

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City Announces 2018-2019 Season

Kansas City, MO (February 12, 2018) – **Lyric Opera of Kansas City General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler** today announced its 2018-2019 season. The season includes four mainstage productions at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts including a spectacular **NEW PRODUCTION** of ***West Side Story***, plus new-to-Kansas City productions of ***Madama Butterfly***, ***Così fan tutte***, and ***The Pearl Fishers***. All performances will be accompanied by members of the Kansas City Symphony.

In its third season, the Lyric's 2018-2019 Exploration Series continues with three performances at the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building and at Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral.

General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler stated, "When the Lyric Theatre was founded in 1958, Russell Patterson had a vision to make opera accessible to a modern audience. Sixty years later, Lyric Opera of Kansas City is still firmly committed to that vision. We have made it our mission to make opera indispensable to Kansas City through adventurous programming over a wide range of repertoire. Our 2018-2019 season was designed to surprise, delight, and inspire the seasoned opera-lover and the newcomer alike."

2018-2019 Season

Bernstein's *West Side Story*

The season opens with the award-winning work that transports *Romeo & Juliet* to the streets of New York City, an **ALL-NEW PRODUCTION** of ***West Side Story***, featuring the original **Jerome Robbins** choreography and the original orchestral score. Created by artists **Leonard Bernstein**, **Arthur Laurents**, **Stephen Sondheim**, and Jerome Robbins, who set out to surpass the expectations of musical theater, this production will give audiences the rare opportunity to experience *West Side Story* at the scale in which it was originally conceived.

This production is a co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Director **Francesca Zambello** of Washington National Opera and Glimmerglass Festival will be making her Lyric Opera debut. **David Charles Abell** (Conductor/*Carmen*, 2016) will return to Lyric Opera. **Vanessa Becerra**, also making her Lyric Opera debut, will sing Maria, after appearing in the role at

Glimmerglass in July-August 2018 and as Johanna/*Sweeney Todd* at Atlanta Opera. **Andrew Bidlack**, who recently debuted with Lyric Opera in the Lyric's critically-acclaimed *Everest* (2017), will sing Tony. **Brian Vu**, in the role of Riff, will also debut here, after appearing as Riff with Houston Grand Opera and Glimmerglass.

Deb Sandler stated, "Our selection of *West Side Story* to open our 61st season continues our commitment to excellent works that also offer a rich variety. Producing *West Side Story* honors the diverse repertoire of our Company, which, early in its history, produced *Most Happy Fella*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Man of La Mancha*, and Kander and Ebb's *The Happy Time*. In 1971, the Company appeared on the cover of LIFE magazine for its production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It is to this commendable list that we will add *West Side Story*. As we observe the centenary of Bernstein's birth, it seems entirely fitting to celebrate with a quintessential work by this American conductor who became an American composer."

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

In a stunning traditional production from The Dallas Opera and directed by **Ron Daniels** in his Lyric Opera debut, ***Madama Butterfly*** tells Puccini's tragic love story of a young Geisha and her doomed marriage to a swaggering US Naval Officer.

Karah Son, in her Lyric Opera debut in the role of Butterfly, has sung the role at Opera Australia, Welsh National Opera and Glyndebourne Festival. Pinkerton will be played by **Georgy Vasiliev**, who is making his Lyric Opera debut, and recently sang the role at Opera Australia. **Kristin Choi**, another debut, portrays Suzuki, and has sung the role at Washington National Opera. **Daniel Belcher** (*Silent Night*, 2015; *Dead Man Walking*, 2017), in the role of Sharpless, is a local favorite. **Ryan McAdams**, who conducted Lyric Opera's *Le nozze di Figaro* in 2016, returns as well.

Mozart's *Così fan tutte*

This lush production from San Francisco Opera places Mozart's classic opera in the glittering Belle Époque era at a lavish Monte Carlo resort. Directed by **James Alexander**, who debuted with Lyric Opera with *The Pirates of Penzance* (2017), the cast features **Daniela Mack** in the role of Dorabella and **Vanessa Vasquez** as Fiordiligi. Mack recently made her Metropolitan Opera debut, and both Mack and Vasquez will make their Lyric Opera debuts. **Alasdair Kent** will also be making his Lyric Opera debut in the role of Ferrando; his repertoire includes multiple Mozart roles. Former Resident Artist **John Viscardi** returns as Guglielmo; he appeared with Lyric Opera in *The Juliet Letters* and *Dead Man Walking* in 2017. **Maureen McKay** (Susanna in Lyric Opera's *Le nozze di Figaro*, 2016) returns in the role of Despina. **Patrick Carfizzi**, who portrayed Dulcamara in Lyric Opera's *The Elixir of Love* in 2016, returns as Don Alfonso. Early music specialist **Jane Glover** will conduct in her Kansas City debut; she has served as the Artistic Director of the London Mozart Players and the Director of Opera at the Royal Academy of Music, and is currently Music Director of Music of the Baroque.

Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*

The season concludes with a trip to the ancient island of Ceylon, where a forbidden love threatens both the prosperity of a civilization and a vow of eternal friendship. This wildly colorful production from San Diego Opera was designed by Zandra Rhodes, the iconic British designer who dressed Princess Diana and the musical artist Prince, among others. **Andrew Sinclair**, making his Lyric Opera debut, will direct. Conductor **Antony Walker**, who is Music Director of Pittsburgh Opera and Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera, will also make his Kansas City debut.

The Pearl Fishers brings multiple Lyric Opera debuts, including **Maeve Höglund** as the priestess Leila, **John Moore** as Zurga, and **Christian Zaremba** in the role of Nourabad. Höglund's roles include Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Musetta in *La bohème*; Moore has sung Zurga in several productions, and

Zaremba recently debuted at the Metropolitan Opera as Angelotti/*Tosca*. **Sean Panikkar** (*Silent Night*, 2015), will be returning to sing Nadir.

The 2018-19 Lyric Opera of Kansas City season is sponsored by the Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts and the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation.

Exploration Series

This series of three adventurous productions during the 2018-2019 season features an eclectic array of works to be performed in The Lyric's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building in the Crossroads Arts District and at Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral. The ***Explorations Series*** will feature 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. "This programming diversity allows us to touch audiences in new and personal ways, while expanding the range of our offerings," said General Director Deborah Sandler. "We believe the intimacy of our ***Explorations*** performances will create a new kind of experience for audiences. This series will also continue to showcase the extremely talented singers in our Resident Artist Program, along with other guest artists from around the world."

Exploration Series for 2018-2019 will be announced shortly.

Explorations Series Sponsors: Virginia & Charles Clark and Spencer Fane LLP.

THE OPERAS



West Side Story (1957)

By Leonard Bernstein

Book by Arthur Laurents; lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Original Jerome Robbins choreography with original orchestral score

Sung in English with English subtitles

Five performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

- **NEW PRODUCTION** from Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago
- Sets and costumes from The Glimmerglass Festival

Performances of West Side Story

- Saturday, September 22 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, September 23 at 2:00 p.m. (Sunday Subscriber performance)
- Wednesday, September 26 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, September 28 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, September 30 at 2:00 p.m.

Overview of *West Side Story*

West Side Story defies labels, and has since the beginning: legendary Broadway producer/director George Abbott wrote to Bernstein in 1945, “When I talk of opera, I am talking about a new form which does not now exist: I am talking about something which I expect you to create...unhampered by tradition.” The Romeo & Juliet concept for *West Side Story* came to Jerome Robbins first, and he insisted that it be cast with singers who could dance. Arthur Laurents suggested that Tony and Maria would be associated with rival street gangs, which were in the news then. In November 1955, a young Stephen Sondheim joined the team and witnessed the “no borders, no boundaries” collaborative dynamic of Bernstein and Robbins. “The fusion of forms would be as snug as a switchblade,” writes Laura Jacobs in the February 2018 issue of *Vanity Fair*.

Less than two years later, *West Side Story* opened on Broadway and ran for 732 performances, spurring thousands of performances outside New York City. *West Side Story* has been on video, in schools, in a punk rock version, in a one-woman version by Cher (!), and at the illustrious La Scala opera house, proving that this gritty, big-city retelling of a 16th-century play can bloom, and burn, and become a true American phenomenon that shakes off any simple categorization.

Cast and Artistic Team: *West Side Story* (bios available at kcopera.org beginning 2/12/18)

Maria	Vanessa Becerra*
Tony	Andrew Bidlack
Riff	Brian Vu*
Anita	TBA
Bernardo	TBA
Conductor	David Charles Abell
Director	Francesca Zambello*
Choreographer	Julio Monge*

* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut



***Madama Butterfly* (1904)**

By Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, based on a short story by John Luther Long

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Four performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

- Last performed at Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 2012
- Sets and costumes from The Dallas Opera

Performances of *Madama Butterfly*

- Saturday, November 3 at 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 7 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 9 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 11 at 2:00 p.m.

Overview of *Madama Butterfly*

Born of American fascination with the exoticism of the East after the opening of Japan, John Luther Long's short story "Madame Butterfly" was an amalgam of accounts by Long's sister and an 1887 French novel; it captured Puccini's imagination when he saw a staged version in London in 1900. To that tragic second-hand story, he added Giacosa's libretto that made Cio-Cio San the real star, and composed a score that makes us weep beautiful tears as Butterfly floats helplessly to her fate.

Cast and Artistic Team: *Madama Butterfly* (bios available at kcopera.org beginning 2/12/18)

Cio-Cio San	Karah Son*
Pinkerton	Georgy Vasiliev*
Sharpless	Daniel Belcher
Suzuki	Kristen Choi*
Goro	Julius Ahn*

Conductor	Ryan McAdams
Stage Director	Ron Daniels*

* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut



***Così fan tutte, or The School for Lovers* (1789)**

By Wolfgang A. Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

Four performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

- Last performed at Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 2011
- Sets and costumes from San Francisco Opera

Performances of *Così fan tutte*

- Saturday, March 16, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, March 22, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, March 24, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.

Overview of *Così fan tutte*

It is hard to know who is the most cynical character in Mozart's late-career masterpiece; perhaps he would have wanted it that way. Working with his famous collaborator Lorenzo Da Ponte, he concocted a heady mix of fiancée-swapping, silly disguises, broken promises, possibly some ancient mythology, and pure musical magic that makes it all work together. Is it true that all women are unfaithful? What we know for sure is that when devoted couples attend "The School for Lovers" in Monte Carlo, all bets are off.

Cast and Artistic Team: *Così fan tutte* (bios available at kcopera.org beginning 2/12/18)

Fiordiligi	Vanessa Vasquez*
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Dorabella	Daniela Mack*
Ferrando	Alasdair Kent*
Guglielmo	John Viscardi
Despina	Maureen McKay
Don Alfonso	Patrick Carfizzi

Conductor	Jane Glover*
Stage Director	James Alexander

* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut



The Pearl Fishers (Les pêcheurs de perles) (1863)

By Georges Bizet

Libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré

Sung in French with English subtitles

Four performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

- Last performed at Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 2007
- Sets and costumes by Zandra Rhodes, from San Diego Opera

Performances of *The Pearl Fishers*

- Saturday, April 27, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 1, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, May 3, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 5, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.

Overview of *The Pearl Fishers*

One unattainable priestess's beauty – and her responsibility to protect the island from evil and storms – broke up a friendship between a pearl fisher and the island chieftain. When the men pledge that she will not come between them again, it happens anyway – and sets their world on fire in more ways than one. Bizet's pre-*Carmen* work is a blazing beauty, filled with romantic drama, dancing, lush melodies, eye candy, and an unexpected twist.

Cast and Artistic Team: *The Pearl Fishers* (bios available at kcopera.org beginning 2/12/18)

Leila	Maeve Höglund*
Nadir	Sean Panikkar
Zurga	John Moore*
Nourabad	Christian Zaremba*

Conductor	Antony Walker*
Stage Director	Andrew Sinclair*
Production Designer	Zandra Rhodes*
Choreographer	John Malashock*

Tickets and Group Discounts

Subscribers have access to the best seats at the best prices, with savings of up to 44% over single ticket prices. They also receive the first opportunity either to keep their original seats or to secure new seats before the general public. Subscribers to the 2017-18 season will receive subscription renewal information beginning the week of February 12, 2018, and will have until May 11, 2018 to renew or improve their current subscription and seat locations. Reservations for new subscriptions will go on sale to the general public at the same time. Renewing subscribers receive priority seating. Single tickets will go on sale to the general public on Monday, July 9, 2018, with Subscriber Courtesy Week July 3 – 9 (excluding July 4), when subscribers can purchase additional single tickets to any show for 25% off.

Season ticket prices range from \$79 to \$511. For ticket information, visit kcopera.org or contact Lyric Opera Ticketing & Patron Services at (816) 471-7344.

Lyric Opera of Kansas City is committed to making opera accessible to all groups by providing great discounts and special services to group ticketholders. Plus, orders of 10 or more seats receive up to a 25% off discount. Lyric Opera of Kansas City is happy to accommodate groups of all sizes, with added perks like FREE seats for event organizers, pre-opera entertainment, and dining discounts.

For more information about group ticket services and discounts, contact Chris Roady at (816) 802-6079 or croady@kcopera.org.

Community Events

Lyric Opera of Kansas City's Education and Outreach programs open the world of opera to people of all ages. We engage the opera lovers of tomorrow through exciting in-school programming as well as Spring Break and Summer Opera Camps. The Ginger Frost High School Honors Artists Program gives talented high school singers the opportunity to study their dream roles and audition for professionals. And patrons of all ages can enhance their opera experience with community events such as At Ease with Opera, Explore the Score, First Fridays, and more.

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.

At Ease with Opera

The Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild continues its lecture and preview series to explore each mainstage opera of the season. Join us for these FREE one-hour presentations, located at the Kauffman Foundation at 4801 Rockhill Rd, Kansas City, MO 64110.

At Ease with Opera dates for 2018-19:

West Side Story – August 27, September 10 and 17, 2018

Madama Butterfly – October 15, 22 and 29, 2018

Così fan tutte – February 25, March 4 and 11, 2019

The Pearl Fishers – April 8, 15 and 22, 2019

Explore the Score

Members of the creative team will take us on a guided tour of the score of each mainstage production at the Lyric Opera's Michael & Ginger Frost Production Arts Building, 712 E 18th St., Kansas City, MO 64108. FREE Event, RSVP required. See kcopera.org for more details.

First Fridays

Lyric Opera of Kansas City joins other Crossroads-area businesses in opening their doors for free community events on selected dates from 5-8 p.m., in the Beth Ingram Administration Building (1725 Holmes, KCMO). Attendees enjoy preview performances of Lyric Opera's mainstage productions by Lyric Opera Resident Artists and Young Apprentices, as well as free drinks and food. The event is FREE and open to everyone. More information is available at kcopera.org.

First Friday dates for 2018-19:

September 7, 2018

November 3, 2018

March 1, 2019

April 5, 2019

The Young Friends of The Lyric

Young Friends of The 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/yfi or contact Ticketing & Patron Services at 816-471-7344. Become a fan on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/YoungFriendsLyric) @YoungFriendsLyric to keep up with current events.

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 works. 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 or on Instagram @kcopera.

Image credits: *West Side Story* rendering by Peter Davison. *Madama Butterfly* production photo by Karen Almond for The Dallas Opera. *Così fan tutte* production photo by Cory Weaver for San Francisco Opera. *The Pearl Fishers* photo by Elise Bakketun for Seattle Opera. High-res images are available.

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