



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ellen McDonald  
816.444.0052  
publicity@kcopera.org

For season tickets: 816.471.7344

**Lyric Opera Education Department celebrates 20 years  
with a world premiere opera for youth**

*January 12-14, 2012 at the Rose Theatre in Rockhurst High School*

KANSAS CITY, MO. (July 27, 2011) – In celebration of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Lyric Opera Education Department announces, in addition to its regular curriculum, the world premiere of *The Giver* composed by Susan Kander and based on the book by Lois Lowry.

“This world premiere production will give area residents an opportunity to see a well-loved novel come to life,” **Paula Winans, director of education** notes. “We have assembled a cast of talented young singers who will perform with adult opera professionals and symphonic instrumentalists, and much to our delight, author Lois Lowry has agreed to speak at each performance.”

**About *The Giver***

*The Giver*, published in 1993, is an award-winning story for teens and young adults and has sold more than five million copies. The book has been adapted for the stage and is being adapted into a feature film. *The Giver* is a science fiction story about a seductively safe and comfortable utopian society where all pain, conflict and confusion is eliminated, and troubling emotions are suppressed.

“Adolescence is a time in life when young people begin to establish their identity. *The Giver* has become a must read for middle and high school students who are challenged by the pressures of conformity as they struggle to create an individual identity,” **Evan Luskins, Lyric Opera general director** said. “*The Giver* explores one young man’s journey towards maturity, and will provide some important guideposts for any young person making this age old struggle.”

The lead character, Jonas, is selected at the age of twelve (the age at which each young person in the story is assigned to his or her life’s work) to become the “Receiver of

Memory.” All members of the society, except for Jonas, have no knowledge of what life was like before the policy of “Sameness” was adopted. As the Receiver of Memory, Jonas stores memories of society from before the conversion to Sameness for his generation, in case the information is required to make decisions that the rest of society lacks the experience to make. As he receives these memories from the “Giver,” Jonas becomes increasingly disenchanted with, and alarmed by, society and its practices (including elimination of those who cannot conform), and undertakes a dangerous effort to enlighten the rest of his community.

**Performance dates:**

*All performances take place at The Rose Theater in Rockhurst High School.*  
9301 State Line Road, Kansas City, MO 64114

**School Performances**

Thursday, January 12, 2012  
10 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.

Friday, January 13, 2012  
10 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.

**Public Performance**

Saturday, January 14, 2012  
2 p.m.

***The Giver is suitable for upper elementary, middle school, and high school students.***

**Author Lois Lowry** is an established American writer of children’s novels. She has written over thirty novels and received Newbery Medals for two of them, *Number the Stars* (1990) and *The Giver* (1993). Her first novel, *A Summer to Die* was published in 1977. Ms. Lowry’s books vary in content and style, but all seem to underscore the importance of human connections. In her writing for children, Ms. Lowry has explored difficult topics such as racism, terminal illness, murder and the Holocaust.

**Composer Susan Kander** began as a playwright before transitioning to a full time composer. This is Ms. Kander’s third world premiere with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. The first collaboration was *Never Lost a Passenger*, in 1996, which introduces children to the story of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Rail Road and the second was *One False Move* in 2003 about teenage girl bullying.

**Director Linda Ade Brand's** varied repertoire includes the direction of more than one hundred plays, musicals and operas. A lover of contemporary opera, she was delighted to help introduce Mark Adamo's *Little Women* and Conrad Susa's *The Wise Women* to Kansas City while resident stage director of the Civic Opera Theatre of Kansas City. Her Lyric Opera of Kansas City credits include *The Elixir of Love*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, plus many productions with the Lyric Opera Education Department. Ms. Brand teaches in the Theatre Department at Avila University and in the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri – Kansas City.

### **The Education Department Celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2011-2012**

For the past 20 years the education department has been dedicated to enhancing the lives of children and adults in the Kansas City area through music and opera education. The Lyric Opera of Kansas City offers a wide array of educational experiences for youth and has reached 572,235 young people. In addition to providing opportunities for students to perform alongside professional opera singers in 26 different operas in schools, community centers, correctional facilities and theatres, members of the Education Department have coached students to perform in main stage Lyric Opera performances. New works have been produced on topics ranging from Harriet Tubman and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to teen bullying, HIV-aids awareness and adaptations of beloved children's books. For more information about the education programs or about the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, visit [www.kcopera.org](http://www.kcopera.org).

### **Tickets for *The Giver***

Tickets go on sale Monday, August 29, 2011 at 9 a.m. for the January 14, 2012 public performance. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and can be purchased by calling Lyric Opera Patron Services at 816-471-7344. To purchase a block of seats for the January 12 and 13 student matinee performances, call the Education Department at 816-471-4933 ext. 125.

*The Giver* is commissioned for and first performed by Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Minnesota Opera. The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is partnering with Rockhurt High School to present *The Giver*.

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

**For performance seats: 816-471-7344**

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