



# FIESTA MELODRAMA

**Directed by Robyn Rikoon and Andy Primm | Produced by Santa Fe Playhouse**

## **A BIT OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

What would you do if you found yourself in the wrong timeline, because somewhere, somewhen, somebody messed up, bad? Would you try to fix things, or would you make do with your new reality? Would you notice the changes right away, or would they accumulate so quietly you may not realize you're living in a fascist state until it's too late? (Sorry, too real? That was probably too real.)

Santa Fe is a city of opposites, of desert heat and mountain cold, old and young, rich and poor, newcomers and those who were "born here all their life." It is more than a tourist trap, much more than the place your one weird aunt goes to buy beads and attend a spiritual retreat in the woods. Its history is as complex as its cultural makeup, with an underlying theme of both transformation and continuity. Anyone who grew up here will return, years later, to find a town shockingly different (there are two Walmarts now?) and also, somehow, reassuringly familiar. The town stays the same... just like our jokes!

Written fresh each year by a "courageously anonymous group of local heroes," the Santa Fe Fiesta Melodrama is an annual event, a goofy stage play tackling issues both petty and serious. Some muddy history, misunderstandings, and clerical errors have led us to dub this year The Third Annual 99th Annual Fiesta Melodrama. It's a homegrown, totally organic local tradition - although it was created by newcomers. It's a musical satire that lampoons the current events and personalities of our beloved town, a very silly show with a very sober commitment to making fun of Santa Fe.

Melodrama is an old art form, exaggerated, straightforward, and unpretentious. Audience participation is highly encouraged, with boos for the villains, cheers for the heroes, and the occasional heckle. Characters talk directly to the audience, breaking the "fourth wall" and insulting them right back. It was odd enough for a theatre company to decide to make a movie, but even more paradoxical to put together a socially-distanced, prerecorded production, when the Melodrama so often feeds on its live audience. But we tried our best. And if that's not good enough for you... BOOOO!



There may not be as many “insider” jokes as usual, but there are still some to be found. A helpful glossary of terms has been provided for those of you who weren’t born here all your life. That way everyone, cosmopolitan or puro Santa, can enjoy the fun. (Besides, there’s no better way to make a joke funnier than by explaining it, unbidden, in great detail!)

Though related to Fiestas, the Melodrama is its own distinct entity, a comedy with the power (indeed, the obligation) to parody (and when necessary, call out) respected Santa Fe institutions. The first Melodrama was performed almost 100 years ago, when the world was a different place... in some ways. In others, they are eerily similar. This year the writers had little trouble finding parallels between the issues of 1920 and 2020. The Melo has borne derision in the past for being too simple, too silly, but therein lies its beauty. The Melodrama never lets plot get in the way of a good story—or a bad joke.

**- Isabel Madley, Dramaturg**





## A HELPFUL GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Fiestas de Santa Fe** is an annual tradition, the significance of which varies, depending on who you ask! Originally a Catholic celebration, Fiestas de Santa Fe has gone through as many changes as the city itself. While the Catholic rites remain an integral element, there is also the pageantry of De Vargas and the Fiesta Queen, the bizarre primeval burning of Zozobra, the arts and crafts fairs that take over the Plaza, the children's pet parade, and the Historical/Hysterical Parade, a mishmash of 1920s Fiesta and the counterculture that parodied it. Fiestas has something for everyone, and it means something different to everyone.



The White House Dry Goods store in the Catron Building (ca. 1915)

**Catron Building** is the home to the corrupt Santa Fe Ring in the late 19th and early 20th century, namely the notorious attorney and senator Thomas Catron, known for his shady land dealings and spoiled beef sales to Native Americans (seriously).

**PRC** is the mysterious New Mexico Public Regulation Commission, which “regulates the utilities, telecommunications, and motor carrier industries to ensure fair and reasonable rates, and to assure reasonable and adequate services to the public as provided by law.” That’s from their website. Your guess is as good as ours.



The Claire (ca. 1917), touted as the first fireproof hotel in town...and which burned down in the 1940s.

**PNM** - New Mexico's electric company

**Zozobra** is a counter-culture addition to Fiestas created 1924 by artist Will Shuster, a monstrous effigy called “Old Man Gloom,” burned to the ground each year with great ceremony (and yes, lots of partying) in an effort to cleanse the community of its worries, fears, and pain.

**Tio Coco** is a spinoff of Zozobra, created in 2018 solely for the entertainment of visiting politicians... and no one else!

**BizMix** is a now-defunct community networking organization

**Bill Richardson** - Former Democratic governor of New Mexico (2003-2011), with a questionable record.

142 E. De Vargas Street, Santa Fe, NM | 505.988.4262 | [playhouse@santafeplayhouse.org](mailto:playhouse@santafeplayhouse.org)



**Susana Martinez** - Former Republican governor of New Mexico (2011-2019), infamous for her debaucherous pizza parties.

Some of our **heroes** are inspired by famous historical figures, and others by local, familiar archetypes of Santa Fe.

**Liz Otero-Warren**, a scholar and devoted historian, inspired by groundbreaking Latina politician and suffragette Adelina “Nina” Otero-Warren, one of New Mexico’s first female officials, and by the many archaeologists and anthropologists who flocked to New Mexico during the early 20th century.

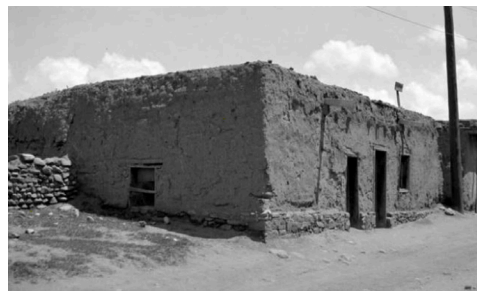


Santa Fe Water & Power Co. on Don Gaspar at Water Street (ca. 1920).

**Gen O’Viva**, the feisty heroine, puro Santa, born here all her life, a strong young woman working multiple jobs in the tourist economy. Her name is a nod to the “first lady of Fiestas,” singer Genoveva Chavez (now the namesake of a local recreation center).

**Salvador Trouser-Perrier**, another recognizable local, the unemployed musician who’s dated everyone (Santa Fe is a really small town). His name is a play on Salvador Perez, a local football coach... also the namesake of a local recreation center.

**Pino Georgio Kief**, inspired by the cadre of bohemian Anglo artists drawn to Santa Fe in the ‘10s and ‘20s - most notably “Los Cinco Pintores,” an art collective of young men in their 20s who were so close they all built their homes next door to one another.



The Oldest House, said by some to predate Oñate’s arrival in 1598 and located on E. De Vargas Street, about a hundred yards from the Santa Fe Playhouse (ca. 1920).

*Photos courtesy Palace of the Governors*