

# MOZART & CIGNA-SANTI'S **MITRIDATE**

## MOZART'S RARELY PERFORMED "MITRIDATE" OPENS BLO'S SEASON



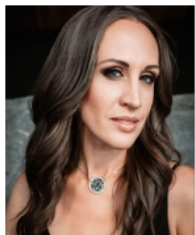
*Stellar cast includes acclaimed tenor Lawrence Brownlee (l.) in the title role, alongside Brenda Rae, Vanessa Goikoetxea and John Holiday.*

*Music Director David Angus, now in his 15<sup>th</sup> season, conducts; Stage Director James Darrah leads an award-winning creative team.*

**Boston, Mass. – July 30, 2024** – Boston Lyric Opera's (BLO) new production of **MITRIDATE, RE DI PONTO** – an early *opera seria* triumph for composer **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** – brings a dramatic story of power, with virtuosic arias and duets, into an onstage world that underscores the timeless nature of absolute power, fraught family dynamics, and political gamesmanship. **MITRIDATE** plays Sep. 13 and 15 at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre.

**Lawrence Brownlee** (l.) returns to BLO in the title role; the acclaimed tenor first performed here in a 2002 production of "The Barber of Seville." **MITRIDATE** is directed by **James Darrah** (BLO's "The Threepenny Opera"; filmed productions "desert in" and "The Fall of the House of Usher"). **Music Director David Angus**, who marks his 15th season with BLO, conducts.

With a libretto by **Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi**, adapted from **Jean Racine's** play, **MITRIDATE** centers on a family's internal strife and struggles for power. Themes of ambition, loyalty, betrayal and conflict – deep aspects of human nature – resonate as strongly now as when the opera premiered in 1770. Written with a preternatural sophistication at 14 years old, the opera exhibits Mozart's innate gift for blending Classical elegance and expressive depth. Popular in its premiere run and considered the composer's first operatic triumph, the work wasn't revived until the 20th century. Due to its demanding vocals, it is rarely performed.



BLO company debuts include soprano **Brenda Rae** (l.) in the role of Mitridate's fiancée Aspasia, **Vanessa Goikoetxea** and **John Holiday** as siblings Sifare as Farnace, and **Charles Sy** as Marzio. The cast includes BLO Emerging Artists **Angela Yam** as Ismene and **Alexis Peart** as Arbate. Full cast bios are [here](#).

In addition to Angus and Darrah, the **MITRIDATE** creative team includes set designer **Adam Rigg** (scenic designer for the Tony-nominated "Illinoise"), costume designer **Molly Irelan** ("desert in"), lighting designer **Pablo Santiago** ("The Threepenny Opera," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "desert in"), projection designer **Hana S. Kim** (a 2024 Tony Award winner for "The Outsiders"), and Wig and Makeup Designer **Ronell Oliveri**, who has worked on BLO productions for more than a decade. A full creative team list and bios are [here](#).

Although the original libretto sets the drama in ancient times, the visual design for BLO's **MITRIDATE** is inspired by 1960s American style. Stories of life-and-death family dynamics

transcend time and culture -- and have fueled both real and fictional narratives throughout history. Director Darrah notes that the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was the time that Americans began to see and treat their political leaders as royalty.

"Bringing MITRIDATE is a significant artistic achievement for the company," said **BLO Artistic Director Nina Yoshida Nelsen**. "Because of the demanding nature of Mozart's vocal parts, it requires a unique confluence of extraordinary artists. Our production highlights the opera's musical brilliance, which includes some Olympian vocal parts. Challenging coloratura passages, wide vocal ranges, and expressive recitatives demand technical precision and dramatic interpretation. The story's intensity covers a terrain of emotions from love and jealousy, to longing and forgiveness."

"Through the music, storytelling and spectacle of opera, we get closer to understanding ourselves, each other, and the logic of the world," says **BLO General Director & CEO Bradley Vernatter**. "MITRIDATE highlights how ambition and the quest for power leads to conflict, whether between nations or within families. Relationships are tested by competing interests and romantic entanglements. Love and power drives individuals to great lengths of loyalty and betrayal. The artistic strength needed to mount this work underscores the high artistic quality BLO brings to the stage, and our commitment to presenting opera of all types."

BLO's production of MITRIDATE will be recorded for later audio broadcast as part of CRB Classical 99.5's "In Concert" series. Details to be announced soon.

### **THE STORY OF "MITRIDATE, RE DI PONTO"**

When the opera opens, family patriarch Mitridate is presumed dead. His children Farnace and Sifare return home to stake claims to his money, his power -- and his fiancée Aspasia. Farnace turns his back on his father's wishes; Sifare remains loyal to Mitridate but falls deeply in love with Aspasia, who returns the feeling.

Mitridate's unexpected return throws the fractured family further into chaos. Alliances are broken and remade, new lovers and enemies enter the picture, and a looming conflict promises to reshape the family for good. Ultimately, the threat of mortality opens Mitridate's heart to unintended love and forgiveness.

### **TICKETS/SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Tickets for MITRIDATE are \$25-\$308. Individual tickets and multi-part subscriptions are available now at [BLO.org](http://BLO.org) or through Audience Services at [boxoffice@blo.org](mailto:boxoffice@blo.org) or 617-542-6772.

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### **ABOUT BLO**

In its 48th Season, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) remains dedicated to creating compelling operatic experiences throughout Greater Boston that welcome new audiences, break new ground, and enrich community life. Since its founding in 1976, Boston Lyric Opera has produced world and U.S. premieres, Pulitzer Prize-winning operas, and notable commissions and coproductions from live stage shows to films streamed worldwide. Details at [BLO.org](http://BLO.org).

**MEDIA:** For details on MITRIDATE and access to creative team and onstage artists, contact John Michael Kennedy at [jmk@jmkpr.com](mailto:jmk@jmkpr.com), 781-620-1761 (office), or 212-842-1752 (cell/text).