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Lyric Opera of Kansas City presents a new production
of The Marriage of Figaro
Final Lyric Opera production in the Lyric Theatre

Kansas City, MO (March 9, 2011)—The Lyric Opera of Kansas City closes its 53rd season April 9 through 17 with a new production of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, which will be performed in Italian with English subtitles. This will be the Company’s farewell production to the Lyric Theatre. Beginning in the fall of 2011, the Lyric Opera will perform at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

“It seemed fitting to perform *The Marriage of Figaro* as the final production because it was performed in our first season at the Lyric Theatre in 1970,” states **Lyric Opera General Director Evan Luskin**. “The Lyric Theatre has been a good home for the Lyric Opera, but we are excited to test the capabilities of the Kauffman Center, which will allow the Company to evolve to the next level.”

Lyric Opera Artistic Director Ward Holmquist notes, “This brand new contemporary production will pay homage to this Theatre through set design, subject matter and stage direction. Our musicians, singers, theatre artists and patrons have spent countless hours making and enjoying opera in this Theatre. I am proud that we have found a way to feature the Theatre in the production.”

“In designing the sets for this new production I will be able to show audience members representations of different areas of the Lyric Theatre never before seen by the general public,” states **Director of Design and Technical Production R. Keith Brumley**.

“Director **Mark Streshinsky** and I are working through the many surprises that will make this, the final production in the Lyric Theatre, as special as it can be.”

Artists

Bass Andrew Gangestad will sing the title role of Figaro. After his performance in *Don Giovanni* at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Paul Horsley of *The Independent* wrote that Gangestad “was an audience favorite for his comic displays...he showed himself capable of producing a beautiful, honest sound.” Gangestad has performed with major opera companies across the nation including The Metropolitan Opera, Minnesota Opera, Seattle Opera and New York City Opera.

Soprano Sari Gruber will sing the role of Suzanna. When she sang the role with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, *Opera News* hailed her performance: “...a blazing-voiced firecracker of a Susanna.” Ms. Gruber has performed the role for numerous companies including Opera Pacific, Boston Lyric Opera and North Carolina Symphony. She also has performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera and Los Angeles Opera.

Baritone Troy Cook returns to the Lyric Opera to portray Count Almaviva having made his Lyric Opera debut in 2004 in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Cook’s performance in the Lyric Opera production of *The Pearl Fishers* in 2007 earned rave reviews from *The Kansas City Star* — “the opera belonged to Cook.” He has performed across the globe including recent performances with the Royal Opera House, Opera Company of Philadelphia and Florida Grand Opera.

Soprano Katie Van Kooten will make her debut at the Lyric Opera as Countess Almaviva. A recent graduate of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, she already has been noted as a “major operatic talent” by *The Daily Telegraph*. She has performed at the Houston Grand Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House and Covent Garden.

Bass-baritone Thomas Hammons will make his Lyric Opera debut as Dr. Bartolo, a role he has sung at numerous companies around the globe including at Opera Colorado, Opera Cleveland, Atlanta Opera, Michigan Opera and Teatro Liceu in Barcelona. Mr. Hammons has appeared at The Metropolitan Opera every season since his debut with the Company during the 1996-97 season.

Stage Director Mark Streshinsky returns to the Lyric Opera to direct after his lauded debut with the company for *Julius Caesar* in 2008. Streshinsky recently was named Artistic Director of the Berkeley Opera. He recently has worked with the Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and has been a member of the staging staffs of San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Dallas Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Seattle Opera.

Two Lyric Opera apprentices – both from the University of Missouri–Kansas City Conservatory – will be featured in the production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. **Stephen Fish** and **Heather Phillips** will play the roles of Antonio and Barbarina, respectively. This will be Ms. Phillips’ debut at the Lyric Opera. The Lyric Opera Apprentice Program is a collaboration with the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the School of Music at the University of Kansas. During the two year program students gain experience and training with the Lyric Opera to become professional opera singers.

Cast List

Figaro: Andrew Gangestad
Susanna: Sari Gruber
Count Almaviva: Troy Cook
Countess Almaviva: Katie Van Kooten*
Dr. Bartolo: Thomas Hammons*
Marcellina: Korby Myrick*
Cherubino: Brenda Patterson
Basilio/Don Curzio: Jonathan Thomas
Antonio: Stephen Fish+
Barbarina: Heather Phillips+*

Artistic Staff

Conductor: Ward Holmquist
Stage Director: Mark Streshinsky
Lighting Designer: Michael Baumgarten
Set Designer: R. Keith Brumley
Chorus Master and Accompanist: Mark Ferrell
Costume Coordinator: Mary Traylor
Props Master: Deborah Morgan
Stage Manager: Erin Thompson-Janszen

+ UMKC Apprentice

* Lyric Opera Debut

About *The Marriage of Figaro*

The Marriage of Figaro was composed by W.A. Mozart to a libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. The opera takes place the day of Figaro and Susanna's wedding, but they may be the only two that want it to happen. Can Figaro outwit the Count and deflect all the distractions to claim his bride? Secret plots and true identities are revealed before nightfall.

The Marriage of Figaro will be sung in Italian with English titles projected above the stage. This will be the last opera performed at the Lyric Theatre, 11th and Central, Downtown Kansas City.

Performance dates are as follows:

Saturday, April 9, 2011 at 8 p.m.

Wednesday, April 13, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 15, 2011 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 17, 2011 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. To purchase tickets, visit 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 preview in the Lyric Theatre Auditorium one hour before curtain, presented by the Lyric Opera Guild. Lyric Opera Guild presenter **Don Dagenais** will lead the 25-minute talks.

The Marriage of Figaro "At Ease with Opera" Presentations:

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

Great Arias from Forgotten Operas

Monday, March 21, 2011 at 7:00 p.m., at the Plaza Branch of the Kansas City Public Library. Guild speakers **Bob Wise and Don Dagenais** will present many unknown opera gems. This presentation will feature many audio and video clips.

Mozart From A to Z

On **Monday, March 28, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.**, at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Guild speaker **Bob Wise** will discuss the music and life of Mozart that people may not know.

Who Was Figaro?

On **Monday, April 4, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.**, **Morton Creditor and Don Dagenais** will be at the Plaza Branch of the Kansas City Public Library. They will explore the writer, Beaumarchais, who created the character of Figaro that has appeared in several operas.

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 *The Marriage of Figaro* on April 9, 2011 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.

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.

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 also will 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 would provide the Company with set rental inventory storage, parking lots and outside green spaces for the Opera Center, and house the administrative staff.

In the summer of 2011, the production and administrative offices of the Lyric Opera will be moving from its home of 40 years at the Lyric Theatre to a temporary home in downtown Kansas City at 1616 Broadway. The production and administrative offices will move to the headquarters on 18th Street when construction is completed in 2012.

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 The Lyric Opera Circle, Bank of America, Frontier Airlines, The National Endowment for the Arts, Missouri Arts Council and the Arts KC Fund.

**Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052.
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