

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City's
Inaugural ***Explorations*** Series
Continues with

Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters*

***Powerful and Moving Song Cycle at the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building
Jan. 28-29***

Kansas City, MO (Jan. 9, 2017) – The inaugural ***Explorations*** series continues with Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters*, Jan. 28 and 29 at the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building at the Richard J. Stern Opera Center. ***Explorations*** features eclectic programs in intimate spaces, with programming that crosses musical borders and experiments with a wide range of lyrical expression.

Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters* was written in 1992 and recorded by the artist himself, together with the Brodsky Quartet. A set of 20 songs for voice and string quartet, including a few quartet-only interludes, they had an unusual inspiration: Costello heard that the lovelorn actually write letters to Shakespeare's Juliet and leave them at her supposed 'balcony' in Verona, Italy. Costello came up with his own stylized "letters" and set them to music, using the idea as a platform for the exploration of young love. Musically the material lies somewhere between that of his pop albums and his Shakespearean orchestral ballet *Il Sogno* of 2004, a more purely "classical" work. Elvis Costello's emotional and poignant renderings of some of these letters became the song cycle *The Juliet Letters*. Music and lyric contributions also from Michael Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas, Ian Derek Bolton, Paul Cassidy and Declan MacManus (Elvis Costello). Publisher: BUG Gold Songs (ASCAP) Obo Plangent Visions Music Ltd.

Rolling Stone stated, "While a project as ambitious as *The Juliet Letters* might have wound up mired in sentimentality and pretension, the singer and his collaborators have created something that is as accomplished as it is moving."

Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters* will be sung by the Lyric Opera Resident Artists including soprano **April Martin**, mezzo-soprano **Samantha Gossard**, tenor **Casey Candebat**, and baritone **John Viscardi**. Most recently, Ms. Gossard won a prestigious Sullivan Award from the William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation and Mr. Viscardi won the International Tosti Vocal Competition in Italy.

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For more information about the Resident Artists Program including the Artists' bios, please visit [Resident Artists Program](#).

They will be accompanied by **The Fry Street Quartet** within a special scenic environment created for this concert. **Fenlon Lamb**, Director of Opera at University of Missouri - Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance, will direct the production, **Jeff Ridenour** will design the scenery. Lighting Design by Nate Wheatley and Costume Design by Mary Traylor.

Lyric Opera of Kansas City General Director and CEO **Deborah Sandler** stated, "**Explorations** allows us to touch audiences in new and personal ways, while expanding the range of our offerings. We believe the intimacy of these performances will create a new kind of experience for audiences. This new series will also showcase the extremely talented singers in our Resident Artist Program, along with other guest artists.

I'm especially delighted to share this bold and deeply moving production with Kansas City. The songs featured in Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters* are the art songs of today very much like the art songs of yesteryear. Their appeal is timeless, whether the composer was Schubert or Elvis Costello."

About The Fry Street Quartet

This remarkable quartet - hailed as "a triumph of ensemble playing" by the *New York Times* - is a multi-faceted ensemble taking chamber music in new directions. Members include Robert Waters, Violin, Rebecca McFaul, Violin, Bradley Ottesen, Viola and Anne Francis Bayless, Cello. Touring music of the masters as well as exciting original works from visionary composers of our time, The Fry Street Quartet has perfected a "blend of technical precision and scorching spontaneity" (Strad). Since securing the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the quartet has reached audiences from Carnegie Hall to London, and Sarajevo to Jerusalem, exploring the medium of the string quartet and its life-affirming potential with "profound understanding...depth of expression, and stunning technical astuteness" (Deseret *Morning News*).

Reaching in new directions, The Fry Street Quartet has commissioned and toured new works by a wide range of composers. *Pandemonium* by Brazilian composer Clarice Assad received its Fry Street premiere with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra; Michael Ellison's *Fiddlin'* was co-commissioned by the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music Series and the Salt Lake City based NOVA series; Laura Kaminsky's *Rising Tide* was commissioned especially for the quartet's global sustainability initiative, The Crossroads Project, toured with projections of paintings created for the project by artist Rebecca Allan, talks by physicist Dr. Robert Davies and photographs by acclaimed environmental photographer Garth Lenz. The quartet's 2014-2015 season included its premiere of Kaminsky's new chamber opera, *As One* with soprano Sasha Cooke and baritone Kelly Markgraff at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, as well as a new work by Libby Larsen entitled *Emergence*, which anchors The Crossroads Project's Second Chapter, *Crossroads: Emergence* for string quartet, film, and actor. The Crossroads Project album has recently been released on Navona Records.

The Fry Street Quartet holds the Endowed String Quartet Residency at the Caine College of the Arts at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

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About Fenlon Lamb

Opera News called Fenlon Lamb “moving and convincing” and *Seen and Heard International* complemented her “well-honed theatrical sensibility.” Ms. Lamb brings these qualities of experience and perspective as an outstanding singing actress to her work as a stage director.

Ms. Lamb is the Director of Opera at UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance where she has directed *Die Zauberflöte*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi* along with *Cendrillon* and *Little Women*. Currently, she is also the Director of Opera and Vocal Programming at Bar Harbor Music Festival. She has designed and directed engaging productions of *Carmen*, *L’Elisir d’Amore*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La Bohème*, *La Cenerentola* and *Don Giovanni* while she continues to program innovative recitals and pops concerts each festival season.

Most recently, Ms. Lamb directed the oratorio *To Be Certain of the Dawn* (Stephen Paulus) with the Lexington Philharmonic and debuted with Finger Lakes Opera directing a production of *La Traviata*. She made her company debut with Opera Santa Barbara directing a “splendid” double-bill of *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. She returned to Palm Beach Opera for her fourth season to direct a “delightful, energetic” *Don Pasquale*. Ms. Lamb also made her debut at Dayton Opera directing *The Pearl Fishers*, joined Mobile Opera for *Werther* with Gran Wilson in the title role and returned to Arizona Opera as stage director for a “grand and gripping” *Rigoletto*.

In recent seasons, Ms. Lamb directed the young artists of the Crested Butte Music Festival in a production of *Don Pasquale* and a new production of *Hansel and Gretel* for Nightingale Opera Theatre with set designer Jeff Ridenour that was hailed as “fresh and alluring from curtain to curtain.” For Palm Beach Opera’s 2013 International season she directed a “fizzing and delightful” *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* “displaying theatrical ingenuity and artistic taste.” Ms. Lamb returned to Opera Carolina as Stage Director for *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Greer Grimsley in a production lauded for its “intriguing visuals, startling set contexts and projections...balancing operatic polish, romantic beauty and feminist critique.” She directed *Cendrillon* at UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance, a production in collaboration with her artistic partner, Jeff Ridenour, that was called “splendid” and “the most spectacular visual production.” She directed a new production of *Werther* with Nightingale Opera Theatre, made her directorial debut at Arizona Opera for *Lucia di Lammermoor* and made her company debut with Orlando Philharmonic directing *Le nozze di Figaro*.

In 2017, Ms. Lamb joins the production team as director for the world premiere of *Riders of the Purple Sage* with Arizona Opera and leads Dayton Opera’s *Carmen* followed by a return to Finger Lakes Opera to direct her first *Tosca*.

About Jeff Ridenour

Jeff Ridenour is a Scenic Designer, based in New York City and originally from Texas. Mr. Ridenour received his M.F.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Since graduating, he has formed a strong creative partnership with director Fenlon Lamb designing and collaborating on several productions in opera including: *Cendrillon*, *Little Women*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Suor Angelica/ Gianni Schicchi* (UMKC Opera), *Hansel & Gretel* and *The Elixir of Love* (Nightingale Opera), *La bohème* and *La Cenerentola* (Bar Harbor Music Festival), and *La Traviata* (Finger Lakes Opera). In addition to opera, he has also designed *Afflicted* (Coterie Theatre), *Seminar* (Unicorn Theatre), *Auntie Mame’d* (KC Artists Against AIDS), *Cabaret* as a guest

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designer/instructor for Austin College, *A Murder is Announced* (Arrow Rock Lyceum), and as the Asst. Scenic Designer/ Props Designer for *A Christmas Carol* (Arrow Rock Lyceum 2014-16 seasons). Since moving to NYC, Mr. Ridenour has been the Charge Scenic Artist for Encompass New Opera Theatre and has studio assisted influential designers including, George Tsybin on *Manon Lescaut* (St. Petersburg & Berlin) and the Sochi Olympics Exhibition (Moscow), Derek McLane on *Gigi* (Kennedy Center/Broadway) and last year was the Asst. Set Designer to Alain Vaes for the new production of *The Nutcracker* (Kansas City Ballet).

Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters*

Lyric Opera's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building
712 E. 18th Street, East Crossroads, Kansas City, MO
Saturday, January 28, 8 p.m. and Sunday, January 29, 2 p.m.
Reception following concert
\$30 for subscribers/ \$35 for non-subscribers

Reservations are required for all **Explorations** performances. To purchase tickets, visit kcopera.org or call Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344 or 1-800-OPERA KC (673-7252). For more information, please visit www.kcopera.org.

Explorations series underwritten by Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Spencer Fane LLP, Thomas and Sally Wood Family Foundation and Jim Zakoura.

2016-2017 Season at a Glance:

Hansel and Gretel

Engelbert Humperdinck 1893
Sung in German with English subtitles

Saturday, September 17, 2016	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, September 21, 2016	7:30 p.m.
Friday, September 23, 2016	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, September 25, 2016	2:00 p.m.

Director/Choreographer: Doug Varone
Conductor: John Keenan
Hansel: Megan Marino
Gretel: Rachele Gilmore
Witch/Mother: Victoria Livengood
Peter: Troy Cook
Sandman: Laurel Weir
Dew Fairy: April Martin

The Marriage of Figaro

CO-PRODUCTION with Opera Philadelphia, San Diego Opera and Palm Beach Opera
Debut at Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Wolfgang A. Mozart 1784
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Saturday, November 5, 2016	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 9, 2016	7:30 p.m.
Friday, November 11, 2016	7:30 p.m.

Lyric Opera of Kansas City Announces **Explorations Series performance**
Elvis Costello's, 'The Juliet Letters'

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Sunday, November 13, 2016 2:00 p.m.

Director: Stephen Lawless
Conductor: Ryan McAdams
Costume Designer: Leslie Travers
Lighting Designer: Thomas C. Hase
Count Almaviva: Edward Parks
Countess Almaviva: Katie Van Kooten
Figaro: Adam Lau
Susanna: Maureen McKay
Dr. Bartolo: Arthur Woodley
Marcellina: Margaret Gawrysiak
Don Basilio/Don Curzio: Steven Cole
Cherubino: Samantha Gossard
Babarina: April Martin
Antonio: Rhys Lloyd Talbot

Lyric Opera of Kansas City PREMIERE

Dead Man Walking

Music by Jake Heggie

Libretto by Terence McNally 2000

Based on the novel by Sister Helen Prejean

Sung in English with English subtitles

Saturday, March 4, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 10, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 12, 2017 2:00 p.m.

Director: Kristine McIntyre
Conductor: Steven Osgood
Sister Helen Prejean: Kate Aldrich
Joseph de Rocher: David Adam Moore
Mrs. Patrick de Rocher: Maria Zifchak
Sister Rose: Karen Slack
Owen Hart: Daniel Belcher
Father Grenville: Casey Candebat
Howard Boucher: Brian Frutiger
Jade Boucher: Samantha Gossard
Kitty Hart: April Martin
Motorcycle Cop: John Viscardi
George Benton: Jeffrey Beruan
Prison Guard #1: Rhys Lloyd Talbot
Prison Guard #2: Armando Contreras

The Pirates of Penzance

Gilbert & Sullivan 1879

Sung in English with English subtitles

Saturday, April 22, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 26, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 28, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 29, 2017 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 30, 2017 2:00 p.m.

Director: James Alexander

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Conductor: Hal France
Mabel: Anya Matanovic
Frederic: Jonathan Johnson
The Pirate King: Kevin Burdette
Major-General Stanley: Robert Gibby Brand
Ruth: Margaret Gawrysiak
Sergeant of Police: Ben Wager
Edith: April Martin
Kate: Samantha Gossard
Samuel: Rhys Lloyd Talbot

About Lyric Opera of Kansas City

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City was founded in 1958; it is one of the nation's premier regional opera companies and brings high quality live operatic performances to the people of the Kansas City area and a five-state region. Repertoire choices encompass original language performances of standard repertory as well as contemporary and American operas. The Company mounts productions that enrich the community it serves, as well as reflect the highest artistic standards of the profession. The Lyric Opera offers innovative and award-winning programs designed to further music and arts education both in schools and in the community and serves more than 18,000 students and educators each year.

Opera lovers can be fans of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City on Facebook or follow us on Twitter at @kcopera.

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a member of OPERA America and this season is made possible with funding from Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts, and the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation.

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