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
2016-17 Season Concludes with

The Pirates of Penzance

April 22, 26, 28, 29 and 30 at
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Kansas City, MO (March 30, 2017) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City concludes its 59th season with Gilbert & Sullivan’s delightful comic operetta The Pirates of Penzance April 22, 26, 28, 29, and 30 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The production will be sung in English with English titles. High res production and artists’ photos can be downloaded here.

The 2016-2017 season ends with the fun and frivolity of The Pirates of Penzance. The rousing songs and colorful sets will have audiences shopping for parrots and broadswords. Gilbert and Sullivan’s cheeky and charming operetta abounds with pirates, maidens and a Major-General with the true gift of gab. Featuring hyperkinetic lyrics, bold and bright sets and a bevy of bungling bobbies, this production promises to be an evening of pure fun. Young Frederic, instantly smitten by the lovely Mabel but beholden to a Pirate King, and beleaguered by the Major-General, must fulfill his sense of duty while staying true to his love. This is truly an opera for all ages.

Making their Lyric Opera of Kansas City debuts are Anya Matanovic in the role of Mabel, Jonathan Johnson in the role of Frederic. Director James Alexander will make his Lyric Opera debut as well. Kevin Burdette returns to Lyric Opera of Kansas City in the role of the Pirate King, after his highly acclaimed performance as Dr. Bartolo in the 2012 production of The Barber of Seville. Also returning to Kansas City is Margaret Gawrysiak as Ruth, who made her Lyric Opera debut in the November production of The Marriage of Figaro. Beloved Kansas City favorite who has performed in numerous Lyric Opera productions, Robert Gibby Brand will portray the Major-General Stanley. Also returning to the Lyric Opera is conductor Hal France.

About the Artists
Making her debut at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City in the role of Mabel, American soprano Anya Matanovic has been praised for her “thrilling vocal color” and “sweetly winning” presence. She made her international opera debut with the New Israeli Opera as Musetta. Her recent performances have been praised as “dark-hued and dazzling” (The New York Times) “Luminous” (The Hub Review) and “Outstanding” (Opera News). Her current and upcoming seasons also include performances with New Orleans Opera, The Cleveland Orchestra, Tucson Symphony, Seattle Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera.
Tenor Jonathan Johnson will be making his Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut in the role of Frederic. A native of Macon, Georgia, he holds a professional artist certificate from the A. J. Fletcher Institute of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. His roles there included Ruggero in La rondine, Lechmere in Owen Wingrave, Azaël in Debussy’s L’enfant prodigue, and Fenton in the production of Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor. Other performance credits include Ezekiel Cheever in The Crucible (Piedmont Opera) and the title role Candide and Rev. Horace Adams in Peter Grimes (Aspen Summer Music Institute). The tenor received his bachelor of music degree from Mercer University’s Townsend School of Music, where he sang the title role in Cavalli’s L’Egisto, Camille de Rosillon in The Merry Widow, and Nemorino in L’elisir d’amore. The spring of 2016 brought Johnson’s debut with the New York Philharmonic in a concert with Grammy-winning trumpet player Chris Botti, and his debut with Portland Opera. At Lyric Opera of Chicago the tenor has performed in Capriccio, Il trovatore, The Magic Victrola, The Passenger, Le nozze di Figaro, The Merry Widow, and Der Rosenkavalier. During the 2016-17 Lyric Opera of Chicago season Johnson is featured in Lucia di Lammermoor, Les Troyens, and Don Quichotte. Future engagements include his debut with San Diego Opera.

American bass Kevin Burdette, as the Pirate King, has impressed audiences with his mellifluous voice and strongly dramatic characterizations. The San Francisco Chronicle called his Leporello “a tour de force of vocal splendor and comic timing,” and The New York Times dubbed him “the Robin Williams of opera”. He has performed at The Metropolitan Opera, San Diego Opera, Portland Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Opera Philadelphia. He previously performed with Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Dr. Bartolo in the 2012 production of The Barber of Seville.

Margaret Gawrysiak, mezzo-soprano, will be returning to Lyric Opera after her debut in the role of Marcellina in November’s The Marriage of Figaro. She has recently performed Mistress Hibbons in the world premiere of Lori Laitman’s The Scarlet Letter with Opera Colorado; Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd with Townsend Opera; Public Opinion in Orpheus in the Underworld, and Little Buttercup in H.M.S. Pinafore with Virginia Opera; Marquise in La file du Régiment with Arizona Opera; Mrs. De Rocher in Dead Man Walking with Dayton Opera; and Vera Boronel in The Consul with Seattle Opera; Zia Principessa in Suor Angelica with Crested Butte Music Festival; Dame Quickly in Falstaff, Baba the Turk and Mother Goose in The Rake’s Progress, and La Mère d’Antonia in Les contes d’Hoffmann with Wolf Trap Opera; and Zita in Gianni Schicchi at the Castleton Festival. Most recent engagements for the 2016-17 season have included the Old Lady in Candide with Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra.

Kansas City audience favorite, baritone Robert Gibby Brand will return to the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Major-General Stanley. Brand has performed with the Quality Hill Playhouse, Actors’ Theatre of Kansas City, the New Theatre, the Unicorn Theater, and the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival. Broadway World recently claimed “Robert Gibby Brand is brilliant and powerful …[he] is without doubt one of the finest dramatic actors in the area.” This will be Brand’s tenth production with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Previous recent productions include Die Fledermaus, The Mikado, Daughter of the Regiment, and Silent Night.

Conductor Hal France will be returning to the Lyric Opera of Kansas City after the 1987 production of Where the Wild Things Are. During a thirty five-year professional career as an opera conductor, Hal France has led organizations and performed with opera companies and
Director James Alexander will be making his Lyric Opera debut. His extensive career in the performing arts ranges from founding a music theatre company in his native Scotland, managing The Boston Pops, staging musicals in London’s West End, serving in the Artists and Repertoire Dept. at The Decca Record Company, managing a roster of classical musicians, soloists and conductors, to producing television and operas on three continents with a large number of prestigious companies, orchestras and conductors.

In Europe his engagements range from The Royal Scottish National Orchestra, to various productions with Scottish Opera, Opera North, The Gabrieli Consort & Players, (Venice and London), to serving for almost seven years as the Associate Director of the Olivier Award-winning Carmen Jones at London’s Old Vic Theatre.

In the United States, Mr. Alexander has been a long- time collaborator with Maestro Seiji Ozawa and The Boston Symphony. For Cincinnati Opera, his highly acclaimed staging of Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro was hailed by Opera News as, “a perfect combination of tastefulness and humor.” He is also the stage director of choice for The Atlanta Symphony and The Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Principals Cast**
Major-General Stanley: Robert Gibby Brand
The Pirate King: Kevin Burdette
Frederic: Jonathan Johnson*
Mabel: Anya Matanovic*
Ruth: Margaret Gawrysiak
Sergeant of Police: Ben Wager
Samuel: Rhys Lloyd Talbot~
Edith: April Martin +@
Kate: Samantha Gossard +@
Isabel: Laura Weir~

**Artistic Staff**
Director: James Alexander*
Conductor: Hal France
Set Designer: James Schuette*
Costume Designer: James Schuette*
Lighting Designer: James Sale
Wig and Make-up Designer: Alison M. Hanks
Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell
Stage Manager: Erin Thompson-Janszen

~ 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. 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, one hour before the performances, with a valid student ID.

**First Friday, April 7 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building** (1725 Holmes, KCMO) – The pirates have taken over Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s offices! Walk the plank and sing some sea shanties all while enjoying free food, drink and previews of this bright and colorful production. The event is FREE and open to the public. Invite your friends to attend on Facebook.

**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 Don Dagenais 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.

**The Pirates of Penzance** “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:

**Am I the Very Model of a Major-General? OR Didn’t I Already Sing My Patter Song?**
**The Life and Legacy of George Grossmith**

**Monday, April 3rd | 7:00 p.m.**
**Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Rd., KCMO, 64110)
**FREE and Open to the Public**

George Grossmith (1847-1912) created many of the iconic roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan canon, including Sir Joseph Porter in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and Major-General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Grossmith also delighted his audiences with his own comic songs and collaborated with his brother on the immensely popular comic novel *The Diary of a Nobody*. Join Robert Gibby Brand, who has become an audience favorite in Kansas City playing the roles Grossmith created, as he prepares to play Major-General Stanley in the Lyric Opera’s *Pirates* production, along with musicologist William Everett as they introduce us to the life and legacy of one of Gilbert and Sullivan’s most famous performers.

**The Piracy of Penzance: Bill (Gilbert) and Arthur (Sullivan’s) Excellent Copyright Adventures**

**Monday, April 10th | 7:00 p.m.**
**Kansas City Public Library** (118 Westport Rd., KCMO, 64111)
**FREE and Open to the Public**

The inspiration behind *The Pirates of Penzance* was some real-life piracy…of the copyright kind…unhappily experienced by the show’s creators. Find out about this, and
more, in a preview of *The Pirates of Penzance* by Don Dagenais of the Lyric Opera Guild. Audio and video excerpts will be included.

**Avast Ye Landlubbers!**

**Monday, April 17th | 7:00 p.m.**
**Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Rd., KCMO, 64110)**
**FREE and Open to the Public**

Why does a life on the high seas outside the law intrigue and excite audiences of movies, musicals, and opera even in the twenty-first century? From Gilbert and Sullivan to Monty Python to Walt Disney, pirates continue to fascinate and entertain. Dr. Charles Gibbs will explore and contrast the roles of pirates in arts and entertainment, and examine the appeal of this lifestyle in a modern society.

**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 2017-2018 season and www.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
Lyric Opera of Kansas City Concludes 59th Season with *The Pirates of Penzance*

**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, 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

---

**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 Švēde  
Sparafucile: Peixin Chen *

---

**The Barber of Seville**  
Gioachino Rossini, 1816  
Sung in Italian with English subtitles
Lyric Opera of Kansas City Concludes 59th Season with *The Pirates of Penzance*