

Techno-infused opera about Steve Jobs gets new backers

May 9 2017, by Morgan Lee



Santa Fe Opera General Director Charles MacKay announces that a techno-infused opera about the life of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs will eventually travel to San Francisco, Seattle and Indiana, at a news conference Tuesday, May 9, 2017, in Santa Fe, N.M. The Santa Fe Opera is preparing for its July world premiere of "The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs" at its open-air summer stage in the foothills of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains. (AP Photo/Morgan Lee)

A techno-infused opera about the life of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs has earned the financial backing of opera companies in San Francisco and Seattle, ensuring the musical meditation on the iconic entrepreneur will travel to America's high-tech enclave.

The partnerships were announced Tuesday as the Santa Fe Opera prepared for its July world premiere of "The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs" at its open-air summer stage in the foothills of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

The Seattle Opera and the San Francisco Opera are underwriting both the already completed artistic creation of the opera, led by composer and electronica DJ Mason Bates, and its physical stage production. As co-producers, the companies guarantee their right to performances beyond Santa Fe in California and Washington. The Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University also has signed on as a co-producer.

Job's life story, as the relentless technology pioneer who embraced Buddhism and simple vegetarian family dinners, has been the subject of documentaries, books, a feature film and a graphic novel since his death from cancer in 2011.

Sponsors of the Jobs opera are counting on Bates and librettist Mark Campbell to deliver a "deeply layered, moving portrayal of a man grappling with the complex priorities of life, family and work," in the words of San Francisco opera General Manager Matthew Shilvock.

"He was also a real person and a member of our community," Shilvock said of Jobs in a written announcement.

Charles MacKay, general director of the Santa Fe Opera, said Jobs provides the "sort of heroic, tragic figure" that operas have explored for centuries—who also may lure new and younger audiences to

metropolitan opera houses.

"The proof is in the pudding and in how the audience responds," MacKay told the Associated Press. "This is not an opera about technology, although it will be the highest technology production that we've ever done. It is an opera about relationships, and it is an opera about human frailties. ... He could be a very difficult man."

Accompaniments include a live orchestra, guitar, natural sounds and expressive electronics—sounds tailored to the man who first won fame and fortune during the microcomputer revolution of the 1970s and 80s with partner Steve Wozniak as they introduced the pivotal Apple II and Macintosh computers.

Fired by Apple in 1984, Jobs went into the visual effects industry at Pixar before his return to Apple as CEO to preside over the heyday of the early iPhone and related gadgets—also becoming a music and media mogul.

MacKay cautioned that "The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs" could take a few years to reach the Bay Area and beyond—normal delays in the painstaking opera planning cycle.

Investments as a co-producer can pay financial dividends if the opera sells tickets and eventually travels the country, or world. The Santa Fe Opera brokered a collaborative hit with other companies with the 2015 opera premiere of "Cold Mountain," adapted from the 1997 novel and popular film.

Seed money for the Jobs [opera](#) was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

From Santa Fe, MacKay has been outspoken in pushing back against

President Donald Trump's proposed elimination of the endowment from the federal budget, with funding recently extended through the end of the current fiscal year in September.

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