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#LyricBelCanto



PHOTO: Todd Rosenberg

BEL CANTO,
Lyric Opera of Chicago's world-premiere production,
to receive broadcast premiere nationally on *Great Performances*
Friday, January 13 at 9pm CST on PBS
Free screening at Lyric's Civic Opera House at 7:30pm –
lyricopera.org/belcanto to reserve tickets

CHICAGO – 12/19/16 – Lyric's world premiere production of the opera *Bel Canto* – recorded in Chicago last January – will air nationally on *Great Performances* Friday, January 13 at 9pm CST on PBS (Check local listings). Based on **Ann Patchett's** bestselling 2001 novel (which was inspired by the 1996-97 Peruvian hostage crisis), the new opera was composed by **Jimmy López** with a libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Nilo Cruz**. Legendary soprano **Renée Fleming**, Lyric's creative consultant, curated the project from its inception and hosts the broadcast.

Lyric will host a free screening of the broadcast in the Ardis Krainik Theatre of the Civic Opera House starting at 7:30pm on Friday, January 13. Seating will be reserved and reservations are required at lyricopera.org/belcanto.

“One of the greatest joys of my role as creative consultant at Lyric has been to develop this new work for the operatic stage,” says Fleming. “When the novel *Bel Canto* came out, it was a runaway bestseller, and friends from everywhere called me and asked, ‘Is this based on you?’ A novel with a soprano at the center, singing my repertoire? Naturally, I had to read it. I immediately realized that Ann Patchett had created a classic portrait of an American singer, and told a story of power and relevance – perfect for opera. So I proposed it as a source when we began the creation of a new work at Lyric. I presented Sir Andrew Davis and Anthony Freud with a huge list of composers. But I had been thinking, what if we ultimately focus on South America for a musical language that would geographically correspond to the piece? When we awarded the commission to the brilliant Jimmy López, I had no idea that he actually had lived through the crisis as a teenager in Lima. The piece also benefits immeasurably from the intensely musical language Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz used in his libretto.”

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.

The *Chicago Tribune* observed that “audience members everywhere surely will take comfort in the opera’s message of the transcendence of love and beauty in a world increasingly wracked with danger and fear.”

“All of us at Lyric are delighted to share the excitement of the world premiere of *Bel Canto* with the *Great Performances* audience,” says **Anthony Freud**, Lyric’s general director, president and CEO. “It is an extraordinary piece – powerful and moving – and I am thrilled that it will be seen and heard by many more people than could 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 **Sir Andrew Davis**, Lyric’s music director, who conducted the world-

premiere performances.

“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 **David Horn**, executive producer, *Great Performances*. “Furthermore, given our long association with Renée Fleming, we are especially pleased to present a project curated under Renée’s auspices at Lyric.”

Bel Canto is sung in Spanish, English, Japanese, Russian, German, French, Latin, and Quechua, with projected English translations. Sir Andrew Davis conducts the 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.

Matthew Diamond, who last year directed NBC’s televised live production of *The Wiz*, directs the television presentation of ***Bel Canto***.

A production of Lyric Opera of Chicago and *Great Performances*, ***Bel Canto the Opera from Lyric Opera of Chicago*** is produced by **John Walker**. For *Great Performances*, **Bill O’Donnell** is series producer; **David Horn** is executive producer.

Visit ***Great Performances Online*** at www.pbs.org/gperf for additional information about this and other programs.

Great Performances is produced by THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET, one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers. Throughout its more than 40-year history on public television, ***Great Performances*** has provided viewers across the country with an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America’s most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming.

About Lyric Opera of Chicago

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.

Founded in 1954, 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, President & CEO 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.

To learn more about Lyric's current season, go to lyricopera.org. You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1617 #LongLivePassion

Major support for the **Great Performances** broadcast of *Bel Canto the Opera from Lyric Opera of Chicago* 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**.

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The Lyric Opera world premiere of López's *Bel Canto* was generously made possible by **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Helen and Sam Zell, Ethel and William Gofen, Ada and Whitney Addington, the Walter E. Heller Foundation, and Roberta L. and Robert J. Washlow**, with additional support from the **National Endowment for the Arts, Prince Charitable Trusts**, and **Robin Angly**.

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.

Steingraeber & Söhne was the Official Piano of Lyric's new production of *Bel Canto*, in partnership with the Grand Piano Haus, Skokie, Illinois.



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