

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ellen McDonald
(816) 444-0052
Or (816) 213-4355 (c)
publicity@kcopera.org

For Tickets: kcopera.org or 816.471.7344

Lyric Opera of Kansas City Announces Three New Key Staff Appointments *Artistic Administrator Brad Trexel, Creative Consultant Vinson Cole and Joe Bellinger as Chief Development Officer*

Kansas City, MO (Oct. 6, 2015) – General Director and CEO **Deborah Sandler** today announced three appointments to the Company’s senior staff, including two newly created key senior positions. **Brad Trexel** as the newly created Artistic Administrator, **Vinson Cole** will join the Company as the newly created Creative Consultant and **Joe Bellinger** as the Chief Development Officer.

Regarding the selection of these three appointments, Sandler noted, “I am delighted to welcome these outstanding three professionals to our Lyric Opera family. We are now fully poised to meet our bold artistic vision for the future and for our Kansas City audiences.

In the midst of a superb group of candidates, these three really stood out. Brad Trexel is an experienced opera professional whose accomplishments are well respected internationally. We are extremely fortunate to welcome him to Kansas City. Vinson Cole is an internationally recognized artist and teacher and has just been chosen to lead our newly created Resident Artists Program. Joe Bellinger’s deep passion for the arts and his significant fundraising accomplishments and leadership in the community will serve our Company well.”

Brad Trexel has been appointed to the newly created position of Artistic Administrator. As such, Trexel will work closely with Sandler to oversee the planning and implementation of the Company’s programming for future seasons. Trexel, most recently the Executive Director of Lake Tahoe SummerFest, has held several artistic and production-related positions during his career as an administrator in the fields of opera and theater. Prior to his appointment at SummerFest, he was Director of Artistic Operations/Artistic Administrator at Opera Colorado in Denver. For three seasons, he was Artistic Administrator at the Royal Danish Opera in the new Royal Opera House in Copenhagen, working with the 30-member ensemble and Artistic Director Kasper Holten planning and casting upwards of 200 performances per season. Previously he was the Artistic Administrator at San Francisco Opera under General Director Pamela Rosenberg, and Assistant Artistic Administrator and Rehearsal Administrator under the late General Director Lotfi Mansouri.

After receiving his degree in Fine arts/Art, he began his career in Wisconsin at the Florentine Opera of Milwaukee where he filled various stage management and production positions over a span of eight years, and at Theatre Tesseract, where he was a stage manager, and occasional director of a production, including the plays *'night, Mother* and *Strange Snow*. He also helmed a main stage production of *Eugene Onegin* and several touring school programs at the Florentine Opera, and a school version of *Romeo and Juliet* for Opera Colorado. While at Opera Colorado he also conceived and directed the inaugural *SIDESHOW*-a cabaret style evening featuring a fully staged performance of Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, alongside a selection of traditional cabaret songs. He is a frequent judge for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and has also served as a judge for several vocal competitions, notably, the Tucker Awards, the Dallas Opera Guild Competition, the ARIA awards, the Fritz and Lavinia Jensen Vocal Competition, and the Irene Dalis Vocal Competition.

Vinson Cole will serve as the newly created Creative Consultant, working closely with Sandler. He will be responsible for assisting in identifying emerging artists, casting and repertoire selection. He is internationally recognized as one of the leading artists of his generation. His career has taken him to all of the major opera houses across the globe including the Metropolitan Opera, Opera National de Paris Bastille, Teatro alla Scala Milan, Theatre Royale de la Monnaie, Brussels, Berlin State Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Munich State Opera, San Francisco Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Opera Australia and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Seattle Opera and many more. Equally celebrated for his concert appearances, Mr. Cole has been a frequent guest of the most prestigious orchestras throughout the world and has collaborated with the greatest conductors of this era including Christoph Eschenbach, Claudio Abbado, Carlo Maria Giulini, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, James Conlon, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Gerard Schwarz as well as Sir Georg Solti and Giuseppe Sinopoli. Mr. Cole had an especially close working relationship with the late Herbert von Karajan, who brought the artist to the Salzburg Festival to sing the Italian Tenor in *Der Rosenkavalier* – the first of many performances there together. Their collaboration went on to include works such as Verdi's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Bruckner's *Te Deum*. Many of these were issued on recordings on Deutsche Grammophon. He was the performer on the soundtrack for the film *Immortal Beloved*.

As a teacher, Cole has taught at the University of Washington School of Music, the New England Conservatory of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Aspen Music Festival and School, Glimmerglass Opera, and the Santa Fe Opera. He has conducted master classes for San Francisco Opera's Merola Program and the Canadian Opera Company. Currently, Cole is a faculty member at the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

Born in Kansas City, Cole studied at the University of Missouri, Kansas City before attending the Philadelphia Musical Academy and the Curtis Institute of Music. In 1977, Cole won the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the WGN Competition, and was awarded both the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Opera Institute grants. Cole's career took off from there as he went on to perform principal roles with the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Paris Opera-Bastille, Teatro alla Scala, and many more. Cole became well known for his interpretation of French repertoire after singing in the Manon centennial performances with Paris's Opera Comique in 1984. Since then, he has performed singular interpretations in such roles as *Lakmé*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlos*, and *Faust*. He has been honored with numerous awards including special invitations to perform with the Harriman-Jewell Series recitals and received an honorary doctorate from William Jewell College. He also received the Alumni Award from the Conservatory at UMKC, plus the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award for outstanding individual achievement and commitment to the arts.

Joe Bellinger has been appointed as the Chief Development Officer and as such will oversee all aspects of fundraising for the Company. Bellinger has over a decade of experience in fundraising in both San Diego, CA and Kansas City. In San Diego, he started his fundraising career with Bravo San Diego, a one of a kind event that focused on building lasting and meaning relationships between the business community and the over 72 local performing arts organizations.

Most recently in Kansas City, he was the Director of Development and Advancement for Cornerstones of Care, a \$58 Million dollar family of five agencies serving children and families in Missouri and Kansas. Prior to Cornerstones, Bellinger was at the Kansas City Care Clinic (formerly the Kansas City Free Health Clinic).

He brings a wealth of knowledge in fundraising and a passion for the performing arts. He has a Masters of Public Administration in Non Profit Management and a Bachelors of Music from the Bass School of Music at Oklahoma City University. In addition, he is alumni of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's Centurions Class of 2012, where he co-chaired the Arts Task Force focused on highlighting the role of a vibrant arts community in economic growth and development of Kansas City.

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 follow the Lyric Opera of Kansas City online under "@kcopera" on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and Flickr and "@LyricOperaKC" on YouTube.

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Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052.

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