

THE SANTA FE OPERA REPORTS ON THE "STATE OF THE OPERA" FOR 2019 SEASON

Ticket Sales and Fundraising Goals Exceeded in Robert K. Meya's
First Year as General Director

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ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

Running from June 28 to August 24, the 2019 Season presented five operas in 36 performances, a special Santa Fe Opera debut concert by celebrated American soprano **Renée Fleming** with the **Santa Fe Opera Orchestra** led by Music Director **Harry Bicket** and two Apprentice Scenes performances. The 63rd Season, the first led by General Director **Robert K. Meya**, Artistic Director **Alexander Neef** and Music Director Harry Bicket, explored classic works of the repertory as well as operas new to the Santa Fe Opera and the world's stage. Opening Weekend featured a new production of Puccini's **La Bohème** and a revival of Lee Blakeley's production of Bizet's **The Pearl Fishers**, both led by female directors. Mozart's **Così fan tutte** returned to the Santa Fe Opera stage in a bold new production; Janáček's **Jenůfa** received its company premiere to great acclaim; and fairy-tale opera **The Thirteenth Child** by Danish Composer **Poul Ruders** and American librettists **Becky** and **David Starobin** received its first performances, marking the company's 16th world premiere. The Santa Fe Opera and its productions were editorialized and critically reviewed by more than 85 regional, national and international print and online publications, including radio and television. Wrote *Scene and Heard International*, "In remote Santa Fe – and here a comparison to Bayreuth is not out of line – you make the pilgrimage to the place, the magnificently open house and view are by design a part of every production, and you submit more readily to a boldness of narrative in the mountains than you might to in an urban opera house to which you rush after work."

In February 2019, the company's recording of **The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs** won the **Grammy**-award for Best Opera Recording. The Santa Fe Opera produced the highly-acclaimed world premiere in July 2017 and performances of the sold-out run were recorded live. The album was released on the PENTATONE label in 2018 and has been praised as "an impressive achievement" by *Gramophone Magazine*.

In May 2019, the Santa Fe Opera announced its latest commissions of two world premiere operas. **Huang Ruo** and **David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly** will open on August 1, 2020. **John Corigliano** and **Mark Adamo's The Lord of Cries** will debut in the 2021 Season. Meya underscored how proud the Santa Fe Opera is to play a major role in the commissioning and producing of new American operas. To date, more than 2,100 performances of 174 different operas have been given by the Santa Fe Opera, including 16 world

premieres and 45 American premieres. In the 2020 Season, *M. Butterfly* will be the company's 17th world premiere; *The Lord of Cries* in 2021 will be the 18th.

In the 2019 Season, 42 Singers and 78 technicians took part in the company's renowned **Apprentice Programs**. The 120 apprentices received intensive training and played a critical role in the creation, both on stage and off, of the season's five mainstage productions. In addition, the opera recently announced 27 recipients of the annual **Outstanding Apprentice Awards**. Awardees received cash rewards, funded by generous donors, honoring their exceptional talent and hard work.

In September 2019, the opera announced a new Concertmaster, **Steven Moeckel**, as well as four other appointments to the **Santa Fe Opera Orchestra**: **Margot Schwartz**, Assistant principal second violin; **Jennifer Best Takeda**, Section violin; **Alistair Eng**, Assistant principal cello; and **Rachel Blumenthal**, Second flute/piccolo. A record-topping 276 applications were received for the various positions.

TICKET SALES

Santa Fe Opera General Director Robert K. Meya noted, "In a time when the industry faces declining ticket and subscription sales, the Santa Fe Opera is in the enviable position of having achieved above 86.3% of house capacity throughout the summer." The company reached and exceeded ticket sales goals, reporting admissions income of nearly \$9.4 million. Audiences represented all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico and 30 additional foreign countries. This year's sales were second only to a recording-setting \$10.3 million earned in 2018.

In a continued effort to maximize ticket sales and engage new audiences, the company launched a new podcast titled "**Beyond the Opera**." The five-episode podcast takes an intimate look at the stories *beyond* the stories and music on stage at the Santa Fe Opera. Season 1 is available to stream and download and has reached listeners across the USA, Canada, Europe and South Africa.

CONTRIBUTED INCOME

The Santa Fe Opera reported \$9.67 million (unaudited figure) in annual operating support for the 2019 fiscal year which ended on September 30, 2019. The figure marks the highest amount of annual contributions in the company's history. The opera has a long tradition of maintaining a balanced budget. Said Director of Development **Allison Swenson**, "While this year's record was certainly a team effort, our General Director Robert Meya deserves recognition for his active role in this achievement."

In May 2019, Board President **Susan G. Marineau** declared victory on the opera's "**Setting the Stage**" **Campaign**, having reached the company's \$38 million cash goal and exceeded the \$45 million overall campaign goal. She noted, "What began four years ago as an ambitious plan to expand and modernize our backstage and front-of-house facilities has now culminated in the successful completion of a new Production Center, expanded Costume Shop and dressing rooms, an enlarged Opera Shop, and additional restrooms and concessions. We are proud of the progress we have made to bring the **Crosby Theatre** complex into the 21st Century, and I am joined by our Campaign Chairman **Susan Morris** and co-chair **Chuck Moore** in extending our deepest thanks to our loyal and generous supporters for allowing us to realize this vision."

The company reported that its popular **Seat Naming Campaign** will continue for the foreseeable future. To date, it has raised over \$1.2 million. Added Marineau, “We are absolutely delighted to be able to acknowledge our patrons and friends who have dedicated seats in the Crosby Theatre on the new **Avenir Electronic Libretto System.**”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COLLABORATIONS

The Santa Fe Opera’s Community Engagement Department continued to expand the breadth and depth of its programming. The number of individuals reached through programs and partnerships in the 2019 fiscal year exceeded 51,500. The **Opera for All Voices** consortium, of which the company is a key leader, continues to develop the four newly-commissioned works. The Santa Fe Opera will present the world premiere of **Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun** on October 26, 2019 at the Lensic Performing Arts Center in downtown Santa Fe. Additionally, “**Key Change,**” a podcast created as part of the Opera for All Voices initiative, received a second season composed of nine episodes that explored the creation of new operas and their connection to our industry, our communities and our future.

The opera expanded its strategic partnerships with the **New Mexico State Library** to include six tribal libraries in Rio Arriba County, funded by the **National Endowment of Humanities**. Its early childhood program **Opera Makes Sense**, designed for children ages 3 - 5, added a concert series to its offerings, and in addition to existing partnerships with the **Georgia O’Keeffe Museum**, the **Museum of International Folk Art**, the **Santa Fe Children’s Museum** and **Santa Fe Public Libraries**, hosted programs and concerts at **Meow Wolf** and the **New Mexico Governor’s Mansion**.

Off-season programs, including Opera Makes Sense, Active Learning Through Opera (ALTO), Young Technicians and Young Voices reached 13,487 children and adults. The opera’s seasonal programs, including the Adult Seminars, Family Nights, Opera Insider days, Opera StoryTellers Summer Camp, Pueblo Opera Program, Prelude Talks, Preview Dinners, 3...2...1 Opera, Youth Nights and various chamber and community concerts touched the lives of 38,081 children and adults. Additionally, in May 2019, the opera’s 25th annual **Spring Tour** presented free public concerts and school performances of **UnShakeable** in the communities of Albuquerque, El Paso, Las Cruces, Los Alamos, Raton, Santa Fe and Taos. The Santa Fe Opera is grateful to the **Melville Hankins Family Foundation** for its role as Principal Education Sponsor.

CO-PRODUCTIONS AND RENTALS

In February 2019, Seattle Opera presented the West Coast premiere of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (2017), which was commissioned by the Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, and San Francisco Opera with support from Cal Performances. Additionally, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music was a co-producer.

The Santa Fe Opera’s production of **The Golden Cockerel** (2017) travels to the Dallas Opera this fall and will be seen on stage later this month at the Winspear Opera House. Additionally, the Santa Fe Opera’s production of **Don Pasquale** (2014), a co-production with Gran Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona and San Francisco Opera, was seen this year at the La Monnaie in Brussels and the Teatro de la Maestranza in Seville.

As part of the opera's ongoing efforts to generate and increase additional revenue streams, the organization hosted a wide-ranging number of post-season events including concerts, weddings, memorial services and special dinners at the **Crosby Theatre** and other locations around the opera's grounds. Musical acts featured at this year's concerts included **Ringo Starr and his all Starr Band**, **Kacey Musgraves**, **Bobby McFerrin**, **John Fogerty**, **The National**, **Dwight Yoakam**, a **Mariachi Extravaganza** and the **Game of Thrones Live Concert Experience**. Revenue generated from these activities represented a 45% increase from the 2018 fiscal year. The events also afforded the company opportunities to welcome new visitors and potential future opera-goers.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the August 2019 Board of Directors meeting, **David Henry Jacobs** was elected President-Elect of the Board of Directors of the Santa Fe Opera, to work alongside **Susan G. Marineau** as she enters the last year of her term as President. **Lynn J. Locker** was elected Treasurer, succeeding **T. Peter Townsend**, who served faithfully in that role for 11 years.

Additionally, the Santa Fe Opera Board of Directors welcomed three new Directors, two Emeritus Directors and two Ex-Officio Directors in the 2019 fiscal year: Directors **Eivind Djupedal**, **John Hauptert** and **Cynthia McCreary**. Emeritus Directors **Marilyn McConnell** and **Robert Weiss**. Ex-Officio Directors Governor of the State of New Mexico **Michelle Lujan Grisham** and Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs **Debra Garcia y Griego**.

OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE

The 2019 Season brought with it the launch of the opera's new **Avenir Electronic Libretto System (ELS)**, representing the latest in seatback title technology. Developed by the Santa Fe Opera, the new ELS features individual high-resolution full-color LCD touchscreens for all 2,250 audience members in both seated and standing room locations. Titles for all five operas were made available to audiences in English and Spanish and the HD display allowed for recognition of donors to the Seat Naming Campaign. The Santa Fe Opera is proud to introduce this new technology to the field of operas. The Santa Fe Opera expresses its deepest thanks to the **Avenir Foundation** for providing the resources to realize this dream.

In September 2019, the opera hosted a **Costume and Props Sale**, which allowed the general public a chance to view thousands of handmade, one-of-a-kind items up for sale and purchase a piece of Santa Fe Opera history. The event brought in hundreds of attendees, created favorable community buzz, generated \$57,865 (unaudited figure) and helped to clear much-needed storage space.

On October 1, 2019, the Santa Fe Opera introduced a refreshed brand identity. In addition to an updated logomark and logotype, the project culminated in **Brand Guidelines** that unify the graphic elements, imagery, typography, colors and voice used throughout the company's print and electronic materials. The guidelines were developed over the course of the 2019 fiscal year through a process that included a company-wide marketing audit and international benchmarking. The resulting guidelines provide writers, graphic designers and staff with the information they need to represent the Santa Fe Opera brand with consistency, impact and integrity. General Director Robert K. Meya presented the new Brand Guidelines, writing, "Our brand is formed in large part through the Santa Fe Opera experience, as well as through SFO's visual, written and verbal communications. It is essential that all of our communications speak with a clear and consistent voice." Meya

added, “How we communicate the Santa Fe Opera to audience members, donors, industry colleagues and other important stakeholders is as important as the work we do on stage.” The company’s updated branding can be seen now on all Santa Fe Opera marketing materials, merchandise and external communications.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Meya recently outlined his continued commitment to fostering equity, diversity and inclusion at the Santa Fe Opera and in the larger world of opera. He said, “To me, what’s most important is creating that sense of belonging. It’s a subject we take very seriously and plan to dive deeper into. When you think about the arts, they have always been a safe place. Artists in particular are people whose perspectives are unique. We need to preserve a space for freedom of expression and to foster an environment where differences and diverse viewpoints are encouraged and valued.”

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The mission of the Santa Fe Opera is to advance the operatic art form by presenting ensemble performances of the highest quality in a unique setting with a varied repertory of new, rarely performed, and standard works; to ensure the excellence of opera’s future through apprentice programs for singers, technicians, and arts administrators; and to foster an understanding and appreciation of opera among a diverse public.

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