Darden in *Fellow Travelers*, BLO’s 2019/20 Season shared the power of opera to express the full range of human emotions, even in the face of a burgeoning pandemic.



PAGLIACCI



FELLOW TRAVELERS



NORMA



GIULIO CESARE



PAGLIACCI

SEP 27–OCT 6, 2019
DCR STERITI MEMORIAL RINK

Music and libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo
English translation by Bill Bankes-Jones

David Angus *Conductor*
David Lefkowich *Stage Director*
Julia Noulin-Mérat *Set Designer*
Charles Neumann *Costume Designer*
Pablo Santiago *Lighting Designer*
Anne Nesmith* *Wig & Makeup Designer*
Cara Consilvio *Assistant Stage Director*
Anderson Nunnelley† *Assistant Stage Director*
Hester Warren-Steijn *Stage Manager*

Heidi Braun-Hill *Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra/Acting Orchestra Leader*
Brett Hodgdon† *Boston Lyric Opera Chorus/Chorus Director*

James Burton *Boston Symphony Children's Choir/ Conductor*
(Prepared by Brett Hodgdon)
Brendon Shapiro† *Rehearsal Coach/Accompanist*

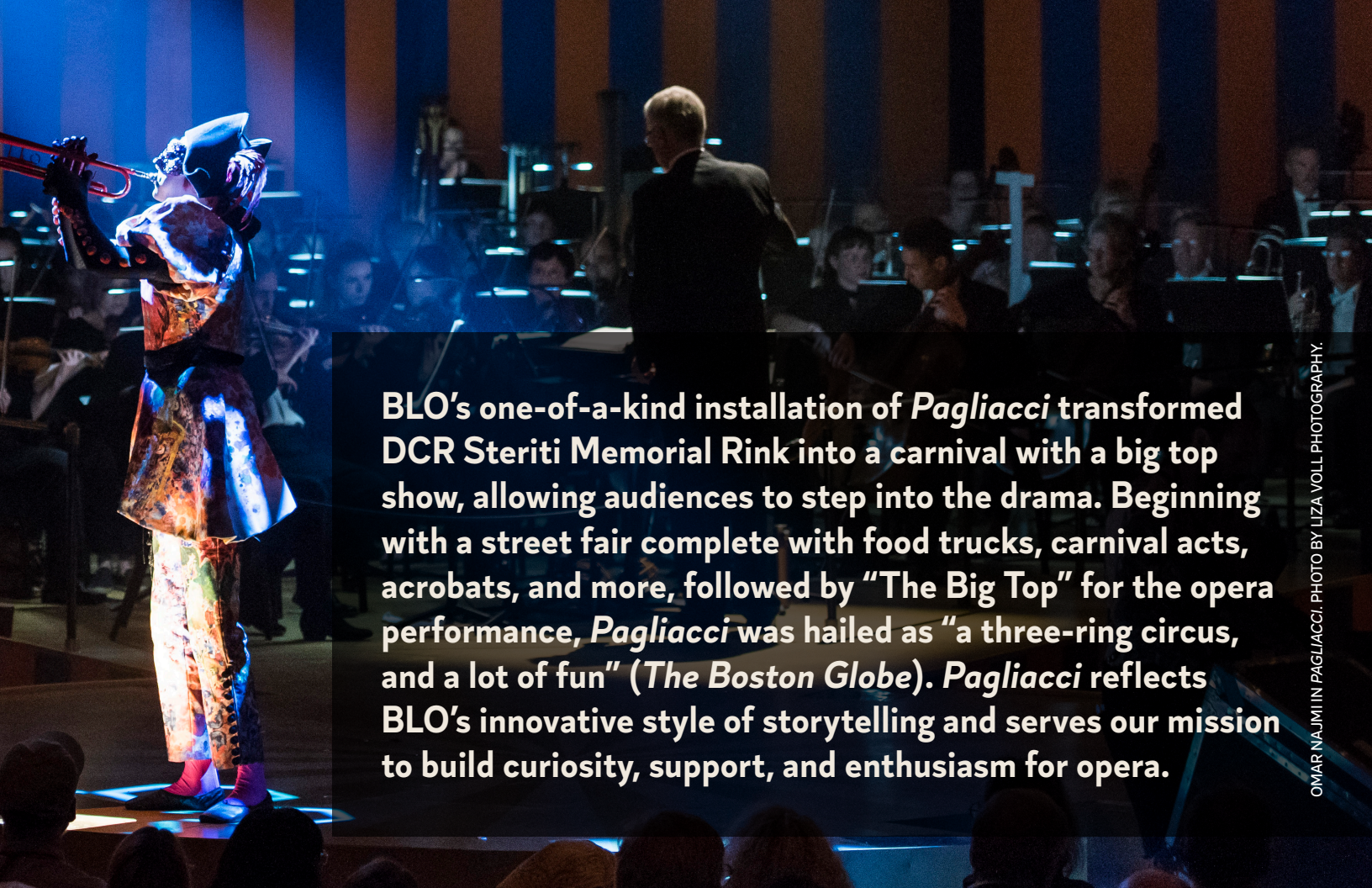
CAST (in order of vocal appearance)

Michael Mayes *Tonio*
Rafael Rojas *Canio*
Omar Najmi† *Beppe-Harlequin*
Lauren Michelle *Nedda*
Tobias Greenhalgh *Silvio*

**Boston Lyric Opera Debut*

†*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist*

‡*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alum*



OMAR NAJMI IN PAGLIACCI. PHOTO BY LIZA VOLL. PHOTOGRAPHY.

BLO's one-of-a-kind installation of *Pagliacci* transformed DCR Steriti Memorial Rink into a carnival with a big top show, allowing audiences to step into the drama. Beginning with a street fair complete with food trucks, carnival acts, acrobats, and more, followed by "The Big Top" for the opera performance, *Pagliacci* was hailed as "a three-ring circus, and a lot of fun" (*The Boston Globe*). *Pagliacci* reflects BLO's innovative style of storytelling and serves our mission to build curiosity, support, and enthusiasm for opera.

"[I]ngenious production" – The Wall Street Journal

"An immersive, substantial operatic extravaganza [and] a visceral sensory experience. BLO transformed the Steriti Rink into a circus wonderland!" – Boston Music Intelligencer

"A fresh new way of presenting opera! For their return to the Steriti Memorial Rink, BLO went all out...Michael Mayes was a tour de force...Lauren Michelle had a beautifully crystalline voice that gave Nedda a fiery... youthful energy...Rojas [stopped] the show when it came time for him to sing "Vesti la giubba"; [he] brought pathos to the whole aria...Tobias Greenhalgh made for a playful Silvio whose voice melded beautifully during his love duet with Michelle...The chorus...was excellently managed in terms of staging: they weaved throughout the audience, and brought life to the opera's many crowd scenes...This *Pagliacci* is a testament to the effectiveness of BLO's installation operas, and I cannot wait to see what is to come next." – Schmopera



FELLOW TRAVELERS



NOV 13-17, 2019

EMERSON PARAMOUNT CENTER | ROBERT J. ORCHARD STAGE

Music by Gregory Spears
Libretto by Greg Pierce
Based on the 2007 novel
Fellow Travelers by Thomas Mallon
Emily Senturia* *Conductor*
Peter Rothstein* *Stage Director*
Sara Brown* *Set Designer*
Trevor Bowen* *Costume Designer*
Mary Shabatura* *Lighting Designer*
Liz Printz* *Wig & Makeup Designer*
Bruno Baker *Assistant Stage Director*
Michael Janney *Stage Manager*

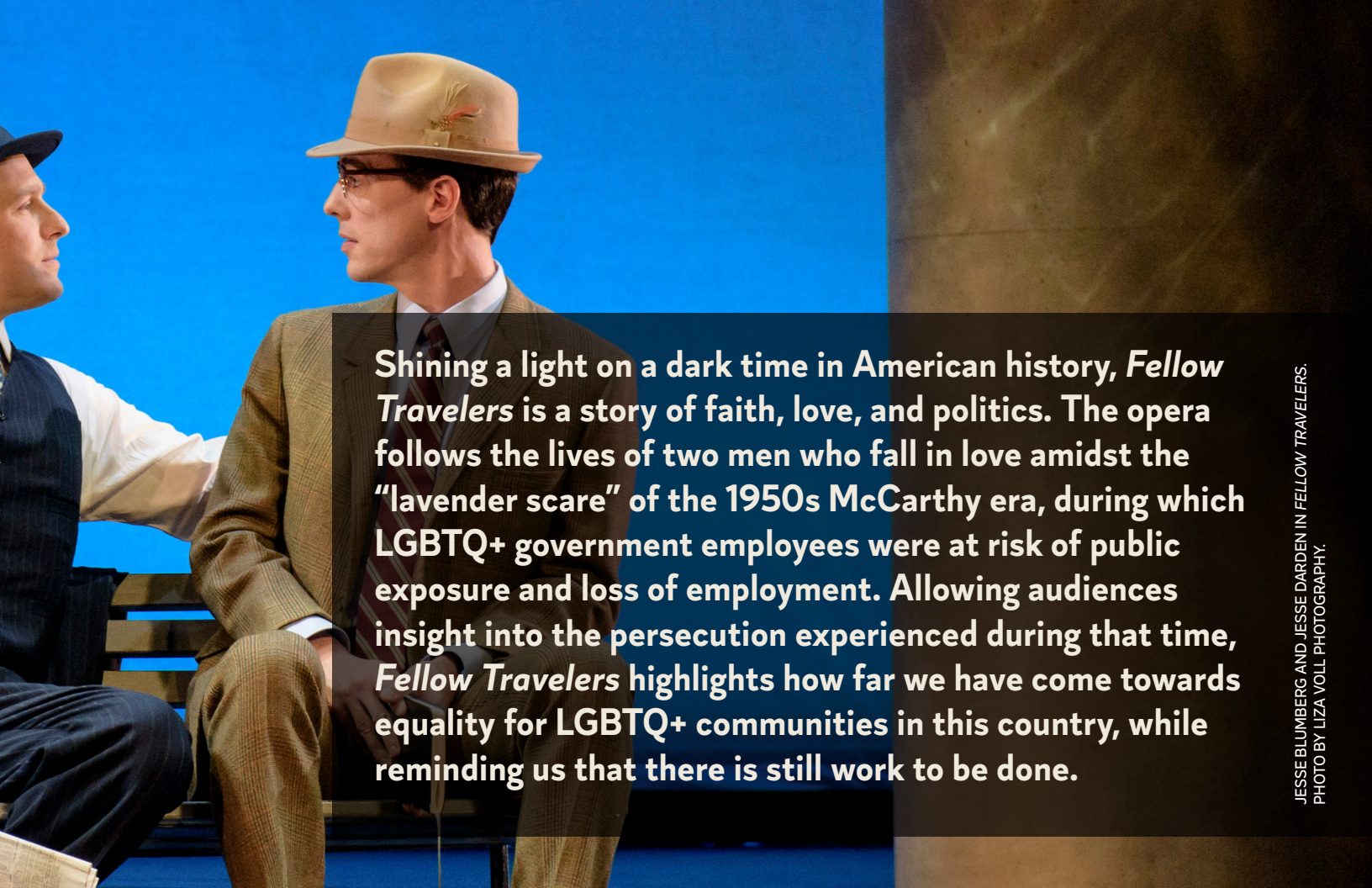
Annie Rabbat *Boston Lyric Opera
Orchestra/Orchestra Leader*

CAST (in order of vocal appearance)
Jesse Blumberg *Hawkins Fuller*
Jesse Darden† *Timothy Laughlin*
Simon Dyer‡ *Potter's Assistant/Bookseller/
Technician/French Priest/Party Guest*
Vincent Turregano‡ *Tommy McIntyre*
James Maddelena *Senator Potter/General Arlie/
Bartender*
Michelle Trainor‡ *Miss Lightfoot*
Chelsea Basler‡ *Mary Johnson*
David McFerrin‡ *Estonia Frank/Interrogator/
Senator McCarthy*
Brianna Robinson† *Lucy*

**Boston Lyric Opera Debut*

†*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist*

‡*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alum*



Shining a light on a dark time in American history, *Fellow Travelers* is a story of faith, love, and politics. The opera follows the lives of two men who fall in love amidst the “lavender scare” of the 1950s McCarthy era, during which LGBTQ+ government employees were at risk of public exposure and loss of employment. Allowing audiences insight into the persecution experienced during that time, *Fellow Travelers* highlights how far we have come towards equality for LGBTQ+ communities in this country, while reminding us that there is still work to be done.

JESSE BLUMBERG AND JESSE DARDEN IN FELLOW TRAVELERS.
PHOTO BY LIZA VOLL PHOTOGRAPHY.

“In BLO’s fine, imaginative production, ‘Fellow Travelers’ succeeds on virtually every level...The singing and acting of the entire cast was top-notch.”

– [Edge Media Network](#)

“‘Fellow Travelers’ is an opera for today...It is reassuring to know that for a few hours on a cold night in Boston a group of strangers sat together and collectively participated in an act of empathy.”

–[Theater Mirror](#)

“BLO has outdone itself yet again with this opera for our time and for times yet to come. What an extraordinary feat.” – [South Shore Critic](#)

“‘Fellow Travelers’ is one of those rare operas that feels important in the broader cultural context that it was created in.” –[Schmopera](#)



MAR 13-22, 2020
EMERSON CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE

Music by Vincenzo Bellini
Libretto by Felice Romani

David Angus *Conductor*
Stephanie Havey *Stage Director*
Shura Baryshnikov *Movement Director*
Julia Noulin-Mérat *Set Designer*
Charles Neumann *Costume Designer*
Pablo Santiago *Lighting Designer*
Ronell Oliveri *Wig & Makeup Designer*
Melanie Bacaling† *Assistant Stage Director*
Michael Janney *Stage Manager*

Annie Rabbat *Boston Lyric Opera/Orchestra Leader*
Brett Hodgdon‡ *Boston Lyric Opera
Chorus/Chorus Director*
Nathan Salazar† *Rehearsal Coach/Accompanist*

CAST (in order of vocal appearance)

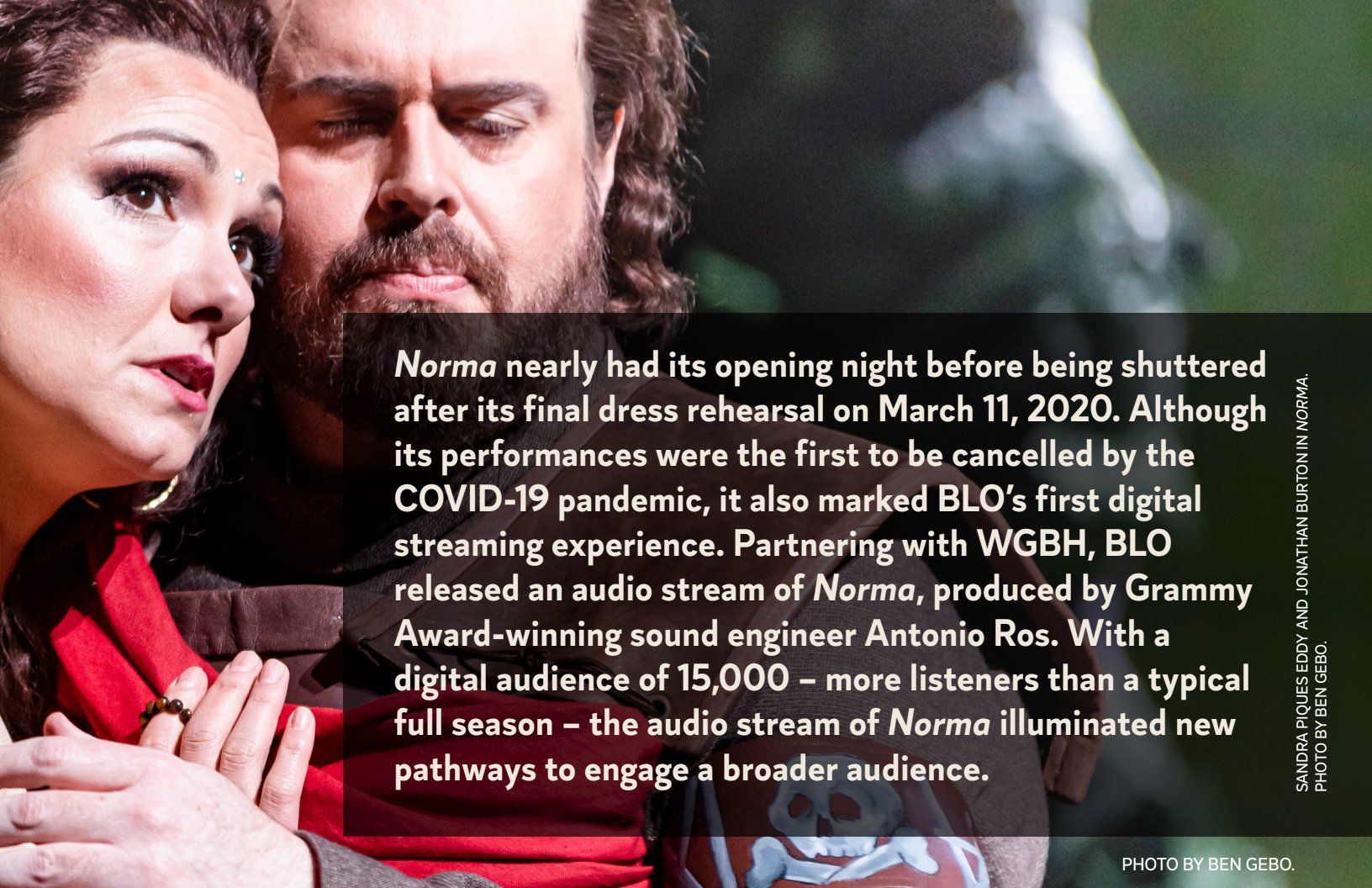
Alfred Walker *Oroveso*
Jonathan Burton *Pollione*
Omar Najmi‡ *Flavio*
Elena Stikhina *Norma*
Sandra Piques Eddy *Adalgisa*
Robyn Marie Lamp† *Clotilde*

**Boston Lyric Opera Debut*

‡*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist*

‡*BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alum*

When the unfolding COVID-pandemic caused the cancellation of Norma's performance run, **BLO PAID 100% OF ARTIST FEES** to its cast, crew, and creative team, from principal artists to truck drivers.



Norma nearly had its opening night before being shuttered after its final dress rehearsal on March 11, 2020. Although its performances were the first to be cancelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, it also marked BLO's first digital streaming experience. Partnering with WGBH, BLO released an audio stream of *Norma*, produced by Grammy Award-winning sound engineer Antonio Ros. With a digital audience of 15,000 – more listeners than a typical full season – the audio stream of *Norma* illuminated new pathways to engage a broader audience.

SANDRA PIQUES EDDY AND JONATHAN BURTON IN *NORMA*. PHOTO BY BEN GEBBO.

PHOTO BY BEN GEBBO.



BLENA STIKHINA AS *NORMA*. PHOTO BY BEN GEBBO.



ALFRED WALKER IN *NORMA*. PHOTO BY BEN GEBBO.



THE CAST OF *NORMA*. PHOTO BY BEN GEBBO.

THE *NORMA* STREAM HAD NEARLY 15,000 VISITORS FROM OVER 95 COUNTRIES.



Although BLO was not able to mount its planned production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, BLO remained committed to ensuring that artists, musicians, and crew received a portion of fees for their originally contracted work.

BLO'S ANNUAL OPERA GALA



RAISED OVER
\$850K

February 2020 marked a grand celebration of Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson's 10th Season with Boston Lyric Opera. BLO's annual Opera Gala raised \$850K in honor of this milestone, featuring what became the company's final in-person performance before the pandemic.

Featuring performances by *Norma* principals, BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artists, and members of BLO's Chorus and Orchestra, the Opera Gala launched the Innovation Fund, honoring Nelson's legacy of experimentation, innovation, and exploration.

This Fund was essential in charting a course through the next few years and sustaining the company through a transition in leadership as Nelson retired in May 2021.



ALL PHOTOS BY ABOVE SUMMIT.



OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC: THE 2020/21 SEASON

“In its creativity and resilience at a time of crisis, BLO has been setting the bar for the city’s mid-size arts organizations.” (The Boston Globe)

operabox.tv



BOSTONLYRICOPERA

The 2020/21 season was one of adaptation, as BLO navigated a unique moment of disruption and recovery for the arts. With the launch of operabox.tv, BLO brought opera directly into people’s homes with cinematic content that shattered preconceptions of opera, making it more accessible to all. BLO Street Stage allowed BLO to create one of the first in-person performances to return to the city, connecting us – safely – to new neighborhoods across Boston from a mobile stage.

Throughout this season, our focus remained on serving our community of audiences while keeping artists employed during a challenging time.



IN THE 2020/21 SEASON, BLO:

- **APPOINTED** the next generation of BLO leadership
- **EXPANDED** our artistic voices
- **INTRODUCED** our first mobile performance stage
- **LAUNCHED** our first streaming platform
- **PRODUCED** three opera films and one filmed opera series
- **DEVELOPED** free, virtual community programs
- **ENGAGED** in our first full-staff DEI training
- **JOINED** with new partners to create much-needed transparent masks
- **CREATED** employment opportunities for local artists, crew, and administrators



ISABEL LEONARD IN DESERT IN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.



BLO STAFF PHOTO.



BLO STAFF PHOTO.

A LEADER FOR THE FUTURE: BRADLEY VERNATTER



PHOTO BY GARY HIGGINS / BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL.

The 2020/21 **season** marked the beginning of a new era with the appointment of Bradley Vernatter as Interim General & Artistic Director for BLO, following the retirement of Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson. Seeking to continue Nelson's legacy of innovation in opera, Vernatter maintained a continuous vision

for the company that focused on stability and growth through the pandemic with increased streaming content on operabox.tv and expanded audience and community engagement.



*"I am honored to take on this role at a pivotal time in Boston Lyric Opera's history and eager to undertake **a strategic planning process** with our board and staff to **chart a course for the company's future**. We are ready to grapple with issues facing many performing arts companies and identify the key priorities for BLO's future — among them, **the safe return to live opera performances** for both artists and audiences, the growth potential of digital media and streaming, **advancing our commitments to diversity and equity**, and interrogating the current opera business model. I am confident **the future for BLO is very bright**, and we will continue to be a leading example for the industry."*

– Bradley Vernatter

A NEW ARTISTIC VOICE: VIMBAYI KAZIBONI

Boston Lyric Opera expanded its artistic team at the beginning of the season with the appointment of Zimbabwean-American conductor Vimbayi Kaziboni as Artistic Advisor. General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson and BLO Music Director David Angus sought a more formal working relationship with the Boston-based artist to collaborate with BLO leadership on artistic planning, in conjunction with veteran theater designer and NEA Opera Honors recipient John Conklin, a current BLO Artistic Advisor.



“I believe that **the ideal artist is a conscious, reflective, global citizen — a steward of humanity**, whose art at its least expresses the inner struggle and spirit of one’s soul, and at its best also reflects, engages and **affects the nexus of human history, culture, and society**. This is my guiding ethos as a conductor, curator, and practitioner of classical music. In light of this calling, my goal...is to apply my artistic mission to **champion unsung voices** and **tell new stories in opera.**”

– Vimbayi Kaziboni

A NEW VENUE: BLO STREET STAGE



Responding to a need for live music making during the pandemic, the company launched BLO Street Stage, a free concert series delivered from a mobile truck-turned-stage, designed in partnership with Artists For Humanity, a local non-profit that provides under-resourced teens paid employment in art and design.

Connecting BLO with new communities and organizations, BLO Street Stage brings together local artists and new audiences through free, accessible performances.

With an opening performance in October 2020 that reached at-capacity audiences in less-than-ideal weather, BLO Street Stage filled a much-needed gap in the arts during the pandemic. From a performance by Yo-Yo Ma for front-line healthcare workers at Mass General Hospital to a world premiere in partnership with the City of Boston, BLO Street Stage persevered to keep live performances alive.

BLO IS PROUD TO HAVE PARTNERED WITH THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR STREET STAGE PERFORMANCES IN THE 2020/21 SEASON:



Boston Baptist College

Fruitlands Museum

Villa Victoria





ZARAY RODRIGUEZ, ACTING MAYOR KIM JANEY, BRENDON SHAPRIO, AND OMAR NAJMI AT THE PREMIERE OF 'MY NAME IS ALONDRA'. PHOTO BY ABOVE SUMMIT.

A WORLD PREMIERE: *my name is Alondra*

In spring 2021, Street Stage debuted our **Poetry in Music** project, developed in partnership with the **City of Boston**, featuring commissions of Boston's Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate that created powerful, creative collaborations between local artists. In May, we presented the premiere of *my name is Alondra* with libretto by Boston Youth Poet Laureate Alondra Bobadilla and composer and BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Omar Najmi.



BLO STAFF PHOTO



A NEW STAGE: CINEMATIC OPERA & BLO's operabox.tv

Launched in fall 2020, BLO's operabox.tv presented an opportunity to make a completely different kind of opera, fusing elements of film and television with opera to welcome a new and global audience. With fresh, genre-defying content designed specifically for the screen, operabox.tv remains a unique opera experience, available on all digital devices.



“BLO could be setting the stage for the future of opera.” (WGBH)



operabox.tv By the Numbers:



MORE THAN
29,000
VIEWERS



MORE THAN
51,100
VIEWS

**“Opera may never be the same!”
(Opera News)**



BLO STAFF PHOTO.

BLO STAFF PHOTO.

TALISE TREVIGNE in *desert in* / MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.



3,000
HOURS
WATCHED



OVER 50
COUNTRIES REACHED
ON SIX CONTINENTS

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER



EXCLUSIVELY ON BLO's operabox.tv

Music by Philip Glass
Libretto by Arthur Yorinks
Based on the story by Edgar Allan Poe

David Angus *Conductor*
James Darrah *Director*
Raúl Santos* *Screenwriter*
Yuki Izumihara* *Production Designer*
Pablo Santiago *Director of Photography*
Camille Assaf* *Costume and Doll Designer*
Yee Eun Nam* *Art Director/Lead Designer (Luna)*
Will Kim* *Lead Animator (Luna)*
Rodrigo Muñoz* *Lead Illustrator/Character Designer (Luna)*
Jian Lee* *Character Animator (Luna)*

Annie Rabbat *Boston Lyric Opera
Orchestra/Concertmaster*

CAST

Chelsea Basler† *Madeline Usher*
Jesse Darden† *Roderick Usher*
Daniel Belcher *William*
Christon Carney *Physician*
Jorgeandrés Camargo *Servant*

With special appearance by Sheila Vand.

"[An] arresting stop-motion film."
– *The New Yorker*

"...[BLO's] most ambitious and spectacular project of the season."
– *The Boston Globe*

"Amazing hand-drawn and stop-motion footage."
– *Cinema Junkie/KPBS*

"The striking visual components embrace the opera's ambiguity and nightmarish ambiance."
– *The Wall Street Journal*

"The crushing forces of the pandemic, shaped by the news media, sculpt this film into something like a diamond. Beautiful, though with cutting edges."
– *WBUR/The Artery*

Philip Glass's *The Fall of the House of Usher* marked operabox.tv's first full-length film release. A fusion of hand-drawn and stop-motion animation with archival footage, BLO's cinematic vision launched Edgar Allan Poe's Victorian gothic horror tale into modern times.



desert in



ANTHONY MICHAEL LOPEZ IN DESERT IN.
PHOTO BY MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.



THE CAST OF DESERT IN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.

EXCLUSIVELY ON BLO'S operabox.tv

Created by Ellen Reid, christopher oscar peña,
and James Darrah

Michael Abels *Composer*
Vijay Iyer *Composer*
Nathalie Joachim *Composer*
Nico Muhly *Composer*
Emma O'Halloran *Composer*
Ellen Reid *Composer*
Wang Lu *Composer*
Shelley Washington *Composer*
Kirsten Greenridge *Writer*
Ryan J. Haddad *Writer*
Joy Kecken *Deputy Lead Writer*
Quentin Nguyen-duy *Writer*
A. Rey Pamatmat *Writer*
christopher oscar peña *Lead Writer*

Roxie Perkins *Writer*
Jesse J. Sanchez *Writer*

David Angus *Music Director*
Vimbayi Kaziboni *Music Supervisor*
James Darrah *Director*
Zackary Drucker* *Director*
Joy Kecken* *Director*
Raviv Ullman* *Director*
Michael Elias Thomas* *Director of Photography*
Yuki Izumihara *Production Designer*
Pablo Santiago *Lighting Designer/Gaffer*
Molly Ireland* *Costume Designer*

Annie Rabbat
Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra/Concertmaster

ARTISTS

Isabel Leonard* *Cass*
Talise Trevigne* *Sunny*
Justin Vivian Bond*
The Lounge Singer
Edward Nelson* *Ion*
Jesus Garcia *Rufus*
Alan Pingarrón* *Federico*
Davóne Tines* *Old Man/Derek*

Brianna J. Robinson† *Vapor*
Emma Sorenson‡ *Vapor*
Neal Ferreira‡ *Vapor*
Raviv Ullman* *Ion (Actor)*
Alexander Jon Flores* *Rufus (Actor)*
Anthony Michael Lopez*
Federico (Actor)
Ricco Ross*
Old Man/Derek (Actor)

Jon Orsini* *Son (Actor)*
Carlis Shane Clark*
The Stranger (Actor)
Shauna Davis* *Vapor (Actor)*
Jasmine Albuquerque* *Vapor (Actor)*
Veronica Taylor* *Vapor (Actor)*

*Boston Lyric Opera Debut
†BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist
‡BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alum

"Lush and expansive...a highly original marriage of opera and series television." – *The Wall Street Journal*

"Spookily and consistently atmospheric...[its] visuals catch the imagination... with an arty style of its own"
– *Financial Times*

"[A] sexy mysterious streaming series assembled by a starry cast and crew."
– *NPR Morning Edition*

"desert in hooks you immediately. Opera may never be the same!"
– *Opera News*

"Exactly what my life was missing: bingeable opera."
– *Which Sinfonia*

"This stylish film-opera hybrid...is a sun-drenched melodrama."
– *New York Observer*

Borrowing from Hollywood's collaborative "writers room" development process, BLO's *desert in* brought composers, playwrights, and directors together to create a made-for-TV, serial Netflix-style, eight-episode opera-meets-television series. This wholly unique, modern approach to operatic storytelling continued BLO's vision to make opera more accessible for all while affirming our commitment to tell relevant stories that reflect the diversity of our community.



TALISE TREVIGNE IN DESERT IN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.



REHEARSING DESERT IN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL ELIAS THOMAS.

A WINTER'S EVENING

BLO filmed its first holiday special, *A Winter's Evening*, during the 2020/21 Season. Featuring rising soprano Gabriella Reyes in her BLO debut, alongside BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist alumnus and pianist Brett Hodgdon and guitarist Zaira Meneses, this live-recorded performance featured reigning Miss Massachusetts Sabrina Victor as host for an evening of beautiful arias and song filmed at the historic Crane Estate.

Nathan Troup *Creator and Producer*
Beatt Productions and E Levin Studios
Video Production and Editing
Immersive Music Project
Post-Production Sound Editing

Gabriella Reyes* *Soprano*
Sabrina Victor* *Host*
Brett Hodgdon‡ *Pianist*
Zaira Meneses* *Classical Guitarist*

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



GABRIELLA REYES IN A WINTER'S EVENING. BLO STAFF PHOTO.



ZAIRA MENESES IN A WINTER'S EVENING. BLO STAFF PHOTO.



SABRINA VICTOR IN A WINTER'S EVENING. BLO STAFF PHOTO.



BLO archival footage found new life in the RETRO+ series. From RETRO+ Short Cuts, a music video with evocative animation and found footage, to the 1991 BLO production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* that launched the career of American soprano Deborah Voigt, these remastered classics found new life on the screen.

Featured works on the series included “Bella figlia dell’amore” from *Rigoletto*, “Casta Diva” from *Norma*, “The Murder Ballad of Mack the Knife” from *The Threepenny Opera*, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, “Der Hölle Rache” from *The Magic Flute*, “Vissi d’arte” from *Tosca*, and the newly restored video of the 1991 BLO production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

RETRO+ Ariadne auf Naxos

Joseph Rescigno *Conductor*
 Bruce Donnell *Stage Director*
 Rodney Griffin *Choreographer*
 John Michael Deegan & Sarah G. Conly
Set & Lighting Designers

Deborah Voigt *Prima Donna/Ariadne*
 David Rampy *Tenor/Bacchus*
 Erie Mills *Zerbinetta*
 Kristine Jepson *Composer*

RETRO+ Short Cuts

Created by John Conklin and Greg Emetaz

“Casta Diva” from Bellini’s Norma

Live stage production at Emerson’s Cutler
 Majestic Theatre, 2020
 Elena Stikhina *Norma*
 Alfred Walker *Oroveso*

David Angus *Conductor*
 Annie Rabbat *Concertmaster*
 Brett Hodgdon *Chorus Master*

“Quartet” from Verdi’s Rigoletto

Live stage production at Citi Performing
 Arts Center Shubert Theatre (now Boch
 Center Shubert Theatre), 2014
 Nadine Sierra *Gilda*
 Michael Mayes *Rigoletto*
 Audrey Babcock *Maddalena*
 Bruce Sledge *The Duke of Mantua*

Christopher Franklin *Conductor*
 Sandra Kott *Concertmaster*

“Largo al factotum” from Rossini’s

The Barber of Seville Live stage production
 at Citi Performing Arts Center Shubert
 Theatre, (now Boch Center Shubert
 Theatre), 2002
 Keith Phares *Figaro*

Stephen Lord *Conductor*
 Sandra Kott *Concertmaster*

“The Murder Ballad of Mack the Knife” from

Brecht and Weill’s The Threepenny Opera
 Live stage production at Huntington Avenue
 Theatre, 2018
 Daniel Belcher *Ballad Singer*

David Angus *Conductor*
 Michael Feingold *English translation*

“Vissi d’arte” from Puccini’s Tosca

Live stage production at Emerson’s Cutler
 Majestic Theatre, 2017
 Elena Stikhina *Tosca*
 Daniel Sutin *Scarpia*

David Stern *Conductor*
 Sandra Kott *Concertmaster*

“Der Hölle Rache” from Mozart’s

The Magic Flute
 Live stage production at Citi Performing
 Arts Center Shubert Theatre (now Boch Center
 Shubert Theatre), 2013
 So Young Park *Queen of the Night*

David Angus *Conductor*
 Sandra Kott *Concertmaster*
 Kelley Rourke *English translation*



DEBORAH VOIGT IN ARIADNE AUF NAXOS. BLO STAFF PHOTO.



DEBORAH VOIGT AND ERIE MILLS IN ARIADNE AUF NAXOS. BLO STAFF PHOTO.

With the **Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra**
 Post-Production Sound Editing by **Immersive Music Project**

PROGRAMMING FOR WHEREVER YOU ARE: [insert:opera], WE NEED TO LISTEN, AND ED- UCATION GONE VIRTUAL



Despite the impact of the pandemic on both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Seasons, BLO's commitment to our community never faltered, innovating with free programs made available through [insert:opera], our initiative to bring opera to you, wherever you are. Initial offerings included *at its (S)Core*, a podcast curated and produced by BLO Jane & Akin Emerging Artist Alumna Melanie Bacaling that explores artistic connections through music; and *Bedtime Lullabies*, a family-friendly series sharing video performances of classical, folk, and original lullabies.



BLO also offered free interactive community programming via Zoom that allowed people to connect over a shared love of music and the arts. *The Tonic Hour* offered audiences an opportunity to let loose and have fun while working directly with BLO artists to create their own operatic stories, taking existing works and spinning them into comic results. Additionally, BLO's monthly Zoom Book Club thematically paired books and operas, from Tomi Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone* paired with Verdi's *Nabucco*, to Madeline Miller's *Circe* with Bellini's *Norma*.



HOSTED BY CELESTE HEADLEE | EPISODE 1: PIPELINE

we need to
LISTEN *Conversations
that Matter*

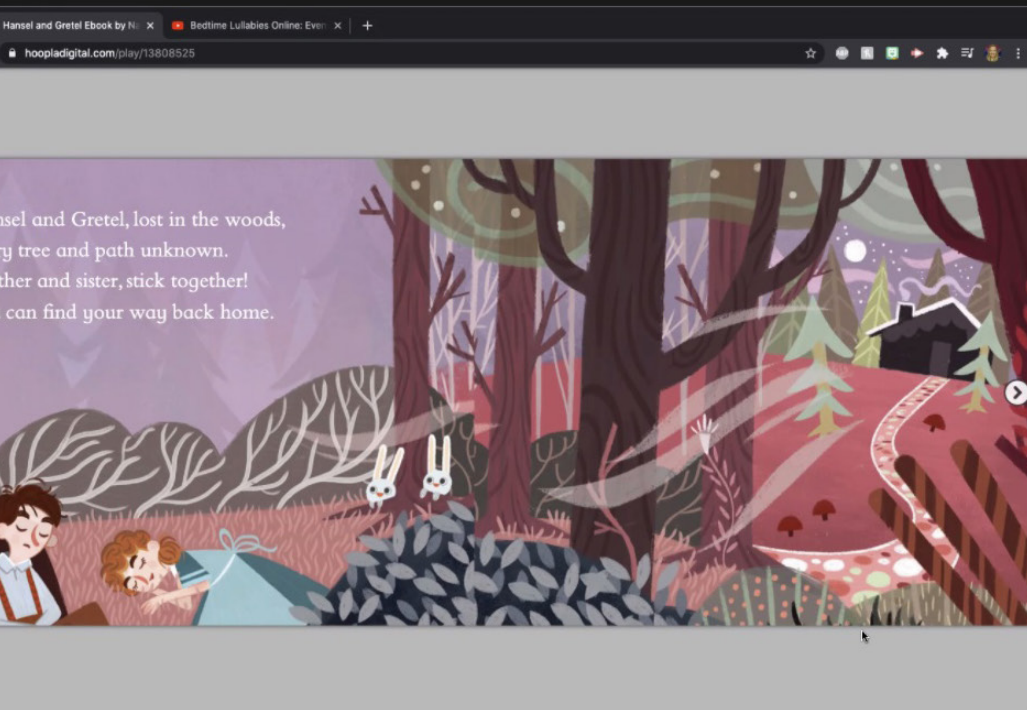


BLO's Create Your Own Opera school partnership program reaches 800 students annually, bringing BLO Teaching Artists directly into classrooms across Greater Boston where students create and perform their own original operas.

Ensuring positive futures for children relies on instilling a love and appreciation for creativity at an early age. Create Your Own Opera teaches more than just music—it empowers participants to become creative thinkers and effective leaders,

strengthens their social-emotional skills and gives them a sense of identity and value that will benefit their futures in invaluable ways.

Throughout the pandemic, BLO remained committed to our education programming, with Create Your Own Opera running remotely, and in hybrid models once guidelines allowed, with students producing operas over Zoom or in person for limited audiences.



BLO's operabox.tv created opportunities to expand our free programming. In fall 2020, BLO hosted *We Need To Listen*, a virtual discussion series that publicly addressed issues of race in classical music and explored paths to make opera more equitable, diverse, and accountable. Hosted by award-winning journalist, author, public media anchor, and classically trained singer Celeste Headlee, the series created a space for artists, industry leaders, and audiences to connect, share, and learn. *We Need To Listen* was produced live on Zoom, and remains available for audiences on operabox.tv.

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA'S HEALTH TASK FORCE FOR OPERA ARTISTS

While no one in our industry could have planned for the disruption caused by the coronavirus, our pivot to digital productions allowed BLO to continue employing our artists and creative personnel during a challenging time. As we developed a safe remote working environment and continued to monitor the various stages of returning to live performances, we engaged a Health & Safety Task Force, led by long-time BLO consulting physician Dr. Susan Bennett and in partnership with Mass General Brigham, to ensure that our production and performance work environments were the healthiest and most comfortable possible.



Dr. Susan Bennett, Mass General Hospital & BLO Consulting Physician

Dr. Erin Bromage, Associate Professor of Biology, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Dr. David Finn, Director of Executive Health at Mass General Hospital

Dr. David Hooper, Chief of the Infection Control Unit and Associate Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Mass General Hospital

Dr. David Kanarek, Co-Director, Cardiopulmonary Exercise Lab at Mass General Hospital

Dr. Phillip Song, Chief of the Division of Laryngology & Co-Director of the Voice and Speech Laboratory at Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary

Hans Bohn, Trombone & BLO Orchestra Member

Robert Couture, Trumpet & BLO Orchestra Member

Vanessa Schukis, Alto & BLO Chorus Member

Alfred Walker, Bass-Baritone

Michael Puzo, Partner at Hemenway & Barnes and BLO Chair, Board of Directors

Andrew Eisenberg, Partner at Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP & Board of Directors

TRANSPARENT MASKS & THE BOSTON RESILIENCY FUND



BLO STAFF PHOTO.

Although the pandemic disrupted live performances, we continued our work to connect with our creative community and, support the vital work of artists. Seeking to increase inclusion for our audience members who are deaf and hard of hearing, BLO partnered with the Mayor’s Commission for Persons with Disabilities as well as Costume Works, a local artisan-led business and costume shop, to create transparent, washable masks to facilitate lip-reading while maintaining a safe environment for all.



BLO STAFF PHOTO.

Thanks to support from the Boston Resiliency Fund, we were able to distribute 1,800 masks to local organizations that serve the communities who needed them. The project also supported staff at Costume Works, providing continued work when work in the arts sector was scarce.



Costume Works inc



LEARNING AND ENGAGING: ACTION STEPS TOWARD DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & ACCESSIBILITY

The 2019/20 and 2020/21 Seasons saw Boston Lyric Opera begin to center and expand its internal work in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility. This work began with two dozen Board members, staff, and BLO-affiliated artists participating alongside many other Boston-area arts organizations in Arts Connect International's 16-week intensive, Cultural Equity Learning Community. This marked the first time in company history that all these groups from across the community came together for the same equity training.

The 2020/21 Season also heralded the beginning of an 18-month partnership with YW Boston, recentering our focus on racial and social justice, sustainability, and impact on our community. Engaging the Board and the entire staff in their course "InclusionBoston," YW Boston led a series of discussions focusing on company culture and our individual roles within it – and identifying both historical and recent issues – which made the organization less likely to allow BIPOC staff to be hired and thrive. Focusing on issues specific to the opera and classical music industries, these sessions fostered candid and vulnerable dialogue about the way our corporate culture, including training and education, is defined by white privilege.

Reflecting on these ongoing conversations, BLO instituted two groups to continue leading BLO's expansion of our diversity, equity, and inclusion practices: the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Council, a Board-led group tasked with developing actionable strategies to ensure that our programs and administration represent the diverse artistry and perspectives of our community; and the BLO Joint-Union IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) Committee, an advisory group with representatives from American Federation of Musicians, American Guild of Musical Artists, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, and BLO who examine issues of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility in the artistic and producing work of each union, BLO, and — more broadly— in the field of opera.

- In summer 2020, members of Boston Lyric Opera’s Board, Staff, and Artists participated in **Arts Connect International’s** 2020 Cultural Equity Learning Community, a 16-week course that included readings, conversations, and lectures.
- In summer 2020, BLO established a DEI Council comprised of members of BLO’s Board and Staff.
- In winter 2021, BLO signed the **Black Opera Alliance’s** Pledge for Racial Equity and Systemic Change in Opera, responding with emphasis on Personnel & Hiring Practices, Board Recruitment & Executive Searches, Artistic Programming & Training, and a Code of Conduct.
- In spring 2021, BLO Board and Staff engaged in the InclusionBoston course through **YW Boston** to customize a facilitation process that led to an action plan specific to the company. Our partnership with YW Boston continued through May 2022.
- In summer 2021, BLO joined together with the **AFM**, the **AGMA**, and the **IATSE** to establish the BLO Joint-Union IDEA Committee (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility), an advisory group to discuss issues as they relate to BLO’s work and relationships to the respective local unions.
- In fall 2021, BLO engaged with the **Asian Opera Alliance** and will have continued conversations to find more ways to advocate for greater Asian and Asian-American representation in opera.
- BLO is committed to an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy that is reaffirmed annually by the Board, Staff, Artists, Creative, and Production Teams.



ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Annie Rabbat,
Concertmaster
Sarah Atwood,
principal 2nd violin
Stacey Alden
Heidi Braun-Hill
Robert Curtis
Colin Davis
Tera Gorsett
Rohan Gregory
Jodi Hagen
Zenas Hsu
Sandra Kott
Pattison Story

VIOLA

Kenneth Stalberg,
principal
David Feltner
Donna Jerome
Abigail Kubert-Cross

CELLO

Loewi Lin, *principal*
Melanie Dyball
Jan Pfeiffer-Rios
Aron Zelkowicz

BASS

Robert Lynam, *principal*
Barry Boettger

FLUTE

Linda Toote, *principal*
Iva Milch

OBOE

Nancy Dimock, *principal*
Lynda Jacquin

CLARINET

Jan Halloran, *principal*
Nicholas Brown

BASSOON

Ronald Haroutunian, *principal*
Rachel Juszcak

HORN

Kevin Owen, *principal*
Whitacre Hill
Dirk Hillyer
Iris Rosenstein

TRUMPET

Bruce Hall, *principal*
Jesse Levine

TROMBONE

Robert Couture, *principal*
Hans Bohn
Cameron Owen

TUBA

Donald Rankin, *principal*

TIMPANI

Jeffrey Fischer, *principal*

PERCUSSION

Richard Flanagan,
principal

HARP

Ina Zdorovetchi, *principal*

CHORUS

CHORUS MASTER

Brett Hodgdon

SOPRANO

Alisa Cassola
Molly Crookedacre
Helen Hassinger
Kelley Hollis
Jessica Jacobs
Jessine Johnson
Tamra Grace Jones
Marie McCarville
Brianna J. Robinson
Kimberly Sandoval
Abigail Smith
Isabelle Zeledón

ALTO

Megan Callahan
Heather Gallagher
Felicia Gavilanes
Elizabeth Kinder
Jaime Korkos
Rebecca Krouner
Katherine Maysek
Sophie Michaux
JoAnna Pope
Arielle Rogers
Vanessa Schukis

TENOR

Quinn Bernegger
David Rivera Bozón
Ethan Bremner
Christon Carney
Frank Levar
Christopher Maher
Thomas Oesterling
Francis Rogers
Patrick Starke
Fred VanNess

BASS

Jorgeandrés Camargo
RaShaun Campbell
Junhan Choi
Kamil Ekinci
Mitch FitzDaniel
Fred Furnari
Taylor Horner
Nicholas LaGessee
Todd McNeel
Blair Mellow
Devon Russo
Marcus Schenck
Ron Williams

EMERGING ARTISTS

2020/21

Nicholas LaGessee, *Baritone*
Omar Najmi, *Composer*
Brianna J. Robinson, *Soprano*
Zaray Rodriguez, *Mezzo soprano*

2019/20

Melanie Bacaling, *Production*
Nicholas LaGessee, *Baritone*
Robyn Marie Lamp, *Soprano*
Brianna J. Robinson, *Soprano*
Nathan Salazar, *Pianist*
Brendon Shapiro, *Pianist*

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