



SARASOTA OPERA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Images:

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Sarasota Opera Opens 2026 Winter Festival with Puccini's *La bohème*

January 20, 2026 —Sarasota Opera will open its [2026 Winter Festival](#) with Giacomo Puccini's [La bohème](#) on Saturday, February 14 at the Sarasota Opera House. As the company enters its 67th season, it embarks on a momentous year celebrating the [Opera House's centennial](#) and marking the final season of long-serving artistic director and principal conductor Victor DeRenzi.

Since its 1896 premiere, *La bohème* has become the most frequently performed operas in the world. Sarasota Opera has presented it in 13 seasons, and its themes of love, friendship, and loss continue to resonate. The opera inspired the Broadway musical *Rent* and appeared in films including *Moonstruck*, which featured Sarasota Opera's Director of Education Martha Collins as Mimì.

Set in 1830s Paris, *La bohème* follows a group of young artists and dreamers. At its heart is the tender, passionate, and ultimately tragic romance between Rodolfo, a poet, and Mimì, an embroideress struggling with illness. Unlike operas about gods or royalty, Puccini's masterpiece is grounded in ordinary life, making it deeply relatable. Puccini's score is celebrated for its beauty and emotional power. Highlights include Rodolfo's aria "Che gelida manina", Mimì's "Sì, mi chiamano Mimì," and Musetta's "Quando m'en vo" ("Musetta's Waltz"), which became a popular hit in 1959 as "Don't You Know" by Della Reese. The Act III duet and the heartbreaking final scene remain among the most moving moments in opera.

Sarasota Opera's cast features soprano Ashley Milanese as Mimì, tenor WooYoung Yoon as Rodolfo, soprano Virginia Mims as Musetta, baritone Filippo Fontana as Marcello, bass Young Bok Kim as Colline, bass Brian Kontes as Benoit, and bass-baritone Hans Tashjian as Alcindoro. The production is conducted by artistic director Victor DeRenzi and directed by Stephanie Sundine, with scenic design by David P. Gordon, costumes by Howard Tsvi Kaplan, lighting by Ken Yunker, and hair and makeup by Sue Schaefer. The performances are sung in Italian with simultaneous English supertitles above the stage.

Patrons are invited to explore the production through our specially curated [La bohème Spotify playlist](#) and the [Behind the Blue Curtain podcast episode *La bohème: Poetry, Poverty, and Passion*](#) with host Martha Collins, stage director Stephanie Sundine, and soprano Ashley Milanese. To access this digital content, plus a full list of performance dates, cast information, synopsis and program notes, visit <https://www.sarasotaopera.org/event/la-boheme>

Tickets are available at the Sarasota Opera Box Office, by phone at (941) 328-1300, in person at 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, Monday through Saturday from 10 AM through 5 PM, or online at www.sarasotaopera.org.

Performance Dates:

Saturday, February 14, 7:30 p.m. (Opening night)
Tuesday, February 17, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 19, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 22, 1:30 p.m. (Matinee)
Wednesday, February 25, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 28, 1:30 p.m. (Matinee)
Tuesday, March 3, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 20, 1:30 p.m. (Matinee)
Thursday, March 26, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 28, 7:30 p.m.

About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera is in its 67th 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 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 the 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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