

A favorite tenor marks 20 years at Sarasota Opera

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Town Chronicle Correspondent

Rafael Dávila, a tenor who is beloved by Sarasota audiences, is celebrating 20 years since he made his debut here.

Although his home is in Puerto Rico, Sarasota is a second home to him.

“Because I started here when I was beginning my career, I call it my home company,” he said. “So that means many of the roles that I perform nowadays I did for the first time in Sarasota. It’s the company that believed in my talent from the beginning, and gave me the opportunity to explore new repertory.”

He performed his first “Tosca” in Sarasota.

“Apart from that, I love the company for many other reasons. I know everybody in the company — we have been working together for decades and I know most of the audience. It’s also the perfect place to be singing in the winter.”

Over the years, he has sung many of those roles with other companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, where he has just completed his sixth year. Recently he performed the role of Ismaele in Verdi’s “Nabucco” — as well as a cover for Don José in the new “Carmen” production, including the Met’s New Year’s opening night gala. Last season he sang leading tenor roles in the operas “Medea” and “Aida,” as well as the title role of Don Carlo. He has been part of the artistic roster of the Met since his debut in 2017 as Don José in “Carmen.”

Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim reviewed Dávila’s Met performance (when, as a



COURTESY PHOTO

Rafael Dávila

cover, he stepped into the role) for The New York Times: “Vocally, Mr. Dávila put in a robust and hot-blooded performance, undaunted by the house or the circumstances. ... For Mr. Dávila, Thursday’s star turn could prove just a one-night stand, but judging from the audience’s reaction, Mr. Dávila will return, with his name printed in the program.”

Life on the road can be lonely but, fortunately for Dávila, after their daughter graduated from college, his wife, Rosa, quit her job so she could travel with her husband.

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— Rafael Dávila

the most beautiful arias. There are a lot of moments for the singer to shine. It’s a shame it isn’t performed more often — it’s such a beautiful score.”

Twenty years ago, he was singing Casio in “Othello” at Tampa Opera.

“I drove down to audition for Maestro (Victor DeRenzi), and he hired me to perform in concert.”

The next winter, Dávila debuted here in “Werther.”

Dávila has been singing opera professionally for 28 years. He first performed in Puerto Rico after he won the Met auditions. Besides singing throughout the United States, he has sung in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Russia.

Following “Luisa Miller,” Dávila will sing the title role in Saint-Saens’s “Samson et Delilah” for Opera Colorado.

But, in the meantime, he is enjoying being back in his second home. 🍷

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