



28 JUNE 2019 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: EMILY DOYLE MOORE | MEDIA@SANTAFEOPERA.ORG | 505-986-5908

THE SANTA FE OPERA COMMENCES 63RD SEASON ON JUNE 28 & 29 WITH *LA BOHÈME* AND *THE PEARL FISHERS*

SANTA FE, NM — The Santa Fe Opera commences its 63rd Season this weekend, June 28 and 29, with performances of Puccini’s *La Bohème* and Bizet’s *The Pearl Fishers*. This year’s festival runs from June 28 to August 24 and will present 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 to be led by General Director **Robert K. Meya**, Artistic Director **Alexander Neef**, and Music Director Harry Bicket, will explore classic works of the repertory as well as operas new to the Santa Fe Opera and the world’s stage.

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 **John 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.

LA BOHÈME

The seamstress and the poet. The singer and the painter. The musician. The philosopher. Young and poor and consumed with love, they lead “charming and terrible lives” in 19th-century Paris. They live in Latin Quarter garrets, furnished mostly with hope for the future. They fraternize with famous writers and artists at the Café Momus, finding a place in a rapidly changing society. They taste the freedom and perils of a freelance economy; and endure epidemics of passion and jealousy, hunger and disease. Puccini’s boisterous and poignant score is both an evocation of youth and a reminder that our rose-colored glasses may need a stronger prescription.

Director **Mary Birnbaum** describes her team’s approach to this new production: “A lot of times *La bohème* feels like, ‘Here are the four bohemians ... and their girlfriends.’ It was very important for us to figure out who these women would have been in this 1830’s world. Mimì is an archetypal *grisette*, someone who was often an artist’s muse and expressed her sexuality in a transactional way (although not as a prostitute).

Musetta is a *lorette*, a bit higher up socially, and in our production, she straddles the line between what women wear and what men wear, to see how much more power she can have. As a woman, I'm thrilled to direct this, because I want the women to be complete characters, not symbols, who have a whole journey towards and away from social conventions."

THE PEARL FISHERS

With *The Pearl Fishers*, the then 25-year old Bizet blended the best elements of grand opera — including extensive use of the chorus and a plush orchestration — with extraordinarily lyrical arias and duets. The story is set in ancient times on the shores of Ceylon, where Zurga, ruler of the pearl fishers, is reunited with his long-lost comrade Nadir. Their famous duet, which recounts a mutual passion for the heavenly Leïla, is one of the finest expressions of friendship in music. Both men renounced her to save their bond, but her unexpected return soon traps them again in "the accursed snares of love."

The late Lee Blakeley's production premiered at the Santa Fe Opera in 2012 and garnered virtually universal critical praise:

"During the somber overture, the pearl divers came onstage carrying their dead chief, presumably a casualty of their hazardous profession. It was a small touch, but emblematic of Lee Blakeley's smart production, the best of this summer's season. Suddenly, the contrived plot made sense ..."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

"Sometimes a straightforward staging — one that is true to the letter and spirit of the work — can be all that's needed for a successful opera performance ... Such is the case with Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* ... which sets forth the *Carmen* composer's earlier stage success with admirable clarity."

—*Chicago Tribune*

MEDIA RESOURCES

2019 Season Overview with Santa Fe Opera Dramaturg Cori Ellison

LA BOHÈME

[Director's Notes from Mary Birnbaum](#)

[High-Resolution Imagery](#)

[Interview with Vanessa Vasquez \(Mimi\)](#)

[Tickets & Info](#)

THE PEARL FISHERS

[Director's Notes from Shawna Lucey](#)

[High-Resolution Imagery](#)

[Interview with Corinne Winters \(Leïla\)](#)

[Tickets & Info](#)

High-Resolution Image Galleries password: **SFOM3d!a2019**

LA BOHÈME

MUSIC BY GIACOMO PUCCINI

LIBRETTO BY GIUSEPPE GIACOSA AND LUIGI ILLICA

PREMIERED FEBRUARY 1, 1896, TEATRO REGIO, TURIN

12 PERFORMANCES: JUNE 28; JULY 3, 6, 12, 19 & 29; AUGUST 3, 7, 12, 17, 20 & 24, 2019

SUNG IN ITALIAN WITH OPERA TITLES IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

A NEW SANTA FE OPERA PRODUCTION

LAST PERFORMED BY THE SANTA FE OPERA IN 2011

PRODUCTION SUPPORT GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY JAMES R. SEITZ, JR.

CREATIVE TEAM

CONDUCTOR: **JADER BIGNAMINI**

DIRECTOR: **MARY BIRNBAUM***

SCENIC DESIGN: **GRACE LAUBACHER***

COSTUME DESIGN: **CAMELLIA KOO***

LIGHTING DESIGN: **ANSHUMAN BHATIA***

CHORUS MASTER: **SUSANNE SHESTON**

CAST

MIMI: **VANESSA VASQUEZ***

MUSETTA: **GABRIELLA REYES***

RODOLFO: **MARIO CHANG**

MARCELLO: **ZACHARY NELSON+**

SCHAUNARD: **WILL LIVERMAN*+**

COLLINE: **SOLOMAN HOWARD**

BENOIT/ALCINDORO: **DALE TRAVIS**

THE SANTA FE OPERA ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

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

THE PEARL FISHERS

MUSIC BY GEORGES BIZET

LIBRETTO BY MICHEL CARRÉ AND EUGÈNE CORMON

PREMIERED SEPTEMBER 30, 1863, THÉÂTRE LYRIQUE, PARIS

7 PERFORMANCES: JUNE 29; JULY 5, 10 & 30; AUGUST 8, 16 & 23, 2019

SUNG IN FRENCH WITH OPERA TITLES IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

A REVIVAL OF SANTA FE OPERA'S 2012 PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION SUPPORT GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE ESTATE OF SUZANNE HANSON POOLE
AND ERIN & THOMAS BUNKLEY III

CREATIVE TEAM

CONDUCTOR: **TIMOTHY MYERS***

DIRECTOR: **SHAWNA LUCEY+**

SCENIC DESIGN: **JEAN-MARC PUISSANT**

COSTUME DESIGN: **BRIGITTE REIFFENSTUEL**

LIGHTING DESIGN: **RICK FISHER**

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION: **LEE BLAKELEY**

CHORUS MASTER: **SUSANNE SHESTON**

CAST

LEÏLA: **CORINNE WINTERS**

NADIR: **ILKER ARCAYÜREK*^**

ZURGA: **ANTHONY CLARK EVANS***

NOURABAD: **ROBERT POMAKOV**

THE SANTA FE OPERA ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

*Santa Fe Opera debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ^American Operatic Stage debut

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.

DISCOVER MORE: SANTAFEOPERA.ORG

CONNECT: [FACEBOOK](#) | [TWITTER](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

###