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## Lyric Opera of Kansas City Presents *Madama Butterfly*

*Demand leads to added performance*

*Acclaimed stars join the cast*

*Director Mark Streshinsky returns to direct Madama Butterfly*

*University Apprentices make their debuts*

Kansas City, MO (August 14, 2012) - The Lyric Opera of Kansas City opens its 55<sup>th</sup> season with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* September 15, 19, 21, 23, and 24, 2012 at the Kauffman Center of the Performing Arts.

*“Madama Butterfly* is one of the most beloved, beautiful and engaging operas ever written. We are pleased to open our second season in the Kauffman Center with this sublime work.” General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler states, “For many, *Madama Butterfly* may be their first opera. Without a doubt, the story of Cio-Cio-San seductively entices opera neophytes. For aficionados, it is the opera that renews their passion.”

Acclaimed soprano Elizabeth Caballero returns to Kansas City to sing the title role after her acclaimed turn as Liu in last season's production of *Turandot*. Lyric Opera Artistic Director Ward Holmquist notes, “Elizabeth stole the show last season. She has a round warm voice that is completely empathetic. As I watched and listened to Elizabeth during *Turandot* rehearsals, I knew her voice, combined with her stellar acting skills, would be perfect to portray the child-bride Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly). I am excited to see what amazing things she does with this complex character.”

### Demand Leads to Added Performance

Due to the popularity of this production, an additional Monday, September 24 at 7:30 p.m. performance has been added to accommodate 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 ability to purchase the best seats which are typically reserved by subscribers. Tickets to this performance went on sale to the general public on Tuesday, August 7 at 9 a.m.

### Acclaimed Stars Join the Cast

Cuban-American Soprano Elizabeth Caballero makes her international debut as Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly). Ms. Caballero's performance as Liu in last season's *Turandot* was lauded by audiences and critics alike, bringing people to their feet during curtain call at every performance. Alex Ross from *The New Yorker* hailed, "Most notable was the Cuban-American soprano Elizabeth Caballero who sang Liu in sensuously glowing tones, her charged legato shaping the music into cogent paragraphs. Liu's death scene tore at the heart." Ms. Caballero's credits include performances at The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Seattle Opera.

Tenor Dinyar Vania will return to the Company to sing the role of Lt. Pinkerton. Mr. Vania made his debut with the Lyric Opera in 2010 as Don José in *Carmen*. *Present Magazine* noted that "Vania commanded his climactic lines with masterful expression and powerful volume." Mr. Vania has been awarded Syracuse Opera's "Artist of the Year" in addition to First Place in the Giulio Gari Vocal Competition. Mr. Vania also has performed at Boston Lyric Opera and New York City Opera.

Baritone Weston Hurt will make his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Sharpless. Pierre Ruhe of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* noted, "Weston Hurt was a vocally handsome Sharpless" when he performed the role at Atlanta Opera. Mr. Hurt's credits include performances at the Austin Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, New York City Opera, and Portland Opera. Additionally, Mr. Hurt has been the recipient of several awards including People's Choice Award at the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, first place in the 2003 Oratorio Society of New York Competition, and a variety of other awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council, and The Palm Beach Opera Competition, among others.

### Director Mark Streshinsky Returns to Direct *Madama Butterfly*

Director Mark Streshinsky returns to the Lyric Opera of Kansas City to direct his first *Madama Butterfly* for the Company. Mr. Streshinsky previously directed the Lyric Opera productions of *Julius Caesar* (2008) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (2011). His creative approach to staging was noted in *Julius Caesar* when KC Metropolis stated “If a production of *Julius Caesar* can be adequately described as edgy, then Mark Streshinsky and Ward Holmquist's partnership achieved that and more via striking dramatic moments and strategic artistic choices.” Mr. Streshinsky has directed at Seattle Opera, Yale Opera, Dallas Opera, Cincinnati Opera and others.

### University Apprentices Make Their Company Debut

The Lyric Opera Apprentice Program is a collaboration with the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the School of Music at the University of Kansas. During the two year program students gain experience and training with the Lyric Opera to become professional opera singers.

University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) apprentice Elizabeth Tredent will make her debut singing the role of Suzuki. UMKC apprentice Chris Carr also will make his Company debut singing Prince Yamadori. Mr. Carr has sung at Central City Opera, Simpson College, Cedar Rapids Opera and the Des Moines Metro Opera. UMKC apprentice Angela Gribble will make her Lyric Opera debut as Kate Pinkerton. Ms. Gribble's credits include performances at The Manhattan School of Music, Janiec Opera, and the Pocket Opera of New York.

University of Kansas (KU) apprentice, Michael Colman will make his debut as The Imperial Commissioner and KU Apprentice Dominic Johnson will make his debut as The Official Registrar.

### Principle Cast

Cio-Cio-San: Elizabeth Caballero

Lt. Pinkerton: Dinyar Vania

Suzuki: Elizabeth Tredent~ \*

Sharpless: Weston Hurt\*

Goro: Doug Jones

Prince Yamadori: Chris Carr~ \*

The Bronze: Philip Horst\*

The Imperial Commissioner: Michael Colman+ \*

Kate Pinkerton: Angela Gribble~ \*

The Official Registrar: Dominic Johnson+

Artistic Staff

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Director: Mark Streshinsky

Lighting Designer: Kendall Smith

Scenery and Props Designer: Neil Patel\*

Costume Designer: David C. Woolard\*

Wig and Make-Up Designer: Joanne Middleton Weaver

Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell

Stage Manager: Jennifer Rimmer

\*Lyric Opera Debut

+University of Kansas Apprentice

~UMKC Apprentice

Scenery and properties for this production are owned by the Minnesota Opera and were constructed by the Minnesota Opera.

About *Madama Butterfly*

Puccini's beautifully tragic *Madama Butterfly* is a story of the love, fidelity and betrayal that occurs when two very different cultures collide. A marriage contract has drastically different meanings to a U.S. Navy lieutenant and his Japanese child-bride. When the nuptials result in a beloved child, the mother will do anything to protect her honor and her child's future as an American.

*Madama Butterfly* will be sung in Italian 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, September 15, 2012 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 19, 2012 7:30 p.m.

Friday, September 21, 2012 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, September 23, 2012 2:00 p.m.

Monday, September 24, 2012 7:30 p.m.-Added Performance

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). 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.

### *Madama Butterfly* “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:

Monday, August 20, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) “Versimo Opera: Get Real!” by Bob Wise, local opera maven. This is about the history of *verismo* opera, the genre of which *Madama Butterfly* is a prime example.

Wednesday, August 22, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) “Andiamo all’opera” or “Let’s Go to the Opera” by Debra Karr, an instructor in Italian from the University of Kansas. This will be a program on Italian for opera goers, covering basic words and phrases you might want to know when attending an Italian opera. It is especially appropriate for this fall, when the Lyric Opera is performing two Italian operas.

Monday, August 27, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) “Backstage at the Opera: Opera at the Movies” by John Tibbets, professor of film at the University of Kansas. This program will be about movies which are about opera and in particular those featuring backstage scenes from operas, or backstage intrigue at the opera. It will include video excerpts.

Monday, September 10, 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO) “A Butterfly is a Fragile Thing” by Don Dagenais, Lyric Opera Guild preview speaker. This will be an in-depth preview of *Madama Butterfly* 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 to attending the Saturday night performance of *Madama Butterfly* on September 15, 2012 at 7:30 p.m., 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 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.

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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