



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2025

Contact: Lael Mohib, Marketing Director
lmohib@sarasotaopera.org
Mobile: 202.257.4822

***Stiffelio* to open this weekend at Sarasota Opera**

Sarasota, FL—Last seen in Sarasota in 2005, Verdi's opera about infidelity and forgiveness, *Stiffelio*, opens Saturday, March 15. Written just before *Rigoletto*, this long-neglected, emotionally charged work is now recognized as an important opera by Verdi.

Stiffelio, a Protestant minister, returns from a mission abroad to be confronted by his wife's infidelity. He faces his wife's transgression, battling his all-too human emotions with his religious faith.

The opera is based on the French play *Le pasteur, ou L'évangile et le foyer* by Émile Souvestre and Eugène Bourgeois and is more realistic than other more melodramatic works Verdi had produced. Operatic subjects in Italy were under strict censorship in the 1850s, and the authorities in Trieste, where the opera was first seen, insisted on many changes. Verdi made several revisions but ultimately withdrew the opera.

It was not until 1968 that a reconstructed version was performed. In 1993, the original score was published in its original form, the opera has since had a number of successful productions.

The opera delves into themes of faith, forgiveness, and marital fidelity. There are several significant musical highlights including a powerful first-act finale, Lina's Act II prayer, Stankar's Act III vengeance aria, and the moving conclusion to the opera.

Tenor [Victor Starsky](#) will sing the title role. A native of Queens, New York, he made his Sarasota debut last season as Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*. He has sung the roles of the Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Opera Modesto, Radamès in Verdi's *Aida*, and Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with Charlottesville Opera.

Canadian-Italian soprano [Aviva Fortunata](#) returns to Sarasota to sing the role of Lina. She made her Sarasota debut in 2023 as Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani* and sang the title role in Verdi's *Luisa*

Miller here in 2024. She was named twice as one of CBC's Top 30 Canadian Classical Artists Under 30. Fortunata is an alumna of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Program.

Baritone [Ricardo José Rivera](#) is back in Sarasota, singing the role of Count Stankar. He performed the role of Miller in Verdi's *Luisa Miller* in 2024 and Don Carlo in the company's 2023 production of Verdi's *Ernani*. Last season he also performed Nottingham in *Roberto Devereux* with Washington Concert Opera, Severo in Donizetti's *Poliuto* with Teatro Nuovo, and Silvio in *Pagliacci* with Opera San Antonio.

Bass [Young Bok Kim](#), marking his 21st year with Sarasota Opera, will sing the role of Jorg. In Sarasota, 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 South Korea, he has sung Don Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with the National Opera of Korea and the Seoul Metropolitan Opera. Kim currently lives in New York where he made his New York City Opera debut as Colline in *La bohème*. He also is performing the role of Don Basilio in Sarasota Opera's current production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Stiffelio will be conducted by Sarasota Opera artistic director and principal conductor Victor DeRenzi and directed by Stephanie Sundine, with set design by Steven C. Kemp, lighting design by Ken Yunker, costume design by Howard Tsvi Kaplan, and hair and makeup by Sue Schaefer. It will be sung in Italian, with English supertitles for six performances, March 15, 18, 20, 23 (matinee), 26, 30 (matinee). Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. and matinee performances begin at 1:30 p.m.

Tickets are on sale at the Sarasota Opera Box Office, by phone at 941-328-1300, in person at 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, or online at <https://tickets.sarasotaopera.org>.

For more information, visit <https://www.sarasotaopera.org/event/stiffelio>.

About Sarasota Opera

This is Sarasota Opera's 66th 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. Sarasota Opera • 61 N. Pineapple Avenue • Sarasota, FL 34236 • (941) 366-8450 • SarasotaOpera.org.

#