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Lyric Opera of Kansas City announces 5-year contract extension for Artistic Director Ward Holmquist

Kansas City, MO (September 9, 2011)—The Lyric Opera of Kansas City Board of Directors today announced the contract extension of Artistic Director Ward Holmquist, who will continue to chart the artistic direction of the Company through the 2016-17 season.

“In his thirteen years as artistic director, Ward Holmquist has overseen a period of great artistic growth and achievement,” states Lyric Opera General Director Evan Luskin. “Now, as we move into the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, I am delighted that he will bring his skills to bear on this next chapter in the history of the Company.”

“The Lyric Opera is fortunate to have a talented Artistic Director such as Ward Holmquist to continue to lead the Company during the next few crucial years,” notes Richard Bruening, President of the Lyric Opera Board of Directors.

“I am thrilled to renew my commitment not only to the Lyric Opera but to the arts community in Kansas City during this time of unprecedented growth,” Holmquist said. “The opening of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and our premier season have been wildly embraced by the community and I am so honored to play a role in this momentum.”

Mr. Holmquist, who has been the Company’s Artistic Director since 1998, will continue to oversee all production aspects of the Lyric Opera, including selection of repertoire, in

conjunction with the general director and the board of directors; casting of singers; hiring of stage directors; coordination of scenic and costume design; musical preparation and rehearsals; and all other aspects of opera production.

As the Company's principal conductor, Mr. Holmquist will continue to conduct a minimum of two productions each season. For its inaugural season in the Kauffman Center, Mr. Holmquist will conduct *Turandot*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Nixon in China*.

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 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. 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 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 will open 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— Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Kansas City Ballet, and Kansas City Symphony—will be in residence at the Kauffman Center. The Kauffman Center's two performance venues, the 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall and the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre, will 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 dynamic downtown, the Kauffman Center will bring 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 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 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 August 2011, the administrative offices of the Lyric Opera moved from its home of 40 years at the Lyric Theatre to a temporary home 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 on 18th and Charlotte. 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 its productions are 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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