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Sarasota Opera Receives \$60,000 Empowering Arts Grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation

September 2, 2026— Sarasota Opera has been awarded a \$60,000 Empowering Arts Grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation (Gulf Coast) in support of its 2026–27 Season. Made possible through the Zoe Anderson Charitable Fund, the grant will provide vital support for Sarasota Opera’s artistic programming, seasonal productions, and community-building events.

The grant designation includes \$30,000 in production support for Sarasota Opera’s 2027 Winter Opera Festival, which will feature Verdi’s *La traviata*, Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Strauss’ *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Janáček’s *Jenůfa*. Additional support will underwrite several signature events, including the Curtain Raiser dinner, the Moonlight & Melodies Dinner Series, and Sarasota Opera’s 2027 Gala, *A Night of Champagne and Camellias*.

“Gulf Coast Community Foundation is one of Sarasota Opera’s most generous and steadfast partners,” said Richard Russell, General and Artistic Director of Sarasota Opera. “This investment strengthens our ability to present world-class opera, welcome audiences into meaningful artistic experiences, and expand the role of opera as a vibrant part of Sarasota’s cultural life.”

The Empowering Arts Grant Program reflects Gulf Coast’s commitment to investing in arts and cultural organizations as essential contributors to the region’s quality of life, economy, and creative vitality. The program is designed to empower local cultural institutions with flexible support that helps them pursue artistic excellence and deepen community engagement.

"Sarasota Opera brings something rare to our region: world-class productions and educational programming that together introduce residents of every age to the art form," said Kelly Borgia, Director, Brand Engagement for Gulf Coast. "That's exactly what our Empowering Arts grants are meant to support. We're proud to help ensure that love of opera can take root right here in Sarasota." Sarasota Opera’s 2026–27 Season marks the company’s 68th season and features a wide-ranging lineup of beloved classics, new productions, and youth opera programming. In

addition to the Winter Opera Festival, the season will include Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Sarasota Youth Opera's production of Rachel J. Peters' *Rootabaga Country* in fall 2026.

"Sarasota Opera is deeply grateful for Gulf Coast Community Foundation's continued belief in the power of the arts to inspire, connect, and strengthen our community," Russell added. "Their leadership helps ensure that opera remains accessible, ambitious, and central to the cultural identity of our region."

About Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Since 1995, Gulf Coast Community Foundation has powered bold philanthropy and collaborative leadership to drive meaningful change across our region. Guided by values of authenticity, curiosity, collaboration, grit, and a trailblazing spirit, we work side-by-side with donors, partners, and community members to tackle our region's biggest challenges and unlock its greatest opportunities. Together with our donors, we've invested more than \$650 million in health and human services, education, civic & economic development, arts & culture, and the environment. Headquartered in Venice, with a second office in downtown Sarasota, Gulf Coast is nationally recognized for excellence, earning multiple "Best Nonprofits to Work For" honors and accreditation from Community Foundations National Standards®. Learn more at GulfCoastCF.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera is in its 68th 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 in 2007, has been called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by Musical America. Richard Russell has served as General Director since 2012 and added the role of Artistic Director in June 2026. 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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