

# LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City  
Announces Selection of  
2018-2019 Resident Artists and  
Kicks Off *Explorations* Series with  
***High Fidelity Opera***

***Resident Artist Program, led by  
World-Renowned Tenor and Teacher Vinson Cole includes  
Soprano Kaylie Kahlich, Mezzo-soprano Kelly Birch, Tenor Joseph Leppek,  
Baritone SeokJong Baek and Coach/Accompanist James Maverick***

***High Fidelity Opera to showcase Resident Artists Sat. Nov. 17 at the  
Lyric Opera's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building***

**Kansas City, MO (Oct. 25, 2018) – General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler** today announced the selection of the artists for the Resident Artist Program for the 2018-2019 season. They include soprano **Kaylie Kahlich**, mezzo-soprano **Kelly Birch**, tenor **Joseph Leppek**, baritone **SeokJong Baek** and coach/accompanist **James Maverick**. Led by **Vinson Cole**, UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance faculty member and one of the leading artists of his generation, they will perform in various roles throughout the 2018-2019 season on the main stage at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts as well as at community outreach and education events.

During their residencies, in addition to appearing in mainstage roles, the Resident Artists will work with visiting guest artists, conductors and directors, participate in master classes, receive career coaching, study leading roles, make musical appearances in the community, and appear in their own intimate musical performances as a part of Lyric Opera of Kansas City's ***Explorations*** series, which will focus on intimate gems of the vocal music repertoire. The 2018-2019 Explorations Series kicks off with ***High Fidelity Opera***, recalling the golden age of radio, November 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Lyric Opera's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building.

### **High Fidelity Opera**

Featuring Gian Carlo Menotti's ***The Old Maid and the Thief***  
and Samuel Barber's ***A Hand of Bridge***

Sat. Nov. 17, 7:30 p.m.

Lyric Opera's Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building  
712 E. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, MO, 64108 (East Crossroads)

Enter the "theater of the mind" and explore the sights and sounds of the golden age of radio, as director **Edward Berkeley** brings to Lyric Opera a program reminiscent of the days when American families tuned in for everything from *The Lone Ranger* to Jack Benny, *The Shadow*, Ray Bradbury stories, and live

performances by symphony orchestras and big bands. Berkeley has fashioned a performance featuring parts of Norman Corwin's *The Anatomy of Sound*, which serve to introduce two popular American radio operas by Menotti and Barber. The audience will also be treated to sound effects performed by the singers. Lyric Opera's Resident Artists are joined by soprano **Kristin Newbegin** and conductor **Carolyn Watson** for the operas.

Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief*, written when he was just 28 years old, is a dark comedy about questionable morals that premiered on NBC Radio in 1939. Featuring four characters, the radio version is comprised of 14 short scenes.

*A Hand of Bridge*, composed by Samuel Barber with a libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti, premiered in 1959 at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, and was featured on The Standard Oil Hour on NBC Radio. In this one-act opera, two unhappily married couples conduct a hand of bridge while confessing some of their innermost fears and desires.

The Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild will provide a reception immediately after the performance. Tickets to *High Fidelity Opera* are \$30. To purchase tickets, call Ticketing & Patron Services at (816) 471-7344. Patrons can purchase 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. Capacity is limited.

#### **CAST of The Old Maid and the Thief**

**Miss Todd** – Kelly Birch +  
**Laetitia** – Kaylie Kahlich +  
**Miss Pinkerton** – Kristin Newbegin \*  
**Bob** – SeokJong Baek +

#### **CAST of A Hand of Bridge**

**David**, a businessman – SeokJong Baek +  
**Geraldine**, his wife – Kaylie Kahlich +  
**Bill**, a lawyer – Joseph Leppek +  
**Sally**, his wife – Kelly Birch +

#### **CREATIVE TEAM**

**Director** – Edward Berkeley \*  
**Conductor** – Carolyn Watson \*  
**Pianist** – James Maverick +

+ Lyric Opera Resident Artist

\* Lyric Opera Debut

*Lyric Opera's Explorations series is sponsored by Spencer Fane LLP, Virginia & Charles Clark, and the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Fund at Lyric Opera of Kansas City.*

#### **About the Creative Team**

**Edward Berkeley** is Director of the Aspen Opera Center, on The Juilliard School faculty, and Artistic Director of NYC's Willow Cabin Theater Company, where he directed Tony- and Drama Desk-nominated *Wildier, Wildier, Wildier*. Other directing credits include *Béatrice et Bénédict* with the New York Philharmonic, *El Niño* with Atlanta Symphony, and engagements at the Library of Congress, Williamstown Theater Festival, and Old Globe Theater.

**Carolyn Watson** is Director of Orchestral Studies at The University of Kansas. Watson has conducted opera and symphony throughout the world, with engagements at Staatsoper Berlin, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne Festival, Austin Symphony, and Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra. In 2017 Watson was one of six conductors selected for the elite Dallas Opera Institute for Women Conductors.

## About the Resident Artists

The Resident Artists have completed their post-graduate education and have some professional experience and will have a full-time 8-month contract with the Lyric for one to two years. High-res photos and bios of the Resident Artists can be found [here](#).

“We launched the Resident Artist Program in 2016 and it has been an unqualified success,” stated Sandler. “Lyric Opera has joined the ranks of distinguished opera companies in North America who are committed to nurturing the next generation of exceptional artists for opera. Our professional development program involves performance experience and opportunities to work with our field’s leading conductors, directors and principal artists. Our audiences have embraced our Resident Artists and have been touched by their performances. I look forward to another season of productive and engaged experiences.”

*Lyric Opera’s Resident Artist Program is sponsored by The Estate of Richard Hill, Charter Sponsor of the Resident Artist Program; The Ingram Family Foundation, and a generous anonymous donor.*

**Soprano Kaylie Kahlich** has appeared on stage as Beatriz Rappaccini in Daniel Catán’s *La hija de Rappaccini*, Fiordiligi in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, the title role in David Carlson’s *Anna Karenina*, Miss Jessel in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw*, Blanche de la Force in Poulenc’s *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and as Dido in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. Ms. Kahlich’s summer engagements have included performances of the title role in Donizetti’s *Rita* for Operativo Houston’s inaugural season, and Lady Billows in *Albert Herring* with Miami Summer Music Festival.

Kahlich received her Master’s Degree in Voice Performance from the University of Houston Moores School of Music as a student of Cynthia Clayton, and her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Baylor University under the guidance of Dr. Randall Umstead.

In the 2018-19 Lyric Opera season, Kahlich will appear in *High Fidelity Opera* and *Mack the Knife is The Man I Love* as part of our *Explorations* series.

**Kelly Birch**, Mezzo-soprano, received her DMA in Vocal performance from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Professionally, Birch has sung roles for Topeka Symphony Orchestra, Opera NEO (San Diego), and the Varna International Opera Academy in Bulgaria.

For the 2018-19 Season, Birch will appear as Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* on the main stage, and in *High Fidelity Opera* and *Mack the Knife is The Man I Love* as part of our *Explorations* series.

**Joseph Leppek, tenor**, has performed professionally in productions and concerts across the United States, including Michigan Opera Theatre, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Saratoga, and, most recently, as Tony in The Glimmerglass Festival’s production of *West Side Story*. He was also a 2018 Great Lakes regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions, and second place winner in the William C. Byrd vocal competition. Leppek holds a Master’s degree in Voice Performance from Rice University and a Bachelor’s degree from DePauw University.

As a Resident Artist for the 2018- 2019 season, Leppek performed the role of Glad Hand in *West Side Story* and will appear in *High Fidelity Opera* and *Mack the Knife is The Man I Love* as part of our *Explorations* series.

**Baritone SeokJong Baek** received his Master’s Degree candidate at Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Ashley Putnam. Previous credits include *La traviata* (Germont) with Aspen Music Festival, *La bohème* (Marcello, cover) with Martina Arroyo’s Prelude to Performance Program, and *Das land des Lächelns* (Tschang), *Le roi l’a dit* (Gautru) with Manhattan School of Music. In 2017, Baek was a Young Artist at the Merola Opera Program with San Francisco Opera, where he appeared as Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers* and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. Baek won first place at the 2018 Alan M. and Joan Taub Ades Vocal competition, third place at 2018 Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition, and was awarded a

special prize at Sonora International competition Francisco Ariza. He is a recipient of the Presser Foundation and Mae Zenke Orvis Scholarship in Opera Studies.

As a Resident Artist for the 2018- 2019 season, Baek will perform as Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly*, as well as in *High Fidelity Opera* and *Mack the Knife is The Man I Love* as part of our *Explorations* series.

**James Maverick**, Pianist/Coach, completing his second year of residency with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, is a graduate of Indiana University. Last season, Maverick served as rehearsal pianist and vocal coach for the Resident Artists in each of Lyric's four mainstage productions and played in the orchestra during *Everest*. Maverick has also coached at the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera and for Indiana University Opera Theater.

### **About Vinson Cole**

American tenor Vinson Cole is internationally recognized as one of the leading artists of his generation. His career has taken him to all the major opera houses across the globe, including the Metropolitan Opera, Opera National de Paris Bastille, Teatro alla Scala Milan, Theatre Royale de la Monnaie, Brussels, Deutsche Oper Berlin, San Francisco Opera, Opera Australia, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Seattle Opera and many more. Equally celebrated for his concert appearances, Cole has been a frequent guest of the most prestigious orchestras throughout the world and has collaborated with the great conductors of the era including Eschenbach, Abbado, Giulini, Maazel, Mehta, Muti, Ozawa, and more. Cole had an especially close working relationship with the late Herbert von Karajan, who brought him to the Salzburg Festival to sing the Italian Tenor in *Der Rosenkavalier* – the first of many performances there together. Their collaboration went on to include works such as Verdi's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Bruckner's *Te Deum*. Many of these were issued on recordings on Deutsche Grammophon.

Currently a faculty member at the Conservatory of Music and Dance at University of Missouri, Kansas City, Cole has taught at University of Washington School of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, Aspen Music Festival and School, Glimmerglass Festival, and Santa Fe Opera. He has conducted master classes for San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program and Canadian Opera Company.

A native of Kansas City, Cole studied at the University of Missouri, Kansas City before attending the Philadelphia Musical Academy and Curtis Institute of Music. In 1977, he won the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the WGN Competition, and was awarded both the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Opera Institute grants. His career took off from there as he went on to perform principal roles with The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Paris Opera-Bastille, Teatro alla Scala, and many more. Cole became well-known for his interpretation of French repertoire after singing in the Manon centennial performances with Paris's Opera Comique in 1984. Since then, he has performed singular interpretations in such roles for *Lakmè*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlos*, and *Faust*. He has been honored with numerous awards including special invitations to perform with the Harriman-Jewell Series recitals and received an honorary doctorate from William Jewell College. He also received the Alumni Award from the Conservatory at UMKC, plus the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award for outstanding individual achievement and commitment to the arts.

*Lyric Opera's Resident Artist Program was made possible by a generous donation from the Estate of Richard Hill, Charter Sponsor of the Resident Artist Program, the Ingram Family Foundation, and a generous anonymous donor.*

### **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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**Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.213.4355. For Tickets: [kcopera.org](http://kcopera.org) or 816.471.7344.**