

# 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](http://kcopera.org) or 816.471.7344

Lyric Opera of Kansas City Kicks Off  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2017-2018 Season with

*NEW PRODUCTION of Eugene Onegin*

*Built at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, production will debut at  
Kauffman Center Sept. 30 through Oct. 8 as part of co-production with  
Hawaii Opera Theatre, Michigan Opera Theatre, Atlanta Opera and Seattle Opera*

*Lyric Opera debuts include Bass-Baritone Paul Whelan,  
Baritone Morgan Smith and Conductor Ari Pelto  
Soprano Joyce El-Khoury and Mezzo- Soprano Megan Marino and  
Tenor Jonathan Johnson return to Lyric Opera*

**Kansas City, MO (August 17, 2017)** – Lyric Opera of Kansas City opens its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season with Tchaikovsky's compelling masterpiece, ***Eugene Onegin*** (oh-nyeh-gin with hard 'g') Sept. 30, Oct. 4, 6 and 8 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The production will be sung in Russian with English subtitles.

In one of the greatest of all musical adaptations of a literary classic, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky turned Alexander 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.

General Director and CEO **Deborah Sandler** said, "Our 60<sup>th</sup> season is designed to give our audiences an experience like no other, with its compelling combination of operas. This year begins with an opera considered by many to be the greatest Russian drama in the operatic repertoire, *Eugene Onegin*. It is lyrical and powerful with its magnificent music, strong characters, and virtuosic singing. Lyric Opera of KC's audiences will be first to see this all new production, built at our very own Production Arts Building, as part of another ambitious co-production partnership we've created with Hawaii Opera Theatre, Michigan Opera Theatre, Atlanta Opera and Seattle Opera. 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. You will not be disappointed."

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## About the Artists

Baritone **Morgan Smith** joins Lyric Opera of Kansas City for the first time in his debut of 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 Lyric Opera in the role of Tatyana after her 2014 performance of Violetta in 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...” This season, Ms. El-Khoury will make her role and company debut as Imogene in *Il Pirata* with the Theater St. Gallen, her company debut at the Teatro Real Madrid as Musetta in *La bohème*, and perform Sylvia in the world premiere performances of Donizetti’s *L’ange de Nisida* in a return to the Royal Opera in collaboration with Opera Rara. In the 2016-2017 season, Ms. El-Khoury made several major debuts: at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Violetta in *La traviata*; 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*. Her debut CD, *Écho* was recently released on Opera Rara.

Mezzo-Soprano **Megan Marino** returns to 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* (Santa Fe Opera Resident Artist Program). 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.

This season, American tenor **Jonathan Johnson** makes his debut at Canadian Opera Company in a production of *Anna Bolena*. In the 2016-2017 season, Jonathan made his debut at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Frederic in the season finale of *The Pirates of Penzance* and at San Diego Opera as Fenton in *Falstaff*. He also completed his time as a member of the Patrick G. & Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s professional artist-development program, where his recent appearances in mainstage productions at the Lyric Opera of Chicago included *Les Troyens*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *The Merry Widow*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Capriccio*,

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*The Magic Victrola* and Mieczysław Weinberg's Holocaust opera *The Passenger*. Future seasons include return engagements with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Other recent engagements include Lindoro at the Portland Opera, *La Damnation de Faust* at the Grant Park Music Festival, *Le Fils* in *Les mamelles de Tirésias* with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Beethoven Symphony No. 9 with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, a performance of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* as part of a Liederabend in Chicago, and various appearances in the Harris Theater's *Beyond the Aria* series, the 125th Anniversary Gala for the Auditorium Theater, and on WFMT radio as part of the Ryan Opera Center Recital Series. Hailing from Macon, GA, Mr. Johnson holds a Master's degree and professional artist certificate from the A.J. Fletcher Institute of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

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*. Most recent highlights include roles of Nettuno, Tempo and Antinoo (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*) at The Grange Festival, Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*) at Hawaii Opera Theatre and at New Zealand Opera, Giorgio (*I puritani*) at Boston Lyric Opera and at Melbourne's Victorian Opera, Nick Shadow (*The Rake's Progress*) for New Zealand Opera, and Banco (*Macbeth*) at Opera North in the UK. Past highlights include Beethoven's *Mass in C* at Grant Park Music Festival, Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) in both Lille and Dijon, Theseus (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for English National Opera, Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) for Norwegian Opera, and Claggart (*Billy Budd*) and Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*) at Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

**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 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, San Diego, Minnesota, 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* which won him the Irish times award for best production of the year. His future engagements include debuts at Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Washington National Opera and returns to Seattle, Dallas, Wexford and Cincinnati Opera. Born and raised in Israel, he makes his home in Atlanta, where he has been the General and Artistic Director of The Atlanta Opera for the past five seasons.

Making his Lyric Opera debut is conductor **Ari Pelto**. In 2015, Mr. Pelto was named Opera Colorado's first ever Music Director, where he has conducted acclaimed performances of *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida* and the recent world premiere of Lori Laitman's, *The Scarlet Letter*. In upcoming seasons at Opera Colorado, Mr. Pelto will lead productions of *La Fanciulla del West*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La bohème*, *Falstaff* and the world premiere of Gerald Cohen's *Steal a Pencil for Me*. Highlights of the 2015-2016 season included *Aida* at Utah Symphony and Opera and return appearances at Atlanta Ballet and Opera Memphis. After earning a Bachelor of

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Music in violin performance at Oberlin Conservatory, he studied conducting at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Rubin Academy in Jerusalem and with Imre Pallo at Indiana University.

## Principals Cast

Tatyana: Joyce El-Khoury  
Eugene Onegin: Morgan Smith\*  
Lensky: Jonathan Johnson  
Olga: Megan Marino  
Prince Gremin: Paul Whelan\*  
Filipyevna: Jane Bunnell\*  
Madame Larina: Alice Chung~  
Monsieur Triquet: Steven Cole  
Zaretsky/Captain: Tim Murray+\*

## Artistic Staff

Director: Tomer Zvulun  
Conductor: Ari Pelto\*  
Set Designer: Erhard Rom  
Costume Designer: Ray Diffen and Isabella Bywater  
Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel  
Dance Choreographer: Logan Pachciarz  
Wig and Make-up Designer: Alison Hanks  
Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell  
Stage Manager: Sadie DeSantis

~ UMKC Apprentice  
+ Resident Artist  
\* Lyric Opera Debut

Tickets start at just \$29 and availability varies by performance. To purchase tickets, call Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344. Patrons can select their own seat and print their tickets at home by visiting [www.kcopera.org](http://www.kcopera.org). Limited student rush tickets are available for \$15 90 minutes before the performances, with a valid student ID.

**First Friday, Sept. 1 from 5 to 8 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building** (1725 Holmes, KCMO) – Enjoy preview performances of Lyric Opera's NEW PRODUCTION of *Eugene Onegin* by Lyric Opera NEW Resident Artists and Young Apprentices, free drinks and food. The event is FREE and open to the public.

### ***Eugene Onegin* Vodka Tasting Tour**

**Fri., Sept. 15, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

**Beth Ingram Administrative Building** (1725 Holmes, KCMO)

Join us at LOKC as we pair the three acts of Eugene Onegin with three craft vodkas from right here in the KC Crossroads! The event begins at 5:30 p.m. at the administrative offices of Lyric Opera of Kansas City, where Ryan Maybee from [Manifesto](#) leads us in a tasting of Rieger Vodka, paired with highlights from Act I of *Eugene Onegin*. Then, we will walk one block to the West to [Lifted Spirits](#) for a tasting paired with highlights from Act II of the opera. We will finish by

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walking seven blocks further west to [Tom's Town Distillery](#) for one more tasting and highlights from Act III. At each location, we'll discuss the plot of an act, hear an aria, and try a new vodka. The price for this special "flight" is \$35 per person and can be purchased [online](#) or at Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344.

## Pre-Opera Talks

Audience members are invited and encouraged to attend a free opera preview, presented by 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. Lyric Opera Guild also presents a series of free "At Ease with Opera" presentations prior to the performance dates.

**Eugene Oegin** "At Ease with Opera" Presentations:

**Monday, Sept. 11 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). Free to the public.**

### **Tchaikovsky and the Russian Opera Tradition**

**Dr. Martin Nedbal**, assistant professor of musicology at the University of Kansas, explores the development of Russian opera in the nineteenth century up to Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Oegin* (1878). An important aspect of Russian opera is its unique combination of national and exotic musical elements with Western European procedures, indebted to Italian, French, and German operatic styles. The talk will focus on the works of Tchaikovsky's predecessors, especially Glinka, Mussorgsky, and Borodin, as well as on Tchaikovsky's own operatic output.

**Monday, Sept. 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). Free to the public.**

### **Historical Trauma, Personal Autobiography, and Artistic Hybridity: Reading Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Oegin***

In this talk **Dr. Ani Kokobobo**, assistant professor of Russian literature at the University of Kansas, contextualizes Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Oegin* in its nineteenth-century historical roots, first by considering how the work fits within the author's own biography by chronicling Pushkin's evolution and growth as a writer and thinker. Second, Kokobobo evaluates more broadly how Pushkin himself and *Eugene Oegin* fit within their particular historical moment in tsarist Russia. Written shortly before some of Pushkin's own friends were publicly hung by tsar Nicholas I as punishment for their organization of the 1825 Decembrist uprising, *Eugene Oegin* is also embedded among significant historical traumas. The talk concludes with a discussion of literary themes and stylistic properties of *Eugene Oegin*, as well as a brief discussion of its potential relevance to our present.

**Monday, Sept. 25 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). Free to the public.**

### **Singing A Literary Masterpiece: The Tale of Tchaikovsky and Eugene Oegin**

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Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (1878) has all the elements of an emotionally charged opera: passionate unrequited love, a fatal duel, and an anti-hero's comeuppance. The composer himself planned the libretto, which features scenes drawn from Pushkin's famous verse novel. Tchaikovsky's musical storytelling does not follow a continuous narrative; instead, the composer blends elements of the Russian episodic style with Western European operatic approaches. In this talk, UMKC musicology professor **William Everett** will begin by exploring aspects of the Russian-Western European debate in nineteenth-century music and how they play out in Tchaikovsky's most famous opera. We'll then look at some of the most beloved scenes from *Eugene Onegin*, including Tatyana's "Letter Scene" and survey the fascinating performance history of this landmark work.

### **The Young Friends of Lyric**

Young Friends of Lyric provides an exciting outlet for young arts supporters (ages 21 and up) in Kansas City to get involved in the community, meet other young professionals and support Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Membership benefits include complimentary beverages at Lyric Opera performances, networking opportunities, restaurant discounts, invitations to special events and more.

Young Friends of the Lyric membership is \$40, and includes benefits for 2 for a full 12 months. To join, visit [kcopera.org/yfl](http://kcopera.org/yfl) or contact Ticketing & Patron Services at 816-471-7344. Become a fan on [Facebook](#) @YoungFriendsLyric to keep up with current events.

Join Young Friends at their first event of the season – **Love is a Battlefield- Eugene Onegin Karaoke Party**, Fri, Sept. 22 starting at 7:00 p.m. at Offkey Karaoke Lounge & Suites (510 Westport Rd, #100, Kansas City, MO 64111) Admission to this event is **FREE**.

### **Explorations** **2017-2018 Season**

This series of four productions during the 2017-2018 season features an eclectic array of works to be performed in Lyric Opera of Kansas City's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building in the Crossroads Arts District and at Grace & 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.

Subscribers may add an **Explorations** subscription to their mainstage subscription for just \$60 per seat. Single tickets for *Explorations* productions are also available for \$25 per seat.

**Explorations** 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

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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 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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), 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. Join Lyric Opera’s Resident Artists for a sampling of the best and the brightest of American musical heritage, past and present.

**Tickets: \$25.**

Reservations are required for all **Explorations** performances. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit [kcopera.org](http://kcopera.org) or call Ticketing & Patron Services (816) 471-7344.

Visit [Lyric Opera of Kansas City](http://Lyric Opera of Kansas City) for more information about Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2017-2018 season and [Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts](http://Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts) for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

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## 2017-2018 Season at a Glance:

\* Lyric Opera debut

### **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: Ari Peltó\*

Scenery Designer: Erhard Rom

Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel

Onegin: Morgan Smith \*

Tatyana: Joyce El-Khoury

Olga: Megan Marino

Lensky: Jonathan Johnson

Gremin: Paul Whelan \*

Filipyevna: Jane Bunnell

Monsieur Triquet: Steven Cole

Zaretsky/Captain: Tim Murray\*

### **KANSAS CITY PREMIERE**

#### ***Everest***

Composer: Joby Talbot, 2015

Librettist: Gene Scheer

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 \*

Conductor: Nicole Paiement \*

Beck Weathers: Michael Mayes \*

Jan Arnold: Sarah Larsen \*

Rob Hall: Andrew Bidlack \*

Doug Hansen: Craig Verm \*

Mike Groom: Mark McCrory

Guy Cotter: Tim Murray

#### ***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 \*

Count Monterone: Andrew Gangestad

Duke: Scott Quinn

Lyric Opera Kicks off 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with NEW PRODUCTION  
of *Eugene Onegin* Sept. 30 – Oct. 8



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Maddalena: Zanda Švėde  
Sparafucile: Peixin Chen \*  
Marullo: Tim Murray  
Giovanna: Alice Chung  
Countess Ceprano: Lauren Auge\*  
Page: Marlen Nahhas\*  
Usher: Armando Contreras

## **REIMAGINED PRODUCTION**

### ***The Barber of Seville***

Gioachino Rossini, 1816  
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

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

Director: Michael Shell \*  
Conductor: Leonardo Vordoni  
Lighting Designer: Kendall Smith  
Almaviva: Jack Swanson \*  
Rosina: Cassandra Zoe Velasco \*  
Figaro: Jarett Ott \*  
Don Basilio: Brian Banion  
Don Bartolo: Matthew Burns \*  
Berta: Marlen Nahhas  
Fiorello: Armando Contreras  
Officer: Tim Murray

## **About Lyric Opera of Kansas City**

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. 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 Lyric Opera of Kansas City on Facebook or follow us on Twitter at @kcopera.

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.**

**For Tickets: [kcopera.org](http://kcopera.org) or 816.471.7344**