

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contact:

Jennifer Colgan
Director of Marketing and Communications
303.468.2025 | jcolgan@operacolorado.org

Opera Colorado Presents *Samson and Delilah*

The opulent production will be directed by Keturah Stickann and feature a cast of Opera Colorado favorites alongside an exciting debut

This will be the first time this opera has been performed at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House since 1987

Denver, CO (April 11, 2024)—Opera Colorado presents Saint-Saëns’s *Samson and Delilah*, opening Saturday, May 4 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, with additional performances on Tuesday, May 7; Friday, May 10; and Sunday, May 12 (Mother’s Day).

Samson and Delilah tells the ancient story of Samson, a man gifted with immense strength, and his relationship with Delilah, a woman who betrays him by revealing the secret of his strength to his enemies. The tale is renowned for its themes of power and freedom, and it has been adapted into various forms of literature, art, and entertainment over the centuries. This production of Saint-Saëns’s retelling breathes life into the narrative with the spectacular vocals, thrilling music, and visual spectacle only grand opera can provide.

"Returning to the Ellie after nearly four decades, *Samson and Delilah* is a masterpiece of French opera that seamlessly combines music, drama, and dance. As we conclude a season rich with Italian and German operatic treasures, this production stands as a thrilling finale. With a stellar cast and the full power of the Opera Colorado Orchestra and Chorus—all intertwined in a tale filled with passion, betrayal, and human struggle—this is an event not to be missed," says Greg Carpenter, The Ellie Caulkins General and Artistic Director.

The production will be directed by **Keturah Stickann**, who directed Opera Colorado’s 2022 production of *Carmen*. Leading in the two title roles are **tenor Rafael Davila** (*Tosca*, 2021), who was praised for a “robust and hot-blooded performance” after his recent appearance at the Metropolitan Opera, and **mezzo-soprano Katharine Goeldner**, making her Opera Colorado debut. *The Virginia Gazette* said, “As Delilah, Katharine Goeldner regaled us with her rich, creamy mezzo-soprano...a delight to watch and a mighty exciting thing to hear.”

Two Opera Colorado favorites round out the cast: **baritone Nmon Ford** returns as the High Priest of Dagon after charming audiences as Escamillo in Opera Colorado’s 2022 production of *Carmen*, and **bass Christian Zarembo** returns as Abimelech after his portrayal of both Monterone and Sparafucile in our 2022 production of *Rigoletto*. **Rachael Harding**, who has choreographed several productions on our stage including *The Barber of Seville* and *The Shining*, lends her talents to the opera’s epic dance sequences featuring local dancers Chloe Abel, Abigail Corrigan, Claire Fisher, Henry McCall, Sydney McCall, and Martez McKinzy.

Music Director **Ari Pelto** leads the Opera Colorado Orchestra in Saint-Saëns's luxurious score, which includes the Bacchanale—a famous showstopper that is often performed as a standalone concert piece by symphonies around the world. Maestro Pelto's son, Alessio, will appear as a supernumerary in act three! He will portray the boy who leads a blind Samson to the pillars that ultimately collapse when Samson takes down himself and his enemies in a final feat of strength.

Patrons attending opening night can expand their experience with an additional ticket to our **Opening Night Dinner**, which includes a delectable three-course meal before the performance. Tickets can be purchased on operacolorado.org. Opening Night Dinner tickets do not include tickets to the performance.

Tickets for the full production, ranging from \$39-\$210, are available at operacolorado.org. For more information about current and future programming at Opera Colorado, contact Jennifer Colgan at jcolgan@operacolorado.org.

Samson and Delilah is sponsored by Johnson Storage & Moving.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

Music by Camille Saint-Saëns
Libretto by Ferdinand Lemaire
Premiered December 2, 1877, Ducal Theatre, Weimar

MAY 4, 7, 10, 12

Ellie Caulkins Opera House at the Denver Performing Arts Complex
Performed in French, with English and Spanish subtitles at every seat.

Estimated Length: 2 hours and 50 minutes, including two intermissions

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

RAFAEL DAVILA | Samson
CHRISTIAN ZAREMBA | Abimelech
NMON FORD | High Priest of Dagon
JOSHUA ZABATTA | First Philistine
ALEXANDER GRANITO** | Second Philistine
RANDY HO** | Philistine Messenger
TURNER STATON** | Old Hebrew Man
KATHARINE GOELDNER* | Delilah
OPERA COLORADO CHORUS
OPERA COLORADO ORCHESTRA

CREATIVE TEAM

ARI PELTO | Conductor
SAHAR NOURI | Chorus Master & Assistant Conductor
KETURAH STICKANN | Stage Director
NATHAN SALAZAR | Répétiteur
RACHAEL HARDING | Choreographer
FRANCES RABALAI | Fight & Intimacy Director
PETER DEAN BECK | Set Designer
J. ISODORA KRECH | Lighting Designer
RONELL OLIVERI | Wig & Makeup Designer

Scenery provided by Pittsburgh Opera.
Costumes provided by Sarasota Opera Association, Inc.
Additional costumes designed by Madison Booth and built by the Opera Colorado Costume Shop

Opera United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing Scenic, Costume, Lighting, Sound and Projection designers in Live Performance.

*Opera Colorado debut

**Opera Colorado Artist in Residence

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For a complete list of biographies, visit operacolorado.org.

Rafael Davila | Samson



Recent engagements for Puerto Rican tenor **Rafael Davila** include his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in *Carmen* (Don José), *Manon Lescaut* (Des Grieux) for San Francisco Opera, Liceu de Barcelona and Opera de Valencia, the world-premiere of Jimmy Lopez's *Bel Canto* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* at the Teatro San Carlo di Napoli and the Macerata Festival in Italy, *Aida* for Valencia, and his debut at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg in a Zarzuela Gala Concert. In the 2021-22 Season, he performed in *Tosca* (Cavaradossi) with Opera Colorado, *Turandot* (Calaf) for the Evansville Philharmonic, *Carmen* (Don José) for Opera de Puerto Rico opposite Puerto Rican diva Ana Maria Martinez, and returned to the Metropolitan Opera for productions of *Tosca* and *Don Carlos*. His engagements in the 2022-23 Season included a return to Sarasota Opera for *Ermani*, the Metropolitan Opera for *Don Carlo*, and a new production of Cherubini's *Medea*, *Pagliacci* for the Pittsburgh Festival Opera, and *Tosca* with Opera Memphis. Rafael has appeared in the Zarzuelas *Los Gavilanes*, *Luisa Fernanda*, *Maria La O*, *Cecilia Valdés*, and *El Huesped del Sevillano*. He has been nominated two times at The Grammy Awards for the recordings of Ariel Ramírez's *Misa Criolla* and Rafael Hernández's operetta *Cofresi*.

Christian Zarembo | Abimelech



French-American bass Christian Zarembo, hailed for “stealing the evening” (*The Washington Post*) and being “ideally cast as the assassin Sparafucile, emerging from the shadows with his seething bass-baritone,” is equally at home under the lights of an operatic drama and concert stage. In the 2022-23 Season, Mr. Zarembo made debuts with Opera Colorado in *Rigoletto* (Monterone and Sparafucile), Seattle Opera in *La traviata* (Marchese d’Obigny), and with Bard Festival in Saint-Saëns’s *Henry VIII* (“Le Legat” Campeggio). In the 2021-22 Season, Christian Zarembo debuted the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Austin Opera, made company debuts with L’Opéra de Montréal and Des Moines Metro Opera in *Die Zauberflöte* (Sarastro), Berkshire Opera Festival in *Don Giovanni* (Leporello), and *La bohème* (Colline) with New Orleans Opera. In Europe, he sang in *Die Zauberflöte* (Sarastro) with the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, and, in concert, Verdi’s Requiem with the Sacramento Choral Society and Orchestra and Taneyev’s *At the Reading of a Psalm* with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Nmon Ford | High Priest of Dagon



Panamanian-American baritone Nmon Ford's recent highlights include his exceptionally reviewed performances in *Don Giovanni* at Dorset Festival Opera in the UK, and in the new Metropolitan Opera production of *Porgy & Bess* (Crown) at London's English National Opera and at Dutch National Opera in The Netherlands. In Denver, he joined Opera Colorado's *Carmen* (Escamillo), a role he also sang at Calgary Opera in Canada and in London at English National Opera. Other highlights include *Salome* (Jochanaan) with Patricia Racette at Pittsburgh Opera, *Fidelio* (Don Pizarro) with Christine Goerke at Cincinnati Opera, *Madama Butterfly* (Sharpless) at Detroit Opera, and *Otello* (Iago) in concert with Atlanta Symphony with Russell Thomas in the title role. Earlier in his career, Mr. Ford sang often at Hamburg State Opera in Germany and appeared in *Tosca* (Scarpia), *Il trovatore* (Count Di Luna), the title role in *Billy Budd*, *Death in Venice* (The Traveler), and *Iphigenie et Tauride* (Thoas) under the baton of Simone Young.

Katharine Goeldner | Delilah



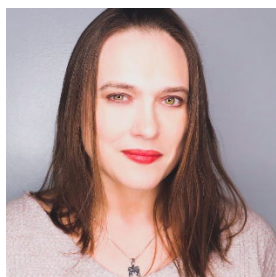
Katharine Goeldner's unique gifts have taken her to stages and concert platforms throughout the U.S. and Europe in an astonishing range of repertory. Katharine's performances in recent seasons include *Samson and Delilah* (Delilah) at Virginia Opera; *Das Rheingold* (Fricka) at Minnesota Opera; *Der Rosenkavalier* (Annina) at The Metropolitan Opera; *Salome* (Herodias) with the Minnesota Orchestra, Tulsa Opera, and at Bard College; *Eugene Onegin* (Madam Larina) at the Santa Fe Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Die tote Stadt* (Brigitta) in Toulouse; *Le nozze di Figaro* (Marcellina) at the Dutch National Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago; and Ricky Ian Gordon and Michael Korie's *The Grapes of Wrath* (Ma Joad) at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. She created the role of Jackie Onassis in *JFK* at Fort Worth Opera and later at Opéra de Montreal. An Iowa native, Katharine studied at Salzburg's Mozarteum.

Ari Pelto | Conductor



Ari Pelto was appointed in 2015 as Opera Colorado's first-ever music director. His "breathtaking wizardry in the pit" (*The Denver Post*) has been widely celebrated, with Pelto in demand at opera houses and concert halls throughout the United States. At the age of 24, Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival, and he has since gone on to conduct worldwide. International engagements include performances with Bochumer Philharmoniker and opera productions at New National Theatre of Tokyo and the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City Opera, conducting *La traviata*, after which he became a regular, returning for productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *La bohème*, and *Carmen*. Recent successes include performances of *The Nutcracker* with Atlanta Ballet and *The Flying Dutchman* with Utah Opera.

Keturah Stickann | Director



Born and raised in the Midwest, Keturah Stickann had a career as a classical and contemporary dancer, performing extensively in opera. Subsequently, her work as a stage director has been seen in many opera houses across the United States and Canada, as well as in Chile, Japan, France, Germany, Hungary, and Australia. A champion of new American opera, she has worked extensively with director and librettist, Leonard Foglia, and has helped to bring new operas to the stage by Ricky Ian Gordon, Jennifer Higdon, and Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer among others. In a creative solution for the COVID era, some of her more recent productions include the drive-in versions of *La bohème* and *The Barber of*

Seville for San Diego Opera. Other recent productions include *Salome* at Madison Opera, *Don Giovanni* at Minnesota Opera, and *Intimate Apparel* at Chautauqua. Keturah is an Artistic Advisor at Knoxville Opera.

Rachael Harding | Choreographer



For the past twenty-plus years, Rachael Harding has built her career around dance—as a professional dancer, teacher, and choreographer. She received her B.F.A. in Dance and a B.S. in Business Management from the University of Arizona and a M.F.A. in Dance from the University of Colorado, Boulder. She began her professional career as a dancer in Denver’s Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. She is currently the resident choreographer for Denver’s professional jazz dance company, Davis Contemporary Dance Company, a performer with Nu-World Contemporary Dance Theatre, co-owner/director of Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop, and owner/director of Miss Rachael’s Dance in Denver, where she is inspired to share her passion for the arts with young dancers every day. She has had the distinct honor of dancing in past Opera Colorado productions, including *Nixon in China*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *Rusalka*, and *Josephine*, and choreographing for *Rusalka*, *Aida*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Josephine*, *The Shining*, and *Die tote Stadt*.

###

ABOUT OPERA COLORADO

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver’s cultural community since 1983. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, the company affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Artist in Residence Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and by each year reaching more than 45,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. For more information, visit operacolorado.org.