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Sarasota Opera and Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi Receive One World Award

Sarasota, FL — Sarasota Opera and Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi were honored with the One World Award by the Sister Cities Association of Sarasota at a gala event held on Sunday, November 7, 2021, at Michael’s on East. The honorary chair of the event was former mayor of Sarasota Liz Alpert. The Gala Co-Chairs were Isabelle Eidet, Katherine Benoit, Kenney DeCamp, Jana Stanley, Toni Duval, Marianne Gordon, Linda Mercurio and Diane Heron (Silent Auction), Dr. Ray Young, Phillip Gordon, Rabbi Jonathan Katz, and Miriam Kramer. Following a cocktail reception, guests were entertained by Sarasota Opera artists soprano Hanna Brammer, tenor Samuel Schlievert, and baritone Alexander Boyd, singing works of Giuseppe Verdi, accompanied by Curtis Serafin.

Maestro Victor DeRenzi was honored for “enhancing peace, understanding, and respect among citizens of the world through his extraordinary achievements.” He is the only conductor ever to have conducted all the works of famed Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi. The 28-season Verdi Cycle was an important initiative that brought international attention to Sarasota and contributed to music, art, and cultural exchanges.

Through his long devotion to Verdi’s work, Maestro DeRenzi and Sarasota Opera have developed relationships with international scholars and the descendants of Giuseppe Verdi who still reside on the composer’s estate, Villa Verdi, near the small city where he grew up, in Busseto, Italy. Because of the close relationship of Sarasota Opera with

Giuseppe Verdi, Maestro DeRenzi suggested a Sister City relationship between Busseto and Sarasota. Phillip Gordon was appointed director by the Sister Cities Association with Kenney DeCamp as Assistant Director and initiated contact with city leaders in Busseto. The first stage was to establish a Friendship City Agreement. It was ratified at the municipal level by then-Mayor Liz Alpert in December 2019. The Mayor of Busseto, Giancarlo Contini, signed the agreement on January 27, 2020 – the 119th anniversary of Giuseppe Verdi’s death.

In recognition of this stellar achievement of the Verdi Cycle in 2016, the government of Italy knighted Maestro DeRenzi with the title of Cavaliere dell’ordine della Stella d’Italia— Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy— for promoting Italian culture abroad.

General Director Richard Russell accepted the One World Organizational Award on behalf of Sarasota Opera, “for extraordinary contributions to our world and the historic completion of the Verdi Cycle.” Commissioner Alpert also presented Mo. DeRenzi and Mr. Russell with a proclamation from the Sarasota City Commission in recognition of the award and the company’s achievements.

Sarasota Sister Cities aims to create exchanges with citizens of Busseto, Italy in arts, culture, education, sports, tourism, and economic development among others. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower founded Sister Cities International after World War II, he envisioned that such citizen-to-citizen connections would build and promote world peace.

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ABOUT SARASOTA OPERA

This is Sarasota Opera’s 63rd Season of bringing world-class opera to Florida’s Gulf Coast. 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 Program in the U.S. The Sarasota Opera House, which underwent a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation in 2007, 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 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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