

LA CENERENTOLA (Cinderella)

**BOSTON
LYRIC
OPERA**

**A NEW BLO
PRODUCTION**

NOV 8-12, 2023

Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre

MUSIC BY
Gioachino Rossini

LIBRETTO BY
Jacopo Ferretti

CONDUCTOR
David Angus

STAGE DIRECTOR
Dawn M. Simmons

BRADLEY VERNATTER
*Stanford Calderwood
General Director & CEO*

DAVID ANGUS
Music Director

**JOHN CONKLIN,
VIMBAYI KAZIBONI, &
NINA YOSHIDA NELSEN**
Artistic Advisors



PRE-SHOW LECTURE

Listen to Professor Allison Voth speak about the history and music of *La Cenerentola* in this 30-minute lecture.



Allison Voth is an associate professor of music at Boston University's School of Music, and principal coach at Boston University's Opera Institute.

STUDY GUIDE

A Guide to BLO's *La Cenerentola*. For additional reading, see pages 14-16.



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Welcome to Boston Lyric Opera's 47TH SEASON!

GARY HIGGINS / BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Goodness Triumphant: A World Where Kindness Wins

The Cinderella story has existed for thousands of years across many cultures. The oldest known version dates back to ancient Greece, with thousands more variations across the world. For generations, our communities have celebrated the idea that we all have infinite possibilities and potential regardless of background and circumstances.

Unlike the American Disney adaptation, where our protagonist's dreams come true through wishing and magic, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, which he also gave the subtitle *Goodness Triumphant*, is centered on the belief that kindness and grace can change our fortunes.

This story resonates deeply with my experience of Bostonians, citizens in a city known for its rich history, expansive culture, and a spirit of resilience. This is the exact reason our production took inspiration from our hometown.

Our Cinderella is a celebration of Boston, and it comes to life with a dedicated and talented cast and crew, including many artists from our vibrant local community. The team is led by the incomparable Dawn M. Simmons, one of Boston's most beloved actors, directors, and arts leaders. The work you see onstage and behind the scenes at this performance is a testament to the tremendous wealth of creativity and artistic riches that exist here.

I want to express my deep appreciation for your kindness and presence today. Just as Cinderella's goodness radiates and changes the world around her, your generosity and support have a transformational impact on Boston Lyric Opera.

As you settle into your seats and the overture begins, I hope the enchantment of *La Cenerentola* reminds you that together, with kindness, we can create our own kind of magic.

Yours sincerely,



Bradley Vernatter | *Stanford Calderwood* General Director & CEO



UPCOMING BLO EVENTS

DEC 4

AWARDS FOR DIGITAL
EXCELLENCE IN OPERA:
SVADBA (Livestream)
OperaAmerica.org/live

JAN 25

WORKS & PROCESS
Guggenheim Museum, NYC

FEB 16-18

THE ANONYMOUS LOVER
The Huntington Theatre

MAR 1-10

EURYPIDICE
The Huntington Theatre

MAR 21

OPERA NIGHT
Boston Public Library

APR 6

THE WANDERER'S
TETHERING
College of the Holy Cross

For event details & times,
[visit blo.org/events](https://blo.org/events)

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Boston Lyric Opera's new mission, vision, and values were created with the extensive participation of 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](https://blo.org/deia)

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & BOARD PRESIDENT



Dear Friends of Boston Lyric Opera,

With November well underway and with you here today, we wanted to take a moment to express our deep gratitude for your support of Boston Lyric Opera. Your presence in our audience means you are about to enjoy a wonderful opera while also supporting our work.

At BLO, we truly believe that to remain relevant today, we must continue to evolve and offer a range of opera experiences. That involves focusing energies on three key elements: traditional opera works, reimagined traditional works, and new works. All three can be equally entertaining, challenging, and invigorating.

In the past year, we have seen the fruits of being dedicated to this vision. Last spring, we co-commissioned and presented the new opera *Omar* to resounding success, rave reviews, and a Pulitzer Prize in Music for its composers Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels. This marked a significant step in our commitment to nurturing contemporary talent and exploring new creative horizons.

Earlier this fall, we had the pleasure to share a reimagined production of *Madama Butterfly*. Once again, the response was overwhelming, making this our best-selling opera in the past seven years. Not only did you, our cherished audience, support us wholeheartedly, we welcomed representatives from opera companies across the country eager to witness the game-changing work happening at BLO.

Now we present the opera classic *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*). We are honored to have been in rehearsals for the show and to watch award-winning local stage director Dawn M. Simmons conjure theatrical magic with our extraordinary artists. In this production, you will see BLO's signature, innovative approach applied to a beloved classic (albeit with a unique, local twist!).

La Cenerentola also highlights one of the most rewarding aspects of BLO's journey: the chance to showcase local and emerging talent. Current and alumni members of the Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artists Initiative have been key to productions throughout 2023. This opera includes three current Emerging Artists: Alexis Peart (playing Tisbe), Angela Yam (covering Clorinda), and Junhan Choi (chorus and covering Dandini). We take immense pride in nurturing the next generation of opera luminaries.

With this the final opera in 2023, and as we approach the holiday season, we wish you all joy, warmth, and good company. In the coming year, please join us for *The Anonymouse Lover* in February and *Eurydice* in March, along with many more programs. There is a wealth of exciting artistic content in store for you.

With gratitude and warmest regards,

Alicia M. Cooney | Board Chair
Boston Lyric Opera

Wayne C. Davis | Board President
Boston Lyric Opera

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As of Oct. 15, 2023

♦ Deceased



MEMBERSHIP

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

- Ticket Discounts
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- and more!

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LA CENERENTOLA

Music by GIOACHINO ROSSINI

Libretto by JACOPO FERRETTI

Sung in Italian with English surtitles

David Angus, BLO Music Director

2023/24 Season Sponsor

Linda Cabot Black

PERFORMANCES

WED, NOV 8, 2023 | 7:30PM

FRI, NOV 10, 2023 | 7:30PM

SUN, NOV 12, 2023 | 3PM

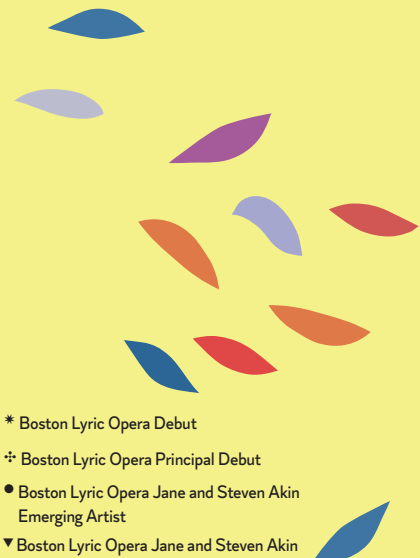
Running time: 2 hours and 50 minutes,
including one 20-minute intermission.

EMERSON CUTLER

MAJESTIC THEATRE

219 Tremont Street

Boston, MA 02116



* Boston Lyric Opera Debut

‡ Boston Lyric Opera Principal Debut

● Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin
Emerging Artist

▼ Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin
Emerging Artist Alum

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor

DAVID ANGUS

Stage Director

DAWN M. SIMMONS*

Set Designer

JENNA MCFARLAND LORD*

Costume Designer

TREVOR BOWEN

Lighting Designer

BAILEY COSTA

Wig/Hair/Makeup Designer

PRISCILLA BRUCE

Intimacy Director

ANGIE JEPSON

Boston Lyric Opera Orchestra

ANNIE RABBAT *Orchestra Leader*

Chorus Director

BRETT HODGDON*

Rehearsal Coaches/Pianists

BRETT HODGDON

DOUGLAS SUMI

Stage Manager

MIKE JANNEY

CAST

Angelina
CECELIA HALL*

Clorinda
DANA LYNNE VARGA⁺

Tisbe
ALEXIS PEART^{•+}

Don Ramiro
LEVY SEKGAPANE*

Dandini
LEVI HERNANDEZ

Don Magnifico
BRANDON CEDEL

Alidoro
JAMES DEMLER

SYNOPSIS

La Cenerentola tells the story of a kindhearted young woman, Angelina, who is forced to be a servant in her own home by her callous stepfather and two self-centered stepsisters.

Act I *Don Magnifico's manor.* The stepsisters, Clorinda and Tisbe, are arguing, while Angelina is taking care of the household. She is treated by her stepfather, Don Magnifico, and her stepsisters as a servant rather than as a family member. While she works, she sings about a king who married a commoner. A beggar knocks at the door (he is really the philosopher Alidoro in disguise). The stepsisters dismiss him, but Angelina kindly offers him bread and coffee. Then, courtiers arrive, telling the family that Prince Ramiro is searching for the most beautiful girl in the land to take as his bride, and there will be a ball this very night for that purpose. Don Magnifico is intent on the prince's marrying either Clorinda or Tisbe to secure his family's failing fortune. They begin to prepare for the ball. After the room clears, Ramiro arrives, disguised in his servant's clothes so he can observe the family's true nature. Alidoro has told him that there is a goodhearted woman in this house worthy of marriage. He meets Angelina briefly, and the two are quickly attracted to each other, but when he asks for her name, Angelina fears she'll get in trouble and flees. Next, Dandini arrives, dressed as the prince, and Ramiro watches as Clorinda, Tisbe, and Magnifico fall all over themselves flattering him as he invites them to the ball. Angelina asks

to be invited, but her stepfather refuses. Ramiro also notices how badly Angelina is treated. Alidoro inquires about the third daughter of the household, but Magnifico lies and says that she has died, with a veiled threat to Angelina that he will kill her should she reveal herself. Later, Alidoro, who has seen her kindness, promises Angelina that he will take her to the ball. At Ramiro's country house, Dandini (still disguised as the prince) and Ramiro (still disguised as a servant) prepare for the ball and discuss Clorinda and Tisbe. They dislike them both and are confused as to which of Don Magnifico's daughters Alidoro claimed had a good heart. Clorinda and Tisbe arrive for the ball early. As a test, Dandini offers the disguised Ramiro as a husband to whichever sister the prince does not marry. Both are outraged at the idea of marrying a servant. Guests continue to arrive, and Alidoro arrives with an unknown, beautiful woman who resembles Angelina. The banquet begins, and everyone feels as if they are in a dream.

Act II *Ramiro's country estate.* Magnifico worries that the arrival of the beautiful stranger will ruin his daughters' chances with the prince. However, Angelina isn't interested in the "prince," and tells him she has fallen in love with his servant, Ramiro. Angelina must leave, but before she does, she

gives Ramiro one of a pair of bracelets and tells him that if he truly cares for her, he will find her. Magnifico insists that the “prince” choose one of his daughters before the evening is over. Dandini confesses that he is really the prince’s servant in disguise. Disgusted, Magnifico immediately leaves with his daughters in tow. At home, they order Angelina to tend to them after their dreadful evening. Ramiro is determined to find his beloved and calls for the carriage that very night. In a sudden summer thunderstorm, his carriage breaks down right in front of Magnifico’s manor (in fact, Alidoro has engineered this little mishap), and he must wait out the storm there. Ramiro sees a glimmer on the servant’s wrist and recognizes it as the bracelet that matches the one he was given by Angelina. They are reunited and Don Magnifico is furious! Ramiro threatens him and his daughters out of anger, but Angelina begs Ramiro to forgive them, and he acquiesces. Angelina and Ramiro celebrate their wedding at the palace. Magnifico tries to win the favor of his stepdaughter at last, but all she wishes is for him to acknowledge her as his true daughter. Angelina is truly happy with Ramiro and shares her joy with her family, forgiving them for mistreating her.



ABOUT BLO'S PRODUCTION

Cinderella is a timeless fairytale that can be — and has been — set in various time periods and locations. Just consider how many versions of the story exist! This flexibility was surely to Rossini’s advantage, since he and librettist Ferretti wrote *La Cenerentola* in a whirlwind of just 24 days! To simplify the staging on such a tight schedule, they eliminated all magical elements from Charles Perrault’s version, which they were basing the opera on, and focused on the “kindness triumphs” theme of the story. Boston Lyric Opera’s version of *La Cenerentola* keeps this thematic focus central, even as we set the story in our own city, today, in 2023. Our Cinderella, Angelina, lives with her stepfather (Don Magnifico) and stepsisters (Clorinda and Tisbe) in the Seaport in a brand-new, sparkling glass high-rise condominium. While Angelina is forced to act as their (unpaid) housekeeper, the stepsisters spend their days as social media influencers, desperate to get “in” with the older, more established wealthy Boston families... like Ramiro’s. Don Magnifico encourages their behavior, hoping it will remedy the fact that they are living beyond their means. In contrast to Don Magnifico’s Seaport residence, Ramiro’s family home in Beacon Hill is a warm old brick house covered in ivy, complete with a beautiful, secluded courtyard. Romance blossoms in this courtyard when Angelina and Ramiro meet for a second time, and this is where Angelina ultimately makes her home with Ramiro, the person who sees her for who she is.

See page 16 to find out more about our Boston settings!

OPERA
AMERICA

2023 AWARDS FOR
DIGITAL EXCELLENCE IN OPERA

NOTEWORTHY PROJECT (FINALIST)



SVADBA

BLO'S 2022 CINEMATIC OPERA EXPERIENCE



Directed by Shura Baryshnikov
Conducted by Daniela Candillari

LEARN MORE:
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Brandon Cedel, Cecelia Hall, Alexis Peart, and Dana Lynne Varga in rehearsal for *La Cenerentola*.

KATHY WITTMAN | BALL SQUARE FILMS

MEET THE ARTISTS

CREATIVE TEAM



DAVID ANGUS | *Conductor*

Now in his fourteenth year as Boston Lyric Opera's music director, David Angus recently served as music director and conductor for the critically acclaimed online productions of *desert in* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, as well as BLO's backwards *La Bohème* and Anne Bogart's striking production of *Bluebeard's Castle*. In addition to his work with BLO, he just conducted a new *Sweeney Todd* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm, *The Marriage of Figaro* in Prague, and several recordings of new American works with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Prior to his time at BLO, Angus was music director of The Glimmerglass Festival and Chief Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Flanders. He has led orchestras and choirs throughout Europe, particularly in Scandinavia, including the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and several Danish orchestras. Born in England, he has conducted most of the major orchestras in Great Britain, including the London Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, most of the BBC orchestras, the London Mozart Players, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He recently debuted with the Toscanini Orchestra in Parma and the Porto Symphony Orchestra in Portugal. He returned to Wexford Festival Opera, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the LPO, and the Huddersfield Choral Society, as well as to his former orchestra in Belgium. Angus was a boy chorister at King's College under Sir David Willcocks and read music at Surrey University. He was a conducting fellow at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he won several prizes for opera conducting.



DAWN M. SIMMONS |

Stage Director

Dawn M. Simmons makes her directorial debut with Boston Lyric Opera with this production of *La Cenerentola*. Regional credits include: The Huntington, JAG Productions, Play On Shakespeare, The Hangar Theatre, and WAM Theatre. Local credits include: Wheelock Family Theatre, Front Porch Arts Collective, Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Central Square Theater, New Repertory Theatre, The

Gloucester Stage Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Actors' Shakespeare Project, Bad Habit Productions, New Exhibition Room, Boston Public Works, Fresh Ink Theatre, and Our Place Theatre Project. Simmons is a Co-Producing Artistic Director of the Front Porch Arts Collective. She also serves on the boards of Arts Connect International and White Snake Projects and is Co-Artistic Director of New Exhibition Room.



JENNA MCFARLAND LORD |

Set Designer

Jenna McFarland Lord is an award-winning scenic, environmental, and production designer. Over the past 22 years, Ms. McFarland Lord has designed shows for several professional companies in Boston such as: *The Prom*, *BLKS*, and *The Color Purple*, SpeakEasy Stage Company; *Grand Horizons* and *Spring Awakening*, The Gloucester Stage Company; *Calendar Girls* and *Something's Afoot*, Greater Boston Stage; *Paradise*, *The Convert*, Central Square Theater; *In The Heights*, Wheelock Family Theatre; *Cherry Docs*, New Repertory Theatre; *Fabulation* and *The Last Five Years*, Lyric Stage Company of Boston; *Così fan tutte*, Boston Conservatory at Berklee; and *Don Giovanni*, New England Conservatory. Off-Broadway credits: *The Secret of Mme. Bonnard's Bath*, New York Playwrights' Lab; and *Man in Snow*, La MaMa Experimental Theatre. She created the interior industrial design for Station1 and she was the production coordinator for the scenic elements for the Boston Winter Festival in Government Center Plaza. Jenna McFarland Lord was the production designer on the film *YE!*, written and directed by John ADEkoje. In addition to her professional design career, Ms. Lord is proud to be in her fifteenth year as the set design teacher at Boston Arts Academy, Boston's only public high school for the arts.



TREVOR BOWEN |

Costume Designer

Trevor Bowen is a costume designer based in the Twin Cities. He graduated from West Virginia University with a Master of Fine Arts. Since then, he was employed in multiple roles in the Long Wharf Theater costume shop, beginning as an intern

while still in graduate school. In 2012, he moved to the Twin Cities to continue work as a design assistant, and moved into becoming a full time costume designer in 2013 with the Pillsbury House Theater production of *The Road Weeps*, *The Well Runs Dry*. Since then, he has worked at various Twin Cities and regional houses, including Asolo Repertory Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, The Jungle Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, and the 5th Avenue Theatre.



BAILEY COSTA |

Lighting Designer

Bailey Costa is a NYC-based lighting designer working in theatre, opera, and dance. Recent designs include: *Here Be Sirens* (upcoming), Mannes Opera; *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Manhattan School of Music; *LA RACE*, Off-Broadway; *SKIN: A New Musical*, Rattlestick Global Forms Theater Festival; and *Don't Stop Me, a new dance-a-thon musical to the death* (Manhattan School of Music). She serves as the assistant lighting designer for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* on Broadway. Ms. Costa received her bachelor's degree from Boston's Suffolk University and her MFA from NYU Tisch.



PRISCILLA BRUCE |

Wig/Hair/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. Ms. Bruce 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.

CAST



BRANDON CEDEL |

Don Magnifico

American bass-baritone Brandon Cedel is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young

Artist Development Program, and was an ensemble member of Oper Frankfurt from 2016-2019. Highlights of his 2022/23 season include Dan Brown, *The Hours*, Metropolitan Opera; Hercules, *Hercules*, Karlsruhe Handel Festival; Don Giovanni, *Don Giovanni*, Atlanta Opera; and Bottom, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Glyndebourne Festival. On the concert platform, he sings Levite in an international tour of Handel's *Solomon* with The English Concert under Harry Bicket, and Christus in Bach's *Matthäus-Passion* with Music of the Baroque under Dame Jane Glover. Recent appearances include Figaro, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Glyndebourne Festival; Dan Brown, *The Hours* (World Premiere), Philadelphia Orchestra/Yannick Nézet-Séguin; Zuniga, *Carmen*, Chicago Opera Theater; Masetto, *Don Giovanni*, Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago; Leporello, *Don Giovanni* and Argante, *Rinaldo*, Glyndebourne Festival; Collatinus, *The Rape of Lucretia*, Boston Lyric Opera; Figaro, *Le*

MEET THE ARTISTS

nozze di Figaro, Opera Philadelphia and Stuttgart Staatsoper; and Colline, *La bohème* and Basilio, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Canadian Opera Company. His roles for Oper Frankfurt include Masetto, *Don Giovanni*; Sprecher, *Die Zauberflöte*; Lieutenant Ratcliffe, *Billy Budd*; Argante, *Ariodante*; Xerxes, *Xerxes*; Cesare, *Giulio Cesare*; Angelotti, *Tosca*; Brander, *La damnation de Faust*; and Achior, *La Betulia liberata*.



CECELIA HALL | *Angelina*

Cecelia Hall sings leading roles as a member of Oper Frankfurt's prestigious ensemble and appears regularly as a guest artist on many of the world's finest stages. Highlights of her 2022/23 season included *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at New York's Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's conducted by Harry Bicket; *Serse, Serse*, Komische Oper Berlin; *Ariodante, Ariodante*, Israeli Opera conducted by Jean-Christophe Spinosi; and leading roles at Oper Frankfurt including Charlotte, *Werther* and Irene, *Tamerlano*. *La Cenerentola* marks her role and house debut with Boston Lyric Opera. Other highlights of her 2023/24 season include her debut with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for Mozart's *Requiem*, conducted by Jaap van Zweden; *Ascanio, Ascanio in Alba* with Oper Frankfurt; and Bach's *St John Passion* with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. Ms. Hall is an alumna of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center, the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, The Juilliard School, and DePaul University.



LEVI HERNANDEZ | *Dandini*

In the 2022/23 season, Levi Hernandez sang in Opera Idaho's *Celebrando a México* concert; Lescaut, *Manon Lescaut*, North Carolina Opera; and Papageno (cover), *Die Zauberflöte* and Dulcarama, *L'elisir d'amore*, The Metropolitan Opera. He appeared as Rappaccini, *La hija de Rappaccini*, Chicago Opera Theater; Tonio, *Pagliacci*, Opera Colorado and El Paso Opera; and Aba, *El milagro del recuerdo*, Houston Grand Opera. He has sung Pa Joad, *The Grapes of Wrath* with numerous companies. Other recent performances include Marcello, *La bohème*, Opera Colorado; Inspector Kildare, *Elizabeth*

Cree, Chicago Opera Theater; Álvaro, *Florencia en el Amazonas*, San Diego Opera and Madison Opera; and Ford, *Falstaff*, Intermountain Opera. He debuted with Houston Grand Opera as Sharpless, *Madama Butterfly*, and has covered roles at the Metropolitan Opera in *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and *Carmen*. Mr. Hernandez has been a concert soloist with the El Paso Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, Pennsylvania Ballet, and Cheyenne Symphony, among others. Recent repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, Dvorak's *Te Deum*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. He was a 2002 Metropolitan Opera National Council Awards and OPERALIA finalist, and a Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation grant recipient. After graduating from Westminster Choir College, Mr. Hernandez studied at the Academy of Vocal Arts.



JAMES DEMLER | *Alidoro*

Bass-baritone James Demler is known for his versatile range of repertory. He has been an annual favorite with Boston's Odyssey Opera, with recent roles including Pistol, *Sir John in Love*; Jov, *Dimitrij*; Pietro de Wissant, *L'Assedio di Calais*; and Earl of Arundel, *Chronicle of Nine* (world premiere), which was recorded with the Grammy-winning BMOP Orchestra. In 2023, Mr. Demler joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera, covering the Notary in *Der Rosenkavalier*. This season, he also sings Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte*, Newport Festival and Benoit/Alcindoro, *La Bohème*, Berkshire Opera Festival; and will debut with Orlando Opera as The Water Goblin, *Rusalka*. Recent engagements include performances with Boston Lyric Opera, White Snake Projects, The Boston Pops, Houston Symphony, and Ottawa Orchestra. He played Noah in Wes Anderson's film *Moonrise Kingdom* and has performed internationally in Belgium, Germany, Egypt, and Canada. Features on opera recordings include *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Odyssey Opera; *Bandanna*, Las Vegas Philharmonic, and Shining Brow, Buffalo Philharmonic. Mr. Demler holds degrees in vocal performance from The University of New Mexico, The University of Arizona, and The Eastman School of Music. He was a Fellow at the Aspen School of Music and the Houston Opera Studio, and teaches at Boston University.

**ALEXIS PEART | *Tisbe***

Mezzo-soprano Alexis Peart joins Boston Lyric Opera as a Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist, making her company debut as *Tisbe*, *La Cenerentola*, also singing *Big Stone*, *Eurydice* and covering *Dorotheé*, *L'Amant Anonyme*. She is the featured mezzo-soprano in a world premiere by Kitty Brazelton to accompany FirstWorks (RI)'s bespoke public art experience in collaboration with Masary Studios. She also performs frequently with groups like *Castle of Our Skins* and the *Assabet Valley Mastersingers*. In 2022/23, Ms. Peart performed as the Voice of Israel, *The Ordering of Moses*, Rochester Oratorio Society; the mezzo soloist in Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*, Boston University Philharmonic Orchestra; and covered *Carmen*, *La Tragédie de Carmen*, Chautauqua Opera. She appeared with the Boston University Opera Institute as *Jo*, *Little Women*; *Ruggiero*, *Alcina*; and *Brittomara*, *If I Were You*, and is a 2022 winner of the Boston University Carnegie Hall competition. Especially apt with new music, Ms. Peart debuted *Ada Lovelace*, *The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage* (world premiere), *Guerilla Opera*; and presented the first live performance of *Love in the Time Of* (world premiere), Boston Opera Collaborative. She can be heard on the Grammy-nominated recording of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* produced by Boston Modern Orchestra Project and *Odyssey Opera*.


**LEVY SEKGAPANE | *Don Ramiro***

South African tenor Levy Sekgapane studied under Kamal Khan and Hanna van Niekerk at the South African College of Music (University of Cape Town). In 2015, he won First Prize at the Belvedere Competition and the Monserrat Caballé International Singing Competition. In 2017, he won First Prize at Operalia, subsequently debuting at Paris National Opera, Bavarian State Opera, El Liceu, and other major houses. Sekgapane's 22/23 season highlights included *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Vienna State Opera; *Idreno*, *Semiramide*, Deutsche Oper Berlin; *Don Pasquale*, Teatro Petruzzelli; *La Cenerentola*, Zürich Opera and Semperoper Dresden; and *Nadir*, *Les Pecheurs de perles*. Notable past engagements include *The Time of Our Singing* (World

Premiere), *La Monnaie*; *Ramiro*, *La Cenerentola*, Los Angeles Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Staatsoper Hamburg, and Opéra royal de Wallonie; Ernesto, *Don Pasquale*, Staatsoper Hamburg and Latvian National Opera; *Adina*, Rossini Opera Festival and Wexford Opera; *Count Almaviva*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Malmö Opera, Teatro Massimo Palermo, Opéra National de Bordeaux, Paris Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Glyndebourne; *Il Turco in Italia*, Staatsoper Hamburg; *Arbace*, *Idomeneo*, Salzburg Festival; *Conte di Libenshof*, *Il viaggio a Reims*, Royal Danish Opera; and *Nemorino*, *L'elisir d'amore*, Staatstheater Wiesbaden. Concert work includes performances with Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, Salle Gaveau, and Basílica de Santa María del Mar. In 2019, his first solo CD of Rossini arias was released by Prima Classic.

**DANA LYNNE VARGA | *Clorinda***

Dana Lynne Varga is a dynamic interpreter of a wide variety of repertoire on opera and concert stages. She frequently solos at Carnegie Hall, most recently singing the *Fauré Requiem* and *Mozart Requiem* with the New York City Chamber Orchestra, as well as the *Brahms Requiem* and *Haydn Lord Nelson Mass* with the New England Symphonic Ensemble. Favorite opera roles include *Pallas Athene*, *Paride ed Elena*, *Odyssey Opera*; *Micaëla*, *Carmen*, MassOpera; *Fiordiligi*, *Così fan tutte*, Commonwealth Opera, CT Lyric, and Boston Midsummer Opera; *Donna Elvira*, *Don Giovanni*, MassOpera; *Alcina*, *Alcina*, Boston Opera Collaborative; *Adina* (cover)/*Giannetta*, *L'elisir d'amore*, Teatro Nuovo; and *Musetta*, *La bohème*, PANopera. Highlights of Ms. Varga's busy concert career have included *Beethoven's Missa Solemnis* with the Cantata Singers, *Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony* with the Metropolitan Chorale, *Mozart's Great Mass in C Minor* with Coro Allegro, *Beethoven's Mass in C* at Tanglewood and countless performances of *Handel's Messiah*, *Haydn's Creation*, and *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony* across the eastern seaboard. Ms. Varga was the first-place winner of the 2016 Classical Singer National Vocal Competition. An accomplished voice teacher and career coach, Ms. Varga is a fierce advocate for singers, devoted to progressive change in the classical vocal industry.



There are approximately 3,000 different versions of the Cinderella story from many cultures worldwide, dating back over 2,000 years with roots in ancient Greece and China. In fact, it follows one of the seven major basic story arcs: “rags to riches.” In this archetype, described in a book by Christopher Booker, the protagonist is poor, in that they lack wealth, beauty, love, or power. They find what they seek, lose it, and then gain it back again. In the case of the Cinderella story, the society within which the story is set is defined by a social stratification that makes the protagonist poor in wealth, love, and power. A high-status marriage — which unites all three of these factors — becomes the idealized “happily ever after.”

Sociologists define social class as a stratification or grouping of people in a hierarchy based on certain characteristics including wealth, education, occupation, and income. Social class also is highly influenced by whether the person conforms to the dominant social norms, including gender expression, religion, political affiliation, etc. Generally, those with more power are of a higher social class, and those with less are of a lower one. The organizing principles of social stratification have shifted and changed over the millennia, yet most civilizations have had social groupings that are in part divided by wealth, education, occupation, and income.

For much of history, in many cultures across the world — and certainly during Rossini’s day — a woman was considered property and obligated to be under the care of a man, usually her father, until she married. Cinderella cannot amass personal wealth, and her wealth automatically becomes the property of her guardian. Her social value comes from her upbringing (which likely included some education), her youth, and her beauty. Many versions of Cinderella — in the Western world, at least — describe the character as coming from a higher social class and being forced to live an impoverished life at the hands of a stepparent whose family is living beyond their means. Cinderella’s inheritance has been squandered and she is essentially held captive. A message of Cinderella is that if women are beautiful, intelligent, patient, and kind, they will find security and wealth through true love and a higher social class (financially secure) marriage, exhibiting true virtues ascribed to aristocrats and royalty and thus proving themselves worthy of such a marriage.

RAGS TO RICHES: A FAIRYTALE OF SOCIAL CLASS

by Rebecca Ann S. Kirk, M.Ed.



Aschenputtel und ihre bösen Schwestern
(*Cinderella and her Wicked Sisters*),
oil painting by Emile Meyer, 1892

German philosopher Karl Marx developed a social theory in the mid-19th century during the Industrial Revolution defining social class in relationship to the economy. In his theory, the working class is in inherent conflict with the owners and profiteers of industry, and the government exists to protect the wealthy over the common good. Marx was a strong supporter of the arts because they influenced culture as subversive propaganda and could potentially incite revolution. He posited that if resources were distributed evenly, then the conflict between classes would resolve.


Many have applied his theories to literary analysis of the Cinderella story, asserting that the central conflict of the story stems from classism. Cinderella is poor even though she lives in a household with her family who are not poor. They oppress her. As a woman, she has no claim to wealth of her own; thus she is forced to be working class, while her stepfamily is middle class, and the royal family has the highest social status. Cinderella is in conflict with her stepfamily because they each want to increase their social class status with a chance at marrying into royalty. In the end, however, Cinderella's virtue is rewarded over her stepsisters' seductions and ambitions of social climbing, demonstrating what society values most in women.

In order to attend the ball, Cinderella must "fit in" with her clothes, which Marx would assert relates to commodification and consumerism. In Rossini

and Ferretti's adaptation, even though the prince (in disguise) already met Cinderella and recognized her virtue, he doesn't initially think of her as "marriage material," because she is a maid. Cinderella is ashamed of her social status and tattered clothing in their first meeting. In the story, wealth is equated to power in terms of social status and the ability to influence society. Therefore, when the prince does choose Cinderella for her virtue and beauty, he has the power to quickly elevate her social status, freeing her from her oppression in spite of the lower status she was forced into by her stepfather.

BLO's production is set in present-day Boston. Boston is one of the oldest cities in the United States and has a long history with social class. The class systems have shifted over the centuries, yet some of the old structures remain. Much of Boston's social class system is defined by "who came first" in colonizing the land and building the city.

"Boston Brahmin" is a term used to describe approximately 66 family lines, many of which are recognizable because New England towns, buildings, businesses, streets etc. are named after them. These "old money" Boston families were the first European families — most, originally middle class — who built their fortune as merchants and businessmen in the early days of Boston's history and have since amassed much of the wealth in the city by owning land, buildings, and businesses; and by



Boston Lyric Opera's new production of *La Cenerentola (Cinderella)* is set in modern-day Boston — a city known and loved by many that also has a rich, complex history.



The visual landscape for our production will be familiar to many Bostonians, particularly highlighting two iconic neighborhoods: Beacon Hill and the Seaport.

We have assembled a collection of articles and deep dives into these locales to enrich your theater-going experience.

holding influence in the philanthropic and political sectors. These early white Protestant settlers also captured and enslaved Native Americans and brought captured Africans to Boston to be enslaved as early as 1638. These enslaved peoples labored to build wealth for the “Boston Brahmin” families that has lasted over four centuries.

As Boston grew, new waves of immigrants arrived as poor and working class. They faced discrimination and worked for the upper classes through agricultural, service, and industrial labor. The Irish formed the first major wave of immigration in 1820, along with Canadians, Germans, and English, followed later by the Portuguese and Cape Verdeans. In the next fifty years, immigrants arrived from China, Italy, Russia, and Armenia. Immigrants came to Boston for many reasons, but all were striving for a better life with freedom to work, worship, and build safe communities. As generations became more established and amassed generational wealth, those that had settled earlier slowly rose in social status to be middle class, and in some cases upper class, while newer immigrants filled working-class jobs and neighborhoods.

Newer waves of immigration continued throughout the 20th century, making today's Boston home to people from all over the world, including people from Syria, Lebanon, Haiti, Vietnam, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Central America, South Asia, Brazil, Jamaica, Columbia, and many more

places. Since its founding, Boston has been a sought-after destination as a welcome place of asylum for refugees worldwide since the 1600s, and especially since World War II which, in part, has contributed to the rich diversity we see today.

Generally, those that live within the City of Boston today are made up of middle-class, upper-middle class, and wealthy residents known as the “Creative Class” and neighborhoods of “Service Class” residents who are lower class and often work jobs that serve the “Creative Class.” Those who are lower middle and middle class “Working Class” tend to live outside the city and commute, if necessary, as the cost of living has forced them outside the city's limits.

The “Rags to Riches” archetype still resonates in today's stratified cultural landscape, for while actual royalty is all but a thing of the past, the wealthy still hold immense power and influence, and a marriage may change a person's social standing. *Cinderella's* fairytale says that if we have high moral standards, in the end, it will transcend our social status. There's a reason why this story endures across time and place. We still adore and retell it today, be it via Disney's *Cinderella*, *Pretty Woman*, or *Ella Enchanted* — to us, it represents the romance of the American Dream.

Rebecca Ann S. Kirk, M.Ed. is Boston Lyric Opera's Director of Community & Learning. She holds degrees in Education and Sociology.

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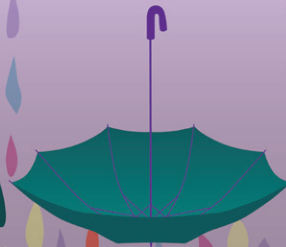
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Now in its 47th Season, Boston Lyric Opera is dedicated to creating compelling operatic experiences throughout the greater Boston area that welcome new audiences, break new ground, and enrich community life.

Since its founding in 1976, Boston Lyric Opera has produced world and US premieres, Pulitzer Prize-winning operas, and notable commissions and coproductions, ranging from live stage shows to films streamed worldwide.

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. Each season, BLO invests in Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artists to hone their craft and prepare for the next step in their careers. Alongside its mainstage season, BLO presents wide-reaching community and educational public programs and performances year round, some at its Midway Artist Studios headquarters, others in partnership with the Boston Public Library, Boston Public Schools, and cultural organizations across New England.

BLO launched a new five-year strategic plan in 2022, prioritizing four strategic pillars: Programming, Community, Space, and Leadership, along with a renewed commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and 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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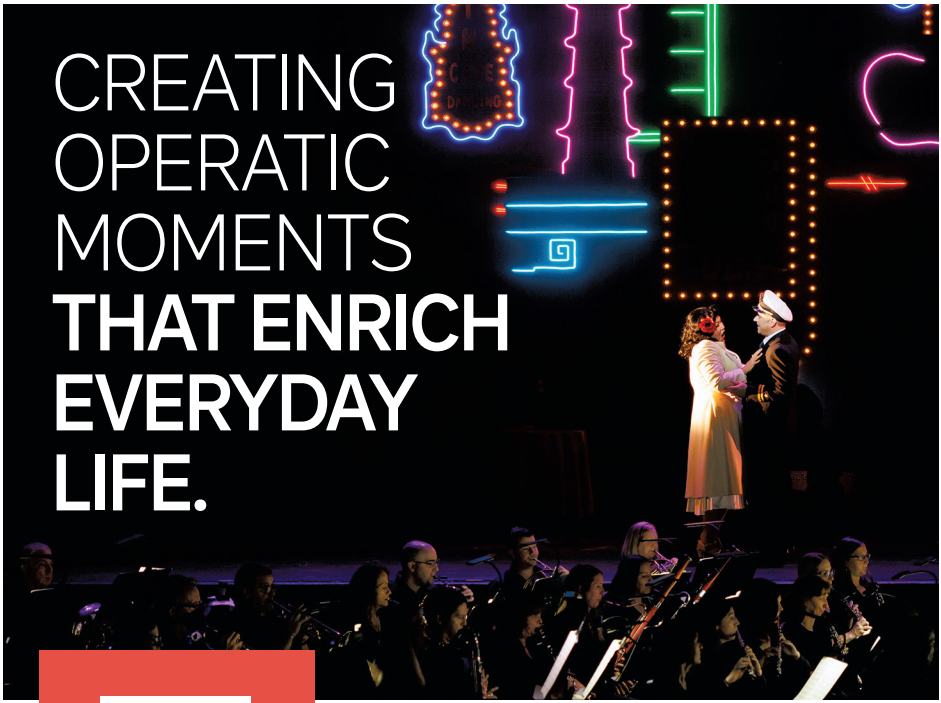
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BLO's 2023 production of *Madama Butterfly*, with Karen Chia-Ling Ho and Dominick Chenes.

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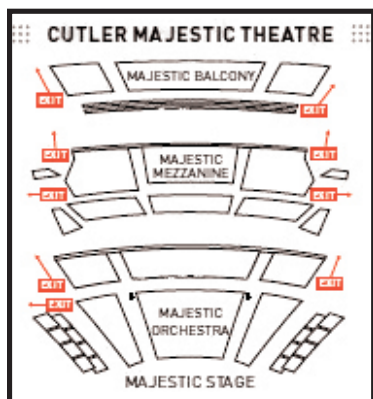


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