



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Sarasota, FL (August 7, 2017)**

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**THE SARASOTA CUBAN BALLET SCHOOL  
ANNOUNCES COLLABORATION  
WITH SARASOTA OPERA**

The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School (SCBS) and Sarasota Opera announce an inaugural collaboration for the 2017/2018 season. SCBS will participate in three of the five operas in Sarasota Opera's upcoming season.

SCBS's Tania Vergara, Choreographer and Master Teacher, and four dancers from the Sarasota Cuban Ballet School will join the production team and cast of this fall's production of Verdi's *La traviata*. Ms. Vergara will serve as the production choreographer and the four dancers, Elias Re, Evita Re, Zachary Bennett, and Camila Serrano, will alternate performances. In addition to *La traviata*, Ms. Vergara will serve as choreographer for Act II of Bizet's *Carmen* as well as choreograph movement for the principal artists in the final opera of the season, *Tiefland* by Eugen d'Albert.

Tania Vergara trained in Cuba and taught at the National Ballet School from 1986 to 2013. During this time she founded, directed and was choreographer of Endedans, a Cuban contemporary dance company. After coming to the U.S. in 2014, she joined the faculty of the School of Ballet Arts in Lake Worth, Florida, and is a popular guest choreographer for dance companies in the U.S. Her choreography has won many awards, including the Ibero-American Choreography Award in 2008 for "To the Ends of the Earth," the Anacaona "Golden Flower" Distinction granted by the Dominican Republic's Igneri Foundation, and National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) Choreography Award.

Sarasota Opera launches its 59th season on November 3 with the return of Verdi's *La traviata*, which will run through November 21. In addition, the Sarasota Youth Opera will present its sixth world premiere, *Rootabaga Country* by Rachel J. Peters, on November 11 and 12. The 2018 Winter Festival Season opens on Saturday, February 10, with the Sarasota Opera premiere of Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. Following on February 17 will be the return of *Carmen* by Georges Bizet; the Sarasota Opera premiere of *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini on March 3; and the Sarasota Opera premiere of the German verismo opera *Tiefland* by Eugen d'Albert opening March 10.

“We are thrilled with this exciting new artistic collaboration between our school and the Sarasota Opera,” said Ariel Serrano, SCBS’s Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director. “We look forward to exposing our patrons to the Opera, and the Opera patrons to the Sarasota Cuban Ballet School.”

Subscriptions for the 2017/2018 Season are available now, both online at [sarasotaopera.org](http://sarasotaopera.org) and in the Sarasota Opera Box Office. Single tickets go on sale exclusively online on August 1 and at the Sarasota Opera Box Office on September 1. For more information, call the Sarasota Opera Box Office at (941) 328-1300 or visit in person at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34236.

#### **About The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School**

SCBS was founded in 2012 by the Cuban-born husband and wife team of Ariel Serrano and Wilman Hernandez. Born in Cuba, they trained at the elite National Ballet School of Cuba and performed internationally. In 1993, they moved to Sarasota to join the Sarasota Ballet. Co-Artistic Directors of SCBS, they teach classes at all levels for students from age three to adults, but the heart of the School’s program is a rigorous training course to prepare talented, serious young dancers for professional careers. Students of SCBS have gone on to perform with Dance Theater of Harlem, Milwaukee Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet West, Boston Ballet, Ballet Manila, Ballet Municipal de Lima and The Royal Ballet.

#### **About the Cuban Style**

SCBS is the only school in the United States specializing in the Cuban training style, which is renowned for its athleticism, passion and grace. The Cuban Style is an authentic movement of style of classical ballet with influences from the major schools of ballet—French, Italian and Russian. It emphasizes dancing with the entire body and promoting harmonious movement among arms, legs and torso. It is a very clean and precise, but not stiff. It has a romantic feel, with attentive partnering, and is changing the face of modern ballet with superb technique and impeccable footwork. This award-winning School provides world-class ballet instruction in the tradition of the Cuban method.

#### **About Sarasota Opera**

Based on Florida’s beautiful Gulf Coast, Sarasota Opera recently completed its internationally acclaimed Verdi Cycle making it the only company in the world to have performed every work of Giuseppe Verdi. In 1960, the company began presenting chamber-sized repertoire in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota’s Ringling Museum of Art. Recognizing the need for a theater more conducive to opera, the company purchased the former A.B. Edwards Theater in downtown Sarasota in 1979 and first performing in it in 1984 as the Sarasota Opera House. The theater has just undergone a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation enhancing audience amenities, while updating the technical facilities including increasing the size of the orchestra pit. The theater, which reopened in March 2008, 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 Executive Director Richard Russell since 2012. The company has garnered international attention with its Masterwork Revivals Series, which presents neglected works of artistic merit, as well as the Verdi Cycle producing the complete works of Giuseppe Verdi. Recognizing the importance of training, Maestro DeRenzi founded the Apprentice Artist and Studio Artist programs. Sarasota Opera also maintains a commitment to education through its Invitation to Opera performances for local schools and the unique Sarasota Youth Opera program.

#### ***The Sarasota Cuban Ballet School is sponsored in part by:***

*abc7, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Dr. Suzanne Kesten Mentoring Foundation, Publix, Saks Fifth Avenue, William G. and Marie Selby Foundation, Sarasota Magazine, Sarasota County TDT and WUSF Public Media*

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