BOSTONLYRICOPERA Opera Night at the Boston Public Library: Women & Ambition

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 @ 6PM Boston Public Library, Rabb Lecture Hall

FEATURING
NINA YOSHIDA NELSEN,
moderator
CHELSEAS BASLER,
soprano
ANGELA YAM,
soprano
JI YUNG LEE,
pianist
DR. CHARMAIN JACKMAN,
guest panelist

Welcome to Opera Night at the Boston Public Library with Boston Lyric Opera!

Female characters grappling with power have a distinct presence across centuries of operatic composition. Are we listening to what they have to say? Tonight, we will explore the nuances of this emotionally, psychologically, and politically complex repertoire, brought to life with thrilling performances by BLO musicians. We hope you will join the conversation during the audience Q&A.

Talk to a friendly BLO staff member and take our survey to share your thoughts about today's performance, sign up for our email list or check out our website to learn more, and bring a friend with you to our next event! To learn more about Boston Lyric Opera and future events, please visit BLO.org.



Boston Lyric Opera has partnered with the Boston Public Library Central and branches across Boston for over twenty years providing equitable access to quality opera experiences to the community. All programs in partnership with the BPL are made available for free and are open to the public to attend.



PROGRAM

Moderator: Nina Yoshida Nelsen, BLO Artistic Director

"La luce langue" from Macbeth

Music by Giuseppe Verdi Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

"Una donna a quindici anni" from Così fan tutte

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

"Ain't it a pretty night" from Susannah

Music & Libretto by Carlisle Floyd

"While I waste these precious hours" from Amelia Goes to the Ball

Music & Libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti

"Addio del passato" from La traviata

Music by Giuseppe Verdi Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

"Down you go" from Flight

Music by Jonathan Dove Libretto by April De Angelis

"Vissi d'arte" from Tosca

Music by Giacomo Puccini Libretto by Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa

"Sull'aria" from Le nozze di Figaro

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

"Glitter and be gay" from Candide

Music by Leonard Bernstein Lyrics by Richard Wilbur

MEET THE ARTISTS



GRAMMY® Award-nominated soprano **Chelsea Basler** continues to make her mark in an extensive array of operatic roles due to her unique combination of vocal appeal and artistry. During the 2024/25 season, Ms. Basler sang High Priestess in Boston Lyric Opera's production of Aida and covered Julie Jordan in Carousel. Past roles with BLO include covering Eurydice in Aucoin's Eurydice and singing Musetta in La bohème. Ms. Basler enjoys a particularly strong relationship with BLO, which she initially joined as an Emerging Artist during the 2013/14 season. Other recent work

includes returning to The Metropolitan Opera to cover Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, as well as making her role debut as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with Newport Classical.



Angela Yam returns as a BLO Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist for the 2025/26 Season as Second Apparition in *Macbeth* and Hortensia in *Daughter of the Regiment*, also covering Marie. Her debut as Ismene in BLO's 2024 production of *Mitridate* was awarded the *Boston Globe*'s Best Breakout Performance in a Supporting Role and featured on the cover of *Opera Magazine*. Her 2024/25 season included the title role in *La Calisto*, Opera Memphis; Liesgen, *Coffee Cantata*, Boston Baroque and North Star Baroque; Horse and Rabbit, *The Big Swim*, Asia Society Texas/Houston

Grand Opera; and Heavenly Friend 1 and Carrie Pipperidge (cover), Carousel, Boston Lyric Opera. Past roles include Johanna, Sweeney Todd, Chautauqua Opera and Opera Saratoga; Josephine Young (cover), An American Soldier, PAC NYC; Cobweb, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Santa Fe Opera; and Diana, Iphigénie en Tauride, Boston Baroque. Yam was a New York City District winner in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, and her self-directed visual recital was awarded 3rd place in the 2022 American Prize Competition. As a composer, Yam's output includes art songs, chamber/dance works, and operas for Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, Catalyst New Music, Boston Opera Collaborative, songSLAM NYC, Robert Moses' Kin, SMFA at Tufts, and DREAMGLOW.



Pianist and vocal coach **Ji Yung Lee** has made appearances at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Greene Space, and Symphony Hall. She has performed via numerous radio broadcasts including WQXR, MPR, WFMT, and WGBH. She is a member of the opera faculty at New England Conservatory and of the music staff at Boston Lyric Opera. Recent BLO engagements include *Noah's Flood, The Seasons, Die tote Stadt, The Anonymous Lover,* and *Omar.* In July 2025, she served as a choral pianist for Tanglewood's production of *Tosca*. Other recent

highlights include work with Connections Chamber Music, the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, the Harriman-Jewell Series, a video production for tonebase with cellist Laurence Lesser, and WQXR's Christmas concert with tenor Stephen Costello. Lee has worked with Amelia Island Opera, Boston Art Song Society, Julliard's Drama division, and Victory Hall Opera. She has been a vocal piano fellow in festivals including Music Academy of the West, Aspen Music Festival and School, SongFest, and Hawaii Performing Arts Festival; and a conducting fellow with the Pehlivanian Professional Opera Academy. Lee holds a master's degree from New England Conservatory and a graduate diploma from The Julliard School.



Nina Yoshida Nelsen (she/her), Boston Lyric Opera's Artistic Director since 2024, made her BLO debut in 2021 as Mamma Lucia, Cavalleria Rusticana. She was featured as a singer and storyteller in the filmed documentary-concert B., which marked an artistic culmination of BLO's "The Butterfly Process." She joined the company as an Artistic Advisor in 2021, participating in artistic discussions and decisions, company auditions, and more. Most recently, she served as dramaturg for BLO's widely acclaimed 2023 production of Madama Butterfly. Nelsen has performed

traditional and contemporary operatic roles throughout North America and Europe, including performances with Washington National Opera, Lincoln Center, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and Avery Fisher Hall. She continues to perform actively with companies across the United States and Canada. Recent and upcoming work includes classic and contemporary repertoire with regional and nationally recognized opera houses. As Co-Founder of the Asian Opera Alliance, Nelsen has worked to uplift Asian artists and to advocate for greater representation within the industry. She was recently featured in TIME Magazine and was the subject of an NHK World documentary centered on Jack Perla and Jessica Murphy Moo's opera *An American Dream* and Nelsen's origination of the role of Hiroko Kobayashi at Seattle Opera. A Boston University alumna, Nelsen received undergraduate degrees in violin and psychology, and a master's degree in voice. She also holds an Artist Diploma from Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts.



Dr. Charmain Jackman is an award-winning psychologist, TEDx speaker, and visionary entrepreneur, with over two decades of experience in mental health. As the founder of InnoPsych, a mental health consulting firm, she has connected more than 10,000 people to therapists of color, transforming access and narratives around therapy for communities of color. Dr. Jackman has supported the wellbeing of artists for over two decades and consults with arts institutions to integrate a trauma-informed approach into their productions and organizational culture. Her deep commitment

to supporting the mental health ecosystem led her to write *The Black Therapist's Guide to Private Practice and Entrepreneurship*, a book that empowers BIPOC therapists to build profitable and sustainable businesses. A champion of mental health equity and workplace wellbeing, Dr. Jackman's impactful work has earned her numerous accolades, including the 2025 Boston Business Journal's Innovators in Healthcare award, and features in reputable media outlets such as *Oprah Daily*, *Essence*, NPR, *The New York Times*, and *The Boston Globe*. She is a global mental health advocate and an appointed member of the Massachusetts 988 Commission. As a wife and mom to two creative humans, she is reminded every day to live life with joy and compassion.

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS

"La luce langue" from Macbeth

La luce langue, il faro spegnesi
Ch'eterno scorre per gl'ampi cieli!
Notte desiata, provvida veli La man colpevole che ferirà. Nuovo delitto!... È necessario!
Compiersi debbe l'opra fatale. Ai trapassati regnar non cale; A loro un requiem, l'eternità!
O voluttà del soglio!
O scettro, alfin sei mio!
Ogni mortal desio
Tace e s'acqueta in te.
Cadrà fra poco esanime

"Una donna a quindici anni" from Così fan tutte

Chi fu predetto re.

Una donna a quindici anni Dèe saper ogni gran moda, Dove il diavolo ha la coda, Cosa è bene e mal cos'è. Dèe saper le maliziette Che innamorano gli amanti, Finger riso, finger pianti, Inventar i bei perché.

Dar retta a cento; Colle pupille Parlar con mille; Dar speme a tutti, Sien belli o brutti; Saper nascondersi Senza confondersi; Senza arrossire Saper mentire; E, qual regina Dall'alto soglio, Col «posso e voglio» Farsi ubbidir.

Dèe in un momento

Par ch'abbian gusto Di tal dottrina. Viva Despina, Che sa servir!

Translation

The light diminishes, the beacon it put out that roams eternally through the vast heavens! Desired night, providentially veil the quilty hand that will strike the blow. A new crime!... It must be! The fatal deed must be done. The dead do not care to reign; for them, a requiem, and eternity! Oh. lust for the throne! Oh scepter, at last you are mine! Every mortal desire is silenced and satisfied in you. He who was predicted king will soon fall lifeless.

Translation

At fifteen, a woman
Should know the ways of the world,
Where the devil keeps his tail,
What's right and what is wrong.
She should know the wiles
That ensnare lovers,
How to feign laughter or tears
And how to make up good excuses.

At one and the same moment She must listen to a hundred But speak with her eyes To a thousand; Hold out hope to all, Be they handsome or plain, Know how to hide things Without getting flustered, Know how to tell lies Without ever blushing. And, like a queen On her lofty throne, Get her own way With "I can, and I will."

It seems they're taking To this doctrine; Long live Despina, Who knows it's done!

"Ain't it a pretty night" from Susannah

Ain't it a pretty night!
The sky's so dark and velvet-like and it's all lit up with stars.
It's like a great big mirror reflectin' fireflies over a pond.
Look at all them stars, Little Bat.
The longer you look, the more you see.
The sky seems so heavy with stars that it might fall right down out of heaven and cover us all up in one big banket of velvet stiched with diamonds.

Ain't it a pretty night.

Just think, those stars can all peep down and see way beyond where we can:

They can see way beyond them mountains to Nashville and Asheville and Knoxville.

I wonder what it's like out there, out there beyond them mountains where the folks talk nice, and the folks dress nice like you see in the mail-order catalogs.

I aim to leave this valley some day and find out for myself: To see all the tall buildin's and all the street lights and to be one of them folks myself.

I wonder if I'd get lonesome for the valley though, for the sound of crickets and the smell of pine straw, for soft little rabbits and bloomin' things

and the mountains turnin' gold in the fall.
But I could always come back
if I got homesick for the valley.
So I'll leave it someday and see for myself.
Someday I'll leave and then I'll come back
when I've seen what's beyond them mountains.

Ain't it a pretty night.
The sky's so heavy with stars tonight that it could fall right down out of heaven and cover us up in one big blanket of velvet and diamonds.



"While I waste these precious hours" from Amelia Goes to the Ball

While I waste these precious hours,
Hear a woman's prayer, O ye heavenly Powers!
You must know woman wants but little
here below.
Man may pray for lands and oceans,
Woman holds more modest notions.
But alas, why do men get all the best of things,
While we women must be thankful for the rest?

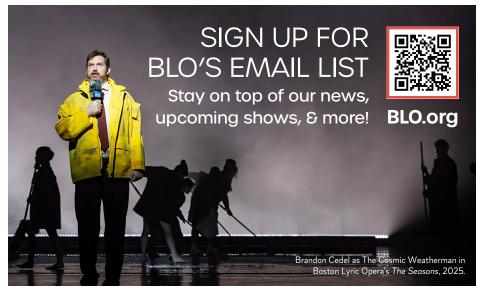
Not for glory I pray, nor pow'r, Just for a ball, an innocent ball. You whose finger moves the stars, Make them linger, stay the hours, Hold back the moon, o Heaven, Halt all time's flight So that I may go to the ball tonight!

"Addio, del passato" from La traviata

Addio, del passato bei sogni ridenti, Le rose del volto già sono pallenti; L'amore d'Alfredo perfino mi manca, Conforto, sostegno dell'anima stanca. Ah, della traviata sorridi al desio; A lei, deh, perdona; tu accoglila, o Dio. Or tutto finì.

Translation

Farewell, happy dreams of the past,
The rosiness of my cheeks
has already gone pale;
The love of Alfredo I will miss,
The comfort and support of my tired soul.
Ah, smile upon the desire
of a fallen woman;
God, pardon and receive her.
All is now over.



"Down you go" from Flight

Down you go. Scurry down, for sweaty embraces in sordid places.

Ruled by animal natures.

And people come from every corner, Come scrabbling here from every corner,

Heading for somewhere warmer.

Their grubby dreams of love and romance.

If you can't get it here,

What makes you think you can get it in France?

I'd like to put a spoke in.

Put a spanner in.

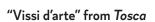
Put a stop to that sort of thing.

Stewards, return to departures, please:

Another plane about to leave.

Everyone passes through. Everyone's in transit. But you sit there and stare. You're not going anywhere. I like that, staring at me, Transfixed, unchanging. I like him to look at me and adore. That's enough for me.

Flight Four-Seven-Oh, about to go.



Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore, non feci mai male ad anima viva! Con man furtiva quante miserie conobbi aiutai. Sempre con fè sincera la mia preghiera ai santi tabernacoli salì. Sempre con fè sincera diedi fiori agl'altar. Nell'ora del dolore perchè, perchè, Signore, perchè me ne rimuneri così? Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto, e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel, che ne ridean più belli. Nell'ora del dolor perchè, perchè, Signor, ah, perchè me ne rimuneri così?



I lived for my art, I lived for love, I never did harm to a living soul! With a secret hand I relieved as many misfortunes as I knew of. Always with true faith my prayer rose to the holy shrines. Always with true faith I gave flowers to the altar. In the hour of grief why, why, o Lord, why do you reward me thus? I gave jewels for the Madonna's mantle, and I gave my song to the stars, to heaven, which smiled with more beauty. In the hour of grief why, why, o Lord, ah, why do you reward me thus?

"Sull'aria" from Le nozze di Figaro

SUSANNA

"Sull'aria "

LA CONTESSA

"Che soave zeffiretto..."

SUSANNA

"Zeffiretto..."

LA CONTESSA

"Questa sera spirerà..."

SUSANNA

"Questa sera spirerà..."

LA CONTESSA

"Sotto i pini del boschetto."

SUSANNA

Sotto i pini...?

LA CONTESSA

"Sotto i pini del boschetto."

SUSANNA

"Sotto i pini...del boschetto.."

LA CONTESSAA

Ei già il resto capirà.

SUSANNA

Certo, certo il capirà.

Translation

SUSANNA

"To the zephyr ..."

CONTESSA

"How sweet the breeze..."

SUSANNA

"The breeze..."

CONTESSA

"Will be this evening..."

SUSANNA

"Will be this evening..."

CONTESSA

"In the pine grove."

SUSANNA

In the pine...?

CONTESSA

"In the pine grove."

SUSANNA

"In the pine grove."

CONTESSA

The rest he'll understand.

SUSANNA

I'm sure he'll understand.

In this scene, the Countess is dictating a letter to Susanna, who is repeating her text to make sure she has it right. The lines in quotation marks are the lines of text going into the letter.

"Glitter and be gay" from Candide

Glitter and be gay, That's the part I play; Here I am in Paris, France, Forced to bend my soul To a sordid role,

Victimized by bitter, bitter circumstance.

Alas for me! Had I remained Beside my lady mother, My virtue had remained unstained Until my maiden hand was gained By some Grand Duke or other.

Ah, 'twas not to be; Harsh necessity Brought me to this gilded cage.

Born to higher things,

Here I droop my wings, Ah! Singing of a sorrow nothing can assuage.

And yet of course I rather like to revel, Ha ha!

I have no strong objection to champagne,

My wardrobe is expensive as the devil, Ha ha!

Perhaps it is ignoble to complain... Enough, enough

Of being basely tearful! I'll show my noble stuff

By being bright and cheerful!

Ha ha ha ha hal Hal

Pearls and ruby rings... Ah, how can worldly things Take the place of honor lost? Can they compensate

For my fallen state,

Purchased as they were at such an awful cost?

Bracelets...lavalieres Can they dry my tears? Can they blind my eyes to shame? Can the brightest brooch Shield me from reproach? Can the purest diamond purify my name?

And yet of course these trinkets are endearing, Ha hal

I'm oh, so glad my sapphire is a star, I rather like a twenty-carat earring,

If I'm not pure, at least my jewels are!

Enough! Enough! I'll take their diamond necklace And show my noble stuff By being gay and reckless! Ha ha ha ha hal Hal

Observe how bravely I conceal The dreadful, dreadful shame I feel. Ha ha ha hal



BOSTONLYRICOPERA 2025/26SEASON

GET AN INSIDER'S LOOK BEYOND THE STAGE: **BLO.ORG/SEASON**









Presented in partnership by Boston Lyric Opera & Boston Conservatory at Berklee, the Opera Innovators Series brings together visionary artists and creative leaders in opera for a dynamic educational & professional development program.

Thank you to David & Janet McCue for their generous support of Boston Lyric Opera in presenting the Opera Innovators Series this season.



BOSTONLYRICOPERA

2025/26 JANE & STEVEN AKIN EMERGING ARTISTS

BLO is celebrating 15 years of the Jane & Steven Akin Emerging Artist Initiative!

The pursuit of a successful career in opera is a challenging and expensive undertaking.

BLO proudly provides opportunities and funding for Emerging Artists to hone their talents with regular coaching and mentorship, to expand their repertoire by preparing new roles, and to be heard by diverse audiences in BLO productions and community events.

More than 50 artists have benefited from this initiative since its inception.



Alexandra Dietrich director | Mary Kray mezzo-soprano | Josie Larsen soprano | Morgan Mastrangelo tenor Devon Russo bass-baritone | Laura Santamaria soprano | Zizhao Wang bass-baritone | Angela Yam soprano

BOSTONLYRICOPERA 2025/26SEASON

YOUR NEXT CAPTIVATING
EVENING AWAITS:
BLO.ORG/SEASON



MACBETH

OCTOBER 10 - 12 EMERSON COLONIAL THEATRE

RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES!

NOVEMBER 12 SOWA POWER STATION

VANESSA

JANUARY 8-10 SYMPHONY HALL

MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 3

FEBRUARY 10 SYMPHONY HALL

SONG OF THE EARTH (DAS LIED VON DER ERDE)

MARCH 20 - 29 OPERA + COMMUNITY STUDIOS

RAEHANN IN RECITAL

MARCH 24
OPERA + COMMUNITY STUDIOS

DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

APRIL 24 - MAY 3
EMERSON COLONIAL THEATRE

SHE WAS THERE

JUNE 13-14

THE WEST END MUSEUM & MUSEUM
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY



Visit us this fall for more free events!

Opera Innovators Series @ Boston Conservatory at Berklee:
Norman Garrett Masterclass
September 28 | 3:00 - 5:00pm

Opera Innovators Series @ Boston Conservatory at Berklee: Maestro Riccardo Frizza Masterclass October 9 | 7:00 - 9:00pm

BLO @ Fort Point Open Studios
Opera on Tour: Daughter of the Regiment
October 18 | 3:00 - 4:00pm

Opera Innovators Series @ Boston Conservatory at Berklee: Karen Slack Recital October 21 | 8:00 - 10:00pm

Opera Night @ Boston Public Library, Central Branch December 4 | 6:00 - 7:30pm

Opera Innovators Series @ Boston Conservatory at Berklee: Melanie Bacaling Masterclass December 5 | 3:00 - 5:00pm

Learn more about upcoming BLO events at BLO.org/events.

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