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BLO's Stephen Shrestinian Award for Excellence Presented to Joseph Valone

Boston, MA — On April 23, 2008, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) presented the Stephen Shrestinian Award for Excellence to baritone Joseph Valone before a gathering of Board members, patrons, singers, guests and staff at the final dress rehearsal for *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. This award is presented annually to a member of BLO's ensemble who has demonstrated exceptional artistic growth and shown great promise for continued professional achievement.

The Stephen Shrestinian Award for Excellence, a cash award, was created to assist young artists with further professional development and training. The recipient may use the award for BLO-approved advancement activities such as coaching a new role, taking a movement, dance or acting class, or paying a portion of graduate school tuition.

"Joseph exhibits great potential and talent both on and off the stage," said Janice Mancini Del Sesto, General Director of BLO. "Whether singing a role in a mainstage production, or as a member of our professional ensemble, or working to introduce opera in our In School Previews, Joseph has proven to be a valuable contributor in performance and in educational outreach activities. Through this award, we are eager to play a role in and watch his professional growth over the next few years."

Mr. Valone made his debut with Boston Lyric Opera last season as Prince Yamaduri in *Madama Butterfly* and appears again as a member of BLO's ensemble during the 2007–2008 Season. This spring he engaged students and educators as part of BLO's In-School Previews for its *Hansel and Gretel* production for school children and families. He is a graduate of Boston University where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance and Italian Literature in 2005, followed by a Master's Degree in 2007. Mr. Valone has sung roles in several Boston University opera productions including: Schaunard in *La bohème*, The Traveling Shoe Salesman in *Postcard from Morocco* and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, and also with multiple performing arts organizations in the Boston area including Opera Intermezzo and Boston Midsummer Opera. In January, he performed the role of Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra. Beyond Boston, he premiered

the role of Mr. Darcey in a musical adaptation of Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* with Ohio Light Opera in 2006. Mr. Valone is currently continuing his vocal studies with Penelope Bitzas.

The Stephen Shrestinian Award was established in the 1998–1999 Season by BLO in memory of long-time BLO ensemble member Stephen Shrestinian following his sudden death in 1996 at the age of 29. A gifted young tenor, Mr. Shrestinian was a regular member of the BLO ensemble, and sang comprimario and supporting roles with the Company. The award is funded by the relatives, friends, colleagues, members of the BLO ensemble, audience members, and others who knew and admired him. Past recipients of the Shrestinian Award include Neil Nelson, Alan Schneider, Heidi Stober, Stephanie Chigas, Laura Choi Stuart, Andrea Coleman, and Erica Brookhyser.

BLO continues to raise funds for this award. For further information about the Stephen Shrestinian Award for Excellence, or to contribute to the fund, please contact Christopher Marrison, Director of Development, at 617.542.4912 x264. BLO is a member of The Boston Foundation Endowment Partners Program.

Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) is New England's favorite opera company. Founded in 1976, BLO is recognized for its artistically excellent productions of a diverse repertoire that entertain and inspire audiences and which feature emerging operatic talent. Its mainstage productions at The Citi Performing Arts CenterSM Shubert Theatre, live broadcasts on WGBH radio and traveling production of a fully staged, one-hour English version of a popular opera for school children and families reach some 200,000 people a year. BLO's programs are funded, in part, by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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