

# Lyric

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#LyricBelCanto

## PBS to showcase Lyric's *Bel Canto – The Opera* world premiere on its landmark *Great Performances* series



Photo: Todd Rosenberg

Chicago – **Lyric Opera of Chicago** is excited to announce that Thirteen Productions LLC for WNET New York has selected the world-premiere production of *Bel Canto – The Opera* to be part of the prestigious *Great Performances* series on PBS. The WNET team will be in Chicago to film performances January 5 and 8. *Bel Canto* will air nationally during the 2016/17 television season.

Now in its 43<sup>rd</sup> season, PBS's *Great Performances* has a history of capturing noteworthy live performances for national broadcast. **Matthew Diamond**, who also recently directed NBC's televised live production of *The Wiz*, will direct the television presentation of *Bel Canto*, collaborating with the award-winning production team from WNET and *Great Performances* executive producer **David Horn**.

***Bel Canto***, based on **Ann Patchett's** bestselling 2001 novel (inspired by the Peruvian hostage crisis of 1996-97), is a new opera composed by **Jimmy López** with libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Nilo Cruz** and curated by legendary soprano **Renée Fleming**, Lyric's creative consultant. Internationally acclaimed soprano **Danielle de Niese** stars as the American opera diva Roxane Coss, who is making a special appearance at a multinational diplomatic gathering in Lima when terrorists storm the mansion. The hostage situation becomes a siege as government forces surround the compound. During the months-long crisis, lines blur and unexpected alliances form between captors and captives, with Roxane's singing becoming a powerful, humanizing force.

Among the hostages are a Japanese industrialist, Katsumi Hosokawa (who is obsessed with the opera singer and who is the reason she was invited to perform), and his translator Gen Watanabe, portrayed by **Jeongcheol Cha** and **Andrew Stenson** respectively. **J'nai Bridges** sings the role of guerilla Carmen; with **Rafael Davila** as General Alfredo; **William Burden** as Rubén Iglesias, the vice president; **Anthony Roth Costanzo** as César; and **Jacques Imbrailo** as Joachim Messner, the Red Cross intermediary for the hostages, captors, and government officials. ***Bel Canto*** is sung in Spanish, English, Japanese, Russian, German, French, Latin, and Quechua, with projected English translations.

**Sir Andrew Davis** conducts the new Lyric production directed by **Kevin Newbury**. The production is designed by **David Korins** (sets), **Constance Hoffman** (costumes), **Duane Schuler** (lighting), and **Greg Emetaz** (projections). **Michael Black** is chorus master and **Nick Sandys** is fight director.

"All of us at Lyric are delighted to share the excitement of the world premiere of *Bel Canto* with the *Great Performances* audience," says Lyric's general director **Anthony Freud**. "It is an extraordinary piece—powerful and moving— and I am thrilled that it will be seen and heard by many more people than can attend the live performances here at Lyric."

Fleming adds, "It is simply stunning to see my good friend Ann Patchett's novel come to life onstage as an opera written by Jimmy López and Nilo Cruz. We all feel very close to this piece, and are honored that Lyric Opera's world-premiere production will be aired across the country on *Great Performances*."

"I am so proud to present our Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus in this exceptional premiere!" says Davis.

"With a history of Lyric Opera of Chicago coproductions dating back to 1980, we are delighted to once again partner with Lyric to bring innovative contemporary opera to a national audience through *Great Performances*," says Horn. "Furthermore, given our long association with Renée Fleming, we are especially pleased to present a project curated under Renée's auspices at Lyric."

For ***Bel Canto*** tickets and information call (312) 827-5600 or go to [lyricopera.org/belcanto](http://lyricopera.org/belcanto).

Major support for the *Great Performances* broadcast of *Bel Canto* from Lyric is provided by Ethel and William Gofen, Nancy W. Knowles, Dr. David G. Knott and Ms. Françoise Girard, and Liz Stiffel, with additional support from the Walter E. Heller Foundation and Jim and Kay Mabie.

Major support for *Great Performances* is provided by the Irene Diamond Fund, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Arts Fund, The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, the LuEsther T. Mertz

Charitable Trust, Rosalind P. Walter, The Agnes Varis Trust, The Starr Foundation, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, the Lenore Hecht Foundation, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, and PBS.

Lyric Opera world premiere of López's *Bel Canto* generously made possible by **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Helen and Sam Zell, Ethel and William Gofen, an Anonymous Donor, the Walter E. Heller Foundation, and Roberta L. and Robert J. Washlow**, with additional support from the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

***Bel Canto*** was created with funds from the Prince Prize for Commissioning Original Work, which was awarded to Jimmy López and Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2013.

#### **About Lyric**

Founded in 1954, Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

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