

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2016-17 Season Kicks off with *Hansel and Gretel*

Doug Varone directing and choreographing, Megan Marino and Rachele Gilmore making Lyric Opera Debuts; Conductor John Keenan, Victoria Livengood and Troy Cook return

Kansas City, MO (August 18, 2016) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City opens its 59th season with Engelbert Humperdinck’s reimagined fairy tale opera ***Hansel and Gretel*** September 17, 21, 23 and 25 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The production will be sung in German with English titles. High res production and artists’ photos can be downloaded [here](#) .

Reimagined as a fantasy carnival world, this opera, based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, is delightfully enhanced by performers from Doug Varone and Dancers, with sets and costumes designed by Tony Award winner David Zinn. ***Hansel and Gretel*** will start the season with a serving of deliciously dark drama and bewitching melodies.

General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler said, “We begin our season with this somewhat unknown and sumptuous work of German romantic opera. I am thrilled to share ***Hansel and Gretel*** with our audiences as Doug Varone and his Dancers surprise us with this stunning, dreamlike and unexpected vision for the production. Doug’s work has commanded international acclaim and you will not be disappointed.”

About the Artists

Award-winning stage director and choreographer **Doug Varone** makes his Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut with this production. Varone, who also works in dance, theater, opera, film, television and fashion, is the artistic director of Doug Varone and Dancers. In opera, Varone is in demand as a director and choreographer. Among his four productions at The Metropolitan Opera are *Salome* with its sensational *Dance of the Seven Veils* for Karita Mattila, and the world premiere of Tobias Picker’s *An American Tragedy*. His Met Opera production of Hector Berloiz’s *Les Troyens* was recently broadcast worldwide in HD. He has staged multiple premiers and new productions for Minnesota Opera, Opera Colorado, Boston Lyric Opera, Washington Opera and New York City Opera, among others. His numerous theater credits include choreography for Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theaters across the country. His choreography for Manhattan Theater Club’s current musical hit *Murder Ballad* earned him a Lucille Lortel nomination for choreography. Film credits include choreography for the Patrick Swayze film, *One Last Dance*.

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Making her Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut in the pants role of Hansel, American mezzo-soprano, **Megan Marino**, is a genre-adventurous musician and showman of "impressive clarity", "warm, plummy tone" and "considerable range and confidence" (*Washington Times*). Her recent appearances include the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Spoleto Festival USA and Caramoor Music Festival.

Also making her Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut, **Rachele Gilmore**, in the role of Gretel, is one of America's most sought after coloratura sopranos, and continues to thrill audiences around the globe. Zachary Woolfe (*The New York Times*) called Ms. Gilmore's soprano "clear yet warm-toned." She's graced the stages of many prestigious opera houses and symphonies including Teatro alla Scala, The Metropolitan Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Boston Lyric Opera, The Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Mezzo-soprano **Victoria Livengood**, returns to Lyric Opera of Kansas City after more than 20 years, her most recent Lyric performance being the 1994 *The Saint of Bleeker Street* in the role of Victoria. She will be portraying the dual roles of the Witch & Gertrude (the Mother). Livengood has been praised as a versatile performer in her performances at opera companies across the country and around the world. She has been called "unquestionably memorable," and praised for her "striking, rounded portrayal of a comic character." Having performed at such varied stages at The Metropolitan Opera and the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, she most recently performed the role of Acuzena in *Il Trovatore* with Hawaii Opera Theatre.

American baritone **Troy Cook** returns to Lyric Opera of Kansas City after his acclaimed performance as Count Almaviva in the 2010 production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, in the role of Peter, the Father. His voice has been praised as "a beautiful, robust, woolen baritone, the sort that flows effortlessly in its middle range, and gathers energy as it climbs higher, never showing the faintest hint of a blemish." (*The New Criterion*) His experience includes significant roles at Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opera Philadelphia, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Washington National Opera.

Two of our newly appointed Resident Artists will be making their Lyric Opera debuts: **Laurel Weir** will perform the role of Sandman and **April Martin** will perform the role of Dew Fairy.

Conductor **John Keenan** is returning to Lyric Opera of Kansas City after his critically acclaimed performance in *Il Trovatore* (2012). Since conducting major works at the Metropolitan Opera, Kirov Opera, and with L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Keenan is in demand by many prestigious orchestras and opera companies. Known for a varied and extensive repertoire, he has emerged as one of the most important conductors of the works of Wagner, Mozart, Verdi, and Strauss. Most recently, he conducted an acclaimed *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Metropolitan Opera, and he is the only American to conduct Wagner at the famed Kirov Opera. He has conducted the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and the New Zealand Symphony, as well as the orchestras of Louisville, Edmonton, Spoleto Festival, and the Vancouver CBC Symphony.

Principals Cast

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Hansel: Megan Marino*
Gretel: Rachele Gilmore*
The Mother/ The Witch/Gertrude: Victoria Livengood
Peter, the Father: Troy Cook
Sandman: Laurel Weir ~
Dew Fairy: April Martin+@

Artistic Staff

Director/Choreographer: Doug Varone*
Conductor: John Keenan
Set Designer: David Zinn*
Costume Designer: David Zinn*
Lighting Designer: Marcus Dillard
Wig and Make-up Designer: Alison Hanks
Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell
Stage Manager: Audrey Chait

~ UMKC Apprentice
+ Resident Artist
@ former Lyric Opera Apprentice
* Lyric Opera Debut

Ticket availability varies by performance. To purchase tickets, call Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344 or 1-800-OPERA KC (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. This production is appropriate for children and adults who are not afraid of clowns.

Introducing First Act

Lyric Opera is making it easier to introduce young audiences to the wonderful world of opera. Children as young as eight years old can enjoy child-friendly performances, sometimes even younger if they are strong readers and can follow subtitles.

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is now offering special ticket prices for those 18 and under to two productions sure to entice and intrigue and create young opera lovers: ***Hansel and Gretel*** and ***The Pirates of Penzance***.

Hansel and Gretel: \$30 per seat

The Pirates of Penzance: \$50 per seat

Terms and conditions: Both \$30 and \$50 prices include \$6.50 ticketing /facility fees. Children's seats may only be used for patrons 18 and under. Adults and children must attend the same performance. Lyric Opera of Kansas City recommend children under 13 be seated with a supervising adult.

The Great Hansel and Gretel Bake-off

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To celebrate this confectionary fairy tale, Lyric Opera of Kansas City is holding a ***Hansel and Gretel*** inspired “Bake Off”. No professional experience necessary. Bakeries are welcome to register.

All entries will be posted to the Lyric Opera website. Voting will occur online, with one vote per person per day for two weeks. The top three winners will display their work at the BravoKC! Fifth Anniversary Birthday Celebration for the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, Friday, Sept. 2, where an anticipated 5000 guests will cast the final vote. Then opera audiences, filled with both families and well-educated patrons of the arts, will enjoy the display of the three winners during the September run of Lyric Opera’s ***Hansel and Gretel***.

Key Dates:

- July 25th - Registration opens at kcopera.org/bake
- August 15th – 29th – Online voting open to the public
- September 2nd – Final voting at Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts’ BravoKC Live Event
- September 17th, 21st, 23rd & 25th – ***Hansel and Gretel*** opera performances

The first place winner will receive a full page advertisement OR full page program insert in Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s ***Hansel and Gretel*** program, plus 6 tickets to the production. Winners will also receive a \$100 gift certificate to Pryde’s of Westport and tickets to Halloween Haunt/Pumpkin Patch at Worlds of Fun. Prizes will also be awarded for the second and third place winners.

ArtsKC Encounter, Aug. 26 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Presented by the Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building (1725 Holmes St. Kansas City, MO 64108)

Join us for a reception in the Beth Ingram Administration Building where you’ll enjoy heavy appetizers from Deco Street Eats, cocktails, and a short performance featuring the Lyric’s Apprentice Artists previewing songs from the Fall 2016 season opener, ***Hansel and Gretel***. Afterward, get a complete production tour, featuring the set vault, costume shop, rehearsal hall, paint floor, scene shop, and prop storage! Young Friends of the Lyric Members receive 50% off tickets. Register [here](#).

First Friday, Sept. 2 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts (1601 Broadway, KCMO) – 5th Anniversary Bash!

We’ll unveil the top entries and the winner of our baking contest. Enjoy performances by Lyric Opera NEW Resident Artists and Young Apprentices, free drinks and food. The event is FREE and open to the public. More information available [here](#).

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 Bill Everett 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.

Hansel and Gretel “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:

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Monday, August 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. The Grim(m) Adventures of Hansel and Gretel.** Join Lyric Opera's Linda Ade Brand, Director of Education and Outreach, and Brad Trexell, Artistic Administrator, as they talk about the fear factors in this classic fairy tale -- hunger, getting lost, scary witches who look a lot like your mom -- and how those elements have been depicted in a selection of operatic productions. Get a sneak peak of our upcoming production plus an invitation to join a new Lyric Opera of Kansas City book club.

Monday, August 29 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. The Music of Humperdinck, Brought to You by Wagner.** The music of the late Romantic composer Engelbert Humperdinck was often focused on folk tale-inspired works intended at least in part for young audiences. The music itself, however, was inspired by a most un-childlike source, Richard Wagner, proving the point that *Hansel and Gretel* is "not just for kids." In this presentation, Ernest Neighbor and Don Dagenais will trace his development as a composer, explore the antecedents of Humperdinck's music, and maybe discuss some of his musical contemporaries who were similarly influenced.

Monday, Sept. 12 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. From a Family Project to an International Megahit: The Story of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*.** In the 1890s, long before Walt Disney started making animated films based on Grimm fairy tales, the German composer Engelbert Humperdinck (1854-1921) accepted his sister's request to create songs for a family performance of *Hansel and Gretel*. From this modest beginning came a beloved work in the operatic repertory, first performed in 1893. William Everett's introduction to the opera will feature excerpts from several notable performances.

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. Membership benefits include exclusive ticket offers, networking opportunities, restaurant discounts, invitations to special events and more.

Young Friends of the Lyric membership is \$30 for an individual, \$50 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.

Fri, Sept. 16 starting at 6:00 p.m. at Roth Living (601 W. 47th St, Kansas City, MO 64112) Wickedly Delicious.

Explorations 2016-2017

This NEW initiative in the 2016-2017 season features an eclectic array of works to be performed in The Lyric's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building in the Crossroads District and Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral. Explorations 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. The intimacy of the

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Explorations performances will create a new kind of experience for audiences. This new series will also showcase the extremely talented singers in the Resident Artist Program, along with other guest artists.

Explorations is underwritten by Virginia and Charles Clark, the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation and the Thomas and Sally Wood Family Foundation.

In-event hospitality for all Explorations performances provided by Young Friends of the Lyric.

Meet the Resident Artists

Lyric Opera Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building
712 E. 18th St., East Crossroads, Kansas City, MO
Sunday, Sept. 11, 2 p.m.
Reception following concert
FREE

Schubert | Beatles

Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral
415 W. 13th St, downtown Kansas City, MO
Saturday, Oct. 1, 8 p.m.
Reception following concert
\$30 for subscribers/ \$35 for non-subscribers

This fascinating program, a collaboration with the New York Festival of Song, combines Schubert *Lieder* with special arrangements of songs by the Beatles in a format that showcases their similarities and differences. Pianists **Steven Blier** and **Michael Barrett**, along with violinist **Charles Yang**, soprano **Sari Gruber**, tenor **Andrew Owens** and baritone **Theo Hoffmann**, explore the music and the connections between these iconic artists, who captured the spirit of their age.

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

Elvis Costello's *The Juliet Letters* were written in 1992 and recorded by the artist himself, together with the Brodsky Quartet. A set of 17 songs for voice and string quartet, with 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. The program will be sung by the Lyric Opera Resident Artists accompanied by a String Quartet within a special scenic environment created for this concert.

Art Songs Series: American Voices

Lyric Opera Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building
Sunday, March 26, 2 p.m.
Reception following concert
\$15 for subscribers/ \$20 for non-subscribers

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Lyric Opera resident artists perform song cycles by contemporary American composers, with selections from among the compositions of Jake Heggie (composer of the opera *Dead Man Walking*, one of the productions in the Lyric Opera's 2016-17 season), Lori Laitman, Robert Paterson, and Gabriel Kahane, and others.

The Lyric Opera Resident Artists Program

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City recently announced the selection of the inaugural class of the Resident Artists Program. They include: soprano **April Martin**, mezzo-soprano **Samantha Gossard**, tenor **Casey Candebat**, baritone **John Viscardi**, and pianist **Kyle Naig**.

They will perform in various roles throughout the 2016-17 season on the mainstage at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts as well as at community outreach and education events. The artists were selected after a rigorous national audition of hundreds of singers. The Resident Artists Program is led by **Vinson Cole**, UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance faculty member and one of the leading artists of his generation.

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.

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 2015-2016 season and www.kauffmancenter.org for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

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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.
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: Catherine Cook

Don Basilio/Don Cozio: Steven Cole

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

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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
Jade Boucher: Samantha Gossard
Kitty Hart: April Martin
Motorcycle Cop: John Viscardi
George Benton: Jeffrey Bervan
Prison Guard #1: Rhys Floyd 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
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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