

# LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Lyric Opera of Kansas City Kicks Off 2019-2020 Season with Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*

***New-to-Kansas City rollicking comedy will feature Lyric Opera debuts  
Kansas City Native Tenor Ben Bliss, Bass Matt Boehler,  
and Conductor Michael Christie  
Sopranos Kathryn Lewek and Rachele Gilmore and  
Director Alison Moritz return to Lyric Opera***

**Kansas City, MO (August 26, 2019)** – Lyric Opera of Kansas City opens its 2019-2020 season with a risqué screwball comedy, ***The Abduction from the Seraglio***. This production transplants Mozart's glorious melodies to the golden age of Hollywood, evocative of the films *It Happened One Night* and *Road to Morocco*.

The production runs Sept. 21, 25, 27, and 29 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and will be sung in German with English subtitles. High-res production and artist photos can be found [here](#).

The production will feature the Kansas City operatic debut of Prairie Village native, **Ben Bliss**. Singing the lead male role of Belmonte, which he performed previously at The Metropolitan Opera and at England's famous Glyndebourne Festival, Bliss is quickly making his mark in the operatic world. In what may be a first, Bliss will appear alongside his mother, Judy Bliss, who has been a Lyric Opera chorister for more than 30 years.

More Lyric Opera debuts include Bass **Matt Boehler** as Osmin and Conductor **Michael Christie**. Returning to Lyric Opera are sopranos **Kathryn Lewek** (Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, 2013) and **Rachele Gilmore** (Gretel in *Hansel & Gretel*, 2016) and Director **Alison Moritz** (*Penelope*, 2019). Detailed bios available at [www.kcopera.org](http://www.kcopera.org).

**General Director and CEO Deb Sandler** stated, "Our 2019-2020 season is designed to show the breadth and scope of not only the operatic canon but the continued commitment to quality that our Company has accomplished. *Abduction* is considered by most to be the first of Mozart's great works, written at a time when he begins to forge his own path to greatness. We bring together a superb cast and artistic team for this musically splendid – and funny – work."

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Lyric Opera invites audience members at all performances to be part of the glitz and glamour of 1930s and 1940s Hollywood by getting dolled up, vintage-style, or coming in costume as one of your favorite Tinseltown stars. You may spot some ritzy celebrities, or you may need to sidestep a few paparazzi as you make your way to your seats! Follow Lyric Opera on social media for updates and behind-the-scenes fun.

Three things about *The Abduction from the Seraglio*:

1. "Too many notes. Just cut a few and it will be perfect." You may remember those "cutting" words which the tin-eared Emperor presented to Mozart in the movie *Amadeus*. Reportedly, Joseph II really did offer that opinion in response to Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the opera he commissioned from the young composer in 1782.
2. Wolfgang Mozart was 25 years old and finally wanted to take his life into his own hands. He moved to Vienna and refused his father's efforts to influence him. He rented a room from the Weber family and fell in love with their daughter Constanze, whom he intended to marry without consulting his father. *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is his declaration of freedom from his father's influence, and it's likely no coincidence that the *Abduction* heroine is named Konstanze.
3. Mozart's "Turkish" music was characterized by unusual instruments such as cymbals, big (Turkish) drums, bells, piccolo flutes and triangles. This so-called "Janissary music" gave the opera a certain exoticism. With *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Mozart created the first of his great masterpieces. It premiered on July 16, 1782, in Vienna and was a great success.



*The Abduction from the Seraglio*, final scene in the Seraglio nightclub: all praise the Pasha.  
Photo by Brittney Werner for New Orleans Opera.

### ***The Abduction from the Seraglio (Die Entführung aus dem serail) (1782)***

By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Gottlieb Stephanie

Sung in German with English subtitles, and English dialogue

Four performances at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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- New-to-KC production: scenery from New Orleans Opera, costumes by Lyric Opera of Kansas City
- *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was last performed at Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 2007

### Performances of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*

- Saturday, September 21, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, September 27, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, September 29, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.

### Overview of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*

The great screwball comedies such as *It Happened One Night* owe much to Mozart and his librettist Gottlieb Stephanie. While the feisty heroines Konstanze and Blonde endure forced labor in the Pasha's swanky nightclub, their sweethearts Belmonte and Pedrillo hatch an elaborate plan to rescue them. Hilarity ensues, including intricate ruses and misplaced affection. The quartet is captured during escape and sentenced to death – but the Pasha surprises everyone in the heartwarming finale.

### Cast and Artistic Team: *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (bios available at [kcopera.org](http://kcopera.org))

Conductor: Michael Christie \*

Director: Alison Moritz

Belmonte: Ben Bliss \*

Konstanze: Kathryn Lewek

Blonde: Rachele Gilmore

Pedrillo: Joseph Leppek ~

Osmin: Matthew Boehler \*

Pasha Selim (spoken): Matthew J. Williamson \*

Set Designer: [Steven C. Kemp](#) for New Orleans Opera

Costume Designer: Mary Traylor

Lighting Designer: [Anshuman Bhatia](#)\*

Wig & Makeup Designer: David Zimmerman

Chorus Master: Piotr Wisniewski \*

\* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut

+ Lyric Opera of Kansas City mainstage debut

~ Lyric Opera of Kansas City Resident Artist

Tickets start at \$29 and availability varies by performance. 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. Student rush tickets are subject to availability.

### Related Events

#### Friday, Sept. 25

#### Friday Fanfare

A special "date-night" ticket package for the September 25 performance

Lyric Opera has created a special ticket package for the 19-20 season that includes two

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tickets, dinner for two, and parking in the Kauffman Center garage for our Friday performances. Customers can choose Classic for \$159 or Deluxe for \$250. Packages are available for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* now; capacity is limited. Full details are at [//kcopera.org/tickets](http://kcopera.org/tickets).

### ***The Abduction from the Seraglio* “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:**

**Monday, August 26 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). Free to the public.

#### **Finding Bliss in Opera**

Judy Bliss has been a member of the Lyric Opera chorus for over 30 years. She will appear in *The Abduction From the Seraglio* alongside her son Ben Bliss, now an international opera star, in the male lead role of Belmonte! This may be the first mother-son combination to appear onstage at Lyric Opera. Judy will talk about her career, and what it's like to share the stage with a superstar son.

**Monday, Sept. 9 at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation** (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). Free to the public.

#### **Mozart's Viennese Debut**

Mozart's future in the Austrian capital rested heavily on the success of his debut opera with Vienna's finicky musical public. Mozart and his librettist defined success as pleasing *and* astonishing the Viennese and succeed they did! Thomas Bauman, professor emeritus of Musicology at Northwestern University, helps us to see and hear it as a music drama as rich and “Mozartean” as his later operas.

**Monday, Sept. 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Arthur Mag Conference Center Auditorium (4290 Cherry St., Kansas City, MO 64110)** Free to the public.

#### **The Exotic and the National in *Abduction***

Dr. Martin Nedbal of the University of Kansas, who recently published a book on Mozart, explores the historical and musical contexts for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in late 18th-century Vienna. Dr. Nedbal focuses on the Viennese fascination with the Middle East, and the early stirrings of German nationalism.

### **Orpheus KC Events**

**(Orpheus KC is formerly Young Friends of Lyric Opera)**

#### **Orpheus KC Reverse Happy Hour**

**Friday, Sept. 27 at 10:30 p.m.**

**Anton's**

**1610 Main St, KCMO 64108**

Orpheus KC invites members, the membership-curious, and opera fans to join them in a reverse happy hour. Tickets to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* sold separately. RSVP at <https://kcopera.org/support/support-groups/orpheus-kc/> by September 27 at 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact Shannon Rolle at (816) 471-4933, ext. 134

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**Orpheus KC Pre-Opera Sunday Brunch**

**Sunday, Sept. 29 at 11:00 a.m.**

**Bluebird Bistro**

**1700 Summit, KCMO 64108**

Orpheus KC invites members, the membership-curious, and opera fans to join them in pre-show brunch. Tickets to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* sold separately. RSVP at <https://kcopera.org/support/support-groups/orpheus-kc/> by September 27 at 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact Shannon Rolle at (816) 471-4933, ext. 134

*This production is supported in part by the City of Kansas City, Missouri Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund. The 2019-2020 Lyric Opera of Kansas City season is sponsored by the Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts and the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation.*

## 2019-2020 Season at a Glance:

### ***NEW-TO-KANSAS CITY PRODUCTION***

#### ***The Abduction from the Seraglio***

Wolfgang Mozart, 1782

Sung in German with English subtitles, and English dialogue

**Saturday, September 21, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Wednesday September 25, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Friday, September 27, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Sunday, September 29, 2019 2:00 p.m.**

Conductor: Michael Christie \*

Director: Alison Moritz

Belmonte: Ben Bliss \*

Konstanze: Kathryn Lewek

Blonde: Rachele Gilmore

Pedrillo: Joseph Leppek +

Osmin: Matthew Boehler \*

Pasha Selim: Matthew J. Williamson \*

#### ***La bohème***

Giacomo Puccini, 1896

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

**Saturday, November 9, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Wednesday, November 13, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Friday, November 15, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Sunday, November 17, 2019 2:00 p.m.**

Conductor: David Charles Abell

Director: Kathleen Smith Belcher

Mimi: Raquel González

Rodolfo : Georgy Vasiliev

Lyric Opera of Kansas City Kicks off 2019-2020 Season with Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*

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Musetta: Sylvia D'Eramo \*  
Marcello: Timothy Renner \*  
Colline: Christian Zaremba  
Schaunard: Hadleigh Adams\*

## ***NEW-TO-KANSAS CITY PRODUCTION***

### ***Lucia di Lammermoor***

Gaetano Donizetti, 1835  
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

**Saturday, March 7, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Wednesday, March 11, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Friday, March 13, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Sunday, March 15, 2020**      2:00 p.m.

Conductor: Carlo Montanaro \*  
Director: Shawna Lucey \*  
Lucia: Sarah Coburn  
Edgardo: Evan LeRoy Johnson \*  
Enrico: Troy Cook  
Raimondo: Adam Lau  
Arturo: Joseph Leppek +  
Alisa: Kelly Birch @

## ***KANSAS CITY PREMIERE***

### ***The Shining***

Music by Paul Moravec  
Libretto by Mark Campbell  
Based on the novel by Stephen King  
Sung in English with English subtitles

**Saturday, April 25, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Wednesday, April 29, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Friday, May 1, 2020**      7:30 p.m.  
**Sunday, May 3, 2020**      2:00 p.m.

Conductor: Gerard Schwarz \*  
Director: Eric Simonson  
Jack Torrance: Edward Parks  
Wendy Torrance : Kelly Kaduce  
Dick Hallorann: Aubrey Allcock\*  
Mark Torrance: Malcolm MacKenzie\*



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Delbert Grady: Joseph Leppek +  
Lloyd the Bartender: Roger Honeywell\*  
Mrs. Massey: Kelly Birch@  
Mrs. Grady: Morgan Balfour +  
Horace Derwent: Schyler Vargas  
The Senator: Seungyun Kim +

\* Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut  
+ Lyric Opera of Kansas City Resident Artist  
@ Former Lyric Opera of Kansas City Resident Artist

## **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.

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 or [publicist@kcopera.org](mailto:publicist@kcopera.org).**

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