

THE
SANTA FE
OPERA



For Immediate Release

THE SANTA FE OPERA ANNOUNCES THE CANCELLATION OF ITS 2020 SEASON DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Contact: Emily Doyle Moore | media@santafeopera.org | 505-986-5908

Santa Fe, NM — General Director Robert K. Meya today announced the cancellation of the Santa Fe Opera’s 2020 Season scheduled to open on July 3 and run through August 29. The cancellation is a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of nonessential businesses, constraints on public gatherings and restriction of both domestic and international travel. These precautions, taken to protect public health and safety, have impacted the opera’s ability to fully prepare and safely gather for its 64th Festival Season.

In an open letter Meya writes, “It is with profound sadness that I announce today that the Santa Fe Opera has been forced to cancel its 2020 Season as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This difficult but necessary decision was made with the health and safety of our staff, artists, patrons and the entire Santa Fe community at the forefront of our thoughts. I am at a loss to describe the disappointment that I myself and all my colleagues feel today. I know that we are joined by the many singers, musicians and artisans who have been tirelessly preparing for our 2020 Season when I say that our greatest regret is not being able to share in the creative process with you, our beloved patrons.”

The Santa Fe Opera’s 64th Season was scheduled to present 39 performances of five operas, including the world premiere of Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*; two company premieres, Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and Dvořák’s *Rusalka*; Steven Barlow’s inventive new production of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*; the revival of Tim Albery’s much-loved production of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*; and two Apprentice Scenes performances. The 2020 Season reflected the time-tested programming model pioneered by Santa Fe Opera founder John Crosby: a balanced and varied repertory of new, rarely performed and standard works portrayed in a new light. All other activities and services, including theater tours, preview dinners, shuttles, tailgate picnics, prelude talks, opening night dinners, opera storytellers summer camp, adult learning seminars and the *Tristan und Isolde* symposium, have been canceled.

The season cancellation was announced with the full support of the opera’s Board of Directors. Over the past nine weeks, the Board held a series of interim committee meetings in an effort to explore every possible contingency and scenario that might allow the Santa Fe Opera to present a full or an abridged season. Board President Susan G. Marineau expressed heartfelt sadness over the final outcome saying, “We reviewed countless budget projections and abbreviated season scenarios, knowing how hard our singers, artists, seasonal crew and year-round staff have worked to prepare for the 2020 Season. We are also keenly aware of the innumerable small businesses in Northern New Mexico that depend upon the

80,000 patrons who visit the Santa Fe Opera each summer. In spite of all our best efforts, the decision was ultimately made for us.”

The opera consulted with the office of New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on additional safety measures and was prepared, if allowed to open, to practice social distancing, implement quarantines, conduct wellness checks and limit theater capacity. New Mexico Secretary of Cultural Affairs Debra Garcia y Griego states, “I am so grateful to the Santa Fe Opera’s leadership for taking their time to really evaluate all possible options before making this difficult decision. I consider the Opera to be a cornerstone of the arts and culture sector of our state. By thoughtfully and patiently analyzing this situation throughout the past several months, it will provide a benchmark for the cultural community at-large.”

The opera has announced that it will provide a level of compensation to all seasonal employees who were engaged to start work in the coming weeks. Writes Meya, “Each year at this time, we begin to welcome over 600 additional staff members in preparation for our summer performances. Many of them now face an extremely difficult and uncertain future. It is with their welfare in mind that I announce our commitment to providing a level of compensation to all artists, musicians, artisans and seasonal staff who were engaged for the 2020 Season. But, we need your help.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the opera had made significant progress toward its fundraising and ticket sales goals for 2020. Meya is asking all ticket holders to consider donating their tickets back to the Santa Fe Opera, stating, “With \$5 million in tickets already sold for the 2020 Season, this represents the single greatest financial challenge we currently face as well as the greatest opportunity for you to help during this time of unprecedented need.”

Ticket holders will be contacted by Santa Fe Opera staff to discuss their options which include:

- Make a tax-deductible donation for the value of purchased tickets;
- Receive a credit to be applied to the 2021 or 2022 Season;
- A refund for the value of purchased tickets;
- A combination of donation, credit or refund options.

The opera also unveiled a Ticket Donation Matching Campaign, in which a group of generous donors have agreed to match all donated tickets dollar-for-dollar – up to \$3 million. Meya notes, “Your tax-deductible donation will have double the impact and will provide the Santa Fe Opera with a bridge over these dark and turbulent times. You will also receive recognition and benefits for the value of your gift during our 2021 Season.”

Ticket holders will have until August 31, 2020 to choose their preferred option, after which, a credit in the ticket value amount will be issued for future use. Due to the high volume of requests, patrons are asked to allow 4 to 6 weeks from the date of their request for processing.

In addition to preparing for its 2020 Season, the company had originally planned to announce the repertory and casting for its 2021 Season this month. States Meya, “We now anticipate announcing our future plans in late summer or early fall.” The company’s 2021 Season includes the previously-announced world premiere of *The Lord of Cries* by John Corigliano and Mark Adamo, based on *The Bacchae* by

Euripides and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The title role of *The Lord of Cries* is written for counter-tenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, who will make his Santa Fe Opera debut in this new production directed by James Darrah.

In the near term, the Santa Fe Opera is redoubling its commitment to providing online learning activities in collaboration with school partners and public libraries. The popular program *Opera Makes Sense*, which has been a mainstay of the Santa Fe Public Library family programming, is now offered online. The first *Opera Makes Sense – Stories that Sing!* episode premiered on May 2. Three additional episodes will follow, each airing on a Saturday morning at 10:00 am MT throughout the month of May. Active Learning Through Opera (ALTO), a program for teens in partnership with New Mexico libraries, is in beta-testing for *The Power of Stories: Collaborative Online Storytelling*. Opera Storytellers summer camp will also be offered on a virtual platform. In June, July and August there will be learning opportunities for fans of the Opera's Seminars, Spotlight Series and Opera InSight. Additional details for each of these programs will be shared soon.

The opera's multi-year commissioning program, *Opera for All Voices*, continues apace with the development of new works committed to social impact and the representation of diverse voices. Says Director of Community Engagement Andrea Fineberg, "The sunshine in this is that we have two new pieces that are almost ready to be premiered. Both are adaptable and nimble and in perfect alignment with the ethos of the initiative as well as our current circumstances. In the case of *Hometown to the World* by composer Laura Kaminsky and librettist Kimberly Reed Thomas, the piece is based on the 2008 ICE raid of a Postville, Iowa meat-packing plant and ends with the prayer *Tikkun Olam* which translates to "Today I Repair the World." The second work, *The Pigeon Fancier*, is much more allegorical. It tells the story of a refugee; it's about grieving and coming back together and healing. I see both pieces as particularly timely given this new world we've found ourselves in." The Santa Fe Opera plans to announce additional details and performance dates at its next press conference.

Ticket Donation Matching Campaign Sponsors

The Santa Fe Opera wishes to thank the following donors for their generous support of the Ticket Donation Matching Campaign. Their collective gifts will match each donated ticket dollar-for-dollar – up to \$3 million.

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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 175 different operas by 89 composers spanning five centuries of opera, creating a legacy of 45 American premieres and 16 world premieres.

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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