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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Actors With Asolo Repertory Theatre Give Their New Housing At Serenata A Standing Ovation

Sarasota, FL – When accomplished actors come to perform with the famed Asolo Repertory Theatre, they expect that everything from lighting to box office sell outs will be commonplace for a professional company widely recognized as an important cultural force in the Southeastern U.S. As of April 2008, Asolo Rep once again exceeded their expectations.

That was the month that Asolo Rep became one of only a handful of theatre companies in the United States to own the temporary housing they offer traveling troupes—housing that is in keeping with the caliber of the actors they are bringing to Sarasota. Asolo Rep purchased 10 condominiums at Serenata, located at University Parkway and Tuttle Avenue, four miles from its performance and rehearsal space and downtown, and three miles from I-75. These fully furnished units feature spacious suites, screened balconies, equipped kitchens, laundry facilities, and even plasma televisions. According to Darrin Baker, the Broadway actor who recently starred in *Working* at The Mertz Theater, they didn't cut any corners.

"We really felt valued," said Baker, who has appeared on Broadway in plays such as *Wonderful Town* with Brooke Shields and on television in *Law & Order*, and *Melrose Place* to name but a few. "For a New Yorker, staying at Serenata was like being at a spa.

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Touring Actors Give Serenata a Standing Ovation. 2-2-2.

What makes it even better is that Asolo Rep is doing theater that's on par with New York."

Carl Meyer, a longtime Asolo Rep Board Member and Real Estate Broker at the St. Armand Coldwell Banker office, felt that luxury housing was needed to retain and attract top talent to Sarasota. Meyer worked in concert with retired Michigan builder and Fellow Board Member Herman Frankel to find the location and the quality the Asolo required.

"Most actors," explains Meyer, "pursue roles on their own, because that's the way it's always been done. Now, we go to the actors and invite them to winter in Sarasota, to stay in first-class accommodations at Serenata, and while you're here, perform within one of the country's top theatre companies. It helps us hire the best of the best."

Acting troupes have a difficult schedule at best, according to Cheryl Ferriera, interim marketing director for Asolo Rep. Their days are long, and often broken up into several small blocks of free time. Between rehearsals, doing eight shows a week, and only one day off, it was key that everything they might need be within easy reach.

"We chose Serenata because it's so close to everything—our venues, the beaches, downtown Sarasota and St. Armand's Circle. Equally important, right in the community they have a fitness center, resort-style pool, tennis court—even a Panera's across the street," said Ferriera.

Like most community theater companies, Asolo Rep is required to provide housing and transportation for its actors. Challenges in finding rental accommodations that are in keeping with what actors, stage managers, directors and other professionals enjoy at home was what ultimately drove the decision to buy. Serenata offered that and a great location as well.

"They call this area the "new Sarasota" because of so much development on the horizon...University Town Center anchored by Nordstrom and Nieman Marcus, Fresh Market, plus Starbucks, Publix and all the other daily conveniences," said Chris Gladdue,

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Touring Actors Give Serenata a Standing Ovation. 3-3-3.

Serenata owner and development review coordinator for the City of Sarasota. "As a city planner, I recognize that being in an area on the rise means increasing property values."

Serenata Condominiums were developed to provide a resort lifestyle in a great location by Chicago-based MCZ/Centrum Development, a developer with 30 years of experience in urban renaissance and in the development of many exciting new neighborhoods. They are currently building in Chicago, Kansas City, and throughout South Florida.

Asolo Repertory Theatre is Florida's premier professional theatre and one of the most important cultural forces in the Southeastern United States. Having built a 50-year reputation as a center for theatrical excellence, Asolo Rep crafts the highest quality productions of classical, contemporary, and newly commissioned work all performed in the rarest form of rotating repertory. The Company is guided by Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Managing Director Linda DiGabriele and features an accomplished resident company complemented by distinguished guest artists.

"I'm privileged to do a lot of Broadway, so I don't have to travel much," said Baker, who will soon be starring on the big screen in *The Good Guy* with Scott Porter of *Speed Racer*. "but if Michael Edwards ever calls, I'm there. It's like a working vacation."

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Asolo Repertory Theatre and Serenata photography is available upon request.

For information online, visit www.asolo.org or www.liveatserenata.com.