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August 17, 2021

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## **Martha Collins named Director of Education for Sarasota Opera**

*Stage Director brings significant and diverse accomplishments to new role*

**Sarasota, FL** – Sarasota Opera General Director Richard Russell and Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi have announced Martha Collins as the new Director of Education. She will be responsible for the development of Sarasota Opera’s Youth Opera and Adult Education programs and community engagement efforts.

Ms. Collins has a long association with Sarasota Opera, having first joined the company in 2004 as a stage director for the Apprentice Artists program. She has since directed numerous mainstage productions, including *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (2017), *Nabucco* (2019), and *Romeo and Juliet* (2020), and most recently was stage director of *The Happy Deception*, and *Dido and Aeneas*, performed during the 2021 Winter and Spring Opera Festivals. She has directed the annual Sarasota Youth Opera production every year since 2005, including *Rootabaga Country* (2017) and *Brundibar* (2019). She has also directed at numerous other organizations including Tri-Cities Opera, Opera Southwest, New York University, and New England Conservatory. She has extensive teaching credits, including New York University, Swarthmore College, Brevard Music Center, and the Florence Voice Seminar in Italy. Ms. Collins will continue to direct productions for Sarasota Opera.

Born in Ottawa, Ms. Collins gained much acclaim in Canada as both a concert and operatic performer. She has appeared with the Canadian Opera Company, Festival Ottawa, Vancouver Opera, Calgary Opera, Opera Lyra and Toronto's Opera in Concert. In 1985 she was a finalist in the prestigious BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, and in 1986 she was chosen to perform for Prince Charles and Princess Diana at the opening gala of the World's Fair in Vancouver, British Columbia. On the silver screen, Ms. Collins appeared in the 1987 Norman Jewison film "Moonstruck," in the role of Mimi.

On her new position with Sarasota Opera, Ms. Collins states, "I am excited to take on an expanded role in passing on this art form that I love to others."

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## **ABOUT SARASOTA OPERA**

Sarasota Opera recently completed its 62nd Season of bringing world-class opera to Florida's Gulf Coast. The company was launched in 1960, when a touring chamber opera company came to the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art and the Asolo Opera Guild was formed to present the season. By 1974 the Asolo Opera was mounting its own productions at the theater. Recognizing the need for a theater more conducive to full-scale opera, the company purchased the former A.B. Edwards Theater which in 1984 (as the Sarasota Opera House) became home to the newly renamed Sarasota Opera. The building underwent a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation in 2007 enhancing audience amenities, while updating the technical facilities including increasing the size of the orchestra pit. The theater, which reopened in March 2008, has been called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by Musical America.

Since 1983, the company has been under the artistic leadership of Victor DeRenzi and administrative leadership of General Director Richard Russell since 2012. Sarasota Opera has garnered international attention with its Masterwork Revivals Series, which presents neglected works of artistic merit, as well as the Verdi Cycle, completed in 2016, that made Sarasota Opera the only opera company in the world to present all of Verdi's works. Recognizing the importance of training, Maestro DeRenzi founded the Apprentice and Studio Artist's programs. Sarasota Opera also maintains a commitment to education through its "Explorations in Opera" performances for local schools and the industry-leading Sarasota Youth Opera program.

Sarasota Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Programs are supported in part by an award from the Tourist Development Tax through the Board of County Commissioners, the Tourist Development Council and the Sarasota County Arts Council. Additional funding is provided by the City of Sarasota and the County of Sarasota.

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