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Contact: Emily Doyle Moore | [media@santafeopera.org](mailto:media@santafeopera.org) | 505-986-5908

## **The Santa Fe Opera presents the world premiere of fairy-tale opera *The Thirteenth Child* on July 27**

**Santa Fe, NM** — On Saturday, July 27, the Santa Fe Opera will add a new work to the operatic canon with its world premiere of *The Thirteenth Child* by Danish composer **Poul Ruders** and American librettists **Becky** and **David Starobin**. The production is a co-commission and co-production with the **Odense Symphony Orchestra** and marks the Santa Fe Opera's sixteenth world premiere. Inspired by "The Twelve Brothers," a little-known short story by the Brothers Grimm, the opera, in Ruders' words, "displays the most artful juggling of the classic archetypes: evil/good and hate/love inside a plot, which is strikingly modern in terms of political scheming and sinister maneuvering — all of which crumbles and becomes dust by the sheer force of the enduring love between the two protagonists Princess Lyra and Prince Frederic." Ruders adds, "It is a universal story that audiences, well, everybody with a hope for the future, will never tire of." The struggle to find happiness and unite a family is at the core of this particular tale. The 80-minute work is sung in English and presented in two acts, with no time or location specified. Ruders describes the music as "ear candy...with chile peppers."

Born in 1949 and trained as an organist, Poul Ruders is considered to be the foremost Danish composer of the post-war generation, having forged a reputation as an eclectic creator willing to use a variety of techniques and styles. *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini has praised Ruders as "a prodigiously skilled and daringly imaginative craftsman." His works incorporate features of minimalism, Medieval and Renaissance-era styles, popular music and various tonal and atonal elements. *The Thirteenth Child* is his fifth opera; in discussing its genesis Ruders explains, "In the late Summer of 2010, The Royal Danish Opera premiered my fourth opera, *Selma Ježková* (based on the story in Lars von Trier's film *Dancer in the Dark*), and I thought this would be the last opera from my hand, having explored such diverse genres as period drama (*Tycho*), dystopy (*The Handmaid's Tale*), black farce (*Kafka's Trial*), and then the tragedy of *Selma Ježková*. But never say never — the cog-wheels at the back of my composer-mind started to whirl. In other words, I could not help myself from getting started on a new adventure, and this time a real adventure: a fairy tale, a fantasy. In [this] genre, the possibilities are limitless. It's an explosion of imagination. You can just go wild with the score." In addition to operas and symphonic works, Ruders has written music for choir, chamber ensemble, and solo instrument.

The libretto is written by Becky and David Starobin of the new music label **Bridge Records** (Becky, president, David, founder and director) which has produced much of Ruders' music for the past 33 years. Their work with Ruders has included the performance and recording of dozens of his vocal and instrumental compositions, ranging from opera to symphony to chamber music. *The Thirteenth Child* is their first operatic collaboration as co-creators. The Starobins reflect, "Our personal knowledge of Ruders' musical vocabulary and compositional preferences were a primary stimulant in our creative process. When working on any given scene, it became a game for us to 'imagine how Poul would set THIS line.' More often than not, though, Poul ended up surprising us with twists and turns that we never could have imagined. ...Our words were created with love — for our characters and for their plight, and for the composer who has delivered an intensely beautiful score."

## The Production

For the world premiere production, director **Darko Tresnjak** was intrigued by the opportunity to direct a work by a living composer. He says, "When I listened to this opera, when I looked at this work, it was so exquisite — 80 essential minutes. And having seen the quality of work at the Santa Fe Opera and everything I knew about the company, I felt good, because it [the piece] is *this* precious. ...It's holding water in your hands; you want to protect every drop." The creative team, each making his Santa Fe Opera debut, includes Tresnjak's longtime collaborators **Alexander Dodge** (scenic design) and **York Kennedy** (lighting design), with whom he has worked on 30 different productions, including 19 at outdoor venues. Projections designer **Aaron Rhyne** has also worked on a number of shows with Tresnjak, who states that Rhyne is "at the forefront of this new and increasingly important theatrical field." Video projection mapping (i.e., projecting video onto surfaces of buildings) will create the illusion of the set's tower, inspired by **Hitchcock's *Vertigo***, coming alive through manipulation and distortion. Audiences can look forward to views of the tower from a dizzying, top-down perspective.

Also making her Santa Fe Opera debut is costume designer **Rita Ryack**, a Tony and Academy award nominee who has designed costumes for numerous Hollywood films and on and off-Broadway productions.

## The Recording

In tandem with its world premiere staging, on June 21 a CD recording of *The Thirteenth Child* was released on the Bridge Records label to critical acclaim. Writes *Fanfare Magazine*, "Ruders and his librettists have created an enchanting work in the genre of the fairy-tale opera, replete with spells, magic gardens, a quest to find 12 long-lost brothers, and a princess (the 13<sup>th</sup> child of the title) fated to undergo ill and happy adventures before she rescues her brothers and weds her prince..." Of the recorded cast, **Tamara Mumford** reprises her role as Queen Gertrude on the Santa Fe Opera stage.

## The Cast

English conductor **Paul Daniel CBE** makes his Santa Fe Opera debut leading a talented young cast that includes American soprano and former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice **Jessica E. Jones** (Lyra) in her Santa Fe Opera debut, American mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford (Queen Gertrude) in her Santa Fe Opera debut, American tenor and former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice **Joshua Dennis** (Frederic), American bass-baritone

**Bradley Garvin** (Drokan) in his Santa Fe Opera debut, and American bass and former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice **David Leigh** (King Hjarne), also in his company debut. **Susanne Sheston** serves as Chorus Master.

*The Thirteenth Child* is the final installment of the five mainstage shows in the Santa Fe Opera's 2019 Season.

## The 2019 Season

The 2019 Season summer festival runs from June 28 to August 24 and presents 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 63<sup>rd</sup> Season, the first to be led by General Director **Robert K. Meya**, Artistic Director **Alexander Neef** and Music Director Harry Bicket, explores classic works of the repertory as well as operas new to the Santa Fe Opera and the world's stage.

## World Premieres at the Santa Fe Opera

Since its founding in 1957, the Santa Fe Opera has demonstrated an unflagging commitment to new works. Thirteen of fifteen of its world premieres (twelve of which were commissioned by the company) have been by American composers, with six 21st-century American works premiering since the turn of the millennium: Bright Sheng's *Madame Mao* (2003), Paul Moravec's *The Letter* (2009), Lewis Spratlan's *Life is a Dream* (2010), Theodore Morrison's *Oscar* (2013), Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* (2015) and Mason Bates' *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (2017).

Poul Ruders' *The Thirteenth Child* (2019) marks only the third world premiere by a non-American composer at the Santa Fe Opera, and the first in nearly 50 years. Previously, the company presented Luciano Berio's *Opera* in 1970 and Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Yerma* in 1971.

## About the Santa Fe Opera

Lauded by *The Wall Street Journal* as "the Rolls-Royce of American summer opera festivals," the Santa Fe Opera annually draws 85,000 people from New Mexico and around the globe. Nestled atop a mountain vista in northern New Mexico, the company's iconic **Crosby Theatre** offers a nightly seating capacity of 2,126. The covered theatre is open on three sides, allowing visitors to enjoy performances complemented by the elements. Since 1957 the company has presented over 2,000 performances of 168 operas by 87 composers, including 15 world premieres and 45 American premieres.

## **Media Resources for *The Thirteenth Child***

[High-Resolution Imagery](#)

["The Thirteenth Child" audio sampler](#)

["Beyond the Opera" Podcast: "The Thirteenth Child" — A fairytale collaboration with first time librettists Becky & David Starobin](#)

["The Thirteenth Child" Works & Process panel at the Guggenheim](#)

[Director's Notes from Darko Tresnjak](#)

[Composer and Librettists' Notes](#)

[KHFM Video Interview with Conductor Paul Daniel](#)

[KHFM Video Interview with Jessica E. Jones](#)

[KHFM Video Interview with Tamara Mumford](#)

["New York Times" Feature: A Rarity for Poul Ruders: A Feel-Good Opera](#)

["OperaWire" Artist of the Week: Jessica E. Jones](#)

["The Thirteenth Child" Production Detail Page](#)

[Press Tickets Request Form](#)

# ***The Thirteenth Child***

Music by Poul Ruders

Libretto by Becky and David Starobin

World Premiere, July 27, 2019, The Santa Fe Opera, Santa Fe

5 performances: July 27 & 31; August 9, 14 & 21, 2019

Sung in English with opera titles in English and Spanish

Co-commission and co-production with Odense Symphony Orchestra

Production support generously provided by David Henry Jacobs, Gene & Jean Stark  
and The National Endowment for the Arts

## **Creative Team**

Conductor: **Paul Daniel CBE\***

Director: **Darko Tresnjak\***

Scenic Design: **Alexander Dodge\***

Costume Design: **Rita Ryack\***

Lighting Design: **York Kennedy\***

Projection Design: **Aaron Rhyne\***

Chorus Master: **Susanne Sheston**

## **Cast**

Lyra: **Jessica E. Jones\*+**

Queen Gertrude: **Tamara Mumford\***

Frederic: **Joshua Dennis+**

Drokan: **Bradley Garvin\***

King Hjarne: **David Leigh\*+**

## **The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra and Chorus**

\*Santa Fe Opera debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice

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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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