BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

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Esther Nelson Named New General & Artistic Director Of Boston Lyric Opera

Will succeed Janice Mancini Del Sesto September 2, 2008

Boston, MA — Steven P. Akin, Chairman of the Board of Boston Lyric Opera (BLO), announced today that Esther Nelson will become BLO's new General & Artistic Director effective September 2, 2008. Current General Director Janice Mancini Del Sesto will facilitate Ms. Nelson's transition into the organization. The appointment follows an eight month executive search precipitated by Ms. Del Sesto's announcement in November 2007 to complete her tenure at BLO at the end of her contract.

Search Committee Co-Chairs David Scudder and Horace H. Irvine II noted, "We are so pleased Esther has accepted the position. Her distinguished and successful career among many of the country's opera companies will be a terrific asset to BLO as it strives to increase not only the quality but also the quantity of opera in Boston."

Ms. Nelson's experience in opera and the performing arts spans three decades. Prior to her recent position as a Management Consultant to artistic associations in New York, Virginia, Tennessee, Maine and Germany, Ms. Nelson spent six years as the General Director/CEO of Glimmerglass Opera, an internationally renowned opera festival in Cooperstown, NY. During that time, the company expanded its artistic growth, dramatically increased ticket revenue, fundraising, special events and education outreach, and nearly doubled its annual budget. Shortly before Ms. Nelson's departure in 2002, Glimmerglass enjoyed an accumulated surplus and an Endowment growth. Her leadership of the prestigious company earned her a professional citation from the Governor of New York.

"The Board is extremely confident in Esther's abilities to work closely with BLO's talented staff to build upon Jan's significant accomplishments," Mr. Akin said. "The collaborative process, not only between Jan and Esther during the transition but also between Esther and BLO's stakeholders going forward will undoubtedly facilitate the elevation of the Company's cultural prominence in Boston and beyond."

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Before joining Glimmerglass, Ms. Nelson was the General Director/CEO at Nevada Opera Association; the Director for Virginia Opera Association in Richmond; the General Director at Triangle Opera Theater in North Carolina; and the Director of Public Relations, Marketing and Development for New Orleans Opera Association, where she was also responsible for artistic administration. Ms. Nelson first entered the New Orleans community in the late 1970s as the Assistant Art Director and Set Designer for the city's PBS station, WYES, before becoming the Art Director for Fitzgerald Advertising, Inc. Her artistic leadership at these two organizations garnered several national advertising and design awards.

"I look forward to becoming part of Boston's vibrant arts community, and to producing a wide range of operatic works, bringing engaging talents of the music and performing arts world to Boston," Ms. Nelson said. "I am fortunate to be able to build on Jan Del Sesto's admirable leadership, and Maestro Lord's artistic vision and excellence. I am also pleased to be able to work with an obviously committed and generous Board of Directors and Overseers, a dedicated staff, and supporters. I hope to meet many of the Boston performing arts community soon, to discuss their ideas and hopes for their opera company."

Ms. Nelson has been an On-site Evaluator for the National Endowment for the Arts, an outside consultant for OPERA America, an evaluation panelist for the New York State Council of the Arts, and a frequent panelist and speaker. Present professional and civic activities include serving on the Boards of several financial, direct services, health care, arts and cultural agencies in the U.S. as well as in Europe. She and her husband Bernd Ulken, a retired Delta Airline Captain, have two children, Dieter and Clara Ulken. Ms. Nelson's other interests include piano music, painting, writing, medieval history and literature, bicycling and running, and she holds a license as a private pilot. She also is an active member in her family organization dedicated to the preservation of their ancestral castle in her hometown of Sulzfeld/Baden, Germany.

"I am delighted that our succession plan for my departure has resulted in the appointment of Esther Nelson," Ms. Del Sesto said. "During her tenure at Glimmerglass, one of BLO's co-production partners, I had a wonderful working relationship with her and gained great respect for her leadership, her intelligence, her aesthetic sense, and her warmth and sense of humor. I am so pleased she will succeed me and I'm committed to ensuring BLO's ongoing success by facilitating a smooth transition in leadership over the next few months."

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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 feature emerging operatic talent. BLO produces three mainstage productions at the Citi Performing Arts Center℠ Shubert Theatre in Boston and a production of a fully staged, one-hour English version of a popular opera for school children and families throughout New England. BLO's programs are funded, in part, by a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. www.blo.org