

Lyric

FROM: Lisa Middleton, Director of Marketing

MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Holly H. Gilson (hgilson@lyricopera.org/ 312-827-5939)

Magda Krance (mkrance@lyricopera.org/312-827-5924)

Kamaria Morris (kmorris@lyricopera.org/312-827-5928)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Monday, May 9, 2016

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

20 North Wacker Drive

Chicago, IL 60606

lyricopera.org

#LyricJason

Lyric Unlimited Presents
A World-Premiere Youth Opera
Jason and the Argonauts

A new opera for young people with music by Gregory Spears and libretto by Kathryn Walat debuts at Chicago's Vittum Theater August 20 and 21

Free and open to the public



CHICAGO – Lyric Unlimited presents the world premiere of ***Jason and the Argonauts***, a new opera for youth from acclaimed composer **Gregory Spears** and librettist **Kathryn Walat** at **Vittum Theater** (1012 N Noble St, Chicago). This is the fourth world-premiere opera commissioned by Lyric Unlimited, Lyric's department dedicated to education, community engagement, and new artistic initiatives. Four performances will take place: **Saturday, August 20 at 10am and 12pm**, and **Sunday, August 21 at 2pm and 4pm**. The performances are free and open to the public, but tickets are required. For more information and to reserve tickets, visit <http://lyricopera.org/argonauts>.

Inspired by one of the most celebrated hero stories in Greek mythology, *Jason and the Argonauts* follows the journey of Jason on his quest for the Golden Fleece and his rightful throne. On his voyage, Jason encounters people and animals that help him fulfill his destiny and learn what it means to be a real hero. *Jason and the Argonauts* is recommended for children ages 7 to 12. Lyric Unlimited is partnering with Chicago's National Hellenic Museum on this project.

Gregory Spears is an award-winning composer, whose work, called "astonishingly beautiful" by *The New York Times*, blends aspects of baroque style, minimalism, and romanticism. His opera, *O Columbia*, recently received its world premiere at Houston Grand Opera. Spears's next opera, *Fellow Travelers*, written in collaboration with librettist Greg Pierce and director Kevin Newbury, will premiere at the Cincinnati Opera in June 2016. He has won prizes from BMI and ASCAP, as well as awards and fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Fulbright Foundation (Fellowship to Denmark 1999-2000), and the Vagn Holmboe Competition.

Kathryn Walat is a playwright and librettist. Walat's plays have been produced Off-Broadway and across the country, including *Victoria Martin: Math Team Queen*, which premiered at the Women's Project (NY) and was subsequently published in *New Playwrights: The Best Plays of 2007*. *See Bat Fly*, produced at Playwrights Rep (Providence), was named to the Kilroy's List of Most Recommended Plays by Women for 2014. She is co-librettist with Gregory Spears of the chamber opera *Paul's Case*, adapted from the Willa Cather story. The opera was developed by American Opera Projects, premiered at UrbanArias, and was produced at the PROTOTYPE Festival and Pittsburgh Opera. It was named in *The New Yorker* magazine's list of Ten Notable Performances and Recordings for 2014.

Jason and the Argonauts features tenor **Kyle Knapp** (Jason), baritone **Vince Wallace** (Male Narrator), soprano **Amy Kuckelman** (Female Narrator), and bass-baritone **Peter Morgan** (Chiron).

"Following the great success of our world-premiere children's opera *Second Nature*, we are delighted to present our newly-commissioned work geared towards children, *Jason and the Argonauts*," said **Anthony Freud**, general director of Lyric Opera. "With **Gregory Spears** and **Kathryn Walat** at the helm of the creative team, and exceptional artists in the cast, this is a world-premiere production that we at Lyric are thrilled to share with Chicago audiences."

"A major goal of Lyric Unlimited is to present opera in fresh and exciting ways to communities throughout the Chicago area," said **Cayenne Harris**, director of Lyric Unlimited. "While *Jason and the Argonauts* is based on an ancient Greek tale, it explores timeless themes that children and adults alike can enjoy."

Jason and the Argonauts will be directed by **Loren Meeker**, who directed Lyric's *Die Fledermaus* (2013). Set design is by **Joe Schermoly** (debut), and costumes are by **Theresa Ham**. Ensemble musicians are **Matthew Gemmill** (music supervisor and harpsichord), **Dawn Gingrich** (violin), **Amanda Grimm** (viola), and **Larry Glazier** (cello).

Following the premiere performances at Vittum Theater, *Jason and the Argonauts* will be presented at schools and community venues around Chicago as part of Lyric Unlimited's Opera in the Neighborhoods program.

Sponsors

Major support provided by the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund**. *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Opera in the Neighborhoods* are supported by Lead Sponsor **J. Christopher and Anne N. Reyes** and cosponsors an **Anonymous Donor**, **Dover Foundation**, and **Wintrust Community Banks**.

Lyric Unlimited was launched with major catalyst funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and receives major support from the **Caerus Foundation, Inc.**

About Lyric

Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

About Lyric Unlimited

Lyric Unlimited is a long-term, evolving initiative that encompasses company activities that are not part of Lyric's mainstage opera season. Its mission is to provide a relevant cultural service to communities throughout the Chicago area and to advance the development of opera by exploring how opera as an art form can resonate more powerfully with people of multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and interests. It also leads the development of innovative partnerships with a wide range of cultural, community, and educational organizations to create a breadth of programming through which Chicagoans of all ages can connect with Lyric. In the 2015/16 season, more than 126,000 children, students, and adults participated in Lyric Unlimited activities. For more information about Lyric Unlimited program offerings, visit lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited.

###

Performance Details

Subject to change

For more information and to reserve tickets, visit <http://lyricopera.org/argonauts>

Jason and the Argonauts

<http://lyricopera.org/argonauts>

Gregory Spears, Composer

Kathryn Walat, Librettist

Loren Meeker, Director

Kyle Knapp, Jason

Vince Wallace, Male Narrator

Amy Kuckelman, Female Narrator

Peter Morgan, Chiron

Matthew Gemmill, Music Supervisor and Harpsichord

Dawn Gingrich, Violin

Amanda Grimm, Viola

Larry Glazier, Cello

World-Premiere Performances

Vittum Theater

1012 N. Noble St, Chicago

Saturday, August 20, 2016, 10am and 12pm

Sunday, August 21, 2016, 2pm and 4pm

Tickets: Free and open to the public; reservations available through <http://lyricopera.org/argonauts>