

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City Celebrates 60th Anniversary with Announcement of 2017-2018 Season

**60th Anniversary Season includes a
NEW PRODUCTION of Eugene Onegin, the Kansas City premiere of Everest,
Verdi's Rigoletto and Rossini's The Barber of Seville, at
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts**

**Exploration Series includes The Bernstein Songbook with
New York Festival of Song and As One**

Kansas City, MO (Feb. 6, 2017) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City **General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler** today announced its 60th anniversary, with four world-class works in the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts including the NEW PRODUCTION of **Eugene Onegin**, the KANSAS CITY PREMIERE of **Everest**, Verdi's **Rigoletto** and Rossini's **The Barber of Seville**.

In its second season, the Lyric's new 2017-2018 Explorations Series at the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building and at Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral includes four presentations: **Meet the Resident Artists, The Bernstein Songbook with New York Festival of Song, As One** and **American Voices – Art Songs & Arias**.

"Our 60th season, featuring 17 Kansas City debuts, is designed to give our audiences an experience like no other, whether you renew your love for a beloved classic or grow breathless at a brand new work," Sandler said. "This season reflects our long history with iconic stories that have stood the test of time, and groundbreaking productions that explore opera's ability to create truly compelling storytelling. Our mission is to make Lyric Opera of Kansas City indispensable to the public through transformational opera experiences and broad service that captures the hearts and minds of our communities."

The 2017-2018 season opens with Tchaikovsky's compelling masterpiece, **Eugene Onegin (oh-nyeh-gin)** and will feature notable Lyric Opera debuts including **Morgan Smith** as Onegin and **Stuart Stratford** conducting, as well as the return of soprano **Joyce El-Khoury**. Following this Romantic milestone is the exhilarating new opera, **Everest** in its Kansas City premiere, which will include major Lyric Opera debuts including **Andrew Bidlack** as Rob Hall, **Craig Verm** as Doug Hansen **Michael Mayes** as Beck Weathers and **Leonard Foglia** directing. It also features the much-anticipated Lyric Opera debut of Dallas Opera Principal Guest Conductor **Nicole Paiement**. In only its second performance since the acclaimed world premiere in Dallas, this production of

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Everest is based on the true-life tragedy that claimed the lives of 15 climbers in 1996. It conveys the enormity of the disaster with a percussion section so large that it overflows the orchestra pit, forcing the voice of the mountain itself to “spill out” into the audience and surround it with sound. The Company then returns to its Italian roots to revel in the gritty realism of Verdi’s dark *Rigoletto*., featuring major Lyric Opera debuts of **Leo An** as Rigoletto, **Nicole Haslett** as Gilda; and **Peixin Chen** as Sparafucile. Its highly recognizable melodies and often intimate tunes offer the small comfort of familiarity as the characters careen toward their intense and famously tragic end. The season concludes with Rossini’s *bel canto* comedy, *The Barber of Seville*. Notable debuts include **Jarrett Ott** as Figaro, **Emily Fons** as Rosina, and **Jack Swanson** as Almaviva as well as director **Michael Shell**. This reimagined comedy plants the story-in the carnival-like setting of Spain’s Seville April Fair, creating a mirthful world in which ‘60s surrealism and satire intermingle.

2017-2018 Season at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

NEW PRODUCTION

***Eugene Onegin* (oh-nyeh-gin)**

Pyotr Tchaikovsky, 1878

Sung in Russian with English subtitles

Saturday, September 30, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, October 4, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Friday, October 6, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, October 8, 2017	2:00 p.m.

In one of the greatest of all musical adaptations of a literary classic, Tchaikovsky turned Pushkin’s Russian “novel in verse” into one of the world’s most beloved operas. Awash in aristocratic formality and extravagance, Onegin’s youthful disillusionment snowballs into a tragic love story saturated with drama, reversal of affections, betrayal of friendship, and death. Pushkin’s profoundly human, ultimately devastating story, elevated by Tchaikovsky’s richly layered and unabashedly expressive music, make *Eugene Onegin* perhaps the most universally beloved of all Russian operas.

Featured Artists

Baritone **Morgan Smith** joins Lyric Opera of Kansas City for the first time in the title role of Onegin. Since his time as a Seattle Opera Young Artist from 2001-2003, Mr. Smith has enjoyed a varied career, originating many roles including Starbuck in *Moby-Dick*, for which he was praised by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as an artist of “vocal splendor, moral authority and deep empathy.” Mr. Smith’s other recent appearances include Seattle Opera, Arizona Opera, Vancouver Opera and Austin Lyric Opera.

Soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** returns to the Lyric Opera in the role of Tatiana after her 2014 performance of Violetta in the Lyric’s *La traviata*. Of her performance in the title role of Donizetti’s *Maria Stuarda* at Seattle Opera, *The Seattle Times* wrote: “El-Khoury scored a triumph in the title role, combining an exquisite delicacy of sound with affecting vulnerability – yet producing plenty of steel in the confrontation scene in which she denounces Elizabeth...” In the 2016-2017 season,

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Ms. El-Khoury made several major debuts: first in London at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Violetta in *La traviata*; then at the Glyndebourne Festival, also as Violetta; and at Opéra National de Bordeaux as Leïla in *Les pêcheurs de perles*. She made her role and house debuts with Opera Philadelphia as Liù in *Turandot*, and also as Salomé in Massenet's *Hérodiade* with Washington Concert Opera. Previously Ms. El-Khoury performed Violetta in *La traviata* with the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, Musetta in *La bohème* with the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* with North Carolina Opera, and joined the roster of San Diego Opera to perform the role of Tatyana Bakst in Jake Heggie's new opera *Great Scott*, alongside Frederica von Stade, Nathan Gunn, Isabel Leonard, and Anthony Roth Costanzo.

Mezzo-Soprano **Megan Marino** returns to the Lyric Opera in the role of Olga, after making her critically acclaimed debut as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* in the Fall of 2016. Recent performances include: Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Virginia Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Florida Grand Opera), Jessie in *The Long Walk* (Utah Opera), Second Wood Nymph in *Rusalka*, as well as *Roméo et Juliette* and *Rigoletto* (Metropolitan Opera), Despina in *Così fan tutte* (Central City Opera), Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), Meg Page in *Falstaff* (Des Moines Metro Opera), Angelina in *La cenerentola* (Opera Fort Collins), the Page in Strauss' *Salome* and Claire in the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*. She holds prizes from the William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation, Opera Index, the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition, the Opera Birmingham Vocal Competition and the George London Foundation.

Tenor **Jonathan Johnson** will return to the Lyric Opera stage in the role of Lensky after his debut in the 2016-2017 season finale as Frederic in the Lyric's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Currently a member of the Patrick G. & Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, the Lyric Opera of Chicago's professional artist-development program, he has appeared in that company's mainstage productions of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Merry Widow*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Capriccio*, *The Magic Victrola* and Mieczysław Weinberg's Holocaust opera *The Passenger*. He completed a fellowship at the A.J. Flecher Institute at the University of North Carolina School of Arts. While an A.J. Fletcher Institute Fellow, Mr. Johnson performed the roles of Ruggero from Giacomo Puccini's *La Rondine*, Lechmere from Benjamin Britten's *Owen Wingrave*, Azaël in Debussy's *L'enfant prodigue*, and Fenton from Otto von Nicolai's *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*. He also made his Piedmont Opera debut in the role of Ezekiel Cheever in Robert Ward's *The Crucible*.

Bass-baritone **Paul Whelan** will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Prince Gremin. Last season he added Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) to his repertoire at Hawaii Opera Theatre. He has appeared at Geneva Grand Theatre as Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and at Gothenburg Opera as Claudio in *Hamlet*. Highlights include Daland in *Der fliegende Holländer* at Hawaii Opera Theatre and New Zealand Opera, Giorgio in *I puritani* at Boston Lyric Opera and at Melbourne's Victorian Opera, Nick Shadow *The Rake's Progress* for New Zealand Opera, Banco in *Macbeth* at Opera North in the UK. Past highlights include Beethoven's *Mass in C* at Grant Park Music Festival, Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in Lille and Dijon, Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for English National Opera, Collatinus in *The Rape of Lucretia* for Norwegian Opera, and Claggart (*Billy Budd*) and Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*) at Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

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Tomer Zvulun is one of opera's most exciting young directors, earning consistent praise for his creative vision, which is often described as cinematic and fresh. His most recent work with the Lyric Opera was as director of *Die Fledermaus* in 2014. His work has been presented by prestigious opera houses around the world, including The Metropolitan Opera, the opera companies of Seattle, Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Wolf Trap and Buenos Aires, and educational institutions and universities such as The Juilliard School, Indiana University, Boston University, and IVAI in Tel Aviv. He made his European debut at Wexford Festival Opera directing the Europe premiere of *Silent Night*. Notable productions during the 2016-2017 season have included the premiere of Bolcom's *Dinner at Eight* for the Minnesota Opera, *Falstaff* for Des Moines Metro Opera and *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and *Silent Night* for The Atlanta Opera, where he is General and Artistic Director.

Making his Lyric Opera debut is conductor **Stuart Stratford**, the Music Director of Scottish Opera. Appointed in 2015, his most recent credits with the company include *Jenůfa*, *Rusalka* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In the UK, he worked with Opera North, Birmingham Opera Company, Welsh National Opera and English National Opera, London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia, and the City of London Sinfonia. Outside the UK, he has recently worked at Musica Aeterna Perm, Hong Kong, Theater St Gallen, Finnish National Opera and West Australian Opera. Mr. Stratford studied at Cambridge University and studied conducting at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory with the great Ilya Aleksandrovich Musin.

Everest

Music by Joby Talbot, libretto by Gene Scheer, 2015
Sung in English

Saturday, November 11, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 15, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Friday, November 17, 2017	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, November 19, 2017	2:00 p.m.

This contemporary tragedy brings to life the white-knuckle, devastating true stories of three climbers caught in a blizzard on Mt. Everest in 1996. As the first staged performance since the world premiere in Dallas, Leonard Foglia's acclaimed production of *Everest* promises an operatic journey unlike anything other. Gene Scheer's unrelenting libretto and composer Joby Talbot's luminous and inventive score will surround the audience with the insurmountable beauty of the Himalayas, the demons and dreams driving each climber upwards, and the undeniable danger that infuses every exhausted step with fear.

Featured Artists

With a "powerful" voice and an "arresting stage presence," baritone **Michael Mayes** will be making his Lyric Opera debut in role of Beck Weathers. He is known for his consummate portrayals of iconic characters in the operatic repertoire. Originally from Cut and Shoot, Texas (just north of Houston), Mr. Mayes has performed with opera companies across the United States including Cincinnati Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Kentucky Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Arizona Opera, Central City Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre and Fort Worth Opera. The 2015-

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2016 season included his debuts with Dallas Opera and San Diego Opera in the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Great Scott*, Jack Rance in Opera Omaha's *La fanciulla del West*, and Joseph De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking* with New Orleans Opera. During the 2016-2017 season, Mr. Mayes makes his debut with Washington National Opera in what has become a signature role for him, as De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking*. He also returns to Dallas Opera in the role of Doug in *Everest*. Future seasons include a debut with the Teatro Real in Madrid.

Andrew Bidlack will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Rob Hall. He is a celebrated tenor, named one of *Opera News*' "top 25 brilliant young artists" in 2015. Known for his work in contemporary opera, Mr. Bidlack originated the role of Rob Hall in Dallas Opera's premiere of *Everest*. *Opera Magazine* noted in its review that Bidlack "made a very strong impression... agile of technique, absolutely secure and sweet-toned."

Praised for his "arrestingly vibrant" and "robust" baritone, **Craig Verm** will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Doug Hansen. He has brought his riveting portrayals to stages around the world. Most recently he made his company debut at Santa Fe Opera as Sonora in *La fanciulla del West*, also performing The Count in Santa Fe's *Capriccio*, for which he was praised for his "deep, velvet baritone (whose) featured moments leapt out from the crowd." Mr. Verm has also made debuts on the stages of Lyric Opera of Chicago, Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse and the Nationale Reisopera in the Netherlands. Frequently sought-after for new works, Mr. Verm created the role of Doug Hansen in Dallas Opera's *Everest*. In Joby Talbot's *Everest* at Dallas Opera.

Bass **Mark McCrory** will be performing the role of Mike Groom. He has attracted considerable attention for an imposing voice and galvanizing stage presence, with notable appearances that include the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Hawaii Opera Theatre, Minnesota Opera, Opera Festival of New Jersey, the role of the Count in the same opera for New Orleans Opera, the title role in *Don Giovanni* for Opera Pacific, Capellio in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* for Opera Philadelphia, Claudius in Thomas' *Hamlet* with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the Portland Opera, Olin Blitch in *Susannah* for Hawaii Opera Theatre, The Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* and Friar Lawrence in *Roméo et Juliette* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City. He has appeared at the Rome Opera as Marco in William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge* and is a regular guest of The Dallas Opera, where he has performed in 18 productions. As an alumnus of the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists, he sang numerous roles with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Leonard Foglia, who makes his Lyric Opera debut with this production, is a theater and opera director as well as a librettist. His work has been seen on Broadway, across the country, and internationally. This past December, he directed the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*, at Houston Grand Opera. In 2015, he directed two world premieres: Joby Talbot's *Everest* at the Dallas Opera and Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* at Santa Fe Opera. Of his production of *Everest*, *Opera News* wrote: "Director Leonard Foglia set his performers scrambling through its crevices; the staging was kinetic but never busy or overelaborate; instead it focused our attention on just how formidable a task the climbers faced." As a director, his opera credits include the premieres of four operas by Jake Heggie. His production of Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* has been seen across the country.

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Conductor **Nicole Paiement** makes her Lyric Opera debut with these performances of *Everest*, having led the world premiere at Dallas Opera, where she is currently Principal Guest Conductor. In April 2016 she was awarded the American Composer's Forum "Champion of New Music Award" for her outstanding contributions to contemporary music. Founding Artistic Director of Opera Parallèle in San Francisco, she has gained an international reputation as a conductor of contemporary music and opera. During the 2016-2017 season she conducts *Silent Night* at Atlanta Opera (November 2016), Mohammed Fairouz' *The Dictator's Wife* at Washington National Opera (January 2017), Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, Philip Glass' *Les enfants terribles* and Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince* for Opera Parallèle (February, May and December 2017), Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Douglas Cuomo's *Arjuna's Dilemma* for Dallas Opera (Spring 2017), Handel's *Xerxes* for Glimmerglass Opera (Summer 2017). Paiement earned rave reviews in her 2012 Dallas Opera debut, conducting Peter Maxwell Davies' *The Lighthouse*. "She combined old-fashioned precision and discipline with up-to-the-minute insight into the complex modernity of the score," wrote *D Magazine*. In February 2014 she conducted Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers* and later that year she appeared as guest conductor with the Washington National Opera. With Opera Parallèle, Paiement has conducted works by Lou Harrison, John Harbison, Philip Glass, Virgil Thomson, Osvaldo Golijov, and Kurt Weill, and world premieres of Luciano Chessa's *A Heavenly Act* and Dante De Silva's *Gesualdo, Prince of Madness*. Paiement is also the Artistic Director of the BluePrint Project, a new music series sponsored by the San Francisco Conservatory that commissions works by living American composers.

Rigoletto

Giuseppe Verdi, 1851
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Saturday, March 3, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 7, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 9, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 11, 2018	2:00 p.m.

Immensely popular since its premiere in 1851, Verdi's ***Rigoletto*** (based on the play by Victor Hugo) tells the story of a hunchbacked jester dealing with the beauty and evil of life. Alternately grand and intimate, the opera highlights Verdi's unique expansion of the conventions of Italian opera of mid-19th century. When court jester Rigoletto's comedic cruelty crosses the line, he is cursed by a courtier, and the curse threatens his attempts to protect his innocent daughter from the powerful Duke's depraved intentions. Verdi's gritty opera contrasts a haunting, emotionally careening storyline with radiant melodies, unforgettable arias and ensembles, and some of the most recognizable music in all of opera.

Featured Artists

Nicole Haslett makes her Lyric Opera debut in the role of Gilda. This season she joins Deutsche Oper Berlin for several roles including Adele in *Die Fledermaus* and Berthe in Meyerbeer's *Le prophète*, both new productions. Recent performances include the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Utah Opera), Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Berkshire Opera Festival), Florestine in Milhaud's *La mère coupable* (On Site Opera), Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, First

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Niece in *Peter Grimes*, Semele in *Die Liebe der Danae*, Frasquita in *Carmen* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), and Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (Cincinnati Opera). Ms. Haslett recently joined the roster of The Metropolitan Opera for its production of *Iolanta* and sang Chloé in Offenbach's *Daphnis et Chloé* with Heartbeat Opera. She was a 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions grand finalist, and a 2015 Second Place winner of the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition.

Praised by *The Independent* for her "movie-star looks" and "chocolatey mezzo-soprano," Latvian mezzo-soprano **Zanda Švēde** will be returning to the Lyric Opera after her critically acclaimed and hugely popular performance in the title of *Carmen*. She will be performing the role of Maddalena. She has quickly gained recognition as one of opera's rising young stars. Highlights of her career include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* at San Francisco Opera, Olga in *Eugene Onegin* with North Carolina Opera, and Maddalena in *Rigoletto* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Švēde recently completed her Adler fellowship at San Francisco Opera and is an alumna of Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in Riga, Latvia, Scuola Italia in Italy, and the Tyrolean Opera Program in Austria.

Scott Quinn returns to the Lyric Opera in the role of Duke, after making his debut in the 2014-2015 season as Alfredo in *La traviata*. Recent performances include: Boris in *Káťa Kabanová* (Seattle Opera), Rodolfo in *La bohème* (Minnesota Opera), Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (Palm Beach Opera), Števa Buryja in *Jenůfa* (San Francisco Opera), Fritz in *L'amico Fritz* (Den Jyske Opera), Don José in *Carmen* (Arizona Opera), the Duke in *Rigoletto* (Atlanta Opera), and creating the role of Villiers in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players*. He is a former participant in San Francisco Opera's prestigious Merola Opera Program, in which he sang excerpts of the title role of *Don Carlos* as well as Nadir in *Les pêcheurs de perles*. He won first place in the Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Competition, and second place in the Dallas Opera Guild Competition.

Leo An is making his Lyric Opera debut in the title role of *Rigoletto*. He is highly regarded internationally for his Verdi roles such as *Rigoletto*, *Nabucco*, Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*, Ezio in *Attila*, Conte di Luna in *Il Trovatore* and Pagano in *I Lombardi*. He has performed in houses like Opera di Firenze, Teatro Regio di Torino, Teatro Filarmonico (Verona), Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Washington National Opera, Seoul Arts Center and many others.

A recent graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, **Peixin Chen** will be performing the role of Sparafucile in his Lyric Opera debut. He is recognized for his majestically resonant bass voice and for a keen dramatic instinct that he brings to a wide range of roles on the international opera stage. His repertoire spans a wide range, from the comic roles of Donizetti, Mozart, and Rossini to the larger serious roles of Puccini, Verdi, and Wagner. Peixin Chen has worked with an illustrious array of conductors and directors on many of the great stages of the world including Lincoln Center, National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Washington National Opera.

Director **David Gately** is known for his vivid story-telling and lively and clever productions. His most recent work with Lyric Opera of Kansas City was as director of the acclaimed 2014

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production of *La traviata*. During the 2016-2017 season, he directs *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with Kentucky Opera, *Before Night Falls* with Florida Grand Opera, and *Voir Dire* with Fort Worth Opera. Recent highlights include *Aida* with Opera Colorado, *The Merry Widow* with Utah Opera, *Showboat* with Kentucky Opera, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Fort Worth Opera. In addition to his continued work on the stage, Mr. Gately is also an Assistant Professor of Music in the College of Fine Arts at Texas Christian University.

Conductor **David Charles Abell** returns to the Lyric Opera after conducting the critically acclaimed and hugely popular *Carmen* in 2016. He is a regular guest of leading British orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Hallé Orchestra. Outside of the UK he has conducted the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Atlanta and Cincinnati Symphonies, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Iceland Symphony, the West Australian Symphony, the Boston Pops, Philly Pops, New York Pops, the Atlanta Symphony and the Cincinnati Symphony, among others.

The Barber of Seville

Gioachino Rossini, 1816
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Saturday, April 28, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 2, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 4, 2018	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 6, 2018	2:00 p.m.

Completing the 2017-2018 season is the comedic jewel, Rossini's ***The Barber of Seville***, one of the great operatic comedies of the repertoire. While remaining true to every character, every gesture and every note of the original opera, this vibrant production of ***Barber*** draws inspiration from the magical realism of filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, in order to transform the opera's Spanish setting into a '60s psychedelic experience. Even after 200 years, this opera's buoyant good humor and elegant melodies have delighted the diverse tastes of every generation. Several of the most recognizable tunes have entered the world's musical unconscious, most notably the introductory patter song of the swaggering Figaro, the titular barber of Seville. In ***The Barber of Seville***, audiences are first introduced to the beautiful Rosina, later known as the Countess (Almaviva) in ***The Marriage of Figaro***. ***The Barber of Seville*** is a delightful opera perfect for the whole family.

Featured Artists

American baritone **Jarrett Ott** will be making his Lyric Opera debut as Figaro. He was recently named one of 25 "Rising Stars" by *Opera News*, who described his voice in the opera *Cold Mountain* as having an "often ravishing, airy vocal finish... He brought the testing role not only lovely, Pelléas-like sound but a deep investment in the words." In the 2016-2017 season, Mr. Ott makes his major European opera debut at Deutsche Oper Berlin singing the role of the Angel in Andrea Lorenzo Scartazzini's world premiere work *Edward II*, and embark on a European tour with Perm Opera and MusicAeterna as Don Pedro de Alvarado in a concert

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version of Purcell's *Indian Queen*. In North America, important role debuts include Curly in *Oklahoma!* with Glimmerglass Festival and Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers* with North Carolina. In the 2015-16 season, Mr. Ott performed W.P. Inman in the East Coast premiere of *Cold Mountain* with Opera Philadelphia. Other role debuts included The Count in Strauss' *Capriccio*, a co-production with Opera Philadelphia and Curtis Opera Theatre, and Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Santa Fe Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Emily Fons** will also be making her Lyric Opera debut in the role of Rosina. She is impressing audiences and critics alike through her remarkable versatility as an interpreter of Mozart and Baroque music as well as that of Rossini and contemporary composers. The 2015-2016 season included several debuts: with the New Orleans Opera as Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, with the Canadian Opera Company as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* and with the Pittsburgh Opera and Lyric Opera of Baltimore as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Ms. Fons ended the season by returning to the Santa Fe Opera as Stephano in *Roméo et Juliette*. Recent engagements included returns to the Dallas Opera as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for San Diego Opera, her first Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Madison Opera and Opera Theatre of St Louis, the role of Ruby in the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*, and Orlofsky at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Stillwater, Minnesota native **Jack Swanson** is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after tenors in the opera world and will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Almaviva. His distinctive lyric voice has been acclaimed for its agility both in the acrobatic arias of Rossini and in the legato melodies of Donizetti. Mr. Swanson earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Oklahoma, where he performed the roles of Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*. In May of 2016 he received his Masters of Music in Vocal Performance from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. While at Rice, he performed the roles of Count Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Eurimaco in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. Additional roles include Tonio in *La fille du regiment* and Count Belfiore in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*. For two years he was also an apprentice at Santa Fe Opera. During the Summer of 2016, Mr. Swanson made his Des Moines Metro Opera debut singing the role of Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff*.

Declared as "having a beautiful bass-baritone voice" by The *New York Times*, **Matthew Burns** is a dynamic performer known for his unique portrayals of opera's most acclaimed bass-baritone roles. He will be making his debut with Lyric Opera in the role of Doctor Bartolo. This season, Mr. Burns has performed the role of Bartolo with Virginia Opera and his signature role of Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Utah Opera. This season also marks several role debuts for Mr. Burns, including that of Gus O'Neill in John Musto's *Later the Same Evening* and Pistacchio in Donzetti's *Il campanello di notte*, both with Opera Memphis, and the role of Bégearss in Milhaud's *La mère coupable* with On Site Opera.

American bass **Peter Volpe** continually receives critical and popular acclaim worldwide and will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Don Basilio. Possessing a vast and ever-expanding repertoire of over 80 roles in six languages, he is known for a captivating style and interpretive skill that embraces the depth of every character he embodies. Of a recent portrayal of Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin*, *Opera News* said he "managed to create in his single aria and

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scene an impressive dignity. His full-bodied bass and great candor of tone, together with his intelligent interpretation, won him a well-deserved ovation.” Mr. Volpe made a recent foray into the Wagnerian repertoire, having performed Hunding in *Die Walküre* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Bard College under Leon Botstein, an all-Wagner concert with North Carolina Opera, and the role of Daland in *Der fliegende Holländer* at Glimmerglass Opera, Virginia Opera, Florentine Opera, and Washington National Opera.

Making his Lyric Opera debut, **Michael Shell's** “visionary” and “masterful storytelling” (*Opera News*) is making him one of the most sought-after directors in the United States. His “thoughtful and detailed score study” (*Opera Today*) is shown in character development and relationships onstage as well as the complete visual world he creates. Shell has directed at Atlanta Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Omaha, Opera San Jose, Opera North, Virginia Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. He made his international directing debut at the Wexford Festival Opera in 2010 with a production of Richard Wargo’s *Winners* and returned the next fall to direct *Double Trouble – Trouble in Tahiti & The Telephone*. Among his upcoming projects are productions of *La bohème* and the West Coast premiere of *Silent Night* at Opera San Jose (both in 2017), *L’italiana in Algeri* at Piedmont Opera (2017), and as Associate Director, Houston Grand Opera’s *Giulio Cesare* (2017). Shell holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. He was a Corbett Scholar at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and he studied Acting and Scene Study on scholarship in NYC. He has been a guest faculty member at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Florida State University and Webster University. He has also been guest director at The A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute and at Indiana University.

Originally from Trieste, Italy, and now a naturalized American citizen, conductor **Leonardo Vordoni** studied conducting at the Accademia Pescaresse with Gilberto Serembe and earned a diploma in opera conducting at Bologna’s Reale Accademia Filarmonica. Of his Chicago Opera Theatre debut conducting *Mosè in Egitto*, *Opera News* wrote: “Maestro Leonardo Vordoni led a splendidly nuanced reading of verve and melting grace.” Due to the accolades and respect earned through such performances, Mr. Vordoni is in high demand by leading opera companies throughout the world. He made important debuts at Houston Grand Opera conducting *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; Canadian Opera Company conducting *La cenerentola*; and Lyric Opera of Chicago conducting *Le nozze di Figaro*, where the *Chicago Tribune* wrote “Mindful of the singers’ needs, he infused the orchestral playing with crisp vitality and shapely phrasing.” He returned to Michigan Opera Theatre to conduct their production of *La bohème* and also conducted *L’elisir d’amore* at Minnesota Opera and Opera Santa Barbara, *Roméo et Juliette* at Opera Grand Rapids, and *L’italiana in Algeri* at Lyric Opera Kansas City. During the 2016-2017 season he conducts *La bohème* with Opera Omaha (November 2016) and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Grand Rapids (May 2017).

Ticket Information

All performances will be held in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. All performances will be accompanied by members of the Kansas City Symphony. Subscribers have access to the best seats at the best prices, with savings of up to 77% over single ticket prices. They also receive the first opportunity either to keep their original

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seats or to secure new seats before the general public. Subscribers to the 2017-2018 season will receive subscription renewal information beginning the week of February 6, 2017, and will have until May 17, 2017 to renew or improve their current subscription and seat locations. Reservations for new subscriptions will go on sale to the general public at the same time. Renewing subscribers receive priority seating. Single tickets will go on sale to the general public on Monday, August 7, 2017.

Season ticket prices range from \$79 to \$499. For ticket information, visit kcopera.org or contact Lyric Opera Ticketing & Patron Services at (816) 471-7344, toll free at 1-877-OPERA KC (673-7252).

Explorations Series 2017-2018 Season

This series of four productions during the 2017-2018 season features an eclectic array of works to be performed in The Lyric's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building in the Crossroads Arts District and at Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral. The **Explorations Series** will feature adventurous programming that crosses musical borders, experiments with a wider range of genres, and illuminates the intersection of classical music with various streams of popular music. "This programming diversity allows us to touch audiences in new and personal ways, while expanding the range of our offerings," said General Director Deborah Sandler. "We believe the intimacy of our **Explorations** performances will create a new kind of experience for audiences. This series will also continue to showcase the extremely talented singers in our Resident Artist Program, along with other guest artists from around the world." Subscribers may add an Explorations subscription to their mainstage subscription for \$60.

The **Explorations Series** is underwritten by the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Spencer Fane LLP, the Thomas & Sally Wood Family Foundation and Jim Zakoura.

Program 1: Meet the Resident Artists

September 24, 2017, 2:00pm
Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building

Join us for an informal afternoon 'salon' at our Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building to meet Lyric Opera of Kansas City's talented 2017-2018 Resident Artists! Through conversation and musical selections including arias, art songs and show tunes, sneak a first peek at the quartet and pianist who will grace our stage and our **Explorations** presentations throughout the season. **FREE. Seating is limited, RSVPs required.**

Program 2: *The Bernstein Songbook* with New York Festival of Song

October 14, 2017, 7:30pm
Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral

The creators of last year's brilliant **Schubert | Beatles** program, New York Festival of Song, now bring us **The Bernstein Songbook** in a special second collaboration with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. The focus is on the remarkable musical output of the iconic Maestro, Leonard Bernstein, in celebration of the centennial of his birth in 1918. Again set in the grandeur of Grace & Holy Trinity

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Cathedral, the program will include his final song cycle, Arias and Barcarolles, along with other favorites and rarities and will bring fascinating insights into one of the 20th century's American musical legends.

Tickets: \$25.

Program 3: As One

January 27 (7:30pm) and 28, (2pm), 2018
Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building

In this chamber opera for two singers and string quartet by composer **Laura Kaminsky**, librettist **Mark Campbell** and librettist/filmmaker **Kimberly Reed**, along with a mezzo-soprano and a baritone, depict the experiences of its sole transgender protagonist, Hannah, as she endeavors to resolve the discord between her self and the outside world. "*As One* is everything we hope for in a contemporary opera: topical, poignant, daring, and beautifully written," wrote *The New York Observer*.

Tickets: \$25.

Program 4: American Voices - Art Songs & Arias

March 24 (7:30pm) and 25, (2pm), 2018

Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building

The number of American Composers creating art songs and new operas in recent years is bringing an embarrassment of musical—and lyrical—riches...perhaps of new "Golden Age." Join Lyric Opera's Resident Artists for a sampling of the best and the brightest of American musical heritage, past and present.

Tickets: \$25.

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. Under the leadership of General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler, 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, serving more than 8,000 students and educators each year.

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 and opened in 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.

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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 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 kcopera.org for more information about the Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2017-2018 season and kauffmancenter.org for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

2017-2018 Season at a Glance:

NEW PRODUCTION

Eugene Onegin

Pyotr Tchaikovsky, 1897

Sung in Russian with English subtitles

Saturday, September 30, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 4, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 6, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 8, 2017 2:00 p.m.

Director: Tomer Zvulun

Conductor: Stuart Stratford

Onegin: Morgan Smith

Tatyana: Joyce El-Khoury

Olga: Megan Marino

Lensky: Jonathan Johnson

Gremin: Paul Whelan

Everest

Composer: Joby Talbot

Librettist: Gene Scheer

2015

Sung in English with English subtitles

Saturday, November 11, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 15, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 17, 2017 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 19, 2017 2:00 p.m.

Director: Leonard Foglia

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Conductor: Nicole Paiement
Beck Weathers: Michael Mayes
Jan Arnold: TBA
Rob Hall: Andrew Bidlack
Doug Hansen: Craig Verm
Mike Groom: Mark McCrory

Rigoletto

Giuseppe Verdi, 1851
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Saturday, March 3, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 7, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 9, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 11, 2018 2:00 p.m.

Director: David Gately
Conductor: David Charles Abell
Rigoletto: Leo An
Gilda: Nicole Haslett
Duke: Scott Quinn
Maddalena: Zanda Švėde
Sparafucile: Peixin Chen

The Barber of Seville

Gioachino Rossini, 1816
Sung in English with English subtitles

Saturday, April 28, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 2, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 4, 2018 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 6, 2018 2:00 p.m.

Director: Michael Shell
Conductor: Leonardo Vordoni
Almaviva: Jack Swanson
Rosina: Emily Fons
Figaro: Jarett Ott
Don Basilio: Peter Volpe
Don Bartolo: Matthew Burns

Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052 or Tickets: kcopera.org or 816.471.7344