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THE
SANTA FE
OPERA



The Santa Fe Opera Names **Kevin Murphy** Director of the **Apprentice Program for Singers** and **Susanne Sheston** Associate Director

Acclaimed pianist, coach and educator Murphy joins Santa Fe Opera Chorus Director Sheston in leading the renowned program into the Santa Fe Opera's 70th Season; **applications for the 2027 Apprentice Singer class reopen September 10–12**

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Santa Fe, NM — The Santa Fe Opera is pleased to announce the appointment of acclaimed pianist, vocal coach and educator **Kevin Murphy** as Director of the **Apprentice Program for Singers** and celebrated, longtime Santa Fe Opera Chorus Director **Susanne Sheston** as Associate Director. Together, Murphy and Sheston will lead one of the nation's most respected professional training programs for emerging opera singers as the program approaches its seventh decade and the company prepares for the 70th Festival Season in 2027.

Founded in 1957 as an integral part of **John Crosby's** vision for the Santa Fe Opera, the program was the first of its kind in the United States to give young singers transitioning from academic study to professional careers meaningful opportunities to learn, rehearse and perform within a fully professional opera company. Each summer, approximately 40 young vocalists are selected through a highly competitive audition process to spend the summer in Santa Fe, where they perform in the chorus and named roles in mainstage productions, cover principal artists, receive intensive coaching and master classes and audition for leading opera companies and artist managers. The program has welcomed more than 1,500 artists and helped launch the careers of internationally acclaimed singers including **Joyce DiDonato, Michael Fabiano, John Holiday, Kate Lindsey, Will Liverman, Rachel Willis-Sørensen** and many others. Alumni have also gone on to distinguished careers as coaches, educators and arts administrators throughout the field.

In conjunction with the leadership announcement, **the Santa Fe Opera will reopen applications for the**

2027 Apprentice Program for Singers from **September 10 through 12**, providing additional singers the opportunity to be considered for the program's first class under Murphy and Sheston's leadership. Approximately 40 Apprentice Singers will be selected for the 2027 program, which runs **May 27** through **August 28**. Selected singers perform and cover roles in mainstage productions, receive individual coaching and master classes, participate in industry auditions, appear in the company's annual Apprentice Scenes and Concert performances and serve as members of the acclaimed Santa Fe Opera Chorus. Live auditions will take place in **Cincinnati, New York, Houston** and **San Francisco** in October. Application information and the YAP Tracker link are available at www.santafeopera.org/company/singers/singers-application-info.

"Kevin Murphy is one of the most respected teachers, mentors, coaches and conductors of young singers working today, and we are thrilled to welcome him into this important leadership role," said General Director **Robert K. Meya**. "Pairing Kevin and Susanne's extraordinary breadth of experience and their deep knowledge of our company, our artists and the Apprentice Program for Singers gives us an exceptional team to guide the next generation of singers. Developing young artists has been fundamental to the Santa Fe Opera since our very first season, and I can think of no better way to carry that commitment into our 70th Season and beyond. As Kevin and Susanne prepare to welcome their first class of Apprentice Singers, we're also pleased to reopen applications and offer additional emerging artists the opportunity to become part of this extraordinary program."

Murphy brings decades of experience at the highest levels of operatic performance, training and artist development. He is Professor of Music in Collaborative Piano and Director of Coaching and Music Administration for the **IU Jacobs School of Music Opera and Ballet Theater** at the **Indiana University Jacobs School of Music**, where he has served on the faculty since 2011. Since that same year, he has served as Artistic Director of the Singers Program at **Ravinia's Steans Institute**, where he will continue through the 2027 Season. Murphy has also served as Director of Music Administration and Casting Advisor at **New York City Opera** and Director of Musical Studies at the **Opéra national de Paris**. Earlier in his career, he became the first pianist and vocal coach to join the **Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program** and subsequently served as an assistant conductor at the Met from 1993 to 2006. He has also previously worked with Santa Fe Opera artists as a guest vocal coach.

Murphy notes, "The Santa Fe Opera has played an extraordinary role in developing young singers for nearly seven decades, and I am honored to become part of that tradition. What makes this program so distinctive is that its singers are not learning at the margins of a professional opera company — they are essential participants in its artistic life. I look forward to working with Susanne, the artistic leadership and the entire company to give these exceptional young artists the training, opportunities and support they need to take the next steps in their careers."

Murphy's appointment builds upon an established artistic relationship between the **Santa Fe Opera** and the **Indiana University Jacobs School of Music**, with the **IU Jacobs School of Music Opera and Ballet Theater** having previously presented Santa Fe Opera productions. Most notably, IU joined the Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera and San Francisco Opera as a co-producer of Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's ***The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs***, which received its world premiere in Santa Fe in 2017 and its collegiate premiere at Indiana University the following year. The Santa Fe Opera's live recording of the work subsequently received the 2019 **GRAMMY Award** for Best Opera Recording.

Meya adds, “Kevin’s appointment also creates an exciting opportunity to deepen the Santa Fe Opera’s longstanding relationship with the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Our institutions share a commitment to developing young artists and advancing the operatic art form, and we look forward to exploring new possibilities together — from artist training and professional development to future collaborations.”

Chorus Director, teacher, mentor, coach, conductor and passionate advocate for vocal arts training Susanne Sheston brings nearly two decades of experience with the Santa Fe Opera and an intimate knowledge of the program and its singers, having prepared nearly twenty classes of Apprentice Singers for the demanding and acclaimed choral work at the heart of the company’s repertory, earning consistent critical acclaim. *The New York Times’* Zachary Woolfe has called the Santa Fe Opera Chorus, “drawn from the company’s young artist program and directed by Susanne Sheston,” “as always a wonder.” Most recently, reviewing the 2026 Season for the *Dallas Morning News*, Scott Cantrell observed that “All five operas included excellent choral contributions, with festival apprentices prepared by chorus director Susanne Sheston.”

Susanne has also played an active role in the selection and artistic development of Apprentice Singers, including the audition process for recent seasons. “The Apprentice Singers are at the heart of this company, and working with them has been one of the great privileges of my career,” reflects Sheston. “Every summer we welcome a new group of extraordinary young artists and watch them grow through the unique combination of rigorous preparation, professional responsibility and artistic discovery that happens in Santa Fe. I’m delighted to work alongside Kevin in shaping the next chapter of a program I care about so deeply.”

The 2027 Apprentice Singers will participate in the Santa Fe Opera’s 70th Anniversary Season, running **July 2** through **August 28**. In addition to their work throughout the mainstage season, the singers will receive individual coaching and professional development opportunities and be featured in the company’s annual Apprentice Scenes and Concert performances.

Apprentice Scenes

August 15, 2027

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 22, 2027

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 conducted by Erina Yashima

About Kevin Murphy

Kevin Murphy is Professor of Music in Collaborative Piano and Director of Coaching and Music Administration for Indiana University Opera Theater at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. A leading pianist, coach and educator in the field of classical vocal music, he has served as Artistic Director of the Singers Program at Ravinia's Steans Institute since 2011 and has held leadership positions at New York City Opera and the Opéra National de Paris. He spent more than a decade on the music staff of the Metropolitan Opera and has collaborated with leading singers in recital and performance around the world. Murphy holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Master of Music in Piano Accompanying from the Curtis Institute of Music.

About Susanne Sheston

Susanne Sheston made her Santa Fe Opera debut as Chorus Director in 2008 and has since prepared the company's acclaimed chorus — drawn principally from the Apprentice Program for Singers — across nearly two decades of repertory. In addition to her work on the company's mainstage productions, she has been closely involved in the training, preparation and selection of generations of Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Singers.

About the Apprentice Program for Singers

Established with the founding of the Santa Fe Opera in 1957, the Apprentice Program for Singers was the first program of its kind in America and has provided professional training, performance opportunities and international exposure to more than 1,500 young singers transitioning from academic study to professional careers. Apprentice Singers perform as members of the Santa Fe Opera Chorus, sing named roles and cover principal artists while receiving coaching, master classes and opportunities to audition for leaders of opera companies and artist management firms from across the United States and abroad.

About the 2027 Season

In 2027, the Santa Fe Opera celebrates its **70th Season** with a lineup of classic, lesser-performed and new works, new leadership appointments, and a trio of American premieres in 2026, 2027 and 2028. The 2027 Season offers **38 performances**, including an American premiere, two new productions, a beloved revival and a new-to-SFO production. Running **July 2** through **August 28**, the season examines the many dimensions of power — sovereign, social, romantic and political — as expressed through mythic spectacle, comic subversion, psychological intimacy and historical reckoning.

The 70th Season opens on **July 2** with Puccini's *Turandot*, returning to Santa Fe by overwhelming audience demand for the first time since 2005. This new-to-Santa-Fe staging is adapted from a highly acclaimed production that originated in Bari, Italy, directed by **Paul Curran**. Rossini's beloved comedy *The Barber of Seville*, a revival of the company's lauded 2022 production directed by **Stephen Barlow**, follows on **July 3**. At the center of the season is a new production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, opening **July 17** and directed by **Amy Lane** in her company debut. Janáček's powerful drama *Káťa Kabanová* arrives on **July 24**, directed by **David Pountney** with SFO Music Director **Harry Bicket** at the podium. The season culminates in the American premiere of *Of One Blood* on **July 31**, an international co-commission and co-production with the **Bavarian State Opera**, with music by Australian composer **Brett Dean** and a libretto by **Heather Betts**. The 2027 Season will also feature two Apprentice Programs mainstage presentations: a staged evening of **Apprentice Scenes** on **August 15**, with production elements conceived and executed by the company's **Technical Apprentices**, followed by a **Gala Concert** featuring the **Apprentice Singers** and the **Santa Fe Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Erina Yashima** on **August 22**.

Says General Director Robert K. Meya, "Each of these works is a masterpiece in its own right. Together, they form one of the most compelling seasons we have ever assembled. From monumental repertory to the American premiere of a major contemporary opera, our 70th Season affirms the Santa Fe Opera's commitment to artistic ambition while engaging audiences with works that resonate across time and culture. There is truly something for everyone at the Santa Fe Opera — I hope you will join us!"

Individual tickets and subscriptions for both the 2026 and 2027 Seasons are on sale now at santafeopera.org.

About The Santa Fe Opera

Recognized in 2022 as "Festival of the Year" at the **International Opera Awards**, the Santa Fe Opera annually draws 70,000 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.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility at the Santa Fe Opera

Opera has the power to speak truth, broaden perspectives and invite empathy. The Santa Fe Opera is committed to the continuous work of becoming an antiracist and anti-oppressive organization and incorporating the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Our goal is to create a joyful

and engaging environment in which a diverse community of artists, staff, volunteers and audiences alike belong.

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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