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Lyric Opera of Kansas City debuts *Nixon in China*
American Masterpiece Showcases Kauffman Center Capabilities
International Stars Return to Kansas City
Director Revisits Hailed Production

Kansas City, MO (January 30, 2012) — The Lyric Opera of Kansas City continues its 54th season with the Company premiere of John Adams’ *Nixon in China*, presented at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, March 10, 14, 16, 18. The production will feature members of the Kansas City Symphony, in a unique partnership with members of the Kansas City Ballet.

General Director **Evan Luskin** reminisces, “My excitement for our Company debut of this production is hard to describe. When I recall the first time I experienced this piece, and consider the lasting impression it has left on me as an opera patron, it thrills me to think about what our patrons will experience when they view this great American opera for the first time.”

“The passion that both Evan and I have for this modern American work compels us to present it at this seminal moment in our Company’s artistic evolution,” notes Lyric Opera Artistic Director **Ward Holmquist**. “The technical requirements of this production made it impossible for us to contemplate performing this work before now, but the capabilities of the Muriel Kauffman Theatre enable us to present *Nixon in China* with many special visual effects, which will be no less than breathtaking.”

International Stars Return to Kansas City

Baritone **James Maddalena** returns to the Lyric Opera after singing the title role in the world premiere production of *John Brown* in 1987. Mr. Maddalena is renowned for his collaboration with the Houston Grand Opera in the creation and performance of the title role in the world premiere of *Nixon in China*. He has performed the role of Richard Nixon at such international stages as Netherland Opera, the Edinburgh Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Washington Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Australia's Adelaide Festival, the Chatelet in Paris, English National Opera, the Greek National Opera, and most recently in his debut at The Metropolitan Opera, which was part of *The Met: Live in HD* series. Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* hailed Mr. Maddalena for his Metropolitan Opera debut in the role of Nixon: "It would have been impossible to bring any other Nixon to the Met for this premiere. Mr. Maddalena inhabits the character like no other singer... [he] was riveting."

In his Lyric Opera debut, tenor **Alan Woodrow** will sing Mao Tse-Tong. Mr. Woodrow recently sang the role with Vancouver Opera to much acclaim: "Woodrow's powerful heldentenor conveyed hidden menace and a force which grew stronger and more brutal over the course of the evening," *Review Vancouver*. He has appeared at opera houses across the globe including Opera Ireland, Washington National Opera, Canadian Opera Company, English National Opera, La Scala, Israeli Opera and Royal Albert Hall.

Baritone **Richard Paul Fink** (*Rigoletto* 2010) will sing the role of Henry Kissinger, a role he recently sang at The Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Fink has an extensive repertoire and has performed in leading roles across the globe including at LA Opera, Seattle Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Berlin State Opera, Sydney Opera, and Washington National Opera. Paul Horsley of *KC Independent* raved of Mr. Fink's portrayal of Rigoletto in his 2010 Lyric Opera debut: "Fink is one of the world's great Wagner baritones... [his voice] is a wonder unto itself; as solid as a tree-trunk, earthy and visceral. It's like something hewn from stone, yet it's capable of pathos, resolve, desperation, horror."

Baritone **Daniel Belcher** returns to the Lyric Opera to make his role debut as Chou En-Lai, having recently received a 2011 Grammy Award for *L'Amour de Loin* with Deutsche-Symphonie Orchester. Mr. Belcher's latest appearances with the Company include *H.M.S. Pinafore* (2009) and *La bohème* (2008). He has performed with Central City Opera, Opera Colorado, Bilbao Opera (Spain), Stadttheater Klagenfurt, and Florentine Opera.

Soprano **Maria Kanyova** makes her Lyric Opera debut as Pat Nixon. Kyle MacMillan of *The Denver Post* extolled Ms. Kanyova's performance: "She makes the most of the role of

Pat Nixon, humanizing the first lady and investing her with a flesh and bones believability.” Ms. Kanyova has garnered praise for her portrayal of the first lady at the Canadian Opera Company, Opera Colorado and Ravina Festival. She was also featured as Pat Nixon on the recent recording of the work by the Naxos label.

Soprano **Audrey Elizabeth Luna** makes her Lyric Opera debut as Chiang Ch’ing (Madame Mao). Ms. Luna made her debut at The Metropolitan Opera recently as the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*. She has appeared at Cincinnati Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Naples and the New York Philharmonic.

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Director Revisits Hailed Production

Elizabeth Paterson of *Review Vancouver* affirms Director **Michael Cavanagh** “should be lauded” for this production of *Nixon in China*, which he debuted at Vancouver Opera and will direct with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Winnipeg-born Michael Cavanagh studied at the Hochschule für Music in Hamburg, Germany before becoming one of Canada’s best-loved and versatile opera interpreters. His fame stems from his popular productions in every professional opera company in Canada, including Edmonton Opera (where he served as Resident Artistic Director, 1998-2001), Vancouver Opera, Opera Lyra Ottawa, L’Opera de Montreal, as well as in the United States at Minnesota Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Austin Lyric Opera. As a librettist, he also boasts the popular success of seven of his own operas. In 2001, Mr. Cavanaugh directed the Lyric Opera’s production of *Rake’s Progress*.

Michael Cavanagh’s 2010 production of *Nixon in China* at Vancouver Opera was a critical success, and the director brings with him to Kansas City the spectacular scenic design from that production. Erhard Rom, who designed the set, compares the famed replica of Nixon’s Boeing 707 to the *Titanic*, describing it as “almost Wagnerian in scale—almost epic.” The Lyric Opera will build several additional pieces for this impressive set, all of which will be used in Mr. Cavanagh’s production at San Francisco Opera later this year.

Principal Cast

Richard Nixon: James Maddalena
Pat Nixon: Maria Kanyova*
Mao Tse-Tong: Alan Woodrow*
Chou En-Lai: Daniel Belcher
Chiang Ch'Ing (Madame Mao): Audrey Luna*
Henry Kissinger: Richard Paul Fink
First Secretary to Mao: Holly White
Second Secretary to Mao: Kristee Haney
Third Secretary to Mao: Jennifer Powell
Wu Ching-Hua (Female solo dancer): Nadia Iozzo* +
Hung Ch'Anf-ch'ing (Male solo dancer): Logan Pachciarz* +

Artistic Staff

Conductor: Ward Holmquist
Stage Director: Michael Cavanagh
Dance Choreographer: William Whitener +
Set Designer: Erhard Rom
Lighting Designer: Chris Maravich*
Video Designer: Sean Nieuwenhuis*
Costume Designer: Parvin Mirhardy*
Wig and Make-up Designer: Joanne Middleton Weaver
Chorus Master and Accompanist: Mark Ferrell
Props Master: Deborah Morgan
Stage Manager: Erin Thompson-Janszen

*Lyric Opera Debut

+ Collaborator from the Kansas City Ballet

About *Nixon in China*

The Lyric Opera returns to contemporary repertoire with prolific American composer John Adams' opera about Nixon's historic journey to Red China in 1972. This unprecedented trip by a sitting U.S. President to China in the hope of meeting Chairman Mao and creating peace has changed the political landscape between the countries. Richard Nixon reflected on his week-long journey as a "week that changed the world."

***Nixon in China* will be sung in English with English titles visible on personal monitors mounted on each audience member's seatback in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre. This**

production will be performed in the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, located at 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64106.

Performance dates are as follows:

Saturday, March 10, 2012 – 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 – 7:30 p.m.

Friday, March 16, 2012 – 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 18, 2012 – 2 p.m.

Ticket availability varies by performance. **To purchase tickets, call Patron Services (816)471-7344 or 1-800-OPERA KC (673-7252). Patrons can select their own seat and print their tickets at home by visiting www.kcopera.org. Limited student rush tickets are available for \$15, cash only, one hour before curtain, with a valid student ID.**

Opera Previews

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. Lyric Opera guild presenter **Richard Byrum** will lead the 25-minute talks.

Collaboration with Kansas City Public Library

The popular Kansas City Public Library Series **Meet the Past with Crosby Kemper III** series returns for a conversation with Edgar Snow, as portrayed by local actor Robert Gibby Brand, at the Kauffman Center on March 1.

Snow, born in Kansas City in 1905, was a journalist best known for his writings about China in the 1930s, most especially *Red Star Over China*, a largely favorable account of Mao and his Communist Red Army guerrilla forces. The book introduced Mao and his “agrarian reformers” to the western world and made Snow famous. Snow went on to write *The Battle for Asia* in 1941 and *Stalin Must Have Peace* in 1947.

This performance, which will be held on the Lyric Opera set for *Nixon in China* in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, is free to attend. Due to the popularity of this event, we can only guarantee seating to those who RSVP. You can reserve your seat online at www.kcopera.org. Reservations are also accepted by phone at 816-471-7344.

This event is so-sponsored by the Kansas City Public Library and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Additional event support is provided by the Edgar Snow Memorial Fund.

***Nixon in China* “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:**

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

Monday, February 20, 7:00 p.m., at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Missouri. **Mara Gibson**, local composer and director of the Academy at the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance, will discuss the music of composer John Adams in a program titled: “John Adams’ *Nixon in China*: A Composer’s Perspective.” She will be assisted by vocalist **Stephanie Meyer**.

Wednesday, February 22, 7:00 p.m., at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Missouri. **Megan Greene**, the Director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Kansas and an Associate Professor of Modern Chinese History, will present a talk about China at the time of Nixon’s visit. This talk will focus on the propaganda of the Cultural Revolution period, with a particular emphasis on revolutionary operas and ballets such as the one shown within the opera, and will include video excerpts.

Monday, February 27, 7:00 p.m. Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Missouri. **Richard Byrum** will give a preview of *Nixon in China* entitled “*Nixon in China*: A Study in Cultural Fault Lines.”

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 single 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 *Nixon in China* on March 10, 2012 at 7:30 p.m., the Bohemians gather for dinner prior to Saturday night performances at one of the Lyric Opera’s many restaurant partners, where members receive discounted meals. To learn more, email bohemians@kcopera.org.

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Lyric Opera Bohemians, the members of the Bohemians will host a “young professionals night at the opera” on Friday, March 16. Beginning at 6 p.m., members of Young Friends of Art of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kauffman Center Encore, and other young professional groups that support the arts will enjoy a happy hour in the lobby of the Kauffman Center. The young professionals will attend the opera and will be invited to a post-opera reception and meet-and-greet

with some of the opera's principal singers. Tickets for the entire evening's entertainment are \$50 and interested young professionals can reserve their tickets by calling 816-471-7344.

About Lyric Opera of Kansas City

The 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 patrons of Kansas City 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. 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 more than 20,000 students and educators each year.

Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, a new multi-venue center for music, opera, theater, and dance designed by Moshe Safdie, opened in Kansas City September 16, 2011. The Kauffman Center seeks to enrich the lives of all Greater Kansas City residents by presenting vibrant performances, educational programming, and creating a tradition of the performing arts as a catalyst for Kansas City's civic, economic, and educational vitality. Three of the region's leading performing arts organizations – Kansas City Ballet, Kansas City Symphony, and Lyric Opera of Kansas City – are in residence at the Kauffman Center's two performance venues. The 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall and the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre offer audiences engaging and intimate experiences, while at the same time providing resident companies with dramatically enhanced performance capabilities. Serving as a cultural cornerstone for Kansas City's dramatic downtown, the Kauffman Center brings a new spotlight to the region's performing arts community while simultaneously attracting some of the world's most talented performers and entertainers, further establishing Kansas City as a major cultural destination. More information on the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is available at www.kauffmancenter.org.

Building for the Future

On November 4, 2010 the Lyric Opera of Kansas City announced a capital campaign for the renovation of property on 18th and Charlotte, in the Kansas City Crossroads Arts District, for its new Opera Center.

The Opera Center complex will consist of two buildings: a Production Arts building and an Administrative building with set rental inventory storage. The Production Arts building will include a rehearsal space that will match the footprint of the stage of the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The Production Arts building will also house a full wig, costume, and set construction shop, and facilities for educational and community outreach programs. Such an integrated and dedicated production facility does not exist in Kansas City; the Company envisions the Production Arts building becoming a resource for other local performing arts companies.

The second building on the property will be adjacent to the Production Arts building. It will provide the Company with set rental inventory storage, parking lots and outside green spaces for the Opera Center, and house the administrative staff.

In August 2011, the administrative office of the Lyric Opera moved from its home of 40 years at the Lyric Theatre to a temporary space in downtown Kansas City at 1616 Broadway. The production department has already moved the scene shop from its home of 25 years, an old elementary school, to its new home in the Production Arts Building. The production and administrative offices will move to the Opera Center Complex when construction is complete in July, 2012.

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

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a member of OPERA America, and this production is made possible with funding from Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts, Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Hall Family Foundation, Lyric Opera of Kansas City Foundation, William T. Kemper Foundation, Commerce Bank Trustee, National Endowment for the Arts and Missouri Arts Council. Frontier Airlines is the Official Airline of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052.

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