

THE ANONYMOUS LOVER

Feb 16 - 18, 2024
The Huntington Theatre

BLO
BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA PREMIERES NEW REVIVAL OF ROMANTIC 18TH CENTURY OPERA

Groundbreaking Black composer Joseph Bologne's charming comedy features a new adaptation by OBIE Award-winning Boston playwright Kirsten Greenidge.

Runs February 16-18, 2024 at The Huntington Theatre.

BOSTON, Mass. – December 19, 2023 – Boston Lyric Opera presents a new production of **THE ANONYMOUS LOVER**, the 18th century romantic and comic chamber opera by **Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges**. The premiere includes a new adaptation by Obie Award-winning Boston playwright **Kirsten Greenidge** that mixes English dialogue with the original French singing in a performance perfectly aligned with its Valentine's Week debut. A co-production with Opera Philadelphia, **THE ANONYMOUS LOVER** runs for three performances from February 16-18, 2024 at The Huntington Theatre on Huntington Avenue. Tickets and details are available at blo.org/anonymouslover.



Told in two acts over 90 minutes with no intermission, the story revolves around Léontine (played by **Nardus Williams**, r.), a wealthy young widow disenchanted with the notion of finding love again until she begins receiving love letters from a secret admirer. Léontine relies on the counsel of her friend Dorothee, and Valcour (**Omar Najmi**, l.) – a wealthy young courtier – to determine whether to keep accepting the letters



and gifts, or discourage the suitor's gestures of love. Léontine and Dorothee suspect Valcour may be the lovelorn writer and Léontine isn't sure how to feel about it. Valcour's friend Ophémon encourages him to stop fretting and come clean about being the admirer, while Dorothee urges Léontine to accept love into her life.

The opera holds a key place in the annals of music history as one of the first known operas composed by a Black artist. **THE ANONYMOUS LOVER** was Bologne's most successful opera and the only one known to have survived over time. Interest in Bologne's work was renewed by the 2022 film "Chevalier" that chronicled the 18th century prodigy's rich life. The influence of

Bologne's charming work – and the French play by Madame de Genlis on which its libretto was based – can be seen in generations of secret love-letter stories told in plays like “The Shop Around the Corner” and the musical it spawned (“She Loves Me”), and in films like “You’ve Got Mail.”

THE ANONYMOUS LOVER is directed by **Dennis Whitehead Darling**. The 37-member orchestra is conducted by BLO Music Director **David Angus**. Of Greenidge's adapted libretto, Darling says “Kirsten has written a quite funny, engaging romantic comedy that finds the perfect balance of humor and heartfelt.”

In a nod to Bologne, the character of Valcour in this production is a composer. Act 1 takes place in a drawing room with a harpsichord, and some of Bologne's other surviving symphony and opera music will be incorporated.

“In this season centered on love, this show may be our most romantic of all,” says **BLO Stanford Calderwood General Director and CEO Bradley Vernatter**. “It's a tribute to Bologne that his groundbreaking opera has survived the unlikeliest of circumstances and stood the test of time to become a standard bearer in the comic opera genre. His musical voice and boundary-stretching format, enhanced immeasurably by Kirsten Greenidge's sly and funny adaptation, is a joy to present for audiences in Boston and Philadelphia.”

CAST AND ARTISTIC TEAM

The cast for THE ANONYMOUS LOVER includes **Nardus Williams** as Léontine, BLO Emerging Artist alumnus **Omar Najmi** as Valcour, **Evan Hughes** as Ophémon, **Sandra Piques Eddy** as Dorothee, Emerging Artist alumna and “Omar” breakout star **Brianna J. Robinson** as Jeannette, and **Zhengyi Bai** as Colin.

Set Designer is **Baron E. Pugh**. Lighting designer is **Driscoll Otto**. Wigs and Makeup Designer is **April Gerbode**. Chorus Director is **Brett Hodgdon**.

THE ANONYMOUS LOVER IN NEW YORK

A preview of THE ANONYMOUS LOVER will be part of The Guggenheim Museum's “Works & Process” series in New York City on January 25, 2024. Boston Lyric Opera CEO and General Director **Bradley Vernatter**, Opera Philadelphia General Director & President **David Devan**, Stage Director **Dennis Whitehead Darling** and book writer **Kirsten Greenidge** will talk about how they are working together to co-produce this new take. The event includes performance highlights by members of the BLO cast.

Tickets for THE ANONYMOUS LOVER are available now and can be purchased through the BLO website at blo.org, by reaching BLO Audience Services at 617.542.6772, or via email at boxoffice@blo.org.

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CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: Boston Lyric Opera presents a new production of THE ANONYMOUS LOVER by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, in a new adaptation by OBIE Award-winning Boston playwright Kirsten Greenidge. Cast includes **Nardus Williams** as Léontine, BLO Emerging Artist alumnus **Omar Najmi** as Valcour, **Evan Hughes** as Ophémon, **Sandra Piques Eddy** as Dorothee, Emerging Artist alumna and "Omar" breakout star **Brianna J. Robinson** as Jeannette, and **Zhengyi Bai** as Colin.

WHEN/ Fri.-Sun., Feb. 16-18, 2024: Fri. and Sat. @ 7:30pm; Sun. @ 3pm

WHERE: The Huntington Theatre, 264 Huntington Avenue, Boston

TICKETS: Tickets start at \$33. Available now online at blo.org, and through BLO Audience Services at 617.542.6772 or boxoffice@blo.org.

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MEDIA INFORMATION

For advance stories about THE ANONYMOUS LOVER, interviews with the artists and BLO representatives, photos and other assets, or press tickets to the performances, contact John Michael Kennedy at 781-620-1761 or jmk@jmkpr.com.