

# LYRIC OPERA

## KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Lyric Opera of Kansas City Continues 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary 2018-2019 Season with *Madama Butterfly*

*Lyric Opera debuts include Soprano Karah Son,  
Tenor Georgy Vasiliev, Mezzo-Soprano Kristen Choi, Tenor Julius Ahn,  
and Director Ron Daniels;  
Baritone Daniel Belcher, Bass Peixin Chen, and  
Conductor Ryan McAdams return to Lyric Opera*

**Kansas City, MO (Oct. 11, 2018)** – Lyric Opera of Kansas City continues its 61st season with a perennial audience favorite, 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 the tragic love story of a young geisha and her doomed marriage to a swaggering U.S. Naval officer.

“One of the most beloved of all operas, Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, is full of contrasts. This is a brutal story, based on a real story which occurred in Nagasaki at the end of the 19th century. The sublime beauty of the music contrasts with the ugly, heart-wrenching story, creating a profound and poignant experience,” stated **Deborah Sandler**, General Director and CEO of Lyric Opera of Kansas City. “More than any other treatment of this material, it is the beauty of Puccini’s musical gift that that allows us to cry for Butterfly.”

**Karah Son**, making 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. **Kristen 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; and **Peixin Chen**, who dazzled audiences in *Rigoletto* earlier this year, returns as The Bonze. **Ryan McAdams**, who conducted Lyric Opera’s *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2016, returns as well.

The production runs November 3, 7, 9 and 11 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and will be sung in Italian with English subtitles. High-res production and artist photos can be found [here](#).

### Three things about *Madama Butterfly*:

1. The story of Cio-Cio San has inspired many adaptations, such as the Broadway musical *Miss Saigon*, a ballet, a Mexican telenovela, the rock band Weezer’s second studio album, and a TV series. It has also informed more than a few film plots, such as *Fatal Attraction*, in which Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) identifies with Cio-Cio San and, in the original ending, commits suicide while “Un bel di” plays in the background.

2. After *Butterfly*'s unsuccessful opening at La Scala in Milan, Puccini made revisions that softened Pinkerton's character somewhat, but not entirely: audiences still boo Pinkerton at the end of the opera, and some tenors regard those boos as success in portraying Pinkerton's *lack* of character.
3. Sometimes, life really does imitate art: there really was a "Madame Butterfly" who lived in Nagasaki, who married a Scottish industrialist (who abandoned her) and had a son, Tom Glover. While Tom had advantages such as a good education and his family's wealth, and his mother eventually found happiness in another marriage, Tom committed suicide shortly after Nagasaki was bombed in 1945.

### ON THE LYRIC OPERA BLOG...

- The real Madama Butterfly (video)
- Loving *Madama Butterfly*: It's Complicated
- Visit <https://kcopera.org/blog>



### ***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
- Production owned by The Dallas Opera; Scenery originated at San Francisco Opera
- Scenery and costumes designed by Michael Yeargan

### **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 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 [here](#))**

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Cio-Cio San               | Karah Son*         |
| Lt. Pinkerton             | Georgy Vasiliev*   |
| Sharpless                 | Daniel Belcher     |
| Suzuki                    | Kristen Choi*      |
| Goro                      | Julius Ahn*        |
| The Bonze                 | Peixin Chen        |
| Prince Yamadori           | SeokJong Baek * +  |
| The Imperial Commissioner | Matthew Scrivner   |
| Kate Pinkerton            | Kelly Birch * +    |
| The Official Registrar    | Armando Contreras~ |

Conductor Ryan McAdams  
Stage Director Ron Daniels\*

\* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut  
+ Lyric Opera Resident Artist  
~ Lyric Opera Apprentice Artist

See the most up-to-date cast list [here](#).

Tickets start at just \$29 for Wednesday and Friday performances. 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, starting 90 minutes before the performances, with a valid student ID.

## Related Events

### Explore the Score

Thursday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m., at Lyric Opera's Michael & Ginger Frost Production Arts Bldg (712 E. 18th St., KCMO 64108)

Conductor **Ryan McAdams** shares a personal introduction to the music and characters of this Puccini masterpiece. **FREE** Event, RSVP required at <https://kcopera.org/performances/madama-butterfly-18/> or by phone at (816) 471-7344.

### **Madama Butterfly** "At Ease with Opera" Presentations:

**Monday, October 15 at 7:00 p.m. at MRI Global Auditorium** (425 Volker Blvd, KCMO 64110). **Note the special location. Free and open to everyone. *Sixty Years of Lyric Opera***

September 29, 1958 marked the first opera performance of the company known as the Lyric Theatre of Kansas City. Don Dagenais and longtime Lyric Opera baritone Brian Steele discuss the first six decades of the Lyric Opera company, including its formation, its venues, singers and performances. The presentation will also include historic photographs and recordings taken from some of the early performances.

**Monday, October 22 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free and open to everyone. *Loving Butterfly...It's Complicated***

When American gunboats entered Nagasaki in 1853 demanding that Japan drop its 220-year policy of isolation, both countries were changed. Japanese culture and art exploded in popularity. "Japonism" informed fashion, design, and theatre such as *The Mikado* and *Madama Butterfly*. But how much did the West really understand Japan, and what do we need to keep in mind as our views evolve? Linda Ade Brand, Director of Education, leads a panel including LOKC Artistic Administrator Brad Trexell, and guests from The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: Cat Mueller, Educator, Adult Programs, and Yayoi Shinodo, Curatorial Assistant, East Asian Galleries.

**Monday, October 29 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free and open to everyone. *A Most Beautiful Tragedy***

A tale of two cultures, *Madama Butterfly* tells the heartbreaking story of a young geisha's love for an American Naval officer. Though you may weep in the end, Puccini's exquisite score will captivate you through this journey of innocence, betrayal, honor, and sacrifice. Rebecca Johnson will provide a detailed overview of this beloved masterpiece with audio and video excerpts.

**First Friday**, Nov. 2, from 5 to 8 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building (1725 Holmes, KCMO 64108).

The theme for First Friday is "Puccini Power," featuring short performances at approximately 5:45 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be available. Free and open to everyone; no RSVP required.

**Reverse Happy Hour with Young Friends of the Lyric**, Nov. 9, after the Friday performance of *Madama Butterfly*, at Nara Japanese Sushi Grill (1617 Main St., KCMO 64108). All are welcome to join Young Friends of the Lyric to celebrate after the Friday night performance of *Madama Butterfly*! Enjoy drink and food specials, meet the members of the Young Friends of the Lyric, and perhaps some of the cast of *Madama Butterfly*. Open to everyone; no RSVP required.

## Sponsors

*Madama Butterfly* is sponsored in part by The City of Kansas City, Missouri Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund.

## Remaining 2018-2019 Season at a Glance:

### *Madama Butterfly*

Giacomo Puccini, 1904

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

**Saturday, November 3, 2018** 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, November 7, 2018** 7:30 p.m.

**Friday, November 9, 2018** 7:30 p.m.

**Sunday, November 11, 2018** 2:00 p.m.

Conductor: Ryan McAdams ☒ Director: Ron Daniels\*

### *Così fan tutte*

Wolfgang A. Mozart, 1798

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

**Saturday, March 16, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, March 20, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Friday, March 22, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Sunday, March 24, 2019** 2:00 p.m.

Conductor: Jane Glover \* ☒ Director: James Alexander

### *The Pearl Fishers*

Georges Bizet, 1863

Sung in French with English subtitles

**Saturday, April 27, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, May 1, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Friday, May 3, 2019** 7:30 p.m.

**Sunday, May 5, 2019** 2:00 p.m.

Conductor: Antony Walker\* ☒ Director: Andrew Sinclair\*

\* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut

## 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 or on Instagram @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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