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Contact: Ellen McDonald  
816.444.0052  
publicity@kcopera.org

For Tickets: [kcopera.org](http://kcopera.org) or 816.471.7344

## Lyric Opera of Kansas City Debuts Bellini and his greatest opera, *Norma*

Kansas City, MO (October 12, 2010)—The Lyric Opera of Kansas City continues its 53<sup>rd</sup> season after a record-breaking run of *Carmen* with the Company debut of *Norma*. *Norma* is the quintessential *bel canto* opera showcasing brilliant vocal singing and is the first Bellini opera ever produced by the Company. The production features a renowned cast of singers and The Kansas City Symphony conducted by Lyric Opera Artistic Director Ward Holmquist. *Norma* opens on November 6, 2010 in celebration of National Opera Week October 29 – November 7, 2010. This will be the Company's final season in the Lyric Theatre. Beginning in the fall of 2011, the Lyric Opera will perform at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

“Building off the success of our season opening production of *Carmen*, which was the highest selling opera in the past 20 years, and with 3 sell-out performances, the highest grossing in the Company's history, we are thrilled to premiere the work of one of the hallmark *bel canto* composers, Vincenzo Bellini,” exclaimed Lyric Opera General Director Evan Luskin.

Bellini's gorgeous *bel canto* score marries brilliantly with a gripping story about a powerful woman forced to betray her sacred vows for love – only to be betrayed by her lover's infidelity. In the ensuing struggle to save her name, her children, and her lover, Norma finds truth in the ultimate sacrifice.

“I am excited we have chosen this Bellini gem for the Company's return to opera in the *bel canto* style,” notes Lyric Opera Artistic Director Ward Holmquist. Bellini's

beautiful lyrical lines will pair wonderfully with soprano **Brenda Harris'** dramatic vocal talent. I am also looking forward to working with the up-and-coming soprano **Laura Vlasak Nolen** who recently has become increasingly popular at the Metropolitan Opera.”

#### **Artists**

**Soprano Brenda Harris** revisits the notorious demanding role after performing with the Lyric Opera last season in *Don Giovanni*. Ms. Harris has received critical acclaim for her portrayal of the druid priestess Norma at Opéra de Québec, Michigan Opera Theatre, and Minnesota Opera. *Opera News* hailed her performance at Minnesota Opera: “[she] had it all: unstinting intensity, brilliant high C’s...and total dramatic commitment.”

**Tenor Rafael Davila** returns to the Lyric Opera to sing Pollione after a critically acclaimed performance of Cavaradossi in *Tosca* last season. Mr. Davila, a native of Puerto Rico, has performed around the globe including productions with Opera de Puerto Rico, New Zealand Opera, L’Opéra du Montreal, and Palm Beach Opera, and has toured throughout Europe with Teatro Lirico D’Europa.

**Soprano Laura Vlasak Nolen** makes her Lyric Opera debut as Adalgisa. Ms. Nolen has had multiple engagements at The Metropolitan Opera including Giulietta in *Les contes d’Hoffman*. She has also appeared with New York City Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera.

**Brazilian bass Luiz-Ottavio Faria** returns to the Lyric Opera after receiving rave reviews for his portrayal of Ramfis in *Aida*; Mr. Faria will portray Norma’s father Oroveso, a role in which he also has received critical acclaim. R. Spencer Butler of *Palm Beach Daily News* notes, “His is a resonant and commanding bass. Faria showed a resolute and vigorous bearing as the Druid priest. His ‘Ah! del Tebro al giogo indegno’ was fittingly filled with rage.”

**Director Kristine McIntyre** returns to the Lyric Opera after directing the world premiere production of Kirke Mechem’s *John Brown* with the Company in 2008 and Jake Heggie’s acclaimed *The End of the Affair* in 2007. Ms. McIntyre has directed at The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Opera Boston.

#### **Cast List**

Oroveso: Luiz-Ottavio Faria

Pollione: Rafael Davila

Norma: Brenda Harris

Adalgisa: Laura Vlasak Nolen\*

Flavio: Adam Wade Duncan

Clotilde: Kristee Haney+

+KU Apprentice

\*Lyric Opera Debut

#### Artistic Staff

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Director: Kristine McIntyre

Scenic Designer: Roberto Oswald

Lighting Designer: Marcus Dilliard

Costume Designer: Anibal Lapiz

Chorusmaster/Accompanist: Mark Ferrell

Wig and Makeup Designer: Jan Delovage

Stage Manager: Erin Thompson

#### About *Norma*

*Norma* was composed by Vincenzo Bellini with the libretto by Felice Romani. The opera is about a Druid priestess, Norma, who has secretly mothered two children with an enemy officer, Pollione. He now longs for Adalgisa, a younger friend of Norma's. Norma's rage turns to self-incrimination when she commits the ultimate sacrifice to save her children.

*Norma* will be sung in Italian with English subtitles projected above the stage at the Lyric Theatre, 11<sup>th</sup> and Central, Downtown Kansas City.

#### Performance dates are as follows:

Saturday, November 6, 2010 at 8 p.m.

Wednesday, November 10, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 12, 2010 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 14, 2010 at 2 p.m.

Ticket availability varies by performance. **Limited student rush tickets are available for \$10, cash only, one hour before curtain, with a valid student ID. Single tickets are on sale now.** 3-pack subscriptions are still available and prices range from \$108 to \$216. 3-pack ticket holders for the 2010-2011 season receive a 20% discount and will also **receive priority seating** when the Lyric Opera moves to the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in the fall of 2011. **To purchase tickets, visit [www.kcopera.org](http://www.kcopera.org), or call Patron Services at (816) 471-7344 or 1-800-OPERA KC (673-7252).**

## Opera Previews

Audience members are invited and encouraged to attend a free opera previews in the Lyric Theatre Auditorium one hour before curtain, presented by the Lyric Opera Guild. The 25-minute talks will be lead by Lyric Opera Guild presenter **Richard Byrum**.

### **Carmen “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:**

*At Ease with Opera is presented free of charge by the Lyric Opera Guild.*

#### *Mad About Bel Canto*

On **Monday, October 18, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.**, Guild speaker **Bob Wise** will present an introduction to this fascinating genre of early 19th century Italian opera of which *Norma* is such a sterling example. The presentation will be filled with audio and video recordings of some great singing, including “mad scenes.”

#### *Bellini the Composer, or A Sigh in Dancing Pumps*

On **Monday, October 25, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.**, Guild speaker **Morton Creditor** will be at the podium discussing the eccentric genius who composed *Norma*.

#### *Norma as the Quintessential Grand Opera*

On **Monday, November 1, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.**, Guild speaker **Richard Byrum** will present a full-length preview of *Norma*.

## **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 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 *Norma* on November 6, 2010 at 8 p.m., the Bohemians gather for dinner prior to the Saturday night performance of each opera at the restaurant partners of the Lyric Opera where members receive discounted meals. 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 nations’ 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 seeks to mount 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 over 18,000 students and educators each year.

In fall 2011, the Lyric Opera will move its performances to a new home: the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The state-of-the-art theatre, with acoustics designed by the creative minds behind the innovative Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, promises to be one of the greatest performance venues in the world.

The Company is renovating a property at 18th and Charlotte Streets in the Kansas City Crossroads Arts District. The facility will become a state of the art production and rehearsal facility and will serve as the Company's new home. In addition to housing the administrative offices, the facility will feature a full wig, costume and scenic construction shop, set storage space, as well as rehearsal space that exactly mimics the proportions of the stage of the Kauffman Center.

Opera lovers can be fans of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City on Facebook or follow us @kcopera on Twitter.

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a member of OPERA America, and this production is made possible with funding from Bank of America, Frontier Airlines, The National Endowment for the Arts, Missouri Arts Council and the Arts KC Fund.

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