



**CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**  
**LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY**  
**Kansas City, Missouri**  
[Lyric Opera of Kansas City](#)



The 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 with comprehensive fundraising experience in major gifts, will act as Lyric Opera of Kansas City's senior and leading development professional, responsible for the strategy, implementation, evaluation, and achievement of all support revenue goals. The successful candidate 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 is 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 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 as well 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 above a 4000 square foot area for set storage, 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.

## REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief Development Officer will report to the General Director and Chief Executive Officer Deborah Sandler. The Chief Development Officer has three direct reports.

## PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITIES

*Lyric Opera of Kansas City, founded in 1958, brings high quality live operatic performances to the people of the Kansas City area and the surrounding five-state region. The Company mounts productions that enrich the community it serves, as well as reflecting the highest artistic standards of the profession. Lyric Opera is proud to present 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.*

*Kansas City boasts a thriving performing arts scene. The Lyric Opera is based in the heart of downtown Kansas City, in the Crossroads Arts District. Great restaurants and shops are all within easy walking distance from the offices. In addition to Kansas City's famous Jazz heritage, and world-class barbecue, they are also home to the 2015 World Series Champion Kansas City Royals and the 2020 Super Bowl Champion Kansas City Chiefs.*

*Kansas City 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. The Chief Development Officer at Lyric Opera of Kansas City plays a key role with the Company as a member of the senior leadership team. This opportunity entails creating and stewarding meaningful relationships with our family of donors and cultivating new patrons as we continue to communicate the value of Lyric Opera to our community. The Company is at a pivotal point in its more than 60-year history, having recently embarked upon an endowment campaign to secure the financial future of the Company.*

–Deborah Sandler, General Director and Chief Executive Officer

## PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Strategy, Evaluation, and Implementation of Support Revenue Goals**

The Chief Development Officer will

- coordinate with the General Director and CEO to determine funding priorities;
- evaluate and adjust fund development strategies and tactics as needed to ensure proper return on investment;
- oversee monitoring and reporting systems to measure effectiveness of fund development programs; and
- keep the General Director and CEO informed of important developments, potential problems, and related information necessary for effective management.

### **Major Gifts Program and Major Campaigns**

The Chief Development Officer will

- manage the major gifts program including the moves management system engaging the General Director and CEO, and other development department professionals administering calls portfolios;
- carry a full major gifts portfolio and administer the moves management process on that portfolio to achieve major gifts revenue goals set annually;
- manage the major gifts fundraising effort;
- manage the *ONA* integrated fundraising campaign; and
- plan, implement, and evaluate comprehensive plans for other major campaigns, i.e. capital, endowment, etc.

### **Leadership and Financial Management**

The Chief Development Officer will

- lead the development team to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive annual fundraising program, including campaigns directed to individuals, foundations, and corporations;
- manage and build the development team to produce a high level of performance;
- develop and recommend annual departmental business plans and budgets for revenues and expenses that support the program and contributed income goals of the Company;
- prepare development reports as requested for the General Director and CEO and present to the Board of Trustees; and
- provide monthly projections to the CEO and CFO for the Development department.

### **Donor, Stakeholder, and Trustee Relations**

The Chief Development Officer will

- provide development guidance and training to committee chairs and trustees; and
- build, sustain, and grow relationships with donors and stakeholders.

### **Accomplishment of Company Objectives**

The Chief Development Officer will

- support the Company's mission to make Lyric Opera of Kansas City indispensable to the public through transformational opera experiences and broad service, which capture the hearts and minds of its communities;
- adhere to the Ethics and Principles of the Association of Fundraising Professionals in all development activities;
- adhere to all tax guidelines for 501(c)(3) organizations in all development activities;
- create and clearly communicate the objectives of the Development department;
- create and participate in an environment that encourages donors to participate with the Company through donations, volunteering, auxiliary support or in-kind services;
- maintain confidentiality of donors;
- analyze key donor information for presentation to the Board of Trustees;
- strive to create a culture that emphasizes quality, continuous improvement, and high performance;
- maintain and present a positive attitude with the public, donors, and staff; and
- participate with the senior leadership team in the creation and implementation of audience development and outreach initiatives.

## KEY COLLEAGUES



**Deborah Sandler**

**General Director and Chief Executive Officer**

Deborah Sandler became General Director 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 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 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 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.

Deborah Sandler 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 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'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'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 May, 2015 in Washington, DC. She has been a leader and catalyst regarding the convening of women to advance this cause and served as the first chair of the Women's Opera Network at OPERA America.

Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Sandler is a graduate of Temple University with a degree in music. Sandler earned a Master of Arts degree in Musicology from New York University, completing all of 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.



**Jeffrey S. Walker**

**Chief Financial Officer**

Jeffrey S. Walker has been the Chief Financial Officer at Lyric Opera of Kansas City since February 2014. He earned a B.S. Degree in Accounting, Business Administration, and English from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri in 1995. While at William Jewell he also earned a Saxophone Performance certificate. He earned an MBA from the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas in 2002. He has spent the majority of his professional career in the nonprofit sector, having worked for the Kansas City, Kansas Chamber of Commerce, Community Housing of Wyandotte County,

Sunflower House, the National World War I Museum and Memorial, and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. He has served on several nonprofit boards including the University of Saint Mary National Alumni Board, Leadership 2000 (President) and currently, the Kiwanis Club of Kansas City, Kansas (Treasurer) and the

Humane Society of Greater Kansas City (Treasurer). Outside of work, he enjoys traveling, reading and the fine arts.



**Joanne M. Burns, RN, MPA, FACHE, FHIMSS**  
**President, Board of Trustees**

Joanne Burns is a Board and C-level healthcare, business, and technology leader with strategic and operational leadership experience at companies ranging from S&P 500 to early-stage start-up.

Burns' leadership roles include Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Information Officer, Board Vice-Chair/Director, Advisory Board member, and Business Unit Leader. Experience includes launching start-up businesses, building executive and operational teams, turning around struggling business lines, defining and executing processes for market entry and exit, and reviewing/approving acquisition and divestiture targets.

Burns is an experienced board professional, with program certification from Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health in "Women on Boards." She has served as Director and member of Finance and Compensation Committees of Availity, a \$300M, PE backed healthcare technology company; Chair of the Board for SNOMED, an international, not-for-profit healthcare standards organization; Board member of Innara Health, a Series A funded health care device start-up; and Advisory Board member for the Regenstrief Center for Healthcare Engineering at Purdue University. She is a former Advisory Board member of URXMobile through market exit.

As former Chief Strategy Officer for Cerner Corporation (Nasdaq: CERN), Burns worked with Cerner's CEO, defining corporate strategy and plans. She served as internal consultant to operations and business units to bring operational, technical, and industry expertise improving execution, delivery, and growth plans. She assumed operational responsibility to turnaround struggling \$200M P&L securing additional \$500M bookings, while reducing expense resulting in 52% operating margin in 18 months.

As Chief Information Officer of MU Health Care, Burns had responsibility for strategic direction and operational execution for information technology including cybersecurity. As Executive Director of the Tiger Institute responsible for joint venture startup focused on new product development, she brought several new products to market, managing through the product lifecycle resulting in divestiture, ongoing ownership or market exit.

As a current Board professional, Burns provides guidance and governance to executive teams. She serves as a mentor to CEOs and is recognized for approachability and ability to navigate challenges and propose innovative solutions. She lends expertise where needed outside of standing Board meetings.

Burns is recognized as a leader in the healthcare IT industry through authorship, lectures, presentations, and awards including Women to Watch in Health IT 2020, American College of Healthcare Executives Fellowship, HIMSS Fellowship, Most Powerful Women in Health IT, and The Wharton School and Purdue University guest lectures.

### **PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS**

Lyric Opera of Kansas City seeks a Chief Development Officer with

- knowledge of state-of-the-art fundraising practices;
- an ability to articulate a well thought through plan with clear goals and objectives;
- a commitment to creativity and innovation with a positive approach;

- a demonstrated ability to effectively manage staff;
- an ability to collaborate with staff, professional colleagues, and patrons;
- excellent customer service skills;
- self-motivation, attention to detail and an ability to make “cold calls;”
- excellent written and verbal communication skills;
- proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, and Power Point); and
- experience with Tessitura (a plus).

A bachelor’s degree is required for this position as is at least five years of experience as a senior development professional with a measurable record of major gift accomplishment. An advanced degree is preferred.

### **SALARY & BENEFITS**

Lyric Opera of Kansas City offers a competitive salary and a comprehensive benefits package.

### **LOCATION**

This position is located in Kansas City, Missouri. Out of concern for the health and safety of its employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical offices of Lyric Opera of Kansas City remain closed. The Lyric Opera of Kansas City continues to monitor this health crisis and is following safety recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and its state and local government and health departments. Team members are working remotely. Staff, senior leadership team, and other meetings are being held via Zoom or phone conference.

### **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Lyric Opera of Kansas City.*** Lyric Opera of Kansas City is an equal opportunity employer and affords equal opportunity to all applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. 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@aspingleadershipgroup.com.](mailto:annejohnson@aspingleadershipgroup.com)

*All inquiries will be held in confidence.*