



Kostis Protopapas  
Conductor  
[kostis-protopapas.com](http://kostis-protopapas.com)

Kostis Protopapas was named Artistic Director of Opera Santa Barbara in August 2015. He will make his conducting debut with the company in November 2016, conducting the season's opening production of *Carmen*. The company's 2016-17 season, the first to be planned entirely by Kostis, will also include two company premieres: Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, in a new production by Crystal Manich starring Isabel Bayrakdarian, and Puccini's *La Rondine*.

2016 saw the end of Kostis' long association with Tulsa Opera, where he served as Artistic Director from November 2007 until May 2016, as Interim Executive Director from November 2011 until February 2013 and as Associate Conductor and Chorus Master from 2001 until 2007. During his 15-year tenure with the company, Kostis conducted 30 productions of a diverse repertoire extending from popular classics like *La Boheme* and *Carmen* to contemporary American works like *Elmer Gantry* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. About his 2011 *Barber of Seville* performances, Alex Ross of *The New Yorker* wrote "Most impressive was the fluid idiomatic playing of the orchestra... In any city, it's rare to find a conductor that sets the right tempo so consistently that you stop noticing he's there."

Kostis' leadership at Tulsa Opera focused on furthering the company's long-standing reputation for artistic excellence and expanding the company's commitment to contemporary and American opera. Under his leadership the company produced a major American work each season between 2012 and 2016. Other key initiatives of his tenure included the expansion of the Tulsa Studio Artists Program, the expansion of company's outreach and educational programs, and the forging of new partnerships with arts organizations in Tulsa and beyond.

Between 2002 and 2008 Kostis was also an Assistant Conductor for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, LA Opera and Santa Fe Opera. At the Lyric Opera of Chicago he also served as Assistant Chorus Master under Donald Palumbo for two seasons. Kostis started his career on the music staff of Virginia Opera and Opera Memphis; he conducted at Opera in the Ozarks every summer from 2000 to 2004; has been a regular guest conductor at Union Avenue Opera in St. Louis since 2007 and a guest conductor for the Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Columbus, Shreveport Opera, El Paso Opera, Winter Opera St. Louis and the Westmoreland Symphony. In 2016-17 he will return to Winter Opera St. Louis to conduct *La Cenerentola*.

Born in Athens, Greece, Kostis Protopapas studied Archaeology and History of Art at the University of Athens before coming to the United States in 1993, on an Onassis Foundation scholarship, to study piano at The Boston Conservatory and conducting at Boston University. He became an American citizen in 2011 and splits his time between Chicago and Santa Barbara, with his wife, soprano and stage director Cathleen Dunn-Protopapas, and their four cats, Gus, Miles, Zsa-Zsa and Gigi.