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## Lyric Opera of Kansas City Presents *The Mikado*

*Acclaimed star Denyce Graves in Lyric Opera Debut*

*All new production by R. Keith Brumley*

*Dale Travis, Sarah Jane McMahon and Joshua Kohl in Lyric Opera Debuts*

*Added performance due to high demand*

**Kansas City, MO (March 4, 2013)** - The Lyric Opera of Kansas City closes its 55<sup>th</sup> season with Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, April 20, 22, 24, 26, and 28, 2013 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

This all new whimsical production based on Japanese screens and scrolls is designed by R. Keith Brumley (*The Flying Dutchman* 2013, *Turandot* 2011) and directed by William Theisen (*The Barber of Seville* 2012, *H.M.S. Pinafore* 2009).

"This is undoubtedly the greatest English operetta of all time and always a favorite with our audiences," notes Lyric Opera Artistic Director **Ward Holmquist**. "Especially after this long dark winter, we take special joy in completing the season with this delightful comic opera. Our audiences will feel as though spring has now officially sprung."

"We look forward to a fun filled production, bringing together a cast of sophisticated stage veterans, young emerging talent in the opera field and soon to be graduates of our apprentice program," said Lyric Opera General Director and CEO **Deborah Sandler**. "All of this wrapped together in a clever, witty and newly designed production that is bright and colorful. A delightful must see."

### **Added performance due to demand**

Due to the popularity of this production, an additional performance on Monday, April 22, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. has been added to accommodate the high demand. During the Company's first season in the Kauffman Center last year, it sold 90% of its total season capacity and added an additional performance of *The Barber of Seville* to accommodate heavy demand. The Monday performance offers the general public the opportunity to purchase the best seats, which are typically reserved by subscribers.

**Robert Gibby Brand**, highly regarded local actor and baritone singing Ko-Ko, the executioner, in *The Mikado*, recently explained the secret to Gilbert and Sullivan's long-term popularity, "What's the appeal? There's really nothing else like it. Combine creativity and nonsense with biting commentary and the results are truly amazing." Brand has been in four Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, including three productions of *The Mikado*.

### **Acclaimed star Denyce Graves makes her Lyric Opera debut**

Performing the role of Katisha, Mezzo soprano **Denyce Graves** has been called "an operatic superstar" by *USA Today*. Ms. Graves' signature portrayals of the title roles in *Carmen* and *Samson et Dalila* have been seen at The Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera National de Paris and many others. Ms. Graves has sung at The White House on numerous occasions and has been the recipient of many awards, including the "Grand Prix du Concours International de Chant de Paris." *The Mikado* marks her debut with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

"In addition to singing with our Company on the Kauffman Center stage, Ms. Graves also will help us extend our reach into the community," noted Deborah Sandler, General Director and CEO of the Company. Ms. Graves will lead a master class for Lyric Opera Apprentice Artists from the University of Kansas and University of Missouri – Kansas City. Members of the Ginger Frost High School Honors Artist Program and the UMKC Musical Bridges program also will participate.

Also making his Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut, acclaimed bass baritone **Dale Travis** will be performing the title role of *The Mikado*. With a repertoire of more than 50 roles in 25 years in a wide variety of styles from Mozart, Donizetti and Rossini to Strauss, Puccini and Wagner, Mr. Travis has been a frequent guest with many of the world's leading opera companies. Recent performances include Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Dr. Kolenaty in *The Makropulos Case* at the San Francisco Opera, Louis in *A View from the Bridge* at the Teatro Dell'Opera in Rome, Alidoro in *La cenerentola* at Opera Colorado,

and Sulpice in *The Daughter of the Regiment* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Mr. Travis can be seen in *Manon Lescaut*, as part of the Metropolitan Opera's HD Live Series.

Tenor **Joshua Kohl** will be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Nanki-Poo. Recently called a "tenor to watch" by *The Boston Herald*, Mr. Kohl was recently singled out for his "glorious, relaxed performance" by *Opera News*. This season, Mr. Kohl will be heard as Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Opera Omaha, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Dayton Opera, Chevalier in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera Southwest.

Soprano **Sarah Jane McMahon**, in her Lyric Opera debut, will be performing the role of Yum-Yum. Hailed by *The New York Times* as "bright, active, and fastidiously musical," and by *Opera News* as having "a golden sound," Ms. McMahon is recognized for her "beautiful vocal sophistication" and "sparkling stage presence." Ms. McMahon recently sang a Gala concert opposite Placido Domingo and made her debut with The San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, the Wiener Konzert Haus, Bremen's Die Glocke, and the Santo Domingo Festival in The Dominican Republic. A frequent guest artist at New York City Opera, she performed Mabel in their new production of *The Pirates of Penzance* and was described by *The New York Times* as "the most polished and flexible singer in the cast" and "a deft comic actress."

#### **All new production by R. Keith Brumley**

Director of Design and Technical Production, **R. Keith Brumley** has wowed audiences with his past work on landmark Lyric Opera productions such as *Turandot* (2011) and *Carmen* (2010). Of the *Turandot* production, Sarah Tyrell of KCMetropolis.org raved, "The sets were simply phenomenal."

#### **Principal Cast**

Nanki-Poo: Joshua Kohl\*  
Ko-Ko: Robert Gibby Brand  
Yum-Yum: Sarah Jane McMahon\*  
Katisha: Denyce Graves\*  
The Mikado: Dale Travis\*  
Poo-Bah: David Kravitz\*  
Pish-Tush: Chris Carr ~  
Pitti-Sing: Elizabeth Tredent ~  
Peep-Bo: Etta Fung +

### **Artistic Staff**

Conductor: Mark Ferrell

Director: William Theisen

Set Designer: R. Keith Brumley

Costume Designer: Kärin Kopishke

Wig and Make-Up Designer: Allison Hanks

Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell

Stage Manager: Jennifer Rimmer

\*Lyric Opera Debut

+University of Kansas Apprentice

~UMKC Apprentice

### **About *The Mikado***

Widely regarded as the finest Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, *The Mikado* will captivate and humor you at every turn. Nanki-Poo, son of the Emperor of Japan, is desperately in love with Yum-Yum. But she is betrothed to Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner! Witty lyrics and brilliantly constructed plot twists make this light-hearted tale of forbidden love, deception and beheadings a favorite among opera-goers everywhere.

***The Mikado* will be sung in English with English titles visible on personal monitors mounted on each audience member's seatback in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre.** This production will be performed in the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, located at 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64108.

### **Performance dates are as follows:**

Saturday, April 20, 2013 7:30 p.m.

Monday, April 22, 2013 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 24, 2013 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 26, 2013 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 28, 2013 2:00 pm

Ticket availability varies by performance. **To purchase tickets, call 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](http://www.kcopera.org).**

### **Student Rush Tickets**

A generous donor has sponsored free student rush tickets for the first 333 students and teachers at the performance on Monday, April 22, 2013. Students and teachers can pick up their free tickets at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts box office starting at 6:00 p.m. with valid ID. For the other performance dates, limited student rush tickets are available for \$15, cash only, one hour before the performances, with a valid student ID.

### **Opera Previews**

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 Mikado* “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:**

**Monday, April 1, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) **“So You Think You Would Like to be an Opera Singer?”** Have you ever wondered what the career of an opera star is really like? This evening we will have an interview with **Vinson Cole**, the world-famous Kansas City-born opera tenor, who has enjoyed a spectacular international career spanning the United States, Europe and Australia, and who is now a Professor of Voice at the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance. He will talk about the good (and maybe the not so good) aspects of a career as an international opera personality.

**Monday, April 8, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) **“It’s Not Just the Three Little Maids From School”** by **Professor William Everett** of UMKC. This will be a presentation on various other operettas, in addition to *The Mikado*, which were inspired by Japanese themes in the late 19th Century.

**Monday, April 15, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) Popular Lyric Opera Guild preview speaker **Rebecca Johnson** will present **“*The Mikado: Topsy Turvy in Titipu*,”** an in-depth preview of the operetta with audio and video excerpts.

### **The Bohemians: Young Friends of the Lyric Opera**

The Bohemians is the Lyric Opera organization for young professionals (age 21-40). The Bohemians offer great opportunities to get involved in the community, meet other young adults, and learn a little something about opera too! Bohemians enjoy discounted single tickets, monthly Third Friday Happy Hour gatherings at local hot spots, and special

invitations to exclusive events. In addition, the Bohemians gather for dinner prior to Saturday night performances at one of the many Lyric Opera restaurant partners, where ticket holders receive discounted meals when they show their performance ticket. To learn more, email [bohemians@kcopera.org](mailto:bohemians@kcopera.org).

### **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.

The Lyric Opera began performing in the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in September, 2011 which was a critical and financial success for the Company. Lyric Opera productions were lauded by critics from *The Kansas City Star*, *The New Yorker*, *The Toronto Star*, and Paul Horsley of *The Independent* wrote, "With [*Turandot*] the Lyric Opera is entering a new epoch in its history, and future productions will doubtless be measured by the ambitions of this show." The subscriber base grew to more than 4,100, a 17 year high, and total ticket revenue increased by 73% from the previous season. Ninety percent of the available seats were sold and 75% of performances were sold out. The Company also grew its base of contributors, realizing an increase of the number of donors and establishing a new model to raise funds, which generated \$11,000 in celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Company's nationally recognized education programs. The generosity and support of its patrons and donors allowed the Lyric Opera to end the fiscal year with a surplus.

### **New Leadership at the Lyric Opera**

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, Deborah Sandler began her tenure as new General Director and CEO at the Lyric Opera. Previously, Ms. Sandler served as General Director of Opera Festival of New Jersey, in Princeton, NJ for ten years and then as General Director of Kentucky Opera. During her tenure in each of these companies, Ms. Sandler developed institutional resources and capacities resulting in the growth and acclaim of each company. Ms. Sandler has a commitment to deepening community connections through the creation of programs which involve and engage audiences of diverse ages. Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Ms. Sandler received her Bachelors of Arts in Music from Temple University and a Master's degree in Musicology from New York University. Ms.

Sandler also has studied at the Mandel Center for Nonprofits at Case Western Reserve and at the Fundraising School at Indiana University.

### **Building for the Successes**

On July 5, 2012, the Lyric Opera moved from its temporary home to the new Opera Center campus located at 1725 Holmes.

The Opera Center campus consists of two buildings: a Production Arts building and an Administrative building with set rental inventory storage. The Production Arts building includes a rehearsal space that matches the footprint of the stage of the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The Production Arts building houses a full wig, costume, and set construction shop, and facilities for educational and community outreach programs. Such an integrated and dedicated production facility did not exist until now in Kansas City; the Company envisions the Production Arts building becoming a resource for other local performing arts companies.

The second building on the property is adjacent to the Production Arts building. It provides the Company with set rental inventory storage, parking lots and outside green spaces for the Opera Center, and houses the administrative staff.

### **Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts**

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, a new multi-venue center for music, opera, theater, and dance designed by Moshe Safdie, opened in Kansas City September 16, 2011. The Kauffman Center seeks to enrich the lives of all Greater Kansas City residents by presenting vibrant performances, educational programming, and creating a tradition 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's two performance venues. The 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall and the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre 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 dramatic 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 [www.kauffmancenter.org](http://www.kauffmancenter.org).

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 production is made possible with funding from Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts, Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Hall Family Foundation, Lyric Opera of Kansas City Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, Arts KC, and Missouri Art Council.

**Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052.**

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