

THE
SANTA FE
OPERA



For Immediate Release

The Santa Fe Opera Announces
Celebrated Favorites, a Company
Premiere and an American Premiere in
the 2026 Season

Opening Weekend, July 3 & 4: The celebrated revival of Puccini's ***Madama Butterfly*** and a new production of Mozart's ***The Magic Flute***

July 18, 2026: An enhanced revival of Tchaikovsky's ***Eugene Onegin*** from the 2021 Season

July 25, 2026: Handel's ***Rodelinda***, a company premiere and new Santa Fe Opera production inspired by an acclaimed production commissioned by Hudson Hall at the historic Hudson Opera House

August 1, 2026: The American premiere of ***Lili Elbe***, an opera in two acts by Grammy-winning American composer Tobias Picker and librettist Aryeh Lev Stollman

Visitor Experiences will include **Tailgating, Tours, Preview Dinners, Free Prelude Talks & More**

Individual Tickets & Subscriptions on sale now at santafeopera.org

May 14, 2025

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Santa Fe, NM — In 2026, the Santa Fe Opera presents a lineup of classic, rarely performed and new works. The 69th Festival Season features **38 performances** of two new productions, two celebrated revivals and an American premiere. An homage to the company's first-ever performance in 1957, Opening Weekend takes flight on **July 3** with **Lee Blakeley's** acclaimed production of Puccini's ***Madama Butterfly***, revived by **Melanie Bacaling**. Next, on **July 4**, is a new international co-production with **Garsington Opera** of Mozart's ***The Magic Flute*** directed by **Christopher Luscombe**. Centering the season from **July 18** is a revival of **Alessandro Talevi's** production of Tchaikovsky's ***Eugene Onegin***, originally presented during the opera's 2021 Season. On **July 25**, Handel's ***Rodelinda*** is offered for the first time at the Santa Fe Opera, led by Santa Fe Opera Music Director and Early music specialist **Harry Bicket** with direction by **R.B. Schlather**. Finally, on **August 1**, the Santa Fe Opera presents the American premiere of ***Lili Elbe***, an opera in two acts by Grammy-winning composer **Tobias Picker** and librettist **Aryeh Lev Stollman**, featuring former Apprentice singer **Lucia Lucas** in the title role. The popular **Apprentice Scenes** return, showcasing the opera's singing and technical apprentices. The first performance on **August 16** honors the longtime tradition of staged scenes from the repertoire. The second performance on **August 23** will feature the Apprentice singers in a concert with **The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra**.

Says General Director **Robert K. Meya**, "As we celebrate the Santa Fe Opera's 69th Season, we honor a legacy built on bold creativity, artistic excellence and a spirit of discovery that has defined our company. 2026 offers audiences a confection of beloved classics, rarely heard masterpieces and thrilling new works, culminating in our 46th American premiere: **Tobias Picker** and **Aryeh Lev Stollman's** ***Lili Elbe***. This significant premiere reaffirms our enduring commitment to presenting works that speak to our time and illuminate the future of our art form."

Individual tickets and subscriptions for both the 2025 and 2026 Seasons are on sale now at santafeopera.org.

Madama Butterfly

A Japanese girl on the verge of womanhood sacrifices her heritage for the American dream when a dashing naval officer chooses her for his bride. Butterfly's naïve dream for a better life is crushed by isolation and betrayal when he traps her in the very cage she wishes to escape. Taking her destiny into her own hands, the devastating outcome lingers long after the final note.

The Santa Fe Opera's 2026 Season opens with a revival of the 2010 production of Puccini's ***Madama Butterfly***, originally conceived by the late **Lee Blakeley** and revived by director **Melanie Bacaling** in her Santa Fe Opera main stage directorial debut. Says Melanie, "It is an honor to bring this beloved production back to the Santa Fe Opera stage. *Madama Butterfly* is treasured in the operatic canon, giving us some of Puccini's most celebrated music through a story of immense tragedy. It is a privilege to continue interrogating the narrative with respect and representation at the forefront."

Puccini's transcendental music floats in the **Crosby Theatre** as the story unfolds. This poignant staging blends tradition with emotional depth, featuring elegant scenery by **Jean-Marc Puissant**, costumes by **Brigitte Reiffenstuel** and atmospheric lighting by **Rick Fisher**. **Susanne Sheston** serves as Chorus Director.

Conductor **John Fiore** leads a phenomenal international cast, with several making company debuts: **Karen Chia-ling Ho** as Cio-Cio-San, **Sun-Ly Pierce** as Suzuki and **Ya-Chung Huang** in his American debut singing Goro. **Stephen Costello** sings Pinkerton and **Jonathan Burton** takes the role for the final two performances. Former Apprentice singers **Jarrett Ott** and **Le Bu** perform Sharpless and the Bonze, respectively.

12 performances are scheduled: **July 3, 8, 11, 17, 24; August 3, 8, 10, 15, 20, 26 & 29, 2026**

The Magic Flute

Imagine a magic flute that can tame the wildest of beasts. Can Prince Tamino and Papageno use it to save the princess? They embark on a fantastical quest through the elements, and along the way, they encounter enchanting characters and face daring trials.

The season continues with an enchanting new production of Mozart's ***The Magic Flute***, a new co-production with **Garsington Opera** directed by **Christopher Luscombe** in his company debut and conducted by Santa Fe Opera Music Director **Harry Bicket**.

Inspired by Edwardian pantomime, this new production merges spectacle with storytelling to create an immersive experience for audiences of all ages. Scenic Designer **Simon Higlett** crafts a world of *trompe-l'œil* scenery, evoking Victorian music halls, while lighting by **Philip Rosenberg** and illusions by **Chris Fisher** heighten the magic with stunning stage effects. Costume Designer **Robert Perdziola** blends early 19th-century silhouettes with theatrical flourishes, reflecting the opera's blend of fantasy and adventure. **Susanne Sheston** serves as Chorus Director.

Making company debuts are **Josh Lovell** as Tamino, **Joëlle Harvey** as Pamina, **Rainelle Krause** as the Queen of the Night and **Alexander Köpeczi** as Sarastro. Several former Apprentice singers return, including **Will Liverman** as Papageno, **Spencer Hamlin** as Monostatos and **Le Bu** as the Speaker. A new English translation by **Jeremy Sams** brings immediacy and humor to the performances.

8 performances are scheduled: **July 4, 10, 15; August 4, 13, 22, 25 & 28, 2026**

Eugene Onegin

Unbridled passion, devastating heartbreak and unspoken regret. Tatyana's love is rejected by Onegin. He realizes his mistake, a little too late, leaving no one untouched by the haunting pull of nostalgia and the aching memory of what was, what was not and what could have been.

Centering the 2026 Season is a revival of the company's striking 2021 production of ***Eugene Onegin***, directed by **Alessandro Talevi**. When originally presented, pandemic protocols necessitated significant artistic innovation: the opera's powerful chorus — essential to the drama and emotional scale of the

piece — was positioned offstage, while dancers in costume conveyed the action through movement. Now presented in its complete theatrical vision with newly designed and built costumes, full chorus integration and richly layered stage direction, the opera will come to life in full theatrical splendor.

With evocative sets and costumes by **Gary McCann**, the scenes shift seamlessly between ornate interiors and natural landscapes, with Santa Fe's open-air backdrop heightening the opera's emotional depth. **Rick Fisher** is the Lighting Designer, **Susanne Sheston** serves as Chorus Director and **Athol Farmer** is the Choreographer.

Conducted by **Keri-Lynn Wilson** in her company debut and SFO head of music staff **Robert Tweten** (August 19), the production features an international cast. Making both American and company debuts are Azerbaijani mezzo-soprano **Elmina Hasan** in the role of Olga and Peruvian tenor **Iván Ayón-Rivas** as Lensky; making company debuts are **Olga Kulchynska** as Tatyana, **Mattia Olivieri** as Onegin and **Lindsay Ammann** as Larina. **Alexander Köpeczi** is Prince Gremin, former Apprentice singer **Meridian Prall** returns as Filipyevna and **Ya-Chung Huang** performs Monsieur Triquet.

6 performances are scheduled: **July 18, 22, 31; August 6, 12 & 19, 2026**

Rodelinda

Queen Rodelinda navigates a dangerous political web to protect her throne and family, while her love for her supposedly dead husband reignites in a dramatic clash of passion and ambition. A timeless story of despair, love and ultimately, redemption, unfolds in a bold new production that will grip you from first to final note.

The company premiere of Handel's ***Rodelinda*** follows, opening on July 25. Inspired by a production hailed as a Critic's Pick by the *New York Times* when first staged by **R.B. Schlather** at the historic **Hudson Hall** in 2023, this production pairs Baroque orchestration led by Handel specialist **Harry Bicket** with what Schlather describes as a "noir melodrama gangster story" — a tale of love, power, loyalty and redemption, underscored by exquisite music. With beautiful period costumes from **Doey Lüthi**, lighting by **Masha Tsimring** and scenic design by **R.B. Schlather** and Associate Scenic Designer **Jiaying Zhang**, the result is a visually striking show complete with a dynamic turntable set.

The cast features several company debuts, including **Lucy Crowe** as Rodelinda, **Anthony Gregory** as Grimoaldo and **Hugh Cutting** as Unulfo. Returning to the Santa Fe Opera are **Iestyn Davies** as Bertarido, **Meridian Prall** as Eduige and **William Guanbo Su** as Garibaldo.

5 performances are scheduled: **July 25, 29; August 7, 11 & 21, 2026**

Lili Elbe

Lili's journey—marked by love, loss and self-discovery—is the true story of a Danish painter who, with the steadfast support of her wife Gerda, became one of the first to undergo gender-affirmation surgery nearly a century ago.

Rounding out the 2026 Season is the American premiere of *Lili Elbe*, a two-act opera by Grammy Award-winning composer **Tobias Picker**, with a libretto by **Aryeh Lev Stollman**, dramaturgy by **Lucia Lucas** and direction by **James Robinson** in a new co-production with **Seattle Opera**. Of special note is the return of Mr. Picker to the Santa Fe Opera, where, thirty years ago, his first opera, *Emmeline*, received its world premiere and was captured for national broadcast by **PBS' Great Performances**.

Recipient of the **2023 OPER! Award** for Best World Premiere, this groundbreaking work tells the powerful true story of **Lili Elbe** (1882–1931), a Danish landscape painter who became one of the first individuals to undergo gender-affirmation surgery nearly 100 years ago. With the unwavering support of her wife, artist **Gerda Wegener**, Lili embarks on a courageous journey of self-discovery, facing profound love, loss and the human cost of pioneering change.

Says General Director **Robert K. Meya**, “At the heart of any thriving society is the freedom to live truthfully — to seek self-realization without fear or denial. *Lili Elbe* is more than a powerful new opera; it is a poignant reminder of what it means to fight for authenticity, dignity and love. We are honored to bring this extraordinary true story to our stage and to continue championing works that reflect the full spectrum of the human experience.”

Director **James Robinson**’s production emphasizes the opera’s underlying story of *Orpheus and Eurydice* which parallels the shifting emotional landscapes of Lili and Gerda. Scenic design by **Allen Moyer** brings the elegance of 1920s Copenhagen and Paris to life with costumes by **Marco Piemontese** reflecting evolving perceptions of identity and self-reinvention. **Marcus Doshi** provides lighting with projections by **Greg Emetaz**. **Susanne Sheston** is the Chorus Director and **Seán Curran** serves as Choreographer.

Lucia Lucas, a celebrated Heldenbaritone, stars in the title role and serves as dramaturg, bringing a performance shaped by artistry and lived experience. Maestro **Roberto Kalb** leads the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra and a stunning cast including **Sylvia D’Eramo** as Gerda Wegener, **Josh Lovell** as Claude Lejeune, **Lindsay Ammann** as Mother Wegener and former Apprentice singer **Andrew Harris** as Professor Warnekros.

5 performances are scheduled: **August 1, 5, 14, 18 & 27, 2026**

2026 Debuts

Lindsay Ammann (Mezzo-soprano); **Melanie Bacaling** (Director); **Lucy Crowe** (Soprano);
Hugh Cutting (Countertenor); **Chris Fisher** (Illusions); **Anthony Gregory** (Tenor);
Joëlle Harvey (Soprano); **Elmina Hasan~** (Mezzo-soprano); **Simon Higlett** (Scenic Design);
Karen Chia-ling Ho (Soprano); **Ya-Chung Huang~** (Tenor); **Alexander Köpeczi** (Bass);
Rainelle Krause (Soprano); **Olga Kulchynska** (Soprano); **Christopher Luscombe** (Director);
Josh Lovell (Tenor); **Doey Lüthi** (Costume Design); **Mattia Olivieri** (Baritone);
Marco Piemontese (Costume Design); **Sun-Ly Pierce** (Mezzo-soprano); **Iván Ayón-Rivas~** (Tenor);
Philip Rosenberg (Lighting Design); **Aryeh Lev Stollman** (Librettist); **Masha Tsimring** (Lighting Design);
Keri-Lynn Wilson (Conductor); **Jiaying Zhang** (Associate Scenic Design)

2026 Returning Artists

With most recent or upcoming opera appearance

Singers

Le Bu+ (*Rigoletto*, 2025); **Jonathan Burton** (*Tosca*, 2023); **Stephen Costello** (*Roméo et Juliette*, 2016);
Iestyn Davies (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2021); **Sylvia D'Eramo+** (*La bohème*, 2025);
Spencer Hamlin+ (*Der Rosenkavalier*, 2024); **Andrew Harris+** (*Doctor Atomic*, 2018);
Will Liverman+ (*La bohème*, 2019); **Lucia Lucas+** (*The Letter*, 2009);
Jarrett Ott+ (*The Lord of Cries*, 2021); **Meridian Prall+** (*Orfeo*, 2023);
William Guanbo Su (*Don Giovanni*, 2024)

Conductors

Harry Bicket (*The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025); **John Fiore** (*Tosca*, 2023);
Roberto Kalb (*The Elixir of Love*, 2024); **Robert Tweten** (*Falstaff*, 2022)

Directors

R.B. Schlather (*Così fan tutte*, 2019); **James Robinson** (*La bohème*, 2025);
Alessandro Talevi (*Eugene Onegin*, 2021)

Choreographers & Designers

Seán Curran (*M. Butterfly*, 2022); **Marcus Doshi** (*La traviata*, 2024);
Greg Emetaz (*The Righteous*, 2024); **Athol Farmer** (*Eugene Onegin*, 2021);
Rick Fisher (*Rigoletto*, 2025); **Gary McCann** (*Der Rosenkavalier*, 2024);
Allen Moyer (*La bohème*, 2025); **Robert Perdziola** (*La traviata*, 2002);
Jean-Marc Puissant (*The Pearl Fishers*, 2019); **Brigitte Reiffenstuel** (*The Pearl Fishers*, 2019)

Composer

Tobias Picker (*Emmeline*, 1996)

Chorus Director
Susanne Sheston (2025 Season)

+Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut

Madama Butterfly

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica, Giuseppe Giacosa

Based on *Madame Butterfly* (1898) by John Luther Long

Premiered February 17, 1904, Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy

Adapted from the original production by Lee Blakeley in 2010

12 performances — July 3, 8, 11, 17, 24; August 3, 8, 10, 15, 20, 26 & 29, 2026

Sung in Italian with opera titles in English and Spanish

Creative Team

Conductor John Fiore

Director Melanie Bacaling*

Scenic Design Jean-Marc Puissant

Costume Design Brigitte Reiffenstuel

Lighting Design Rick Fisher

Chorus Director Susanne Sheston

Cast

Cio-Cio-San Karen Chia-ling Ho*

B.F. Pinkerton Stephen Costello

B.F. Pinkerton Jonathan Burton (August 26 & 29)

Sharpless Jarrett Ott+

Suzuki Sun-Ly Pierce*

Goro Ya-Chung Huang*~

Bonze Le Bu+

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra & Chorus

**Santa Fe Opera Debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut*

The Magic Flute

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder

Premiered September 30, 1791, Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden, Vienna, Austria

Co-production with Garsington Opera

English Translation by Jeremy Sams used by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Limited

8 performances — July 4, 10, 15; August 4, 13, 22, 25 & 28, 2026

Singing and Dialogue in English with opera titles in English and Spanish

Creative Team

Conductor Harry Bicket

Director Christopher Luscombe*

Scenic Design Simon Higlett*

Costume Design Robert Perdziola

Lighting Design Philip Rosenberg*

Illusions Chris Fisher*

Chorus Director Susanne Sheston

Cast

Tamino Josh Lovell*

Pamina Joëlle Harvey*

The Queen of the Night Rainelle Krause*

Sarastro Alexander Köpeczi*

Papageno Will Liverman+

Monostatos Spencer Hamlin+

Speaker Le Bu+

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra & Chorus

**Santa Fe Opera Debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut*

Eugene Onegin

Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Libretto by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Based on *Eugene Onegin* (1825-1832; 1833) by Alexander Pushkin

Premiered March 29, 1879, The Maly Theatre, Moscow, Russia

Revival of the 2021 Santa Fe Opera Production

6 performances — July 18, 22, 31; August 6, 12 & 19, 2026

Sung in Russian with opera titles in English and Spanish

Creative Team

Conductor Keri-Lynn Wilson*

Conductor Robert Tweten (August 19)

Director Alessandro Talevi

Scenic & Costume Design Gary McCann

Lighting Design Rick Fisher

Chorus Director Susanne Sheston

Choreographer Athol Farmer

Cast

Tatyana Olga Kulchynska*

Eugene Onegin Mattia Olivieri*

Vladimir Lensky Iván Ayón-Rivas*~

Olga Elmina Hasan*~

Prince Gremin Alexander Köpeczi

Larina Lindsay Ammann*

Filipyevna Meridian Prall+

Monsieur Triquet Ya-Chung Huang

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra & Chorus

**Santa Fe Opera Debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut*

Rodelinda

Music by George Frideric Handel

Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym

Premiered February 13, 1725, King's Theatre, London, Great Britain

A New Santa Fe Opera Production re-envisioned from a production
originally commissioned by Hudson Hall, at the historic Hudson Opera House

5 performances — July 25, 29; August 7, 11 & 21, 2026

Sung in Italian with opera titles in English and Spanish

Creative Team

Conductor Harry Bicket

Production R.B. Schlather

Associate Scenic Design Jiaying Zhang*

Costume Design Doey Lüthi*

Lighting Design Masha Tsimring*

Cast

Rodelinda Lucy Crowe*

Bertarido Iestyn Davies

Grimoaldo Anthony Gregory*

Eduige Meridian Prall+

Unulfo Hugh Cutting*

Garibaldo William Guanbo Su

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra

**Santa Fe Opera Debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut*

Lili Elbe

Music by Tobias Picker

Libretto by Aryeh Lev Stollman

Premiered October 22, 2023, Theater St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland

American Premiere and a new Co-production with Seattle Opera

Used by arrangement with European American Music Distributors Company, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Schott Helicon Music Corporation, New York, NY

5 performances — August 1, 5, 14, 18 & 27, 2026

Sung in English with opera titles in English and Spanish

Creative Team

Composer Tobias Picker

Librettist Aryeh Lev Stollman

Conductor Roberto Kalb

Director James Robinson

Scenic Design Allen Moyer

Costume Design Marco Piemontese*

Lighting Design Marcus Doshi

Projections Greg Emetaz

Chorus Director Susanne Sheston

Choreographer Seán Curran

Dramaturgy Lucia Lucas+

Cast

Lili Elbe Lucia Lucas+

Gerda Wegener Sylvia D'Eramo+

Claude Lejeune Josh Lovell

Mother Wegener Lindsay Ammann

Professor Warnekros Andrew Harris+

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra & Chorus

**Santa Fe Opera Debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American Debut*

Apprentice Scenes

August 16

Sung in various languages with opera titles in English and Spanish

Tickets from \$5 to \$25

Featuring:

The Apprentice Program for Singers

The Apprentice Program for Theater Technicians

Apprentices in Concert with the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra

August 23

Sung in various languages with opera titles in English and Spanish

Tickets from \$5 to \$25

Featuring:

The Apprentice Program for Singers

The Apprentice Program for Theater Technicians

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra

About The Santa Fe Opera

Recognized in 2022 as “Festival of the Year” at the **International Opera Awards**, 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** 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 180 operas by 92 composers spanning five centuries of opera, creating a legacy of 45 American premieres and 19 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.