

The genius of Verdi is celebrated in fall concert at Sarasota Opera

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Town Chronicle Correspondent

Giuseppe Verdi composed a total of 26 operas throughout his career — and Sarasota Opera, under the leadership of Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi, has performed every one of them. Sarasota Opera is the only company on the planet to have performed every note Verdi wrote.

His first opera, “Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio,” premiered in 1839 when he was not quite 26 years old. He completed his last opera, “Falstaff,” in 1893 when he was 80.

DeRenzi’s project, the Verdi Cycle, began in 1989 with “Rigoletto.” During the company’s 2016 Winter Opera Festival, the grand finale was presented with productions of “Aïda” and “The Battle of Legnano.” The final week of the 2016 season was devoted exclusively to Verdi, with concerts of his music, talks, panel discussions and other special events. John Fleming of the Tampa Bay Times called it “one of the most significant achievements in the opera world.”

Although the company performs works by various composers, opera patrons have been able to enjoy something Verdi every season — and 2024-2025 is no different, with Sarasota’s fall concert, “The Music of Giuseppe Verdi” in November.

Selections will include “Celeste Aïda” from “Aïda,” “Tardo per gl’anni e tremulo” from “Attila,” “Ella giammai

m’amò” from “Don Carlo,” “Bella figlia dell’amore” from “Rigoletto” and more.

DeRenzi said he chose this concert’s selections for a specific reason.

“There are some familiar arias and duets in our concert, but I tried to find works that aren’t often done out of context, like the duet that ends the concert, ‘Piangi, fanciulla,’ for Rigoletto and his daughter, Gilda. It’s one of the great moments in opera, but it’s not usually performed outside the complete opera.

“And ‘Ella giammai m’amò,’ from Don Carlo. The character who sings this moment was perhaps the most important leader in the world at the time, King Philip II of Spain, but he feels the same things we all do. To me, Don Carlo is one of the first works of ‘Verismo.’ That term is often used and discussed, but if it indicates truth of emotions, there is no work that shows the human condition more than this.”



MIMS

The cast

• Soprano Virginia Mims made her debut with Sarasota Opera in 2024 as Lucia in Donizetti’s “Lucia di Lammermoor.” She has sung the role of Zemfira in Rachmaninoff’s “Aleko” and Cleopatra in Händel’s “Giulio Cesare” with IU Opera Theater, Susanna in Mozart’s “Le Nozze di Figaro” at Brevard Music Center, and Mary Bailey in

Jake “Heggie’s It’s A Wonderful Life” with IU Opera Theater.



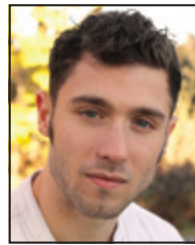
BARD

• Soprano Rochelle Bard made her Sarasota debut in 2019 as Abigail in Verdi’s “Nabucco.” She has sung the title role in Verdi’s “Aïda” with Washington Opera Society, the title role in Puccini’s “Tosca” with Hawaii Opera Theater and the Opera Theater of Connecticut, and Rosalinda in Johann Strauss II’s “Die Fledermaus” with Opera Tampa.



RODRIGUEZ

• Baritone Jean Carlos Rodriguez debuted with Sarasota Opera last season as Enrico in Donizetti’s “Lucia di Lammermoor.” He has sung Paris in Gounod’s “Romeo et Juliette” and Fiorello/Ufficiale in Rossini’s “Il barbiere di Siviglia” with Opera Tampa. He was also accepted into the prestigious Sherrill Milnes’ Savannah Voice Festival, where he sang the title role of Figaro in Mozart’s “Le nozze di Figaro.”



STARSKY

• Tenor Victor Starsky first performed with Sarasota Opera last season

as Don José in Bizet’s “Carmen.” He has sung the role of the Duke of Mantua in Verdi’s “Rigoletto” with Opera Modesto, Radamés in Verdi’s “Aïda,” George Gibbs in Rorem’s “Our Town” at the Utah Festival Opera, and Nemorino in Donizetti’s “L’elisir d’amore” with Charlottesville Opera.



KIM

• Bass Young Bok Kim, a Sarasota audience favorite, has performed with Sarasota opera for more than 20 years, where he has sung the title role in Verdi’s “Attila,” Sparafucile in Verdi’s “Rigoletto” and Raimondo in Donizetti’s “Lucia di Lammermoor,” among others. A native of Korea, he has also sung Don Alfonso in Mozart’s “Così fan tutte” with the National Opera of Korea and the Seoul Metropolitan Opera.

“The Music of Giuseppe Verdi” will be presented Nov. 15 and 17. Tickets are on sale now. 🎟️

“The Music of Giuseppe Verdi”

- **Where:** Sarasota Opera House, 71 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota
- **When:** 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15; 3 p.m. Nov. 17
- **Tickets:** 941-328-1300, in person at 61 N. Pineapple Ave., or online at tickets.sarasotaopera.org.



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