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## SANTA FE OPERA NAMES GENERAL DIRECTOR, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, AND MUSIC DIRECTOR

ROBERT K. MEYA WILL SUCCEED CHARLES MACKAY AS GENERAL DIRECTOR FOLLOWING THE 2018 SEASON

MEYA ENGAGES CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S GENERAL DIRECTOR ALEXANDER NEEF AS SANTA FE OPERA'S FIRST ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, AND APPOINTS CHIEF CONDUCTOR HARRY BICKET AS THE COMPANY'S MUSIC DIRECTOR

**SANTA FE, NM - SUSAN G. MARINEAU**, President of Santa Fe Opera, announced today the appointment of **ROBERT K. MEYA** as General Director, effective October 1, 2018. Meya has served as Director of External Affairs at Santa Fe Opera since March of 2012. He will be the fourth General Director in the company's 62-year history.

As General Director, Meya will provide executive leadership, strategic direction, and administrative oversight for Santa Fe Opera. The company is widely recognized as one of the world's leading opera companies, renowned for a critically-acclaimed summer festival and excellent year-round education programs, all within a balanced \$24 million budget.

In accepting his appointment as General Director and assuming the title of General Director Designate, Meya announced that he will name **ALEXANDER NEEF** Santa Fe Opera's first Artistic Director. Neef will hold this role (subject to INS approval) in addition to his position as General Director of the Canadian Opera Company. Meya will appoint **HARRY BICKET**, Santa Fe Opera's Chief Conductor since 2013 and Artistic Director of The English Concert, to be the company's Music Director. Most recently, this position was held by Alan Gilbert from 2003 to 2007. Reporting to the General Director and in collaboration with the Music Director, the Artistic Director will ensure the highest possible standard of excellence in every aspect of Santa Fe Opera's artistic operations. Neef's and Bicket's new positions will be effective on October 1, 2018.

"It was no surprise that the pool of candidates for General Director of Santa Fe Opera included some of the most accomplished and highly regarded individuals in the world of opera," said President of Santa Fe Opera Susan G. Marineau. "We were engaged in this process non-stop for the last six months. Robert Meya is the best qualified successor to Charles MacKay and former General Directors John Crosby and Richard Gaddes."

"It is truly humbling to be following in the footsteps of giants like Charles MacKay, Richard Gaddes, and John Crosby," said General Director Designate Robert K. Meya. "I am deeply grateful to Charles, who has been my inspiration and my mentor over the last six years, and am especially thankful that I will have the next eight months to work closely by his side. I am confident that the team that I am creating – a triumvirate of sorts – will be able to rise to the challenges of the future. I am honored to have two leading figures in the field of opera joining me at the helm of this great company: Alexander Neef as Artistic Director and Harry Bicket as Music Director."

"Robert Meya represents a new generation in top-tier opera management," said General Director **CHARLES MACKAY**. "It has been a great privilege for me to have collaborated so closely with him over the last six years. Not only does Robert have a stellar record in the industry, he knows our company inside and out, is well-respected by the Board, and understands the community of Santa Fe and the Opera's unique place in the culture and economy of New Mexico. Like all three general directors who came before him, Robert began his career in opera at SFO. He has had significant experience in fundraising,

marketing, Board relations, finance, and other areas fundamental to the operation of a major opera company. With the superb Santa Fe Opera staff and one of the most dedicated, generous, and engaged Boards any opera leader could want, I know the company will be in great hands.”

“Santa Fe Opera is one of the most renowned cultural organizations in North America and I am thrilled to join its team,” said COC General Director and SFO Artistic Director Designate Alexander Neef. “The COC and SFO both share an uncompromising commitment to artistic excellence, as evidenced by the successful co-productions we’ve mounted together in recent years. This role is an exciting opportunity to carry forward the artistic legacy of Santa Fe Opera and continue advancing the operatic art form in one of the most remarkable theaters in the world.”

“I am thrilled with Robert’s appointment, and hugely looking forward to working with him and Alexander Neef on planning for future seasons,” said SFO Chief Conductor, The English Concert Artistic Director, and Music Director Designate Harry Bicket. “Charles’ legacy will continue to grow and expand, and the SFO could not be in safer or more inspirational hands.”

Meya’s appointment follows the announcement in August 2017 that Charles MacKay will step down after the 2018 season when MacKay will have completed ten seasons as General Director and 20 years of cumulative service to Santa Fe Opera. 2018 also marks 50 years since the first engagement of his career in opera. The Search Committee was co-chaired by Susan G. Marineau and Sarah Billingham Solomon; the Washington, D.C.-based Catherine French Group served as consultants. Meya follows MacKay and only two other General Directors in Santa Fe Opera’s 62-year history: Richard Gaddes (2000-2008) and Santa Fe Opera Founder John O’Hea Crosby (1957-2000).

#### **MORE ABOUT ROBERT K. MEYA**

On March 1, 2012, Robert K. Meya joined Santa Fe Opera as Director of External Affairs, where he has worked closely with General Director Charles MacKay to achieve the goals laid out in the Strategic Plan with a special focus on building contributed and earned income, while also seeking to advance the national and international profile of Santa Fe Opera.

Under his leadership, annual fundraising grew from \$6.6 million in 2012 to \$9.4 million in 2017, a growth rate of more than 40%. He planned and successfully executed a \$45-million capital campaign for the renovation of the backstage and front-of-house areas of The Crosby Theatre. Meya launched several new initiatives including a new planned giving society and seat-naming campaign, and has added more than 20 new members to the Board of Directors enhancing the company’s national representation.

Meya organized dozens of outreach events with strategic partners such as the Guggenheim Museum (*Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Cold Mountain, The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*), Asia Society, Morgan Library (*Fidelio*), Kosciuszko Foundation (*King Roger*) and Century Club (*Oscar*), among others. These efforts have catapulted the company’s audience development and cultivation activities onto a national playing field and have helped to solidify Santa Fe Opera’s profile as the nation’s leading summer opera festival.

Previously, Meya served for four years as the Director of Development of New York City Opera where he was hired to work with Gérard Mortier as part of the team responsible for re-shaping the new City Opera. While there, Meya oversaw a staff of 26 and successfully increased annual fundraising from \$11 million to over \$18 million. Meya was a key member of the campaign committee which secured over \$125 million for the renovation of the David H. Koch Theater and oversaw all of the re-opening festivities including a record-setting gala that raised over \$2.3 million.

From 2005 to 2006, Meya was Executive Director of the White Nights Foundation of America, overseeing U.S. fundraising activities for the Mariinsky Theater. Meya was responsible for overseeing an international board of directors who met quarterly in St. Petersburg, Paris, New York and elsewhere and organized the largest gala in the Foundation’s history with the Mariinsky Orchestra conducted by Plácido Domingo and featuring Anna Netrebko.

From 2003 to 2005, Meya served as Acting Director of Major and Planned Giving for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Tanglewood Festival, where he raised over \$20 million in endowment funds to enable the artistic initiatives associated with James Levine’s tenure as Music Director.

From 2000 to 2003, he served as Associate Director of Individual Giving for San Francisco Opera, where he raised significant

funding for the ambitious new productions of incoming General Director Pamela Rosenberg. While there, Meya forged the first strategic partnership between the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in a sold-out program entitled "Meeting Messiaen" in preparation for the company's American premiere of *Saint François d'Assise*.

Early in his career, Meya worked as Auditions Coordinator for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Opera Club Steward at Santa Fe Opera under John O. Crosby, and as a radio announcer and editor for Polish Radio World Service in Warsaw where he produced the first internationally-syndicated story featuring Nobel Prize winner Wysława Szymborska.

A native of Connecticut, Robert earned a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service Degree from Georgetown University with a concentration in International Relations, Law, and Organization and a Masters of Arts Management Degree from Carnegie Mellon University. He is a lifelong devotee of classical music and is a trained classical pianist. He lives in Santa Fe with his wife, soprano Amanda Echalaz, and their two children.

#### **MORE ABOUT ALEXANDER NEEF**

Alexander Neef was appointed General Director of the Canadian Opera Company in June 2008. In his current position, he has transformed the Toronto-based Canadian Opera Company into one of the most significant opera producers in the world today, attracting world-class singers for high-profile role debuts; gathering some of the most important conductors, directors, and designers for creative projects; and cultivating strong relationships throughout North America and Europe with co-producers such as Santa Fe Opera, the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, Royal Opera House in London, Teatro Real Madrid, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and many others.

It was under his leadership that the company returned to the world-renowned Brooklyn Academy of Music for the first time since 1993 with its spectacular production of Robert Lepage's *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* in March 2011. The COC made a swift return to BAM in 2015 to present the U.S. premiere of Zhang Huan's theatrically transcendent production of Handel's *Semele*.

It's also under Neef's direction that the COC delivered the world premiere presentation of Canadian composer Barbara Monk Feldman's *Pyramus and Thisbe* in fall 2015. The last world premiere at the COC took place in 1999. Subsequent world premieres scheduled to date include the COC-commissioned projects of *Hadrian*, composed by Rufus Wainwright with a libretto by Daniel Maclvor, in 2018/2019, and a work by Ana Sokolović slated for a future season.

Neef's many credits for the company also include increasing the public profile and professional development opportunities of the COC's Ensemble Studio program, a training program for young opera professionals. In 2010, an Ensemble Studio performance of a COC mainstage production was introduced as part of the annual season and in 2011, an annual Ensemble Studio Competition was launched, inviting the public to be part of the singers' professional journeys by opening the final round of auditions for the Ensemble Studio to an audience.

As the Head of Casting for Opéra national de Paris from August 2004 to September 2008, Neef was one of Gerard Mortier's closest collaborators and was instrumental in the production of over 80 operas. In March 2007, Neef joined him as Mortier prepared for his tenure at New York City Opera.

Previously, Neef was a member of the artistic administration at the RuhrTriennale, a three-year, multi-disciplinary festival in the Ruhr region of Germany where he was responsible for opera, theatre, and dance productions as well as concerts and events. Prior to his tenure at the RuhrTriennale, he spent two seasons at the Salzburg Festival as a production manager with the artistic administration.

Born in Germany, Neef has a Master of Arts degree from Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen where he studied Latin Philology and Modern History.

#### **MORE ABOUT HARRY BICKET**

Internationally renowned as an opera and concert conductor of distinction, Harry Bicket is especially noted for his interpretation of Baroque and Classical repertory. In 2007, Bicket became Artistic Director of The English Concert, one of the UK's finest period orchestras. In 2013, he was named Chief Conductor of Santa Fe Opera, a post he inaugurated with a critically-acclaimed *Fidelio* in the 2014 season.

Highlights of his operatic career in the United States and Canada include acclaimed productions for Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Atlanta Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera. Bicket has also conducted staged opera at Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Spoleto Festival, and Los Angeles Opera. He has guest conducted with Cleveland Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (Cincinnati May Festival), Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, NACO Ottawa, Indianapolis Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and The New York Philharmonic.

Within Europe he has conducted performances at the Liceu Barcelona, L'Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, Theater an der Wien, Glyndebourne Festival, Scottish Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, and Opera North. He has appeared with RTE National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Rotterdams Philharmonisch, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, Bayerische Rundfunk, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Previous work outside Europe includes the Israel Philharmonic, Opera Australia, New Israeli Opera, and his Japanese debut with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and Ian Bostridge.

He made his Glyndebourne Festival debut in 1996 with Peter Sellars' landmark production of *Theodora*, and returned in 1999 and 2003. He made his debut with the Bayerische Staatsoper in 2000 (a new production of *Rinaldo*), and over the following seven years conducted many performances. In 2001, his first Barcelona production, *Giulio Cesare*, earned him the Opera Critics' Prize for best conductor, and he has since returned for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2005), *Ariodante* (2006), *L'Arbore di Diana* (2009) and *Agrippina* (2013). In 2003 his debut production for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (Handel's *Orlando*) received an Olivier Award nomination for Best New Opera Production. In the same year, he conducted Lyric Opera of Chicago for the first time and has since returned regularly. In 2004, his first Metropolitan Opera production (an acclaimed new production of *Rodelinda* with Renée Fleming and David Daniels) was quickly followed by *Giulio Cesare* (2006-2007) and *Clemenza di Tito* (2008), and he is now a regular guest.

Recent highlights with The English Concert include UK and international touring within Europe, United States (most recently *Ariodante* featuring Joyce DiDonato, including Carnegie Hall) and the Far East; regular Wigmore Hall and Barbican projects; and BBC Proms. Recordings to date with The English Concert include releases for Virgin Classics, Chandos, and Harmonia Mundi featuring Elizabeth Watts, David Daniels, Lucy Crowe, Sarah Connolly, and Rosemary Joshua.

Bicket's discography also includes five recordings with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, including a collection of Handel opera arias with Renée Fleming (Decca) and Ian Bostridge (EMI), as well as selections from Handel's *Theodora*, *Serse*, and the cantata *La Lucrezia* with Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (Avie), which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His Gramophone Award-nominated CDs also include *Sento Amor* with David Daniels featuring arias by Gluck, Handel and Mozart (Virgin Veritas), and *Il tenero momento* with Susan Graham featuring arias by Mozart and Gluck (Erato).

Born in Liverpool, he studied at the Royal College of Music and Oxford University, and is an accomplished harpsichordist.

*The mission of 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 and enrich an understanding and appreciation of opera among a diverse public.*

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