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2026/27 Winter Opera Festival Press Kit

Sarasota Opera Presents Four Winter Festival Productions During Opera Lovers Weeks, March 3-14, 2027

November 16, 2026 — Sarasota Opera has announced the schedule for the 2027 Winter Festival's Opera Lovers Weeks taking place March 3-14. A hallmark of Sarasota Opera's Winter Festival, Opera Lovers Weeks allow audiences to experience all four season productions in as few as three days. Except for the Metropolitan Opera, no other American opera company offers a comparable opportunity to see four different operas in such a concentrated timeframe during the winter season. "Every year we welcome opera lovers from around the world who immerse themselves in our diverse repertoire and unique brand of operatic magic," says Sarasota Opera General and Artistic Director Richard Russell.

The 2027 Winter Opera Festival includes productions of Verdi's *La traviata,* Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore,* R. Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Janáček's *Jenůfa.* "You don't have to travel to Bayreuth or New York to attend four different operas in three days," writes journalist Kurt Loft of *EarRelevant*. "Sarasota will do just fine. That's an option during the ongoing winter festival at Sarasota Opera, a cultural gem in this white-beach paradise on Florida's west coast." Opera lovers who attend all four Sarasota Opera productions in repertoire are eligible to receive a 10% discount on their tickets. All performances take place at the historic Sarasota Opera House, which celebrated its centennial this year.

La traviata
With music by Giuseppe Verdi and a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, *La traviata* is one of the most enduring works in the repertoire. Based on Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias*, the opera tells the moving story of Violetta Valéry, a celebrated courtesan whose unexpected love for Alfredo Germont challenges the constraints of her aristocratic world. Verdi's score is renowned for its dazzling Brindisi, the rapturous love duet "Un dì, felice," and Violetta's sparkling "Sempre

Libera." Verdi's music seamlessly weaves elegance and drama, underscoring the timeless tale of Violetta's love, and selfless devotion. Starring in the title role of this brand-new production is soprano Virginia Mims, a Sarasota Opera favorite celebrated for her "crystalline voice" (*Classical Voice North America*). Mims is joined by tenor Luke Norvell as Alfredo and Luke Sutliff as Giorgio Germont, with Marcello Cormio conducting and Marco Nisticò directing.

H.M.S. Pinafore

This production marks Sarasota Opera's inaugural staging of any Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. *H.M.S. Pinafore* is a cornerstone of Victorian comic operetta, where questions of love and social rank spark humor and delight. At the center of this story, set aboard a British Royal Navy ship, is the earnest sailor Ralph Rackstraw (played by tenor David Walton) and Josephine (played by soprano Hanna Brammer), the captain's daughter, whose affection challenges the strict hierarchies of their world. Also part of the comedy are the "dynamic" bass-baritone (*The New York Times*) Hans Tashjian as The Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, contralto Alissa Anderson as Little Buttercup, Jake Stamatis in the role of Captain Corcoran, and returning Studio Artist, bass-baritone Gabriel Lockheimer Toso as Dick Deadeye. Sullivan's score includes signature pieces such as the opening chorus "We sail the ocean blue," the aria "I'm Called Little Buttercup," and the rousing ensemble "He Is an Englishman." This uproarious satire on class and authority is characterized by witty patter songs and memorable melodies that make it a perennial favorite for audiences of all ages, exemplifying the artistry and comic sensibility intrinsic to Gilbert and Sullivan's celebrated repertoire. *H.M.S. Pinafore* will be conducted by John F. Spencer, IV and directed by Sarasota Opera veteran Mark Freiman.

Ariadne auf Naxos

Ariadne auf Naxos is a dazzling operatic fusion of myth and comedy, with music by Richard Strauss and a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The story begins with a lively backstage prologue in which an opera troupe and a comedy ensemble are forced to perform together. The resulting spectacle sets the mythical, mournful Ariadne (played by soprano Mary Evelyn Hangley) alongside the playful Zerbinetta (Abigail Raiford) and her comedic troupe. The two are joined by Alexander Boyd in the role of Music Master, Tessa Fackelmann as The Composer, and Jeremy Brauner as The Tenor/Bacchus, with Sarasota Studio Artists filling the roles of the commedia dell'arte troupe and supporting characters. *Ariadne auf Naxos* showcases Strauss's gift for intertwining emotional depth with theatrical spectacle, masterfully balancing lush lyricism and witty playfulness, underscoring both the opera's mythic drama and comedic twists. Highlights include Ariadne's sweeping, expressive aria, "Es gibt ein Reich," and the effervescent brilliance of Zerbinetta's show-stopping coloratura, blending technical fireworks with sparkling humor. Strauss's inventive score and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's witty libretto create a poignant meditation on love, transformation, and the magic of theater. The production will be conducted by Jessé Martins and directed by Martha Collins.

Jenůfa

Presented at the Sarasota Opera for the first time in three decades, Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa* is a landmark work of realism and emotional depth, following young Jenůfa as she endures hardship, love, and the unyielding expectations of her village. Central to the drama is the Kostelnička, Jenůfa's stepmother – played by world-renowned soprano Karita Mattila in her Sarasota Opera debut – whose desperate attempt to protect Jenůfa (played by soprano Kathryn Henry who sang the role during the 23/24 season at the Lyric Opera of Chicago) leads to tragic consequences. Janáček's score heightens the opera's psychological intensity, with standout moments including Jenůfa's poignant prayer and the Kostelnička's electrifying monologue at the opera's climax. Tenor Victor Starsky returns to sing Števa Buryja, while tenor Christopher Oglesby will bring his "vibrancy and charisma" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) to the role of Laca Klemeň. *Jenůfa* will be conducted by David Neely and directed by Katherine M. Carter.

Opera Lovers Weeks are March 3-14, 2027, and are available in four subscription packages:

- Series 1 — all evening performances — runs March 3-6. The schedule includes *La traviata* on March 3 (evening), *Ariadne auf Naxos* on March 4 (evening), *H.M.S. Pinafore* on March 5 (evening), and *Jenůfa* on March 6 (evening).
- Series 2 — all evening performances — runs March 9-12. The schedule includes *Jenůfa* on March 9 (evening), *Ariadne auf Naxos* on March 10 (evening), *La traviata* on March 11 (evening), and *H.M.S. Pinafore* on March 12 (evening).
- Series 3 — matinee and evening performances — runs March 11-14. The schedule includes *La traviata* on March 11 (evening), *H.M.S. Pinafore* on March 12 (evening), *Ariadne auf Naxos* on March 13 (matinee), and *Jenůfa* on March 14 (matinee).
- Series 4 — matinee and evening performances — runs March 12-14. The schedule includes *H.M.S. Pinafore* on March 12 (evening), *Ariadne auf Naxos* on March 13 (matinee), *La traviata* on March 13 (evening), and *Jenůfa* on March 14 (matinee).
- Tickets are available at the Sarasota Opera Box Office, by phone at (941) 328-1300, in person at 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, or online at tickets.sarasotaopera.org.

About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera is in its 68th season of bringing world-class opera to Florida's Gulf Coast and celebrating 100 years of the historic Sarasota Opera House. The company was launched in 1960 in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art. In 1984, the company moved into the former A.B. Edwards Theater — now the Sarasota Opera House. Since then, the company has gained an international reputation as one of the leading regional opera companies in the U.S. through initiatives such as the Masterworks Revival Series and the Verdi Cycle. The company's Sarasota Youth Opera is the most comprehensive youth opera program in the U.S. The Sarasota Opera House, which underwent a $20 million renovation in 2007, has been called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by *Musical America*. Richard Russell has served as General Director since 2012 and added the role of Artistic Director in June 2026. Sarasota Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for

the Arts. Programs are paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues.
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