

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Lyric Opera of Kansas City to Debut
Pulitzer Prize Winner *Silent Night*
February 21-March 1
In Commemoration of WWI Centennial**
*Erin Wall, Sean Panikkar and Liam Bonner Lead a Stellar Cast
at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts*

Kansas City, MO (January 22, 2015) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City continues its exhilarating 57th season with the Kansas City premiere of composer Kevin Puts’ 2012 Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, *Silent Night*, February 21, 25 and 27 and March 1 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The production will be sung in English, German, French, Italian and Latin with English titles. High res production and artists’ photos can be downloaded [here](#) .

Based on a fascinating true story, *Silent Night* recounts a miraculous moment of peace during one of the bloodiest wars in human history. On World War I’s western front, weapons were laid down when the Scottish, French and German officers defied their superiors and negotiated a Christmas Eve truce. Enemies became brothers as they came together to share Christmas and bury their dead.

Silent Night, which premiered at Minnesota Opera in 2011 to worldwide critical acclaim, will debut at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. “We are very proud to present this stunning and moving production, which has quickly entered the opera repertoire, to Kansas City audiences,” Deborah Sandler stated. “An extremely poignant work, its premiere is especially timely in light of the commemoration of the centennial of World War I. Through our art, we are able to focus on the price that war extracts. We use our lens to understand that when we appeal to our essential humanity, conflict becomes unreasonable.”

Silent Night earned composer **Kevin Puts** a [Pulitzer Prize](#) in Music in 2012. The libretto, by **Mark Campbell**, is based on the multilingual screenplay by Christian Carion for the 2005 film *Joyeux Noël* that tells a story during the spontaneous but short-lived truce between enemy combatants in World War I on Christmas Day, 1914.

In the role of Anna Sørensen, Canadian soprano **Erin Wall** will be making her debut with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. She reprises the role, which Wall first performed in the Cincinnati Opera production of *Silent Night* in 2014. Wall is a renowned and versatile international talent, acclaimed for her performances of contemporary opera as well as her interpretations of Strauss, Mozart and Mahler. In her recent title role in *Thaïs* at the Edinburgh Festival, Erin won raves as the “Thais of one’s dreams, wielding a soprano of radiance, pristine beauty and tingling top notes,” (*Andrew Clark, Financial Times*). She has also performed at the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra National de Paris, the *BBC Proms* and La Scala.

Dynamic tenor **Sean Panikkar** will make his Lyric Opera debut in the role of German opera singer and conscript Nikolaus Sprink. Capturing national attention as part of the popular trio *Forte Tenors*, Panikkar has been lauded for his “big, potent tenor” (Heidi Waleson, *The Wall Street Journal*). His Molqi in The Metropolitan Opera’s *The Death of Klinghoffer* was universally praised--James Jordan of the *New York Observer* commented he “rose to the challenge of the stratospheric tessitura of Molqi’s war cries.” Performing frequently at the Metropolitan Opera, Panikkar has portrayed Tybalt in *Romeo et Juliette*, with Plácido Domingo conducting, and as Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Panikkar was praised for his “resilient, lyrical, supple and touchingly expressive” tenor (Hilary Finch, *London Times*) in the role of Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at Royal Albert Hall in 2014. He has also performed at San Francisco Opera, Dallas Opera, and the Aix-en-Provence Festival.

Acclaimed baritone **Liam Bonner** stars as the conflicted French commander Lt. Audebert, returning to the role he created in *Silent Night*’s world premiere at Minnesota Opera in 2011. “Mr. Bonner brought warmth and wistfulness to Audebert,” wrote the *New York Times* of Bonner’s reprise of the role at Opera Philadelphia in 2013. Praised by *Opera News* for his “rich, versatile voice” and “beautiful instrument,” Bonner is considered a rising star, and has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera and the English National Opera. He returns to the Lyric Opera after his Kansas City debut in April of last year, for which he received rave reviews for his Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*.

Baritone **Craig Irvin**, making his Lyric Opera debut, will play the role of Lt. Horstmayer, the German commanding officer. Like Bonner, Irvin created his role in the Minnesota Opera world premiere in 2011, and has reprised the role at Fort Worth Opera and Cincinnati Opera. “The robust baritone Craig Irvin is at the moral crux of the opera,”

wrote the *New York Times* in 2013. “Irvin endows his character with full humanity and vocal power,” wrote *Opera News* of the artist’s Horstmayer in Fort Worth Opera’s 2014 production. A frequent performer with Minnesota Opera, Irvin has also performed with Los Angeles Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Returning to the Lyric Opera after his much-heralded turn as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* in 2013, **Daniel Belcher** will perform the role of Scottish priest Father Palmer. The Grammy Award-winning baritone has built a 50-role repertoire that features critically acclaimed performances of the work of Puccini, Mozart and Rossini. Performing in a “brilliant, vibrant baritone,” with an “uncommonly wide range” (*Opera News*), Belcher is a native of St. Joseph, Missouri, attended William Jewell College and has performed with San Francisco Opera, Grand Theatre de Geneve, and New York City Opera.

Octavio Cardenas will direct and be making his Lyric Opera debut. Serving as assistant director for *Silent Night*’s premiere in 2011, he has also directed the Fort Worth Opera’s production of *Silent Night* to wide acclaim in 2014. Also making his Lyric Opera debut is conductor **David Charles Abell**, who most recently wielded the baton, guiding *Porgy and Bess* for Cincinnati Opera to rave reviews.

Scenery and Properties designed by **Francis O’Connor**. Costumes designed by **Kärin Kopischke**. Projections designed by Andrzej Goulding. Sound designed by **Andrew C. Mayer**. Scenery, properties, costumes and media files for this production are owned by the Minnesota Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera and Fort Worth Opera and were constructed by the Minnesota Opera Shops.

University Apprentices

The Lyric Opera Apprentice Program is a collaboration with the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the School of Music at the University of Kansas. During the two-year program students gain experience and training with the Lyric Opera to become professional opera singers. University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) apprentice **Elliot Harrison Brown** will perform in the chorus. University of Kansas apprentices **Samantha Gossard** will perform as Madeleine. **Clark Weyrauch** will sing in the chorus. Former Lyric Opera Apprentice Michael Colman will perform in the chorus.

Principals Cast

Anna Sørensen: Erin Wall *

Nikolaus Sprink: Sean Panikkar *
Lt. Audebert: Liam Bonner
Lt. Horstmeyer: Craig Irvin *
Lt. Gordon: Craig Colclough *
Jonathan Dale: David Blalock
Kronprinz: Doug Jones
Father Palmer: Daniel Belcher
William Dale: Caleb C. Ashby
Ponchel: Andrew Wilkowske *
British Major: Ron Witzke
French General: John Stephens
Madeleine Audebert: Samantha Gossard +
German General: ???
Gueusslein: Elliot Harrison Brown

Artistic Staff

Conductor: David Charles Abell *
Director: Octavio Cardenas *
Set Designer: Francis O'Connor
Costume Designer: Karin Kopischk
Lighting Designer: Marcus Dilliard
Wig and Make-up Designer: Alison Hanks
Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell
Stage Manager: Jennifer Rimmer

Ticket availability varies by performance. To purchase tickets, call Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344 or 1-800-OPERAKC (673-7252). Patrons can select their own seat and print their tickets at home by visiting www.kcopera.org. Limited student rush tickets are available for \$15, cash only, one hour before the performances, with a valid student ID.

***Silent Night* Artists Panel**

The Making of the Opera, the Writing of the Book

Friday February 20th 2015

Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

The events of the 1914 Christmas Truce inspired both a Pulitzer Prize-winning opera and a riveting book. In a rare opportunity to meet the creators of both, composer Kevin Puts, librettist Mark Campbell, and Stanley Weintraub, author of “Silent Night: The story of the World War I Christmas Truce” tell us how these works came into being. On the eve of Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s opening night, Deborah Sandler, Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s General Director and CEO and Matthew Naylor, President and CEO of the

National WWI Museum host this FREE event held in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre in view of the opera's evocative set. Please note this is a FREE, open seating event. Doors open at 6:00pm. No ticket is needed, however RSVPs are requested. Attendees can RSVP at kcopera.org/silentnightpanel.

First Friday, Feb.6 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building (1725 Holmes, KCMO) – Experience Christmas again – in February! Lyric Opera offers a sneak peek of *Silent Night* with special displays about the WWI Christmas Truce, performances by Lyric Opera Apprentices, and free drinks and food. Beer is sponsored by Boulevard Brewery. The event is FREE and open to the public. Invite your friends to attend on [Facebook](#).

Pre-Opera Talks

Audience members are invited and encouraged to attend a free opera preview, presented by the Lyric Opera Guild, in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre within the Kauffman Center one hour before curtain. Lyric Opera Guild presenter Rebecca Johnson will lead the 25-minute talks. The Lyric Opera Guild also presents a series of free “At Ease with Opera” presentations prior to the performance dates.

Silent Night “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:

Monday, Feb. 2 at 7:00 p.m. at the National World War 1 Museum (100 W. 26th St. KCMO) **1915: An Ecstasy of Fumbling** The first four months of fighting on the Western Front produced over 1.7 million casualties. By New Year's Day in 1915 the exhausted armies in France and Flanders had settled into a nearly unbroken network of trenches stretching over 400 miles. In 1915 all of the combatants embarked upon "an ecstasy of fumbling" as they struggled for solutions to the unprecedented military challenges that the trench stalemate presented. Lt. Col. (ret.) Richard S. Faulkner will focus on how the deadly stalemate developed at the end of 1914 and the various efforts the armies made in 1915 to break the deadlock and grasp victory.

Monday, Feb. 9 at 7:00 p.m. at the National World War 1 Museum (100 W. 26th St. KCMO) **Culture & War in the Metropolis** Although the battle fronts in the First World War sometimes approached Paris and Berlin, the inhabitants of these cities experienced historical transformations in cultural and artistic life that connected to varying degrees with the war. UMKC professors Scott Baker and Gayle Levy will discuss some of the most important of these transformations in each metropolis during the decade 1910-1920.

Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the National World War 1 Museum (100 W. 26th St. KCMO) **Joyeux Noel** Prior to the debut of the Pulitzer prize-winning opera *Silent Night* at the Lyric Opera, enjoy an encore screening of the Academy Award-nominated film *Joyeux Noel* in the J.C. Nichols

Auditorium. This program is part of the Lyric Opera Guild's award-winning series, *At Ease With Opera* and an introduction will be provided by one of the *At Ease With Opera*'s most popular preview speakers, Becky Johnson, the President of the Guild. *Free to the public.*

Young Friends of the Lyric

Young Friends of the Lyric provides an exciting outlet for young arts supporters (ages 21-40) in Kansas City to get involved in the community, meet other young adults and support the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. The group hosts "Cocktails with Friends" social hours prior to some performances. You do not have to be a member to attend these happy hours. Membership benefits include admission into a private room with complimentary drinks and food during intermissions, networking opportunities, restaurant discounts, invitations to special events and all the benefits of being a Lyric Opera Guild member.

Young Friends of the Lyric membership is \$25 for an individual, \$40 for a couple, or \$75 for a dual patron membership. To join, contact Ticketing & Patron Services at 816-471-7344. Become a fan on [Facebook](#) to keep up with current events.

About the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is a major center for music, opera, theater, and dance designed by Moshe Safdie opened September 2011. The Kauffman Center presents vibrant performances and advances the role of the performing arts as a catalyst for Kansas City's civic, economic, and educational vitality.

Three of the region's leading performing arts organizations—Kansas City Ballet, Kansas City Symphony, and Lyric Opera of Kansas City—are in residence at the Kauffman Center. The Kauffman Center's two performance venues, the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre and the 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall, offer audiences engaging and intimate experiences, while at the same time providing resident companies with dramatically enhanced performance capabilities.

Serving as a cultural cornerstone for Kansas City's dynamic downtown, the Kauffman Center brings a new spotlight to the region's performing arts community while simultaneously attracting some of the world's most talented performers and entertainers, further establishing Kansas City as a major cultural destination.

More information on the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is available at kauffmancenter.org.

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is fully accessible and provides assistive listening devices plus Braille and large print programs. Service animals are welcome with advance notice. All dates, operas and artists are subject to change.

Visit www.kcopera.org for more information about Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2014-2015 season and www.kauffmancenter.org for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

2014-2015 Season at a Glance:

La Traviata

Giuseppe Verdi 1853

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Saturday, September 27, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 1, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 3, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 5, 2014, 2014 2:00 p.m.

Director: David Gately

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Set and Costume Designer: Desmond Heeley

Violetta Valery: Joyce El-Khoury

Giorgio Germont: Anthony Michaels-Moore

The Italian Girl in Algiers

Gioachino Rossini 1813

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Saturday, November 8, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 12, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 14, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 16, 2014, 2014 2:00 p.m.

Director: Michael Cavanagh

Conductor: Leonardo Vordoni

Set Designer: Robert Innes Hopkins

Isabella: Irene Roberts

Mustafa: Patrick Carfizzi

Lindoro: Taylor Stayton

Silent Night

Kevin Puts 2011

Sung in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin with English titles

Saturday, February 21, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 25, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Friday, February 27, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 1, 2015 2:00 p.m.

Director: Octavio Cardenas

Conductor: David Charles Abell

Lt. Audebert: Liam Bonner

Anna Sorenson: Erin Wall

Lt. Gordon: Craig Colclough

Lt. Horstmayer: Craig Irvin

Nikolaus Sprink: Sean Panikkar

Jonathan Dale: David Blalock

Father Palmer: Daniel Belcher

Kronprinz: Doug Jones

William Dale: Caleb C. Ashby

British Major: Ron Witzke
French General: John Stephens
Madeleine Aude Bert: Samantha Giscard
Ponchel: Andrew Wilkowske

Tosca

Giacomo Puccini 1900

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Saturday, April 18, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 22, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 24, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 26, 2015 2:00 p.m.

Director: Garnett Bruce

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Production Designer: R. Keith Brumley

Floria Tosca: Melody Moore

Mario Cavaradossi: James Valenti

Baron Scarpia: Gordon Hawkins

Sacristan: Julien Robbins

Building for the Future

On November 4, 2010 the Lyric Opera of Kansas City announced a Capital Campaign for the renovation of property on 18th and Charlotte in the Kansas City Crossroads Arts District for the new Richard J. Stern Opera Center. The Company moved from its temporary home to the new Opera Center campus located at 1725 Holmes on July 5, 2012.

The new Opera Center complex consists of two buildings: the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building and the Beth Ingram Administration building with set rental inventory storage. The Production Arts Building includes a rehearsal space that matches the footprint of the stage in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The Production Arts Building houses a full wig, costume and set construction shop and facilities for educational and community outreach programs. Such an integrated and dedicated production facility does not exist in Kansas City; the Company envisions the Production Arts Building becoming a resource for other local performing arts companies.

The second building on the property is adjacent to the Production Arts building. It provides the Company with set rental inventory storage, parking lots and outside green spaces for the Opera Center, and houses the administrative staff.

About Lyric Opera of Kansas City

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City was founded in 1958; it is one of the nations' 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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Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052 or 816.213.4355.

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