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**Sarasota Opera Apprentice Program
to Commence 40th Anniversary Season**

*Venerable education program for singers is a notable accomplishment of
Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi's 40-year tenure*

Sarasota, FL – During the upcoming 2022 Winter Opera Festival, Sarasota Opera will be celebrating its 40th season with Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Victor DeRenzi, who joined the company in 1982. In addition to planning his first season that year, one of Maestro DeRenzi's first initiatives was the founding of the Sarasota Opera Apprentice Artists Program, which established a training ground for singers in the important transition from student to professional life. The program focuses on the standard operatic repertoire from Mozart to Puccini, providing participants with many performing opportunities throughout the fall and winter seasons.

The training aspect of the program teaches singers to give impassioned performances through vocal expression by understanding the meaning of the text. In coachings and classes, acting is taught through an efficiency of movement that brings out the meaning of the work rather than obscuring it. The company encourages a consistent artistic approach that is supported by the staff as well as the style of production.

During the 2022 Winter Opera Festival, apprentice artists will participate in the chorus of the four main stage productions of Puccini's *Tosca*, Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment*, Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, and Verdi's *Attila*. Apprentices will also participate in master classes, language coachings with

native-born speakers, and will perform and cover main stage roles, as well as perform at concerts during the season. Apprentice artists will also have the opportunity to network with more experienced colleagues. In addition to the educational aspects of the program, Sarasota Opera provides apprentice artists with housing, transportation, and a stipend. Unlike some other companies, Sarasota Opera does not charge any fees for either the program or auditions.

Along with Maestro DeRenzi, apprentice artists will receive instruction from Lindsay Woodward, Chorus Master and Program and Music Director of the Apprentice Artists, Martha Collins, Apprentice Artists Program stage director Stephanie Sundine, Apprentice Artists Program stage director, Marco Nisticò, baritone and artistic administrator, and other members of the Sarasota Opera staff.

“We are all looking forward to working with our Apprentices and introducing new performers to our community. In recent years opera companies have had to fill in the technical gaps left by university training, and we are happy to offer a program that can help do that,” states Maestro DeRenzi. General Director Richard Russell—a 1989 alumni of the apprentice program—adds, “An apprenticeship at Sarasota Opera offers an invaluable experience to singers who are in the early stages of their professional careers. The program has fostered the careers of singers who are now performing on stages all over the world.”

2022 Sarasota Opera Apprentice Artists include: sopranos Ariel Andrew, Tori Franklin, Jardena Gertler-Jaffe, Sara Kennedy, Ashlee Lamar, Abigail Raiford, and Julia Wolcott; mezzo-sopranos Ashlyn Brown, SarahAnn Duffy, Kaylee Nichols, Victoria Thomasch, and Zara Zemmels; tenors Pedro Valdez Espinoza, Nicholas Hudak, James Mancuso, Samuel Rosner, Joseph Sacchi, and Gregory Sliskovich; Baritones and bass Jose Cuartas, Daniel Chiu, Johan Hartman, Samuel Rachmuth, Justin Ramm-Damron, and John Siarris.

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.

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