

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City Announces Major Artistic Reorganization

***Artistic Functions Reorganized
Artistic Integrity of Company Remains Paramount***

Kansas City, MO (May 6, 2015) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City today announced a major artistic reorganization in response to a year-long strategic planning process with the Board and staff to better align with common industry structure while remaining committed to artistic excellence. Under this new structure, the General Director & CEO is responsible for creating an artistic vision for the Company, supported by production and administrative staff who together create the season at the Kauffman Center as well as other artistic programming. The General Director will be responsible for choosing repertoire, stage directors, conductors and all other artists. Creative consultants with specialized skills will join the organization as needed on a project by project basis for newly planned artistic initiatives.

General Director & CEO Deborah Sandler said, “Our commitment to artistic excellence has never wavered. We look forward to a very exciting 15-16 season featuring our new film noir production of *Don Giovanni* and our premiere of the first-ever Czech opera *Rusalka*. The high caliber of singers, directors and designers working with us for next season and beyond as well as the immense talent of our very own production staff will ensure that our patrons will be thrilled by our productions.”

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City will continue to partner with the world-class Kansas City Symphony for each production, led by guest conductors who will be announced shortly.

President/CEO of Opera America Marc A. Scorca stated, “The preponderant model of opera companies has a general director who is in charge of the entire artistic and administrative operation. He or she is also responsible for filling senior positions with professionals of his or her choosing who compliment his or her strengths.” Opera America, the national nonprofit service organization for opera, includes an international membership of nearly 200 professional companies.

Ken Hager, Chair, Board of Trustees stated, “Opera companies function differently than other arts organizations such as the ballet and symphony. The Lyric Opera’s General Director & CEO Deborah Sandler has been intimately involved in all aspects of the artistic process since she joined the Company in 2012. Over the past year she led the development of a strategic plan

which included crafting the artistic vision for our company, positioning us for future success.” He continued, “We are reorganizing our artistic functions similar to the majority of US Opera Companies – including our opera peers like Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and Dallas Opera, and even the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago, where the General Director oversees both the artistic and business operations of the company. Deborah brings a wealth of experience in both artistic and financial leadership – she will continue to lead our artistic vision, upholding our first-rate artistic standards.”

The third year of General Director & CEO Deborah Sandler’s tenure at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City reflected great growth of the company on many levels. “The 58 year-old company started the year with \$27.4 million in net assets, including endowment funds, and expects to end the year with record net assets,” stated Board Treasurer J. Michael Sigler, “from prudent fiscal management and the extraordinary generosity and support of our community.”

Furthermore, as part of Ms. Sandler’s artistic vision to expand the Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s community footprint, the 2014/15 season saw the Company broaden its reach through many innovative programs and events. The presentation of the Pulitzer Prize winning opera, “*Silent Night*” on the heels of the 100th anniversary of WWI led to many collaborations with the National WWI Museum, including a WWI Cabaret event, a Veterans’ chorus of over 200 members and a joint artist panel co-led by Mathew Naylor and Deborah Sandler. Education programs like S.T.A.G.E.S. camp earned national support through the NEA, and Lyric Opera’s First Friday open house events garnered close to 1,000 attendees. This summer, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, in collaboration with The Coterie Theatre’s Young Playwright’s Roundtable and UMKC’s Composers in the Schools will present “Words plus Music” at the Kansas City Fringe Festival. Additional innovative programs and events will roll out in the coming months, continuing to fuel this positive momentum.

As part of the artistic reorganization, Board of Trustees Chair Ken Hager announced the departure of Artistic Director Ward Holmquist effective April 30, 2015

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 and Instagram 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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