



SARASOTA OPERA

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**Sarasota Opera Announces Don and Rachael Worthington as Honorees for 2026
Gala: Winter in Paris**

SARASOTA, FL — Sarasota Opera is proud to announce that longtime supporters and community leaders Don and Rachael Worthington will be honored at the company's annual Gala, themed "[Winter in Paris](#)", on Friday, January 30, 2026, at The Ora Ballroom, 578 McIntosh Road, Sarasota.

Don Worthington has been a dedicated member of Sarasota Opera's Board of Trustees since 2010 and served as Chair from 2012 to 2014. His leadership was instrumental during a transformative period for the company, which included a major leadership transition and the launch of the "Investing in the Extraordinary" campaign. That initiative ultimately raised over \$40 million, strengthening the company's artistic and financial foundation. Don's commitment to fundraising and his efforts to bring new patrons into the Sarasota Opera family have left a legacy.

"I think the thing I enjoy most about Sarasota Opera is seeing the performers give their absolute all...their personal best, performance after performance," said Mr. Worthington. "Being a part of this wonderful opera company is a way to contribute to a good cause and get to enjoy the fantastic result. It has been a big part of my life."

Rachael Worthington, a past Gala Chair, is also deeply engaged in the community through her Board and volunteer work with The Florida Holocaust Museum. She was instrumental in forging a partnership between the Museum and Sarasota Opera that helped inform the company's Youth Opera production of Hans Krása's [Brundibár](#). This powerful production will be revived this November, continuing the legacy of education and remembrance. In 2015, the two organizations partnered on a concert titled "Forbidden Music," featuring works by composers whose music was banned by the Nazis. The performance was held at both the Sarasota Opera House and the Straz Center in Tampa.

“Don and Rachael have been friends to many of us for years. Their commitment to Sarasota Opera has been unwavering since their first involvement,” said Victor DeRenzi, Artistic Director of Sarasota Opera. “As board chair, Don understood our needs and vision for the company and helped set our direction.”

“We are thrilled to recognize Don and Rachael Worthington for their extraordinary contributions to Sarasota Opera,” said Richard Russell, General Director of Sarasota Opera. “Their passion, generosity, and leadership have helped shape the company’s success and future.”

[The Gala](#), one of Sarasota Opera’s most anticipated events, will transport guests to the romantic ambiance of Paris with an evening of fine cuisine, dancing, and celebration. The evening will be chaired by Eileen Buzzard, Tamara Jacobs, and Carla Koeffler, and will raise vital funds for Sarasota [Youth Opera and Education programs](#), the company’s nationally recognized programs nurturing the next generation of opera artists and enthusiasts.

Guests are encouraged to dress in chic boutique Parisian black-tie (optional) attire. Reservations and sponsorships are available at various levels, ranging from \$350 per person to \$12,500 Platinum table. For sponsorship opportunities, reservations, or more information, please contact the Sarasota Opera Development Office at (941) 366-8450, Ext. 813 or visit www.sarasotaopera.org.

About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera is entering its 67th season of bringing world-class opera to Florida’s Gulf Coast and is 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. Sarasota Opera • 61 N. Pineapple Avenue • Sarasota, FL 34236 • (941) 366-8450 • SarasotaOpera.org