



Lyric tenor Ryan MacPherson tours the world but never leaves Missouri far behind

Ryan MacPherson, BES '97, a Kansas City native, remembers his days in Columbia fondly, reminiscing about time with his friends of Phi Mu Alpha at Shakespeare's and the Heidelberg ("before the remodel and the fire," he's quick to point out), hanging out with music department friends at Shattered and the Blue Note, and performing onstage at Rhynsburger Theatre in such shows as *Susannah* and *West Side Story*.

Encouraged to focus on opera during his second year of studies at Mizzou, Ryan didn't have to wait long before finding a job in his field. He was performing with the Opera Theatre St. Louis in the chorus while still a student at MU and was recruited to the Masters program at the Yale School of Music soon after, finishing his M.F.A. in 2000 just before relocating to New York.

A few short years after starting his career and building a portfolio of characters, Ryan was asked to return to Mizzou for an unbelievable opportunity in 2003: Originate the role of Meriwether Lewis in a new opera about Lewis and Clark, [Corps of Discovery](#), that had been commissioned to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their trek across the Western U.S. Composed by Michael Ching, the opera was performed in concert at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center before its premiere at the Rhynsburger Theater in Columbia and its opera world premiere at Opera Memphis in 2004. (Also featured in that tour? [Neal Boyd](#), BA '01, who went on to win *America's Got Talent* in 2008.)



Performing with noted opera companies across the U.S. and around the world, Ryan has been described as "a perfect fusion of heroic bearing and hunky male callousness" in *Medea* by the [LA Opus](#); "exuding charm and bravado" in *Rigoletto* by [BroadwayWorld.com](#); and a "dashing presence" in *Vanessa* by the [New York Times](#). This spring, he sang the lead role of *La Traviata*'s Alfredo at Opera Santa Barbara and [Opera Tampa](#), sharing the Tampa stage with fellow alums Elizabeth de Trejo (Violetta) from Yale and Andrea Haefke Kiehl (chorus) from Mizzou. He's currently preparing for the Buxton Festival this summer in London, and will take a short break in New York before singing Romeo with the Dayton Opera and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with Opera Memphis.



While he may have graduated over 10 years ago, Ryan uses his training from MU every time he walks onstage. He says, "Not only did I learn how to present myself and put one foot in front of the other, but I learned how to be a good colleague while taking criticism." He encourages students considering a career in the performing arts to move to Chicago or New York, noting that "it's very, very difficult to begin a career without stepping foot in one of the major cities here in the U.S." In addition, performing in summer

stock and festivals provides not just experience and fun, but also a network of contacts and mentors that will help you launch and maintain your career.

Ryan has traveled the globe making new friends and doing what he loves. He says he "loves meeting a new family within each cast, working and playing as a unit and almost always becoming quite close." But while Facebook and Twitter enable him to keep in touch with friends old and new, he notes that "it's hard to build new relationships and nurture old ones when you're on the road more than 250 days a year. I miss out on birthdays and Mother's Days and actual Sunday dinners at Grandma's house." That said, his mom remarked in a recent interview for [Classical Singer magazine](#) that Ryan never misses a Sunday call home.

Being so far away from home has made his time in New York special. He uses his motorcycle to explore the city and get fresh air whenever he can, and he loves living in what he terms "a very Bohemian section of Brooklyn," near the Gowanus Canal. Close to his neighbors in his building, they socialize frequently and have a pot-luck dinner every now and then. He clearly relishes their sense of community, noting that "I've yet to find a more comfortable place to call home." – *Joanna Russell Bliss*



Want to know more about Ryan? You can read through his website at [www.ryanmacpherson.com](http://www.ryanmacpherson.com) or follow him on Twitter at [@tenorryan](https://twitter.com/tenorryan).