

BICO BOSTONLYRICOPERA 2019/20 SEASON

PAGLIACCI

SEPT 27 - OCT 6 | DCR STERITI MEMORIAL RINK



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WELCOME TO THE FESTIVE SPIRIT OF PAGLIACCI'S FAIRGROUNDS! We ended last season transforming a basketball court into the futuristic dystopia of The Handmaid's Tale, which received universal acclaim and prompted The Wall Street Journal to recognize "the immediacy

of the experience in this unconventional space," calling composer Poul Ruders' work "gripping" and the immersive staging "ingenious."

We have brought opera installations to new heights and look forward to sharing more. Now we launch this new season with an immersive experience of an opera classic—in an ice skating rink. *Pagliacci's* strolling players and performers bring their world into your world here. It is immediate and intimate; you become more than a spectator; you are a participant. And by establishing that connection, in David Lefkowich's production the eventual unraveling of the characters' personal tragedies close up will undoubtedly, once again, feel gripping.

The opera itself is one of the early examples of so-called *verismo* operas, which often featured peasants or characters living on the fringes of society. Stories highlighted lurid passions such as jealousy, violence, lust, illicit sex, and murder. The raw immediacy of Leoncavallo's tale was in contrast to the pursuit of loftier and nobler opera ideals by contemporaries such as Wagner. Even Verdi was critical of the directness of many *verismo* operas but they resonated with audiences. The directness of *Pagliacci's* drama is beautifully echoed in its music and orchestral effects. Its structure is of a play-within-a-play but our production allows you to experience the event in an additional third layer: the initial immersion in the Fairgrounds invites you into *Pagliacci's* theatrical world, and keeps you there until the tragic real end.

As always with our installations, we forge meaningful and lasting relationships with the neighborhoods where we perform—with the businesses, libraries, schools, and residents—and we welcome many of our new friends here to this performance. In my decade as General & Artistic Director of BLO I have loved working with the rich talent we have in Boston: the many enterprising organizations who produce opera, and the deep pool of artists and theater professionals who call Boston their home.

At BLO we are fortunate to regularly draw on that talent, as represented in the BLO Orchestra, the BLO Chorus, our Emerging Artists, production and creative team professionals, our children's choruses, theater artists, and dancers. Together they share the creative process with our guest artists to create amazing opera experiences for you. Our patrons are equally important in making these performances possible. YOU are a central part of today's *Pagliacci* experience.

"Let the Play Begin!"

Esther Nelson | Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director



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Cover: Leapfrog Arts | iStock Left, Esther Nelson by Liza Voll Photography. Above, Arlecchino sketch by costume designer Charles Neumann.



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ESTHER NELSON'S 10TH SEASON

FEBRUARY 22 | 2020 | THE STATE ROOM | BOSTON



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



What a momentous season we are starting...welcome to the big top!

We trust you enjoyed your time at the Fairgrounds and you're settled in for the show. *Pagliacci* opens Boston Lyric Opera's 43rd Season, and the tenth season helmed by our General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson.

One of the many things that Esther is so rightly credited for in her time at BLO is her ability to bring the Company into the community and build community partnerships. Sometimes that takes the shape of BLO doing performances or holding

lectures and discussions at iconic Boston locations like the Boston Public Library, the Athenaeum, Magazine Beach, or District Hall in the Seaport. Sometimes the partnerships include artistic collaborations with groups like Castle of Our Skins or artists like actress, Paula Plum.

And sometimes it brings other organizations into our fold to enhance the experience, the context and the depth of what you see as audience members. In addition to our partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, whose hospitality bookends our season, this production of *Pagliacci* will again show opera and BLO to be touchstones by which true artistic merit can be measured.

Before this performance, you heard one of several community choruses that bring joy and warmth to our Fairgrounds space. These range from Boston Arts Academy, which performed at our final dress rehearsal, to the amazing musicians at Coro-Dante, Cambridge Chinese Choral Society, the Cambridge Community Chorus, Boston Cecilia, and Boston Symphony Children's Choir. I thank the members of each group, all of whom gave their time and their music to be one of our "opening acts."

Likewise, we are so grateful to the youth performers from Circus Up, the Jamaica Plain-based non-profit "social circus," which uses circus arts to overcome social barriers for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Ranging in age from 10 to 16 years old, these young performers, under the direction of Circus Up director Leah Abel, embody an extraordinary breadth of talents. Leah says the young troupe includes a few veterans of corporate gigs and outdoor festivals, but this is their first time as part of an opera.

But, as always, it's your partnership, your support, your enthusiasm for BLO that we truly count on. Forty-three is not one of those nice "round numbers" that get celebrated in organizations like ours (like that 10-year mark I mentioned earlier, and more on that next time), but every year we depend on you—your attendance and your generosity—which together enable BLO to produce the best opera experiences in all of New England. Thank you!

Michael J. Puzo | Chair, Board of Directors

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As of August 14, 2019

PAGLIACCI



Sponsored by Linda Cabot Black

MUSIC DIRECTOR DAVID ANGUS

2019/20 Season Sponsor, Linda Cabot Black

PAGLIACCI

Music & Libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo English Translation by Bill Bankes-Jones

A New BLO Production Sung in English and Italian with English surtitles.

Surtitles by David Lefkowich

PERFORMANCES

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 | 7:00PM SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 | 7:00PM WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2 | 7:00PM FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4 | 7:00 PM SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6 | 2:30PM

Please note: published start times reflect beginning of Fairgrounds experience.

Performance running time is approximately 2.5 hours, including Fairgounds experience. *Pagliacci* running time is approximately 75 minutes.

A TALKBACK will be held immediately following the performance on October 2.

DCR STERITI MEMORIAL RINK 561 COMMERCIAL STREET BOSTON, MA 02109

*Boston Lyric Opera Debut

CREATIVE TEAM

CONDUCTOR DAVID ANGUS

STAGE DIRECTOR DAVID LEFKOWICH

SET DESIGNER JULIA NOULIN-MÉRAT

COSTUME DESIGNER CHARLES NEUMANN

LIGHTING DESIGNER PABLO SANTIAGO

WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER ANNE NESMITH*

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA ORCHESTRA HEIDI BRAUN-HILL

Acting Concertmaster

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA CHORUS BRETT HODGDON*

Chorus Master

BOSTON SYMPHONY

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

JAMES BURTON Conductor

Prepared by BRETT HODGDON

REHEARSAL COACH/ACCOMPANIST BRENDON SHAPIRO+

ASSISTANT STAGE DIRECTORS CARA CONSILVIO

ANDERSON NUNNELLEY

STAGE MANAGER HESTER WARREN-STEIJN

[†]Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist

[‡]Boston Lyric Opera Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist Alumnus

CAST & SYNOPSIS

CAST in order of vocal appearance

TONIO

the Fool of the troupe; plays Taddeo, Colombina's servant

CANIO

the leader of the commedia dell'arte troupe; plays Pagliaccio, the clown

BEPPE

an actor; plays Arlecchino

NEDDA

the troupe's leading actress, married to Canio but secretly in love with Silvio; plays Colombina

SII VIO

a local and Nedda's lover

MICHAEL MAYES

Sponsored by Abigail B. Mason

RAFAEL ROJAS

Sponsored by Alicia Cooney & Stephen Quigley

OMAR NAJMI‡

Sponsored by Dr. Robert Walsh & Lydia Kenton Walsh

LAUREN MICHELLE*

Sponsored by an anonymous donor in honor of Walnut Hill School for the Arts

TOBIAS GREENHALGH*

Sponsored by Susan W. Jacobs

SYNOPSIS

In a prologue, Tonio enters and speaks to the audience directly. He hints of the story that they are about to see and reminds them that actors are real people who experience emotions and passions as they do.

A crowd of townspeople eagerly cheer the arrival of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe. Canio, Nedda, Tonio, and Beppe, all dressed as their characters, drum up business. But when Tonio offers Nedda a hand, Canio angrily helps her himself, threatening violence against any man who touches his wife.

Nedda is disturbed by Canio's vehemence, and she worries that he suspects her secret. Tonio returns and confesses his love for her, but she laughs at him. When Tonio tries to assault her, she strikes back at him. Tonio retreats, vowing his revenge. Silvio, a young man of the village who is Nedda's lover, enters; he has just left the tavern where Canio and Beppe are drinking. Silvio and Nedda embrace and agree to run away together. Tonio, who has been listening, leaves to warn Canio, and the two rush back to catch Nedda's lover, but Silvio escapes before they can identify him. Canio is enraged and demands Nedda tell him who he is; she refuses. He pulls a knife on her, but Beppe disarms him and

persuades everyone to get ready for the show, as the audience is beginning to arrive. Tonio whispers to Canio that Nedda's lover will reveal himself during the performance. Alone, Canio prepares to become the clown.

Nedda, dressed as Colombina, collects money from the audience as they arrive and whispers a warning to Silvio as he joins the crowd. The play begins: Colombina's husband is out and she is waiting for her lover Arlecchino, who serenades her. Her servant Taddeo confesses his love, but she and Arlecchino mock him. The lovers dine and plan to elope. Taddeo bursts back in with a warning of Pagliaccio's arrival, and Arlecchino escapes.

Pagliaccio enters and confronts Colombina, but Canio quickly loses control of himself and demands to know the name of his wife's lover. Nedda tries to bring him back to the plot of the play, calling him "Pagliaccio," but Canio's anger only escalates. The audience cheers, unaware of the rising tension. Beppe tries to intervene, but Tonio stops him. Silvio fights his way through the crowd. Nedda steadfastly refuses to reveal her love, and Canio explodes with rage...

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

NO CLOWNING AROUND: OPERA UP CLOSE

BY DAVID LEFKOWICH

believe Pagliacci is best served when the audience is as close as possible to the music, because the emotion of this music is electrifying.

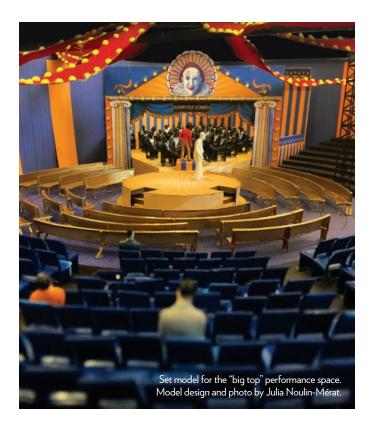
My opera career began at The Metropolitan Opera. The productions there were visually resplendent, overwhelming, large, and exciting. However, with all of that grandeur, there is also a vast distance between the stage and the audience. That distance can be problematic, allowing the audience to relax back into their seats and disconnect from the action onstage. It is a challenge shared by most traditional opera houses.

FVFRYTHING YOU FXPFRIFNCE HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CURATED TO CREATE A TANGIBLE. SENSUAL EXPERIENCE THAT FOCUSES ON THE PERSONAL. INDIVIDUAL AUDIENCE MEMBER.

But by removing the traditional notion of a stage and completely surrounding the audience with performance and music, they become a part of the story itself. Boston Lyric Opera has been at the forefront of this trend for several seasons, upping the ante for the industry.

Immersive, site-specific opera changes expectations. It creates a sense of surprise. What will happen next? The uncertainty sends a palpable jolt of excitement through the audience. Instead of passively watching, they become active and willing participants in the drama. In my experience, audiences that participate in an immersive production are entertained on a profound and unforgettable level.

My first site-specific production took place in the ruins of a flourmill that had been destroyed in a fire. Actors were dressed as factory workers and ensemble members captured the essence



of early-19th century Minneapolis. Although not fully immersive, the site-specific production proved to be a powerful and personal experience for the audience.

Our production of *Pagliacci* goes one step further in being truly immersive. Steriti Memorial Rink gives us an authentic space in which a fair, a circus, and a show may have taken place. You walk through this venue, as if you are townspeople coming to be entertained. Everything you experience has been carefully curated to create a tangible, sensual experience that focuses on the personal, individual audience member. You've already become part of our production.

To further the immersive experience, our production is set in modern day, and the libretto is changed to English so the text and the action is more immediate, and easily understood. It's a nod to the audience experience back at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan in 1892 where *Pagliacci* first premiered. They heard the text in their native language and experienced the drama immediately as it unfolded. Here—in order to revel in the language of the writer—the parts of Pagliacci focusing on love will be heard in the original Italian.

Regardless of the language in which you hear it, I think you'll agree this beautiful music has the power to create an emotional journey without having to understand any of the words. Once you are inside the drama, anything can happen. Welcome to the Fairgrounds, the circus, and the opera!



DAVID ANGUS | Conductor

David Angus is Music Director of Boston Lyric Opera, following a very successful period as Music Director of Glimmerglass Opera. He was formerly the Chief Conductor of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra for many years and built that orchestra into one of the most exciting young orchestras in Northern Europe.

Maestro Angus now conducts all over Europe and North America. He began his career working at Opera North (U.K.) and at Glyndebourne, where he conducted a wide range of operas, and went on to work in Italy and across Europe. In the concert hall, he performs particularly in the U.K. and Scandinavia, and this season, apart from conducting productions at BLO, includes a return visit to Hawaii Opera Theatre, and further work in the concert hall and recording studio with the London Philharmonic.



DAVID LEFKOWICH | Stage Director

David Lefkowich returns to BLO having stage directed *Tosca* in the 2010/11 Season. Mr. Lefkowich has stage directed and fight choreographed for numerous companies including The Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Minnesota Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Directing credits include *Idomeneo*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *L'Histoire du Soldat* (the Ravinia Music Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and *Don Giovanni* (L'Opéra de Montréal, the Ravinia Music Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), among others. He made his European debut directing *Le Portrait de Manon* (the Gran Teatre Liceu in Barcelona), followed by *The Rake's Progress* (La Monnaie in Brussels). Mr. Lefkowich has directed and choreographed productions of *Carmen* (Fort Worth Opera, Anchorage Opera), *Così Fan Tutte* (Opera Saratoga), *Il Trovatore* (New Orleans Opera, Fort Worth Opera), and many more. He fight directed the world premieres of Philip Glass' *Appomattox* (San Francisco Opera), *Miss Lonelyhearts* (Juilliard Opera Center), *La Fanciulla del West* (New York City Opera), among others. David is a guest artist and gives master classes at several young artist programs and universities in the United States and internationally. David is currently the Artistic Director of Out of the Box Opera in Minneapolis, MN.



JULIA NOULIN-MÉRAT | Set Designer

Julia Noulin-Mérat is an international production designer and the founder of Noulin-Mérat Studio. In addition to her work as Associate Producer for Boston Lyric Opera, Julia is the co-Artistic Director for Guerilla Opera. She has designed over 400 opera, theater, and television productions, including 18 new operas and 22 new plays,

and has produced 50 shows. She has served on the panel for OPERA America adjudicating the Tobin Director- Designer showcase and recently received OA's Women's Opera Network mentorship distinction. Recent credit includes: Rigoletto (Minnesota Opera), Le Monde a l'Envers (Wolf Trap Opera), Tosca and Falstaff (Opera Omaha); Gallo, Pedr Solis, and Troubled Water (Guerilla Opera); L'Heure Espagnole and Scalia/Ginsburg (Castleton Festival); Sumeida's Song and 27 (Pittsburgh Opera); and The Rake's Progress, The Threepenny Opera, and The Barber of Seville (BLO). Other projects include a TEDx talk on site-specific opera productions in the modern age; Neverland (with China Broadway), a 50,000 square foot immersive theater piece in Beijing based on Peter Pan; and, Playground (Opera Omaha), a national touring operatic sound sculpture in collaboration with Pulitzer Prizewinning composer Ellen Reid. Ms. Noulin-Mérat is an adjunct professor at Pace University and a graduate of Boston University.



CHARLES NEUMANN | Costume Designer

Charles Neumann returns to BLO having designed costumes for *The Threepenny Opera*. Mr. Neumann is a Boston-based designer and illustrator and has worked with organizations including Edgewood Studios, Central City Opera, MassOpera, and others. Mr. Neumann has been featured in Boston Fashion Week and has shown

at charity events including Urban Nights, a fundraiser for homeless and at-risk youth sponsored by Urban Peak, and WE CAN with Mondo Guerra, sponsored by AIDS Connecticut. Mr. Neumann holds a degree in Fashion Design and Production from Lasell College and completed a costume internship with Central City Opera.



PABLO SANTIAGO | Lighting Designer

Pablo Santiago returns to BLO having light designed *The Threepenny Opera* and *Schoenberg in Hollywood*. Mr. Santiago's lighting design spans theater, opera, dance and gallery work. His work has been seen at Arena Stage (Washington, D.C.), the Paramount Center (Boston), Skirball Center (New York City), South Coast Reper-

tory (Costa Mesa, CA), Mark Taper Forum, Geffen Playhouse (both in Los Angeles), Los Angeles Theatre Center, and more. Recent highlights include War of the Worlds with the LA Phil, Pélleas et Mélisande at Cincinnati Symphony, Breaking the Waves for Opera Philadelphia and PROTOTYPE Festival, Destiny of Desire at the Goodman Theatre and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Flight and Pagliacci for Opera Omaha, Ted Hearne's Place at BAM, as well as the professional World Premiere of Proving Up at Opera Omaha and the Miller Theatre (New York City), Eugene Onegin at The Boston Conservatory, and Boris Godunov at San Francisco Symphony.

ANNE NESMITH | Wig-Makeup Designer

Anne Nesmith is a Washington, DC-based wig designer whose work has been seen at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Opera Philadelphia, Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Opera Boston, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Signature Theatre, Wolf Trap Opera and Washington Ballet, among others. She had designed productions for Seiji Ozawa's Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan, and Hyogo Performing Arts Center in Nishinomiya, Japan. Ms. Nesmith was the Resident Wig and Makeup Designer for the Baltimore Opera Company and has constructed wigs for the Scooby Doo Live! tour and the Asian tour of 42nd St. Her work has been seen in numerous Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's Cultures in Motion programs, Great Planes on the Military Channel, Ice Cold Killers for Investigation Discovery, MD Public Television and the U.S. Army's tour, Spirit of America.

ARTISTS



MICHAEL MAYES | Baritone TONIO

Michael Mayes returns to BLO having performed Escamillo in Carmen and the title role of Rigoletto. Mr. Mayes recently sang Joseph de Rocher in the U.K. premiere of Jake Heggie's Dead Man Walking at London's Barbican Hall. He has performed the role with

multiple opera houses, including Washington National Opera, The Atlanta Opera, and the Teatro Real, Madrid. He again reprises the role this season with Israeli Opera. Operatic credits include Moby Dick, Glory Denied, Out of Darkness, Three Decembers, The Wreckers, Lysistrata, and Everest, among others. Mr. Mayes has performed roles including the title role in Wozzeck, Scarpia (Tosca), Conte Di Luna (Il Trovatore), Jack Rance (La Fanciulla del West), the title role in Nixon in China (Staatsoper Stuttgart), and the title role of Don Giovanni. Upcoming performances include Sweeney Todd with Bergen National Opera, Everest with The BBC Symphony Orchestra, Glory Denied with The Atlanta Opera, Rigoletto with Nashville Opera, Iphigénie en Tauride with Staatsoper Stuttgart, and more.



RAFAEL ROJAS | Tenor **CANIO**

Rafael Rojas returns to BLO having performed in Werther (Werther), La Traviata (Alfredo), and Madama Butterfly (Pinkerton). Mr. Rojas has performed with opera houses both nationally and on the international platform, including Opera North (U.K), Hungarian State Opera, New

Zealand Opera, Welsh National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Glimmerglass, English National Opera, Opera Australia, Semperoper Dresden, and Houston Grand Opera, among others. Operatic credits include Dick Johnson (La Fanciulla del West, Opera National de Paris, Opera North), Cavaradossi (Tosca, Opera North, Den Jyske Opera), Otello (Otello, Hungarian State Opera, Kalamazoo Symphony), Pollione (Norma, Staatsoper Stuttgart), Duca (Rigoletto, Komische Oper Berlin), Radames (Aida, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Nationaltheater Mannheim), Manrico (Il Trovatore, Croatian National Theatre, Zagreb), Gustavo (Un Ballo in Maschera, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Bregenz Festival), and many more. Mr. Rojas has appeared extensively in the U.K., including concerts with the Halle Orchestra and Kent Nagano, and has sung under the batons of Mariss Jansons with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and David Shallon with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra.



OMAR NAJMI | Tenor **BFPPF**

Omar Najmi returns to BLO as a Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artist alumnus, having appeared in many productions with the Company including Kátya Kabanová, The Love Potion, Lizzie Borden, I Puritani, Rigoletto, The Magic Flute, and The Handmaid's Tale. Mr. Najmi is also an

alumnus of the Opera Colorado Young Artist Program (Lucia di Lammermoor, La Fanciulla del West, The Elixir of Love, The Barber of Seville) and has been a Young Artist with Chautaugua Opera, Opera Saratoga, and Opera North. He has performed with Opera NEO (Don Giovanni, The Merry Widow, Idomeneo), Opera Fayetteville (Flight and Little Women), Odyssey Opera (Lucio Silla), the American Lyric Theater (La Reina workshop), and more. Mr. Najmi made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2018 as the tenor soloist in Mark Hayes' Gloria and has performed on the concert stage with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Symphony Orchestra, Cape Cod Chorale, among others. As a composer, he recently premiered his first original chamber opera, En la Ardiente Oscuridad.



LAUREN MICHELLE | Soprano **NEDDA**

Lauren Michelle is prize winner of The BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. International roles include Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro), Musetta (La Bohème), Helena (A Midsummer Night's Dream), Lauretta (Gianni Schicchi), and more. Recently, Ms.

Michelle made her debut at Covent Garden as Jessica in The Merchant of Venice and completed a season as a house soprano with Vienna State Opera. She sang in concert at Los Angeles Opera and made her debut with Washington National Opera alongside Eric Owens. Ms. Michelle was awarded First Place in both the Lotte Lenya Competition and the Marcello Giordani International Vocal Competition. This season, Ms. Michelle sang with the Berlin Philharmonic and Maestro Zubin Mehta, where they performed Rossini. She also made her debut with The Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra, rejoining Nina Stemme to perform Elektra. In France and Germany, she toured staged versions of Pierrot Lunaire and The Seven Deadly Sins, directed by David Pountney. Upcoming performances include La Traviata (Los Angeles Opera) and Freedom Ride (Chicago Opera Theater), among others. This is her Boston Lyric Opera debut.



TOBIAS GREENHALGH | Baritone SILVIO

Tobias Greenhalgh's upcoming performances include the Count (Le Nozze di Figaro), Valentin (Faust), and Ottokar (Der Freischütz) with Aalto-Musiktheater Essen; Escamillo (Carmen) with the Zakopane Music Festival in Poland; and recitals at Shostakovich Hall in

Saint Petersburg, Russia, and with Opera South Dakota, Recent operatic performances include Belcore (L'Elisir d'Amore, Opera Las Vegas), Figaro (Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Glyndebourne Opera Tour), Aeneas (Dido and Aeneas, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence), and title role of Don Giovanni (Virginia Opera, Baltimore Concert Opera). Mr. Greenhalgh has also performed with Charlottesville Opera, Theater an der Wein, and the Weiner Kammeroper, where he made his European debut, and more. He also joined Wolf Trap Opera as a Filene Artist, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as a Gerdine Young Artist, and Palm Beach Opera as a Benenson Young Artist. On the concert stage, he has sung Bach's Saint Matthew Passion, Mendelssohn's Die Erste Walpurgisnacht, Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs with Saint George's Choral Society, and many more. This is his Boston Lyric Opera debut.



2019/20

BLO JANE & STEVEN AKIN **EMERGING ARTISTS**

The pursuit of a successful career in opera is a challenging—and expensive undertaking. Singers must continually hone their talent with regular coaching, expand their repertoire by learning new roles, and find opportunities to make themselves heard. BLO recognizes that the next generation of opera stars needs to be nurtured in order to flourish, and that the future of the art form depends on their success.

To that end, BLO has proudly expanded the opportunities we provide to Emerging Artists:

- Public auditions allow hundreds of singers to be heard
- Role and audition preparation in one-on-one sessions with both BLO's Music Director, David Angus, and BLO coaches
- Understudy key leading roles, serve on stage management staff and directing staff, to broaden their résumés
- Perform principal and comprimario roles in BLO productions
- Additional paid performance opportunities at BLO events
- Stanford Calderwood General & Artistic Director, Esther Nelson, and other leaders in the field provide career guidance and support
- Feedback auditions with Director of Artistic Operations Nicholas Russell provide invaluable advice on repertoire choices
- Introduction of Emerging Artists to key artists' managers

BLO Jane and Steven Akin Emerging Artists are identified during the casting process of each season's repertoire. The Artists have, in most cases, already established themselves professionally and are drawn primarily from the post-graduate and post-young artist fields. In certain exceptional cases, younger candidates who are appropriate for specific repertoire with the Company are considered.



STEPHEN SHRESTINIAN AWARD **FOR EXCELLENCE**

Mezzo-Soprano Felicia Gavilanes is an Emerging Artist alumna and is the recipient of the 2019 Stephen Shrestinian Award for Excellence. The Shrestinian Award is a cash award created to help an exceptional young artist in the BLO chorus further his or her career by supporting advancement activities such as coaching a new role; taking a movement, dance, or acting class; or paying a portion of graduate school tuition or travel expenses. It is awarded

annually in memory of one of BLO's beloved chorus members who passed away suddenly at the age of 29.



IACCI:

LEONCAVALLO'S OPERA & POPULAR CULTURE

BY LUCY CAPLAN

PAGLIACCI IS EVERYWHERE. Since the opera's premiere in 1892, it has become a shapeshifter, remixed and reimagined across disparate corners of the U.S. cultural landscape. Pagliacci fragments and allusions can be found in ragtime and jazz, in movies and novels, in episodes of Seinfeld, The Simpsons and SpongeBob SquarePants, as well as video games, graphic novels, and Twitter memes. But not all such operatic re-workings are created equal. Pagliacci's relationship to other genres and media has changed over time, offering illuminating insight into the relationship between opera and myriad varieties of popular culture.

Why has this particular opera attracted so much attention beyond the opera house? The plot of Pagliacci makes it an ideal candidate for broad appeal. An exemplar of verismo, the opera features a love-triangle storyline—the actor Canio and villager Silvio fight over the affections of Canio's wife, Nedda—likely inspired by an actual event. While the narrative is uncomplicated, it is also disturbingly brutal, driven by jealousy, harassment, and violence. The prologue narrows the space between art and reality with its assertion, delivered via direct address, that this is no escapist fantasy, but rather "a slice of life." And its play-within-aplay conceit encourages the audience to view the characters as regular people whose lives we observe on and off the stage.

The opera's naturalistic musical language heightens its realism. Most melodies are lush yet straightforward, even guileless. They let loose at emotional zeniths (most famously, Canio's "Vesti la giubba"), allowing the singers to inhabit fully the emotions of the characters they portray. Highly recognizable tropes—clanging church bells, pastoral woodwinds—usher the audience into a familiar sonic world.

In addition to these intrinsic characteristics, the opera's early history is vital to understanding its status in the popular imagination. Opera was a vastly popular art form in the 19thcentury United States. But as many other operatic works began to move toward the outer reaches of the cultural mainstream in the early 20th century, Pagliacci remained popular, a manifestation of the genre's enduring mass appeal. The opera was first performed in the U.S. in 1893, at New York's Grand Opera House, and it guickly ascended to prominent status. (Perhaps too guickly: as early as 1907, the New York Times called it a "well-worn work.") It became a hallmark of the repertory for traveling opera troupes who traversed the country in the early 20th century, typically performing the work in English translation as they made appearances at Main Street opera houses across the nation. The opera was so well-known that Irving Berlin satirized it in his 1914 debut musical *Watch Your Step*: "We like you Pagliacci / Because your melody mellow / By Leoncavallo / Affords us something new / And so we'll one-step to you."

Pagliacci reached countless additional listeners via new recording technologies. In 1907, it became the first opera recorded in its entirety; Leoncavallo himself was present for the occasion. The celebrity tenor Enrico Caruso recorded "Vesti la giubba" in 1902, 1904, and 1907; sales of the 1904 version surpassed one million copies, making Caruso the first artist to achieve this milestone. One listener for these recordings was a young Louis Armstrong in New Orleans, an avid Caruso fan who would later incorporate a quotation from Pagliacci into his 1930 "Tiger Raq."

In later years, *Pagliacci* was condensed into pop-culture shorthand, a symbol not so much of opera's crossover appeal as of its separateness. Precisely because it was so widely recognized, it became synonymous with the art form itself: music that conjured up "opera" whenever snippets of it were heard. When the opera was featured in *The Simpsons* episode "The Italian Bob," for instance, it took the characters far out of their comfort zone: in a foreign country, confused, ensnared in trouble. In many opera houses, meanwhile, gaudy, over-the-top productions prevailed. Under these circumstances, the opera's realistic, art-aslife qualities became more difficult to grasp.

Our contemporary moment suggests that still more changes to Pagliacci's cultural significance await. Creative new productions aim to restore the opera to something akin to its early status. Its realistic style speaks to central concerns of modern American culture: notably, the blurring line between private life and entertainment, which seems to have reached an apex in a reality-televised, perpetually-Instagrammed world. On a more disturbing note, elements of the opera's stark portrayal of violence and abuse onstage are chillingly realistic today. Critic Meghan Klinkenborg recently described the opera as "frighteningly timeless" and, "unfortunately just as realistic and relevant as when it premiered," due to its depiction of workplace sexual harassment—and, ultimately, horrific violence—committed by skilled performers who are also dangerous, harmful people.

At the gruesome end of the opera, we are told "The comedy is over!" That may be so, but history suggests that *Pagliacci's* meaning and impact extend far beyond the moment that the opera concludes.

Lucy Caplan holds a Ph.D. in American Studies and African American Studies from Yale University. The recipient of the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism, she teaches in the History and Literature program at Harvard College and writes frequently about music and culture.

















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The mission of Boston Lyric Opera's Community Engagement Department is to provide equitable access to quality arts experiences in the field of opera to its community. To kick off the 2019/20 Season, BLO is engaging new community partnerships for our immersive production of Pagliacci to celebrate being a part of the vibrant ecosystem of performing arts in Boston. We want to acknowledge the expertise, talent, time, and dedication each of our partners brings to this dynamic collaboration enriching the artistic experience for all.



Soprano and Walnut Hill alumna, Lauren Michelle kicked off BLO's School Partnerships engaging with 200 Boston Public School students on the second day of school! She shared her wisdom with youth ages 12-18 on topics ranging from what opera is, to how to stay healthy and vibrant as a performing artist.

Lauren Michelle's BLO Residency sponsored by an anonymous donor in honor of Walnut Hill School for the Arts.

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The Handmaid's Tale; Above Summit captured three friends at our annual Opera Gala Jessica Speece (@instaspeece) posted a group photo at BLO's The Handmaid's Tale after party; Above Summit snapped the next two photos at our annual Opera Gala, and Brandon Cedel (@brandon1129) posted a selfie from a rehearsal for The Rape of Lucretia.

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The new BLO production of Pagliacci is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Boston Lyric Opera's programs are also funded, in part, by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.





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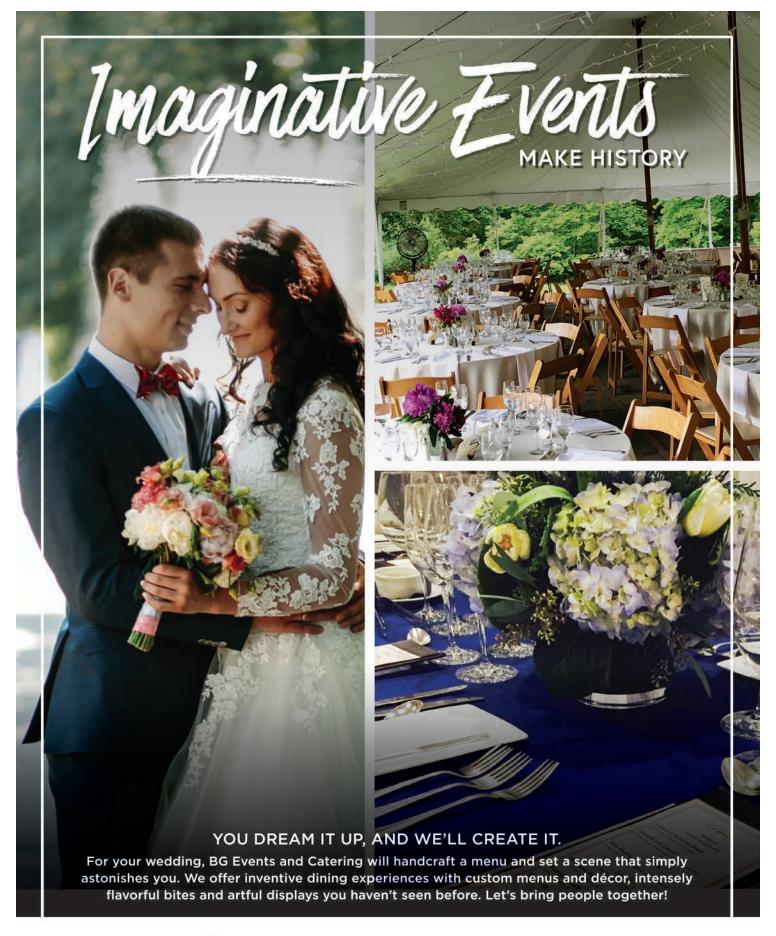
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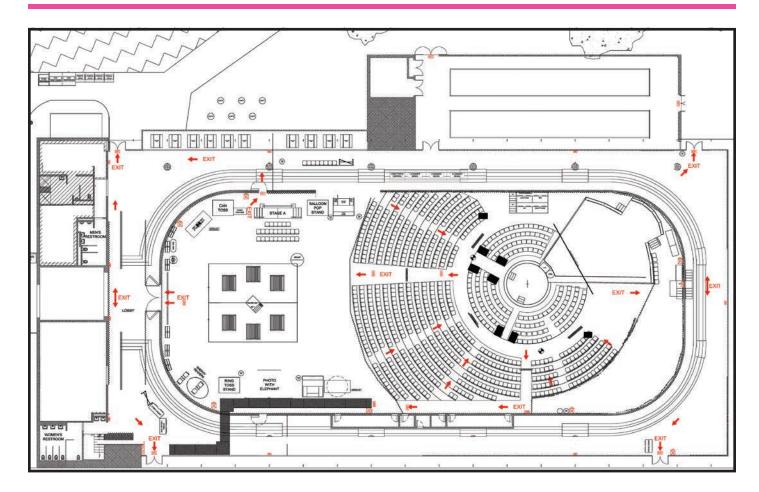
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