



**MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM**

MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM KICKS OFF ITS 61ST SEASON WITH THE SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT

July 5 in San Francisco

July 7 in Palo Alto

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (22 May 2018) – San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 61st season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. Some of opera’s greatest moments will come to life as Merola’s young artists perform staged scenes from *Vanessa, Il tabarro, Les pêcheurs de perles*, and *Don Giovanni* in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. The concerts will be performed **7:30pm, Thursday, July 5** in San Francisco and **7:30pm, Saturday, July 7** in Palo Alto (venues/addresses listed below). For tickets or more information, visit www.merola.org or call **(415) 864-3330**.

Among the scenes to be performed are selections from *Vanessa*, a three-act American opera by Samuel Barber that follows Vanessa and Erika, two women torn between fighting for ideals and settling for what life has to offer. It was composed in the late 1950s, and first performed at the Metropolitan Opera in 1958. That same year, *Vanessa* went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for its composer. Vocal highlights include Erika’s ballad “Must winter come so soon,” and Vanessa’s aria “Do not utter a word.” The artists performing selections from Act 1, Scene 1 will be Megan Grey (Mezzo-Soprano), Brittany Nickell (Soprano), Andrew Moore (Bass-Baritone), and Brian Michael Moore (Tenor).

Also presented will be scenes from *Il tabarro (The Cloak)*, a one-act opera by Puccini, based on Didier Gold’s play *La houppelande*, created as part of a triptych that includes *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Heavily influenced by Debussy and impressionism while creating this work, Puccini paints a vivid musical backdrop in this harrowing drama of jealousy and remorse set on a Parisian river barge. The first performance of this opera was given 100 years ago, in 1918 at the Metropolitan Opera. Among the memorable music is an impassioned duet between Giorgetta and Luigi as they dream of a better life in Paris, and Michele’s jealous tirade when he uncovers his wife’s infidelity. Merola fellows Kendra Berentsen (Soprano), Christopher Colmenero (Tenor), Megan Grey (Mezzo-Soprano), Marlen Nahhas (Soprano), Andrew Moore (Bass-Baritone), Brian Michael Moore (Tenor), WooYoung Yoon (Tenor), and Jaeman Yoon (Baritone) will perform “Se tu sapessi gli oggetti strain,” “È ben altro il mio sogno!,” “O Luigi! Luigi!,” and “Nulla! Silenzio!”

Les pêcheurs de perles (The Pearl Fishers) offers a selection from Bizet’s 1863 opera recounting two men’s vow of eternal friendship, threatened by their love for the same woman. Although it was not revived in Bizet’s lifetime, the opera gained posthumous popularity and from 1886

onwards it was performed regularly in Europe and North America, eventually entering into the repertory of opera houses worldwide. Selections from all three Acts will be performed by SeokJong Baek (Baritone), Kendra Berentsen (Soprano), and WooYoung Yoon (Tenor).

Rounding out the program are selections from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which brought the infamous seducer to life when it premiered at the National Theatre in Prague in 1787. Although this opera is sometimes classified as comic, *Don Giovanni* blends comedy, melodrama, and supernatural elements. Seokjong Baek (Baritone), Kendra Berentsen (Soprano), Andrew Moore (Bass-Baritone), Brian Michael Moore (Tenor), Marlen Nahhas (Soprano), Brittany Nickell (Soprano), Jaeman Yoon (Baritone), and Xiaomeng Zhang (Baritone) will perform "Gia la mensa è preparata" from Act 2. To wrap up, all artists participating in the Schwabacher Summer Concert will perform "Questo è il fin di chi fa mal."

With performances in English, Italian, and French (with supertitles), the Schwabacher Summer Concert will be conducted by Kathleen Kelly (Merola 1991/1992), the first woman and first American named as Director of Musical Studies at the Vienna State Opera. Kelly returns to San Francisco's Merola Opera Program where she was an apprentice coach.

The concerts will be directed by Aria Umezawa (Merola 2016), currently completing her second year as a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow – the first stage director awarded this fellowship in 15 years. Umezawa is the co-founder of the Toronto-based, independent opera company Opera 5, and served as its artistic director from 2012 to 2017. She is also the creator, writer, and director of the web series *Opera Cheats*, and was the 2016 Merola Apprentice Stage Director, where her staging of the Merola Grand Finale concert was praised by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coach accompanists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow and presents outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. Throughout the summer, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement. Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. It is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation, offering financial aid for essential career development costs including coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program. Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists, who have gone on to extensive careers in opera, including Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Rolando Villazon, Thomas Hampson, and Patrick Summers among many others.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 61st season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. Some of opera's greatest moments will come to life as Merola's young artists perform staged scenes from *Vanessa*, *Il tabarro*, *Les pêcheurs de perles*, and *Don Giovanni* in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. With performances in English, Italian, and French (with supertitles), the Schwabacher Summer Concert will be conducted by Kathleen Kelly (Merola 1991/1992), the first woman and first American named as Director of Musical Studies at the Vienna State Opera. Kelly returns to San Francisco's Merola Opera Program where she was an apprentice coach. It will be directed by Aria Umezawa (Merola 2016), currently completing her second year as a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow – the first stage director awarded this fellowship in 15 years.

SHOWS: **7:30pm, Thursday, July 5**
San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

7:30pm, Saturday, July 7
Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford

TICKETS: San Francisco tickets: \$35-\$55
Palo Alto tickets: \$30-\$50 (go on sale May 24)

Discount available for purchase of three San Francisco-based Summer Festival productions (deadline June 18, 2018). Also discount for groups of 10 or more. \$15 student tickets available in limited quantity in advance at San Francisco Opera Box Office.

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit <http://merola.org> or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **415-864-3330**. The box office is open Monday, 10am-5pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10am-6pm.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/MerolaOperaProgram>