



SARASOTA OPERA

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Contact: Lael Mohib, Director of Marketing

Email: lmohib@sarasotaopera.org

Phone: 202.257.4822

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Sarasota Opera Awarded \$24,000 NEA Grant in Support of 2026 Production of *Susannah*

March 9, 2026 — Sarasota Opera is proud to announce that it has been awarded a \$24,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as part of the federal agency's [Freedom 250 initiative in celebration of America's 250th anniversary](#). This grant will support the company's 2026 Winter Opera Festival production of Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. Honoring the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth and in the state of its premiere, *Susannah* is one of the most significant works in the canon of American opera.

Sarasota Opera will present *Susannah* in six performances from March 14 through 28, 2026, marking both the 100th anniversary of Carlisle Floyd's birth and the centennial of the historic Sarasota Opera House. Composed while Floyd was on the faculty at Florida State University, *Susannah* premiered in Florida in 1955 and remains one of the most frequently performed American operas.

Set in rural Tennessee during the 1950s, *Susannah* retells the biblical story of a young woman falsely accused and ostracized by her community. The company's 2026 production will be conducted by Jessé Martins and directed by Martha Collins, with sets by R. Keith Brumley and a full cast of Principal Artists, Studio Artists, and Apprentice Artists.

The NEA's support recognizes Sarasota Opera's commitment to celebrating American cultural heritage, expanding the national operatic repertoire, and presenting works that illuminate essential stories of the American experience.

“We are honored to receive this support from the National Endowment for the Arts,” said Richard Russell, General Director of Sarasota Opera. “Carlisle Floyd is one of the great voices of American opera, and *Susannah* remains deeply relevant today. As we celebrate both the composer’s centennial and the 100th anniversary of our Opera House, this production embodies our commitment to presenting important American works with the highest artistic integrity. The NEA’s investment ensures that audiences from our community and across the country can experience this powerful opera in a meaningful way.”

For more information about *Susannah* and to purchase tickets visit <https://www.sarasotaopera.org/event/susannah> or call the Box Office at 941-328-1300.

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. In June 2026 Maestro DeRenzi will be stepping down from the company and Mr. Russell will add Artistic Director to his responsibilities. 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.

Sarasota Opera • 61 N. Pineapple Avenue • Sarasota, FL 34236 • (941) 366-8450 •
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