

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyric Opera of Kansas City to Present
the Popular and Beloved *Tosca*
Melody Moore, James Valenti and Gordon Hawkins Lead a Stellar Cast
April 18-26 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

Kansas City, MO (March 18, 2015) – Lyric Opera of Kansas City concludes its dynamic 57th season with Giacomo Puccini's vibrant *Tosca*, April 18, 22, 24 and 26 at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The production will be sung in Italian with English and Italian titles. High res production and artists' photos can be downloaded [here](#).

General Director and CEO Deborah Sandler stated, "The 2014-15 season is the season of emotionally contrasting and power-packed operas that you won't want to miss and *Tosca* is the perfect way to finish our season. This big, grand opera features the debuts of some of the world's most talented opera stars from around the world including Melody Moore, James Valenti, and Gordon Hawkins. This growing tradition of presenting the highest quality of artists coupled with the magnificent production qualities that you've come to expect from the Lyric Opera of Kansas City mark *Tosca* as one not to be missed."

One of the most popular and beloved operas of the repertoire, Puccini's *Tosca* features some of the most beautiful music in opera. Set in Rome in 1800, *Tosca* tells the tale of a fiery prima donna forced to play a role she never imagined when she becomes trapped between her allegiance to her rebel lover and a treacherous police officer who will stop at nothing to claim her as his own. This explosive triangle builds to one of the most bloody and intense moments in opera and features Puccini's best-known lyrical arias.

This production features Kansas City debuts of many notable international artists, much to the good fortune of Kansas City audiences. Making her Lyric Opera of Kansas City debut, soprano **Melody Moore** will perform the role of Floria Tosca. This international artist has won accolades around the globe, including rave reviews for her recent performance as Marta in the world premiere of *The Passenger* at Houston Grand Opera. "Moore sings with abandon when the music needs it, but the tenderness and soul she gives Marta's interactions with the other prisoners are even more telling." (*Houston Chronicle*). The *San Francisco Chronicle* said of her *Tosca*, "Tosca is an ideal role for Melody Moore, drawing on her ability to launch potent, full-bodied high notes...while still bringing power and clarity to more intimate passages."

Internationally acclaimed tenor **James Valenti** is also making his Kansas City debut, in the role of Mario Cavaradossi. *The New York Times* noted his “dark-centered, expressive tenor” for his recent lead role in *Don Carlos*. A commanding presence at 6’5”, Valenti has built a global reputation for his elegant musicianship and ardent vocal style. He has performed in many of the world’s most celebrated opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House London, Opera National de Paris, Sydney Opera House and Teatro Alla Scala Milan. In addition to making his Lyric Opera debut, he has another important Kansas City connection: he is the celebrity ambassador for the Kansas City-based charity, Children International, a 75-year old organization that provides life-changing child and youth development programs in ten countries.

Another international star with a no less-commanding physical presence, baritone **Gordon Hawkins** will make his Kansas City debut in the role of Baron Scarpia. He has been critically acclaimed throughout the world for his in-depth interpretations and luxuriant baritone voice. A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the George London Grant recipient, he has been praised for his rich lyricism as well as his dramatic instinct. He is a winner of the Luciano Pavarotti Competition and in 2006 was honored as the Washington National Opera “Artist of the Year.” He is considered the leading Alberich in the world, having performed Wagner’s Ring Cycle with the Washington National Opera, the BBC Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall and most recently with the San Francisco Opera in Francesca Zambello’s American ring. *Voix des Arts* writes of Hawkins recent turn in the title role of Verdi’s *Nabucco*, “ever an instrument of malleable but unbreakable bronze, his voice is now polished to a bright, shining surface that rests upon a column of powerful, ably projected tone.”

Bass-baritone **Julien Robbins** will return to Lyric Opera in the role of Sacristan. Kansas City audiences may remember him for his recent role as Lorenzo opposite Joyce DiDonato in *The Capulets and the Montagues*. Robbins has sung more than 50 roles at the Metropolitan Opera in 25 consecutive seasons. Bass **Ben Wager** returns to the Lyric Opera in the role Angelotti, one year after his turn as Colline in the Lyric’s production of Puccini’s *La bohème*, and this season’s *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, in which he played Taddeo. Tenor **Scott Michael** in the role of Spoletta, and bass **Terence Murphy** as Sciarrone, will also return to Lyric Opera.

Garnett Bruce returns to the Lyric Opera to direct his 6th production in Kansas City, and **Ward Holmquist** will conduct. Lyric Opera of Kansas City Director of Design and Technical Production **R. Keith Brumley** will design the production.

Principals Cast

Floria Tosca: Melody Moore
Mario Cavaradossi: James Valenti
Baron Scarpia: Gordon Hawkins
A Sacristan: Julien Robbins
Cesare Angelotti: Ben Wager
Spoletta: Scott Michael
Sciarrone: Terence Murphy

Artistic Staff

Conductor: Ward Holmquist
Director: Garnett Bruce
Set Designer: R. Keith Brumley
Costume Designer: Lena Rivkina

Lighting Designer: James Sale
Wig and Make-up Designer: Alison Hanks
Chorus Master: Mark Ferrell
Stage Manager: Sadie DeSantis

Ticket availability varies by performance. To purchase tickets, call Ticketing & 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 the performances, with a valid student ID.

First Friday, April 3 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Presented by Lyric Opera of Kansas City at the Beth Ingram Administration Building (1725 Holmes, KCMO) – Escape to Rome for the evening to make a wish in the “City of Fountains”, experience performances by Lyric Opera Apprentices, and enjoy free drinks and food. The event is FREE and open to the public. Invite your friends to attend on [Facebook](#).

FREE Puccini & Paintings In collaboration with the Nelson Atkins Museum and the Lyric Opera Guild, Lyric Opera of Kansas City will present a unique and FREE event at the Nelson Atkins Museum. Opera and art collide as characters from Puccini's classic, *Tosca*, sing their most famous arias and tell their stories. Era-specific paintings will enhance and resonate with the players' emotions. Thursday April 9th presentations at 6pm and 7pm. FREE to attend.

Pre-Opera Talks

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 presenters Don Dagenais and Dr. William Everett will lead the 25-minute talks. The Lyric Opera Guild also presents a series of free “At Ease with Opera” presentations prior to the performance dates.

Tosca “At Ease with Opera” Presentations:

Monday, March 30, at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. Napoleon, the Original "Shabby Little Shocker"** Dr. Chuck Gibbs will present a discussion of how the rise of Napoleon and his conquest of the Italian states shaped not only politics but religion, art, and culture in the early 19th century. In addition, Dr. Gibbs will review how these battles enter the plot of *Tosca*, both the stage play and the opera.

Monday, April 6, at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. From Script to Score: Tosca's Leap** Actor and opera lover Robert Gibby Brand explores how Sardou's heroine of the stage, played by such greats as Sarah Bernhardt, leapt into the operatic world - where she lives and triumphs to this day.

Monday, April 13, at 7:00 p.m. at the Kauffman Foundation (4801 Rockhill Road, KCMO 64110). **Free to the public. Death By Opera: Tosca and the Art of Dying** Popular Lyric Opera preview speaker Don Dagenais will present a detailed preview of Puccini's *Tosca* with audio and video excerpt, and historical background and compositional notes, especially featuring the dramatic deaths of the three major characters in this elegant opera.

Young Friends of the Lyric

Young Friends of the Lyric provides an exciting outlet for young arts supporters (ages 21-40) in Kansas City to get involved in the community, meet other young adults and support the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. The group hosts “Cocktails with Friends” social hours prior to some performances. You do not have to be a member to attend these happy hours. Membership benefits include admission into a private room with complimentary drinks and food during intermissions, networking opportunities, restaurant discounts, invitations to special events and all the benefits of being a Lyric Opera Guild member.

Young Friends of the Lyric membership is \$25 for an individual, \$40 for a couple, or \$75 for a dual patron membership. To join, contact Ticketing & Patron Services at 816-471-7344. Become a fan on [Facebook](#) to keep up with current events.

About the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is a major center for music, opera, theater, and dance designed by Moshe Safdie opened September 2011. The Kauffman Center presents vibrant performances and advances the role 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. The Kauffman Center's two performance venues, the 1,800-seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre and the 1,600-seat Helzberg Hall, 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 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 kauffmancenter.org.

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts is fully accessible and provides assistive listening devices plus Braille and large print programs. Service animals are welcome with advance notice. All dates, operas and artists are subject to change.

Visit www.kcopera.org for more information about Lyric Opera of Kansas City 2014-2015 season and www.kauffmancenter.org for a downloadable media kit about the Kauffman Center.

2014-2015 Season at a Glance:

La Traviata

Giuseppe Verdi 1853

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Director: David Gately

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Set and Costume Designer: Desmond Heeley

Violetta Valery: Joyce El-Khoury

Giorgio Germont: Anthony Michaels-Moore

The Italian Girl in Algiers

Gioachino Rossini 1813

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Director: Michael Cavanagh

Conductor: Leonardo Vordoni

Set Designer: Robert Innes Hopkins

Isabella: Irene Roberts

Mustafa: Patrick Carfizzi

Lindoro: Taylor Stayton

Silent Night

Kevin Puts 2011

Sung in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin with English titles

Director: Octavio Cardenas

Conductor: David Charles Abell

Lt. Audebert: Liam Bonner

Anna Sorenson: Erin Wall

Lt. Gordon: Craig Colclough

Lt. Horstmayer: Craig Irvin

Nikolaus Sprink: Sean Panikkar

Jonathan Dale: David Blalock

Father Palmer: Daniel Belcher

Kronprinz: Doug Jones

William Dale: Caleb C. Ashby

British Major: Ron Witzke

French General: John Stephens

Madeleine Aude Bert: Samantha Giscard

Ponchel: Andrew Wilkowske

Tosca

Giacomo Puccini 1900

Sung in Italian with English and Italian titles

Saturday, April 18, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 22, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 24, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 26, 2015 2:00 p.m.

Director: Garnett Bruce

Conductor: Ward Holmquist

Production Designer: R. Keith Brumley

Flora Tosca: Melody Moore

Mario Cavaradossi: James Valenti

Baron Scarpia: Gordon Hawkins

Sacristan: Julien Robbins

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 the new Richard J. Stern Opera Center. The Company moved from its temporary home to the new Opera Center campus located at 1725 Holmes on July 5, 2012.

The new Opera Center complex consists of two buildings: the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building and the Beth Ingram Administration building with set rental inventory storage. The Production Arts Building includes a rehearsal space that matches the footprint of the stage in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. The Production Arts Building houses 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 is adjacent to the Production Arts building. It provides the Company with set rental inventory storage, parking lots and outside green spaces for the Opera Center, and houses the administrative staff.

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 more than 18,000 students and educators each year.

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

The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a member of OPERA America and this season is made possible with funding from Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts, and the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation.

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Please direct all media inquiries to Ellen McDonald, 816.444.0052 or 816.213.4355.

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