For Immediate Release

THE SANTA FE OPERA



Dramatic Baritone and Former Apprentice Singer **Michael Chioldi** will perform the title role in **Rigoletto** opening **July 12**

7 July 2025

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Santa Fe, NM — The Santa Fe Opera announces dramatic baritone and former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice singer Michael Chioldi will sing the title role in *Rigoletto*, replacing Spanish baritone Gerardo Bullón, who has withdrawn for personal reasons. The production opens July 12 and runs for seven performances through August 20, 2025. A co-production with Irish National Opera and Opera Zuid, Chioldi recently performed the role at the Irish National Opera to critical acclaim.

"Baritone Michael Chioldi made for a terrifically engaging Rigoletto. Physically dominating the stage, his hunchbacked, limping buffoon both managed to repel and inspire pity. Vocally he also packed a punch; there were dark colours to his middle voice while there was a distinct rasp of anger as he bemoaned Gilda's fate in Act 2. His impassioned singing as he beheld his dying daughter was deeply moving."

—BachTrack

"The American baritone Michael Chioldi was excellent as Rigoletto, shaping his declamatory lines with musicality and imbuing his character with the indispensable pathos that is a key element of the role."

—The Journal of Music

- "...the titular hunchbacked jester Rigoletto, deftly played by Michael Chioldi..."
- —The Irish Examiner
- "Chioldi rises perfectly to the demands of Rigoletto's fury and hubris."
- —The Arts Desk

"Michael Chioldi (...) a firm and attractive baritone; he commands the stage whenever he sings."
—Broadway World

Rigoletto

Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* opens **July 12** in a new co-production with the **Irish National Opera** and **Opera Zuid**. Through the omnipresent figure of Rigoletto, jester to the Duke of Mantua, portrayed as both character and ubiquitous mask, audiences are invited to explore themes of desire, betrayal and the relentless forces of fate that shape the lives of those caught in its grip. Making his Santa Fe Opera directorial debut is **Julien Chavaz** with a production that draws inspiration from the rich allure of

Renaissance paintings and the strange ambiance of the circus world. Sets by Jamie Vartan, costumes by Jean-Jacques Delmotte and lighting by Rick Fisher work together to create a powerful and dreamlike environment. David Zimmerman designs wigs and makeup for the production. Nicole Morel serves as Movement Director in her company debut, the Chorus Director is Susanne Sheston and Andrew Moss oversees fight and intimacy direction.

Italian conductor **Carlo Montanaro**, in his company debut, leads the **Santa Fe Opera Orchestra** and a dynamic cast. Dramatic baritone and former Apprentice singer **Michael Chioldi** returns to the Santa Fe Opera stage in the title role. Cuban-American soprano **Elena Villalón** makes her role debut as Gilda. Former Apprentice singer and Korean tenor **Duke Kim** undertakes the role of the Duke. Also making American debuts are Korean bass **Stephano Park** in the role of Sparafucile and Brazilian mezzo-soprano **Marcela Rahal** as Maddalena. Chinese bass-baritone and former Apprentice singer **Le Bu** sings Monterone.

Several Apprentice singers make their Santa Fe Opera debuts, including **Ryan Wolfe** as Marullo, **Kayla Nanto** as Countess Ceprano, **Simona Genga** as Giovanna and **Korin Thomas-Smith** as Count Ceprano. Apprentice singers perform the following roles: **Evan Ladzowski** is the Usher, **Mary Beth Nelson Zaros** is the Page and **Ryan Bryce Johnson** returns to sing Borsa.

Seven performances are scheduled: July 12, 16, 25, 29; August 7, 15 and 20, 2025.

Rigoletto

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave
Based on *Le roi s'amuse* (1832) by Victor Hugo
Premiered March 11, 1851, Teatro La Fenice, Venice, Italy
A New Co-Production with Irish National Opera & Opera Zuid

7 performances — July 12, 16, 25, 29; August 7, 15 & 20
Sung in Italian with opera titles in English and Spanish
Approximately 2 hours 30 minutes; including a 25-minute intermission

Production support is generously provided by

David A Kaplan & Gleen A Ostergaard - Brautigam-Kaplan-Ostergaard Foundation

The John Crosby Production Fund

Additional artistic support provided by David B. & Anna-Karin J. Dillard Gene & Jean Stark

The performances of Elena Villalón are supported by
The Peter B. Frank Principal Artist Fund

The performances of Michael Chioldi are supported by The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation

The performances of Duke Kim are supported by Brooke Suzanne Grey

Creative Team

Conductor Carlo Montanaro*
Director Julien Chavaz*
Scenic Design Jamie Vartan*
Costume Design Jean-Jacques Delmotte
Lighting Design Rick Fisher
Movement Direction Nicole Morel*
Wig & Makeup Design David Zimmerman
Chorus Director Susanne Sheston
Fight & Intimacy Director Andrew Moss

Cast

Rigoletto Michael Chioldi+
Gilda Elena Villalón
Duke Duke Kim+
Sparafucile Stephano Park*~
Maddalena Marcela Rahal*~
Monterone Le Bu+
Borsa Ryan Bryce Johnson=
Marullo Ryan Wolfe*=
Count Ceprano Korin Thomas-Smith*=
Countess Ceprano Kayla Nanto*=
Giovanna Simona Genga*=
Page Mary Beth Nelson Zaros=
Usher Evan Lazdowski=

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra & Chorus

*Santa Fe Opera debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, =Current Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, ~American debut

About Michael Chioldi

Michael Chioldi is one of the world's most sought-after dramatic baritones, having been praised by critics and audiences alike for his interpretations of the Verdi, Puccini and Strauss repertoire.

Chioldi has performed at nearly every major American opera house, including **The Metropolitan Opera**, **San Francisco Opera**, **Houston Grand Opera**, **Washington National Opera** and **Los Angeles Opera**. An

alum of the **Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program for Singers** (1992 and 1993), he made his Santa Fe Opera debut in 1993 as the Second Player in Kurt Weill's *The Protagonist*.

His signature roles include Scarpia in *Tosca* with Hawaii Opera Theater, Ft. Worth Opera, New York City Opera, Toledo Opera and Spain's Opera de Oviedo; Jochanaan in *Salome* with Utah Opera, Virginia Opera and the Saito Kinen Festival in Japan; the title role of Macbeth with Michigan Opera Theatre and Palm Beach Opera, Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Washington National Opera, Utah Opera and New Orleans Opera; and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Washington National Opera and in a nationwide broadcast on the PBS television series Live from Lincoln Center, which received an Emmy award in 2008.

Chioldi has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including The Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition (Winner 1995); The MacAllister Competition; The Licia Albanese-Puccini Competition; The Miami Opera Competition; The Sullivan Foundation; and The Anna Case Mackay Award at the Santa Fe Opera.

He received his Bachelor's degree from West Virginia University and his Master's degree from Yale University. His recordings appear on the **Sony Classical**, **BMG**, **Accord** and **Newport Classics** labels.

Learn more about Michael Chioldi at https://www.michaelchioldi.com.

About the 2025 Season

Opening Weekend centers on a new production of Puccini's *La bohème* directed by James Robinson and a revival of 2021's beloved production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* directed by Laurent Pelly. From July 12, the company presents a new production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* by Director Julien Chavaz in an international co-production with Irish National Opera and Opera Zuid. Opening July 19 is Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, staged by Louisa Muller in a Canadian Opera Company production originated at Garsington Opera. Rounding out the season on July 26 is Wagner's masterpiece *Die Walküre*, presented by the company for the first time in a new production by director Melly Still. To best accommodate audiences, all performances of *Die Walküre* will begin at 8:00 pm.

The popular **Apprentice Scenes** featuring the opera's singing and technical Apprentices are reimagined to provide a wider range of performance and training opportunities for tomorrow's stars. The first performance on **August 10** honors the longtime tradition of staged scenes from the operatic repertoire. The second performance on **August 17** features the Apprentice singers in concert alongside the **Santa Fe Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Iván López Reynoso**.

The 2025 Season also brings both innovative and familiar partnerships:

The recently announced "Summer Saturdays in Santa Fe" round-trip transportation package, in collaboration with Rio Metro Regional Transit District, provides patrons from Albuquerque and all communities in between with a convenient way to attend the opera through the addition of a special late-night train service after each Saturday evening performance of the season. For more information, visit www.santafeopera.org/whats-on/rail-runner-train-package.

For the fifth year running, the Santa Fe Opera Opening Nights radio broadcasts on 95.5 KHFM will serve audiences across New Mexico through state-wide translators, as well as national and international listeners via online streaming at khfm.org. Each broadcast features opening night performances recorded live from The Crosby Theatre and airs on the following dates at 6 PM MDT: July 28, August 4, 11, 18 and 25. Broadcasts will remain available for free, on-demand streaming on the santafeopera.org and khfm.org websites for 30 days. For more information, visit www.santafeopera.org/radio-broadcasts.

Says General Director **Robert K. Meya**, "Now more than ever, people are seeking new and memorable experiences. A night at the Santa Fe Opera offers first-time visitors and longtime patrons just that. From live performances to the fun of tailgating, **Preview Dinners**, **Backstage Tours** and free **Prelude Talks**, we have something for everyone. I hope you will join us for a sensational summer of open-air opera!"

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.

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