



CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI



Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Lyric Opera of Kansas City in the search for a Chief Development Officer.

The Chief Development Officer, an accomplished strategic thinker who is focused on growth and who has comprehensive fundraising experience in major gifts, will act as Lyric Opera of Kansas City's senior and leading development professional, and will be responsible for the strategy, implementation, evaluation, and achievement of all support revenue goals. The Chief Development Officer will inspire and manage a team of development professionals and partner with community leaders at the highest level of donor cultivation and solicitation. The Chief Development Officer will develop and execute the overall organizational strategy for the development effort, in coordination with the General Director and CEO. Included in this strategy will be a plan for prospect identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship for every potential source of contributed revenue from individuals, corporations, foundations, and government. The General Director and CEO and the Chief Development Officer comprise the major gifts team, responsible for leadership level donors in the annual campaign and managing the major gifts program and portfolio of major gift contributors. The Chief Development Officer will achieve revenue goals for the major gift portfolio and will be fiscally responsible for the development department's overall budgeted goals. The Chief Development Officer will be responsible for the successful completion of the *OUR NEXT ACT (ONA)* integrated fundraising campaign and will work in cooperation with the General Director and CEO, Campaign Cabinet, Campaign Counsel, and other key partners to successfully achieve the established campaign goals.

Located in the heart of Kansas City's Crossroads Arts District, Lyric Opera of Kansas City creates transformational opera experiences through its performances and through its outreach and education initiatives. It develops talent, repertoire, programs, and productions that bring the best of Lyric Opera of Kansas City to the world. The Company mounts productions that enrich the community it serves and reflects the highest artistic standards of the profession. Lyric Opera offers innovative programs designed to further music and arts education both in schools and in the community. These programs, as well as its innovative productions of classic and contemporary operas, make Lyric Opera of Kansas City indispensable to the community.

The Company is based at the Richard J. Stern Opera Center located in the Crossroads Arts District of downtown Kansas City. The Opera Center includes the Beth Ingram Administration Building, where the Company's offices are based, and the Michael and Ginger Frost Production Arts Building, housing space for rehearsals, set construction and painting, prop storage, costume shop, and vocal coaching rooms.

Under Deborah Sandler Kemper’s visionary leadership, the Company has soared to new artistic heights, infusing each production with unparalleled passion and innovation. In 2016, Sandler Kemper introduced the groundbreaking Resident Artist Program, a platform that nurtures emerging talents, fosters collaborations with renowned guest artists, and offers comprehensive professional training in all aspects of opera.

Adapting swiftly to the pandemic in March 2020, Lyric Opera embraced online and outdoor performances, ensuring that the power of opera continued to resonate with audiences. In March 2021, the Company achieved a milestone by presenting its first full-scale opera since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, a remarkable co-production with Atlanta Opera, Austin Opera, Utah Opera, and Calgary Opera, captivating audiences with its thought-provoking narrative.

In 2022, the Lyric unveiled new education and community engagement programs. A significant investment in initiatives crafted to promote societal artistic literacy in Kansas City was made, ensuring an engaged and passionate arts-going audience for the future. One such initiative is Opera Unlocked, a comprehensive and sequential in-school education program. As part of this program, Lyric Opera regularly commissions new works for students and intergenerational audiences. The first work created was *Sketchbook for Ollie* in 2022, which toured elementary schools throughout the Kansas City metro area.

After a three-year delay, Lyric Opera triumphantly presented the long-awaited Kansas City premiere of *The Shining* in March 2023. Based on Stephen King’s bestselling novel, this remarkable opera by Pulitzer Prize winners Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell enthralled sold-out audiences at the Kauffman Center. Notably, Lyric Opera also produced the first-ever recording of this extraordinary American operatic classic, released on the Pentatone label in Spring of 2024, further cementing the Company’s artistic impact.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief Development Officer will report to the General Director and CEO, Deborah Sandler Kemper, and will serve on the Lyric Opera’s Senior Leadership Team. The Chief Development Officer will oversee a team of five staff.

FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR AND CEO

Lyric Opera of Kansas City, founded in 1958, continues to evolve as a dynamic, learning organization. Emerging from COVID, in 2022, we paused to consider the future, asking who would be in the audience of 2050, how we can be of value to our diverse communities, and how can we be financially sustainable.

The response was a continued commitment to productions on the mainstage which enrich our communities and reflect the highest artistic standards. Further, the Lyric Opera embarked on a broad and deep program of education and community dialogue. A significant investment in initiatives crafted to promote societal artistic literacy in Kansas City was made, ensuring an engaged and passionate arts-going audience for the future. Having now commissioned three new operas for family and school audiences, we continue to explore our voices.

With a highly collaborative senior leadership team, the next Chief Development Officer will lean into growth and be an imaginative thought partner, seeking new opportunities while creating and stewarding meaningful relationships with our family of donors as we continue to communicate the value of Lyric Opera to our community.

Lyric Opera is proud to produce at the state-of-the-art Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in the Muriel Kauffman Theatre. Since moving to the Kauffman Center in 2011, Lyric Opera has taken advantage of the visionary space by staging ambitious and innovative productions. Smaller, more intimate productions take place in the Lyric Opera Center which houses a full production facility and performance space.

Kansas City boasts a thriving performing arts scene and is home to a vibrant arts community. Strong relationships exist among its leading arts organizations including Lyric Opera of Kansas City, the Kansas City Symphony, the Kansas City Ballet, and the world-class Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, among others.

We dare to dream....

—Deborah Sandler Kemper, General Director and CEO

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Development Officer will

- in partnership with the General Director and CEO, develop, implement, manage, and assess a comprehensive, forward-looking strategy and operational plan for development activities inclusive of giving from individuals, institutions, corporations, planned to give, and campaigns in support of the Lyric Opera's mission and its continued growth as a preeminent cultural institution;
- oversee the successful completion of the *OUR NEXT ACT (ONA)* integrated fundraising campaign;
- evaluate and adjust fundraising strategies and tactics as needed to ensure proper return on investment;
- collaborate with the General Director and CEO, senior management, trustees, development staff, and other key stakeholders to create a culture of philanthropy that fosters and encourages growth;
- ensure that monitoring and reporting systems are in place that measure the effectiveness of fundraising programs;
- oversee and grow the major gifts program, ensuring a robust, active moves management system is in place that transitions donors through the donor cycle, upgrades donors, and provides best in class stewardship activities;
- carry a personal major gifts portfolio of high value donors and prospects, leading by example as an exemplary frontline fundraiser and relationship manager;
- plan, implement, and evaluate all campaigns;
- manage and mentor the development team toward the achievement of ambitious fundraising goals and a high level of performance;
- create and nurture an environment that emphasizes quality, continuous improvement, growth, and high performance;
- develop and recommend annual departmental business plans, budgets, and reports for the General Manager and CEO and Board of Trustees;
- serve as a trusted resource on development matters for all stakeholders including senior leadership, committee chairs, and trustees; and
- work closely with CFO and CEO to develop annual contributed revenue and departmental expense budgets; and work closely with CFO to track and report monthly budget projections.

LEADERSHIP

Deborah Sandler Kemper

General Director and Chief Executive Officer

Deborah Sandler Kemper became General Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City in 2012. She is known throughout the opera industry for her strong commitment to artistic excellence, Company growth, and deepening community connections.

Previously, Sandler Kemper served as General Director of Kentucky Opera where her expertise as both the artistic and management leader of the Company gained acclaim for productions of high artistic quality. In addition, as leader of an outstanding artistic and management team, she was recognized for implementing a strategic plan which led to the expansion of the audience through increasing subscriptions, securing financial stability, and extending the Company's educational and outreach programs. Sandler Kemper began a young artists training program and oversaw an innovative series of education programs which incorporated the use of puppetry in opera for young people. Known for well-balanced casts and discovering new talent, Sandler Kemper is credited as the first General Director to cast a young Joyce Di Donato in the role of Rosina in Kentucky Opera's production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in the beginning of her career.

Sandler Kemper began her career as General Manager of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and later moved to the Opera Theatre of New Jersey as General Director, managing both the artistic and administrative functions. In New Jersey, Sandler Kemper was recognized for her ability to increase the artistic quality and expand the capacity of the Company by developing community awareness through artistic initiatives and dynamic education and outreach programs. The budget tripled in size under Sandler Kemper's leadership, and she was recognized for innovative artistic programming.

In service to the future of opera and the American Opera service organization OPERA America, Sandler Kemper's passion for opening doors to expand the role of women in professional opera was the impetus for the first ever field wide conversation on this topic, which took place in May of 2015 in Washington, D.C. She has been a leader and catalyst regarding the convening of women to advance this cause and served as the founding chair of the Women's Opera Network at OPERA America.

Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Sandler Kemper is a graduate of Temple University with a degree in music. Sandler Kemper earned a Master of Arts degree in Musicology from New York University, completing all her doctoral course work. She has also studied at the Mandel Center for Nonprofits at Case Western Reserve and at the Fundraising School at Indiana University.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Lyric Opera of Kansas City seeks a Chief Development Officer with

- a commitment to the mission of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City—to make Lyric Opera of Kansas City indispensable to the public through transformational opera experiences and broad service which captures the hearts and minds of its diverse communities;
- an ability and desire to serve as a growth agent—ensuring that philanthropic resources keep pace with organizational and program expansion;
- superior strategic planning skills including an ability to develop, implement, and assess short- and long-term strategic and operational plans for development activities across revenue streams;
- knowledge of state-of-the-art fundraising practices including an ability to nurture a culture of philanthropy focused on innovation, creativity, and growth;

- significant experience as a frontline fundraiser and relationship manager with an ability to lead by example, inspiring both staff and volunteers;
- exceptional communication skills across audiences and platforms, including an ability to serve as a compelling writer, speaker, and presenter on behalf of the Lyric Opera;
- highly refined relationship management skills with an ability to inspire diverse stakeholders and build consensus;
- experience hiring, managing, mentoring, and evaluating staff that meet ambitious fundraising goals within a culture of high performance;
- strong experience with budget creation, tracking, and reporting; and
- fluency with technology including an ability to utilize and evaluate fundraising software.

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience and at least five years of successful fundraising experience within an institution on a growth trajectory is preferred for this role. Lyric Opera of Kansas City will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the Lyric Opera, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

SALARY, BENEFITS, AND CULTURE

The salary range for this position is \$130,000 to \$150,000 annually. Lyric Opera of Kansas City offers a comprehensive package of benefits including Health Insurance (Medical, Dental, Vision), Life and AD&D Insurance, Retirement Savings Plan (403b), Paid Time off (Vacation, PTO, Holidays), and Paid Parental Leave.

As one of the premier performing arts institutions in Kansas City, Lyric Opera of Kansas City strives to hire the best in the field. It employs individuals with a great work ethic, sound values, and a drive for excellence. The team is comprised of passionate believers in the power of art to impact community, and the importance of opera in the artistic cultural ecosystem. Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a Company that celebrates diversity, and continually strives to foster a positive, flexible, engaging work environment—a place where building relationships and empowering colleagues is encouraged.

LOCATION

This position is in Kansas City, Missouri.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City and the responsibilities and qualifications specified in the position prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit: [Chief Development Officer, Lyric Opera of Kansas City.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Anne Johnson: annejohnson@aspenleadershipgroup.com.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.