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Sarasota Opera Announces Casting for 2022 Winter Opera Festival

Celebrating a grand return to full-scale opera

Sarasota, FL – Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi and General Director Richard Russell have announced casting for the 2022 Winter Opera Festival, which also marks Maestro DeRenzi’s 40th anniversary with the company. “Full-scale opera is returning to the stage of the historic Sarasota Opera House, and we are thrilled to bring back some of our favorite singers, along with some exciting new faces,” said Mr. Russell. Maestro DeRenzi added, “In addition to our principal singers, we look forward to welcoming back our Apprentice and Studio Artist programs.” One of the hallmarks of Maestro DeRenzi’s tenure is the establishment of programs to help singers in the early stages of their professional careers.

Puccini’s *Tosca*

On February 12, Sarasota Opera will open the 2022 Winter Opera Festival with Puccini’s *Tosca*, one of the world’s most beloved operas. Soprano **Ann Toomey** will make her Sarasota Opera debut as Floria Tosca, the fiery diva. Ms. Toomey has appeared frequently with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and was praised for her “excellent range” and “penetrating voice” by Opera News. Tosca’s lover, the painter Cavaradossi, will be played by **Ben Gulley**, hailed as “an outstanding tenor” by Opera News and “startlingly-gifted” by San Francisco Classical Voice. Mr. Gulley last appeared on the Sarasota Opera stage in 2019 as Ismaele in *Nabucco*. Also returning from the cast of *Nabucco* is **Stephen Gaertner**, who will portray the police chief Scarpia. Mr. Gaertner

has been praised for his “burnished baritone” by Opera Magazine and his “ringing tone and positive stage presence” by Classical Voice America. The Sacristan will be sung by Sarasota Opera audience favorite, Italian bass-baritone **Stefano de Peppo**. Mr. de Peppo—described as “supremely confident and sure of voice” by the Herald Tribune—most recently performed with the company in the 2021 productions of *Maid to Mistress* and *Il signor Bruschino*. Real-life opera couple **Caitlin Crabill**, who sang the title role in 2020’s *La Wally*, and **Samuel Schlievert**, who played Dormont in *The Silken Ladder*, will unite on stage as Tosca and Cavaradossi for the March 11 performance only, joined by **Alexander Charles Boyd** as Scarpia. Maestro **Victor DeRenzi** will lead the Sarasota Opera Orchestra, and **Stephanie Sundine**, who most recently directed the Fall 2021 production of *The Silken Ladder*, will be stage director. *Tosca* will have eight performances through March 19.

Donizetti’s *The Daughter of the Regiment (La fille du régiment)*

Donizetti’s romantic comedy *The Daughter of the Regiment* opens on February 19, with soprano **Jessica Sandidge** playing Marie, the orphaned girl raised by a French regiment. Ms. Sandidge, with “a voice of both power and beauty” (Opera Wire) was last seen at Sarasota Opera in the 2020 productions of *La Wally* and *La bohème*. Also returning from the *La bohème* cast is **William Davenport**—a “well-placed tenor with a ringing top” (Opera News)—who will play Tonio, the Tyrolean villager after Marie’s heart, and stage director **Mark Freiman**, whose work was described as “nothing short of brilliant” by Opera News. Sergeant Sulpice will be performed by “extraordinary” (Opera News) baritone **Matthew Hanscom**, who played Papageno in 2019’s *The Magic Flute*. Mezzo soprano **Lisa Chavez** will portray the Marquise of Berkenfield. After performing the title role in *Dido and Aeneas* with Sarasota Opera earlier in 2021, Ms. Chavez made numerous appearances with New York City Opera in their return to the stage this past September. Maestro **Jesse Martins**, who led *Dido and Aeneas* in Spring 2021, will conduct. *The Daughter of the Regiment* will have seven performances through March 18.

Bizet’s *The Pearl Fishers (Les pêcheurs de perles)*

Opening on March 5, Bizet’s *The Pearl Fishers* will feature audience favorite **Hanna Brammer** in the role of the priestess Leïla. Ms. Brammer recently played Giulia in *The Silken Ladder*, “with a voice of such rich color and agility that it is at times astounding” (Herald Tribune). Nadir, one of two pearl fishers bound in a love triangle, will be portrayed by tenor **Andrew**

Surrena, who most recently—and “heroically” (Herald Tribune)—sang Aeneas in Spring 2021’s *Dido and Aeneas*. Baritone **Kyle Oliver** will play the second pearl fisher Zurga. In addition to being a 2021 Sarasota Opera Resident Artist, Mr. Oliver recently performed with New York’s Teatro Nuovo in *The Barber of Seville*, and “distinguished himself with expressive and animated singing” (John Hohmann for Schmopera). The High Priest Nourabad will be played by bass **David Weigel**, making his Sarasota Opera debut. Mr. Weigel has made frequent appearances with Chicago Lyric Opera, including their pandemic production of *Twilight: Gods*, which reimagined the final chapter of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle. Stage director **Katherine M. Carter** is also making her company debut, having worked previously with Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, American Academy of Dramatic Art, and the New York Musical Theatre Festival. *The Pearl Fishers* will be conducted by **Marcello Cormio**, who led *La serva padrona* with the company in Winter 2021. *The Pearl Fishers* will have six performances through March 19.

Verdi’s Attila

Last seen during the Verdi Cycle in 2007, *Attila* returns to the stage on March 12, with the title role reprised by longtime Sarasota audience favorite bass **Young Bok Kim**. Mr. Kim most recently graced the stage in the November 2020 recital “Live at Sarasota Opera,” and prior to that he sang in Winter 2020’s *La bohème* and *La Wally*. His “booming bass presence” earns warm words of praise from John Fleming in Opera News. His love interest Odabella will be portrayed by the “exquisite singing actress, brilliant and heart-breaking” (Broadway World) soprano **Rochelle Bard**, who last sang with the company in 2019 as Abigaille in *Nabucco*. **Matthew Vickers**, praised as “a gutsy performer whose glowing tenor voice has interestingly dark, baritone undertones” by Opera Now, will play the knight Foresto. Mr. Vickers has performed with the company in numerous productions since 2015 and recently with Lyric Opera of Chicago. His 2020 performance in Franco Alfano’s *Risurrezione* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino was recently released on DVD. The role of Roman general Ezio will be played by baritone **Brian Major**, who was last at Sarasota Opera as a Studio Artist in 2016. Mr. Major’s voice is described as “rich, warm, and full of presence” by the Toledo Blade. Longtime Sarasota audience favorite bass **Stefano de Peppo** will play Leone, an old Roman. *Attila* will be directed by **Martha Collins**, who earlier this year directed *Dido and Aeneas*. Maestro **Victor DeRenzi** will conduct. *Attila* will have five performances through March 22.

Additional casting

All four productions of the 2022 Winter Opera Festival will feature **Howard Tsvi Kaplan** as costume designer, with **Ken Yunker** as lighting designer, and **Kellen Eason** as hair and makeup designer.

Ticket Information

Individual tickets and subscriptions for Sarasota Opera's 2022 Winter Opera Festival are on sale now. For more information, visit SarasotaOpera.org, call (941) 328-1300, or visit the Box Office at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34236.

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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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