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SARASOTA OPERA ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR 2024 WINTER OPERA FESTIVAL

Sarasota, FL— Victor DeRenzi, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, and **Richard Russell**, General Director, are pleased to announce casting for the 2024 Winter Opera Festival. Audiences can look forward to a thrilling season, which opens on February 17th, featuring Bizet's *Carmen*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, and Haydn's *Deceit Outwitted (L'infedeltà delusa)*. The casts of internationally recognized artists include some company favorites, along with several singers making their company debut. Single tickets for the 2024 Winter Opera Festival go on sale on September 1, 2023.

The 2024 Winter Opera Festival will open on February 17 with perennial favorite Bizet's *Carmen*, featuring four artists making their Sarasota Opera mainstage debuts. **Chelsea Laggan**, who first joined the company in 2023 as a studio artist will star in the title role. As a resident artist with the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, she has sung Olga in *Eugene Onegin* and Maddalena in *Rigoletto*. She has also performed with Opera North and been a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Tenor **Victor Starsky** will make his company debut as the jealous soldier, Don José, a role he has also sung with Opera Tampa. He has also appeared in leading roles with Utah Festival Opera, Opera North, and New York City Opera. The role of Micaëla will be portrayed by soprano **Sarah Tucker**, who has sung the role with San Diego Opera and Arizona Opera. She has also been seen at San Francisco Opera, North Carolina Opera, the Dallas Symphony, Fargo-Moorhead Opera, and Utah Opera. The dashing toreador Escamillo will be sung by baritone **Andrew Manea**, who has been heard in leading roles at San Francisco Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Arizona Opera, and Opera Omaha.

Carmen will be conducted by Sarasota Opera artistic director and principal conductor **Victor DeRenzi**, directed by **Martha Collins**, in a set originally designed for Sarasota Opera in 2012 by **David P. Gordon**. Costumes and Lighting for all 2024 Winter Opera Festival productions will be designed by resident costume designer **Howard Tsvi Kaplan** and resident lighting designer **Ken Yunker**. Wigs and makeup for all productions will be designed by Kellen Eason. *Carmen* will be sung in French, with English supertitles for 12 performances through March 22.

Gaetano Donizetti's bel canto masterpiece *Lucia di Lammermoor*, last seen in 2012, will open on February 24. Soprano **Ashley Milanese** will make her company debut in the title role. Ms. Milanese has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Komische Oper Berlin and was a resident artist with the Teatro Regio in Turin. Last season's B.F. Pinkerton in Sarasota Opera's *Madama Butterfly*, tenor **Christopher Oglesby**, will return as Lucia's tragic lover Edgardo. He has recently been heard at San Francisco Opera, Utah Opera, and West Edge Opera. Baritone **Jean Carlos Rodriguez** who is making his company debut as Enrico, Lucia's scheming brother, is a familiar presence in the Tampa Bay region where he has performed numerous leading roles with Opera Tampa. Sarasota Opera company favorite bass **Young Bok Kim**, who debuted with the company in 2004 as Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, will round out the cast as the family chaplain Raimondo.

Sarasota Opera Youth Opera Music Director **Jesse Martins** will conduct *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He has also conducted *The Magic Flute*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *The Daughter of the Regiment* for Sarasota Opera. **Mark Freiman**, who has directed *Norma*, *La bohème*, and *Don Giovanni* among other works for the company, will return to direct. The new production has been designed by **Steven C. Kemp**. *Lucia di Lammermoor* will have eight performances through March 23rd and will be sung in Italian with English supertitles.

Not heard at Sarasota Opera in 25 years, Giuseppe Verdi's *Luisa Miller* will open on March 9. Soprano **Aviva Fortunata**, who made her company debut in last season's production of *Ernani*, will sing the title role. The Canadian-Italian soprano has sung with Pacific Opera Victoria, Canadian Opera Company, Dallas Opera, Calgary Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Tenor **Rafael Dávila**, who is celebrating the 20th anniversary of his Sarasota Opera debut, will sing Rodolfo, the disguised nobleman who is in love with Luisa. In recent seasons his career has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Later next season he will return to Opera Colorado in the title role of *Samson and Delilah*. After a successful Sarasota

Opera debut as Don Carlo in *Ernani* last season, baritone **Ricardo José Rivera** returns as Miller. Recent seasons have seen him with Teatro Nuovo, Opera San Jose, Washington Concert Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ukrainian bass-baritone **Vladyslav Buialskyi** will be making his Sarasota Opera debut as Count Walter. During the 2023-24 season, Buialskyi makes his debut with the Opéra de Lille as Leporello in a new production of *Don Giovanni* conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm, also appearing in concert to perform Brander *La damnation de Faust* with the RTVE Symphony Orchestra Madrid and Beethoven Symphony No. 9 with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra in Warsaw and Berlin. **David Weigel**, heard last season as *Don Giovanni* at the company, returns to sing the evil Wurm. A graduate of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, he has sung with that company, as well as the Metropolitan Opera and the Aspen Music Festival.

Luisa Miller will be conducted by **Victor DeRenzi**, the only conductor ever to have conducted all of Verdi's works. **Stephanie Sundine** will be the stage director. The set for this new production has been designed by **Steven C. Kemp**. *Luisa Miller* will be sung in Italian with English supertitles and have six performances through March 24.

Joseph Haydn's opera *Deceit Outwitted (L'infedeltà delusa)* will receive its Sarasota Opera premiere on March 15. **Hanna Brammer**, will be returning to Sarasota Opera in the role of Vespina. A favorite with Sarasota audiences, this will be Ms. Brammer's tenth leading role for the company since her debut in 2018. She has also sung with Opera Tampa, Nashville Opera, St. Petersburg Opera, and Wichita Grand Opera among others. Chinese-Korean soprano **Yulan Piao** will be making her Sarasota Opera debut as Sandrina in this production. She has recently sung the title role in *Madama Butterfly* with Boston Lyric Opera and has appeared at Knoxville Opera and San Francisco Opera. Tenor **William Davenport** returns to Sarasota Opera as Nencio. Last heard with the company in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, he has also sung the leading tenor roles in *La bohème* and *Rigoletto*. Other recent engagements have included performances at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia Valencia, Spain; Opera Delaware; Baltimore Concert Opera; Opera Southwest; and the Orlando Philharmonic. Another favorite artist with Sarasota Opera audiences, Italian baritone **Filippo Fontana** returns in the role of Neni in this production. Heard last season in *Madama Butterfly* with the company, he has also recently performed with the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy. Rounding out the cast will be the company debut of tenor **David Walton** as Filippo. Other recent appearances include performances with Cincinnati Opera, Virginia Opera, Minnesota Opera, Opera Delaware, Syracuse

Opera, Annapolis Opera, and the Glimmerglass Festival.

Conductor **Anthony Barrese** returns to Sarasota to conduct *Deceit Outwitted*. A frequent guest conductor with the company, he is also Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of Opera Southwest and Music Director of Opera Delaware. **Marco Nisticò** will direct the work. After turning to directing following an international career as a baritone, Mr. Nisticò has directed *The Elixir of Love* for the company and is Sarasota Opera's Artistic Administrator. *Deceit Outwitted* (*L'infedeltà delusa*) will be sung in Italian with English supertitles and will have five performances through March 23.

Subscriptions for the 2024 Winter Opera Festival, which runs from February 17 through March 24 are currently on sale. **Single tickets will be available starting September 1.** Opera lovers and travelers can enjoy the beautiful Sarasota sun and see all four operas in three or four days from March 13-24.

For tickets or more information, please visit SarasotaOpera.org, call (941) 328-1300, or visit the box office at 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, FL 34236.

Sarasota Opera's 2024 Winter Opera Festival

Carmen by Georges Bizet

Sung in French with English translations above the stage

February 17, 20, 22, 25(m), 28, 2024

March 2(m), 5, 8, 13, 17, 19(m), 22, 2024

Evening performances begin at 7:30 pm and matinee performances begin at 1:30 pm.

Artists:

Carmen:	Chelsea Laggan
Don José:	Victor Starsky
Escamillo:	Andrea Manea
Micaëla:	Sarah Tucker
Zuniga:	David Weigel
Conductor:	Victor DeRenzi
Stage Director:	Martha Collins
Scenic Designer:	David P. Gordon

Costume Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan
Lighting Designer: Ken Yunker
Hair & Make-Up Designer: Kellen Eason

Lucia di Lammermoor by Gaetano Donizetti

Sung in Italian with English translations above the stage

February 24, 27, 29, 2024

March 3(m), 6, 10(m), 16, 23, 2024

Evening performances begin at 7:30 pm and matinee performances begin at 1:30 pm.

Artists:

Lucia: Ashley Milanese
Sir Edgardo di Ravenswood: Christopher Oglesby
Lord Enrico: Jean Carlos Rodríguez
Raimondo: Young Bok Kim
Conductor: Jesse Martins
Stage Director: Mark Freiman
Scenic Designer: Steven C. Kemp
Costume Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan
Lighting Designer: Ken Yunker
Hair & Make-Up Designer: Kellen Eason

Luisa Miller by Giuseppe Verdi

Sung in Italian with English translations above the stage

March 9, 12, 14, 16(m), 20, 24(m), 2024

Evening performances begin at 7:30 pm and matinee performances begin at 1:30 pm.

Artists:

Luisa: Aviva Fortunata
Rodolfo: Rafael Dàvila
Miller: Ricardo José Rivera
Il Conte di Walter: Vladyslav Buialskyi
Wurm: David Weigel
Conductor: Victor DeRenzi
Stage Director: Stephanie Sundine
Scenic Designer: Steven C. Kemp

Costume Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan
Lighting Designer: Ken Yunker
Hair & Make-Up Designer: Kellen Eason

Deceit Outwitted (L'infedeltà delusa) by Joseph Haydn

Sung in Italian with English translations above the stage

March 15, 17(m), 19, 21, 23(m), 2024

Evening performances begin at 7:30 pm and matinee performances begin at 1:30 pm.

Artists:

Vespina: Hanna Brammer
Sandrina: Yulan Piao
Nencio: William Davenport
Nanni: Filippo Fontana
Filippo: David Walton
Conductor: Anthony Barrese
Stage Director: Marco Nisticò
Costume Designer: Howard Tsvi Kaplan
Lighting Designer: Ken Yunker
Hair & Make-Up Designer: Kellen Eason

ABOUT SARASOTA OPERA

Sarasota Opera is entering its 65th 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.