



Opera in Santa Fe

Summer music in the mountains of New Mexico

27 July– 3 August 2025 (ML 750)

7 nights • £6,570

Flights are not included

Lecturer: Dr John Allison

One of the world's great summer opera festivals in the spectacular setting of the New Mexico mountains.

The line-up for 2025: *Rigoletto* (Verdi); *Die Walküre* (Wagner); *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart); *The Turn of the Screw* (Britten); *La Bohème* (Puccini).

Santa Fe is small, charming, colourful with excellent museums, galleries and historic sites.

Performances are introduced by John Allison and interspersed with optional visits; we allow time to acclimatise on arrival.

Established in 1957, Santa Fe Opera was the brainchild of New York conductor John Crosby, who felt a home-grown opera company would provide a fertile training ground for young American talent – as well as the ideal complement to Santa Fe's celebrated arts scene.

From the start, the company attracted exceptional musicians – Stravinsky conducted and directed here in the 50s – and, over the years, has developed an international reputation for premiering new work and mounting innovative productions of the classic repertoire. Its 'Apprentice Programme' has now trained over 1,500 opera singers, including stars such as Joyce DiDonato and James Morris.

We see all five productions of the 2025 season: Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Wagner's *Walküre*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Britten's *Turn of the Screw* and Puccini's *Bohème*. Our lecturer introduces the performances through a series of talks. The evenings are further enhanced by the opera house itself. Now in its third incarnation, it is open to the sides linking the audience with the landscape beyond. Glimpsing the setting sun over the desert foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains is yet another highlight.

The small town of Santa Fe shares this backdrop of rolling hills and shadowed peaks, and its green and pleasant streets are celebrated for their sophisticated mix of galleries and boutiques, as well as for some of the oldest buildings in the United States. Colonised by the Spanish in the early seventeenth century, recaptured by the native Pueblo Indians in 1680, ruled by Mexico following their War of Independence and finally becoming part of the



Santa Fe Opera theatre, photo courtesy of Santa Fe Opera.

United States in 1846, the city's museums tell a fascinating story.

We stay in a comfortable hotel in the centre of town, and a fifteen-minute drive to the opera house. From here there is a gentle programme of visits and excursions, including a journey deep into the surrounding countryside to see the cliff-dwellings at the Bandelier National Monument.

Itinerary

Flights are not included (see 'Practicalities').

Day 1: Santa Fe. Your room is available from 3.00pm. The tour begins with supper in the hotel restaurant at c. 8.30pm.

Day 2. A leisurely start to the tour with a 10.00am lecture to introduce the festival. Walk round the main plaza, the historic and contemporary hub of Santa Fe. Visit the low-slung, adobe Palace of the Governors, from where Spain controlled the American southwest in the 17th century. Adjacent is the New Mexico Museum of History which gives an excellent overview from Spanish colonisation to the creation of the atom bomb. The afternoon is free for rest or further exploration.

Day 3. Morning lecture on tonight's performance. Walk to the New Mexico Museum of Art, a wide-ranging collection but particularly good for landscapes of the region. There is the option of continuing to the museum of Santa Fe's most celebrated artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. The afternoon is free until dinner at 5.00pm. *Opera at 8.00pm: Rigoletto* (Giuseppe Verdi) with Carlo Montanaro (conductor), Julien Chavaz (director). Gerardo Bullón (*Rigoletto*), Elena Villalón (*Gilda*), Duke Kim (Duke), Stephano Park (*Sparafucile*), Marcela Rahal (*Maddalena*), Le Bu (*Monterone*).

Day 4. Morning lecture followed by a short drive to Museum Hill. We recommend visiting the botanical gardens, the museum dedicated to Indian arts and culture, and the Museum of International Folk Art (visits are not guided). Return to the hotel for some free time before driving to the opera house for a backstage tour (this is a public tour) followed by buffet dinner. *8.00pm opera: Die Walküre* (Richard Wagner) with James Gaffigan (conductor) and Melly Still (director). Tamara Wilson (*Brünnhilde*), Ryan Speedo Green (*Wotan*), Jamez McCorkle (*Siegmond*), Vida Miknevičiūtė (*Sieglinde*),

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Sarah Saturnino (Fricka), Soloman Howard (Hunding).

Day 5. Morning lecture. The rest of the morning and early afternoon are free. We suggest a walk with our tour manager to Canyon Road, an attractive avenue of commercial galleries, some of them renowned dealers in fine arts. Also here is the adobe San Miguel Mission church, built by Tlaxcalan Indians from Mexico in the early 1600s. Return to the hotel for some free time followed by dinner. **8.00pm opera: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) with Harry Bicket (conductor) and Laurent Pelly (director). Florian Sempey (Count Almaviva), Marina Monzó (Countess Almaviva), Riccardo Fassi (Figaro), Liv Redpath (Susanna), Hongni Wu (Cherubino), Maurizio Muraro (Bartolo), Lucy Schaufser (Marcellina), Steven Cole (Don Basilio).**

Day 6. Drive into the increasingly remote and beautiful landscape of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. In a wooded canyon at the Bandelier National Monument visit the cliff dwellings and village remains of the Ancestral Pueblo people – resident here until around 1550 (c. 1¼ mile trail on foot). The afternoon is free back in Santa Fe. Lecture and dinner before driving to the opera house. **8.00pm opera: *The Turn of the Screw* (Benjamin Britten) with Gemma New (conductor) and Louisa Muller (director). Jacquelyn Stucker (Governess), Brenton Ryan (Peter Quint), Christine Rice (Mrs. Grose), Wendy Bryn Harmer (Miss Jessel).**

Day 7. The day is free after the morning lecture. Suggestions include the various commercial galleries and installation spaces in the 'Railyard District'. Dinner before leaving for the opera house. **8.00pm opera: *La Bohème* (Giacomo Puccini) with Iván López-Reynoso (conductor) and James Robinson (director). Sylvia D'Eramo (Mimi), Long Long (Rodolfo), Szymon Mechliński (Marcello), Emily Pogorelc (Musetta), Soloman Howard (Colline), Efraín Solís (Schaunard), Kevin Burdette (Benoît/Alcindoro).**

Day 8. Free morning in Santa Fe. You can keep your room until 12.00 noon. The tour manager accompanies an early afternoon coach transfer to Albuquerque Airport.

If you wish to extend your stay in Santa Fe, we are happy to book extra nights at our hotel.

Lecturer

John Allison. Editor of *Opera* magazine and music critic. He was born in South Africa and completed his PhD degree while playing the piano and working as assistant organist at Cape Town cathedral. Since moving to London in 1989 he has written for publications around the world, authored two books and served on the juries of many international competitions. He co-founded the International Opera Awards in 2013. He reviews for the *Daily Telegraph* and has previously held positions as music critic on *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Times*.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £6,570. **Single occupancy:** £7,670. *Flights are not included (see below).*

Included: Private coach throughout; hotel accommodation; top category tickets for 5 operas; all breakfasts and 7 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admission charges; all tips; all state taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Getting to Santa Fe: Flights are not included in the price of the tour. On day 1, our tour leaders fly from London Heathrow to Albuquerque (via Dallas Fort Worth) on a British Airways flight arriving at approximately 5:30pm. On the last day, they fly back to London from Albuquerque at approximately 5:00pm. You are welcome to join them on these flights. We also provide airport transfers to meet the recommended flights from/to London. For those not joining the transfers, there is a reduction in price (please contact us for more information).

Visas: British citizens can enter the USA without a visa by applying for a visa waiver online. We will advise on this. *If you have travelled to Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since March 2011 you are not eligible for the waiver and will need to apply for a visa.*

Accommodation. La Fonda on the Plaza (www.lafondasantafe.com): located in the heart of town, on Santa Fe Plaza, the hotel blends historic charm with modern amenities. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? The journey to Santa Fe (from the UK) is tiring and the high altitude (7,000ft) and summer heat can exacerbate this (although the heat is dry and it is much cooler at night). The daily programme of visits is not intended to be taxing but a good level of fitness is required to cope with the itinerary. Daytime temperatures average 29°C (82 °F); evening temperatures 12°C (54°F).

Average distance by coach each day: 33 miles (including the transfer from/to Albuquerque).

Group size: between 10 and 24 participants.