



**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

**May 8, 2019**

**Asolo Rep and The Sarasota Ballet Announce  
Installation of New Seating in the Harold and Esther Mertz  
Theatre in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts**

**(SARASOTA, May 8, 2019)** — Asolo Repertory Theatre and The Sarasota Ballet proudly announce the installation of brand new seating in the Harold and Esther Mertz Theatre, the main performing space for Asolo Repertory Theatre and the home of The Sarasota Ballet. Located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, which is also home to the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, the exquisite Mertz Theatre is one of Sarasota's most populated and significant cultural venues.

This installation will take place over the summer and is expected to be completed by the end of August 2019. The seating in the theatre has increased from 503 to 535 seats, with most of the new seats added to the orchestra section of the theatre. Comfort and sight-line clarity were first and foremost in the process. The new layout also allows for an increase in ADA seating at a variety of price points.

The seats, manufactured by Irwin Seating, are a replica of those in the historic New Amsterdam Theatre, the oldest operating theatre on Broadway, and reflect the style and aesthetic of the Mertz. The installation was funded by Florida State University and championed by Sally McRorie, the university's Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The Mertz, which was originally an opera house built in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1903, has served as Asolo Rep's performing space since 1990 and The Sarasota Ballet's since 1996.

"Together with the FSU/Asolo Conservatory and The Sarasota Ballet, Asolo Rep is thrilled to announce this exciting enhancement to the beautiful Mertz Theatre," said

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Linda DiGabriele, Managing Director of Asolo Rep. "The new seating will undoubtedly enhance our patrons theatrical experience with premium seating, on par with Broadway standards. As the Sarasota community continues to grow substantially each season, we are thrilled to be able to expand right alongside it."

Joseph Volpe, Executive Director of The Sarasota Ballet added "The additional seating not only provides our audience further opportunities to participate in our sold out performances each season, but also brings a new and vibrant energy to the theatre. Both our organizations are grateful for this important investment from Florida State University in the arts in Sarasota."

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## **ABOUT ASOLO REP**

Now in its 60th season, Asolo Repertory Theatre is recognized as one of the premier professional theatres in America and one of the largest in the Southeastern United States. One of the few select theatres in the nation that performs in true rotating repertory, Asolo Rep's highly skilled acting company and extensive craftsmanship bring to life this unique performance method that gives audiences the opportunity to see multiple productions in the span of a few days. Asolo Rep presents up to 10 productions each season including contemporary and classic works and provocative musical theatre experiences. A theatre district in and of itself, Asolo Rep is committed to expanding its reach into the community, furthering its collaboration with the best theatre artists working in the industry today and cultivating new artists through its affiliation with the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Managing Director Linda DiGabriele, Asolo Rep's ambitious theatrical offerings and ground-breaking education and community programming engage audiences and ensure its lasting legacy for future generations.

[www.asolorep.org](http://www.asolorep.org)

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## **ABOUT THE SARASOTA BALLET**

Since 1990, the mission of The Sarasota Ballet has been enriching lives, captivating emotions, and strengthening the community through the art of dance. Under the leadership of Director Iain Webb, Executive Director Joseph Volpe, and Assistant Director Margaret Barbieri, The Sarasota Ballet has received national and international recognition for its diverse repertoire of rarely performed ballets, as well as the integrity and artistry of its performances. The Company's expanded repertoire includes works by world-renowned choreographers such as Sir Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, Sir Matthew Bourne, Dame Ninette de Valois, Michel Fokine, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, Rudolf Nureyev, Jerome Robbins, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Antony Tudor, and Christopher Wheeldon. During Webb's tenure, The Sarasota Ballet has been invited to perform twice at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and twice at the Fall for

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Dance Festival at New York City Center, as well as week-long residencies at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and the Joyce Theater in New York. In May 2017 The Sarasota Ballet performed at the inaugural National Choreographic Festival in Salt Lake City and in August of 2018 returned to the Joyce Theater for another sold out week-long residency.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Sasha Goodrich

Public Relations Manager

941.351.9010 x 4800

**[Sasha\\_Goodrich@asolo.org](mailto:Sasha_Goodrich@asolo.org)**