



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PRESENTS FULL PRODUCTION OF MOZART'S
DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE (THE MAGIC FLUTE)

August 4 & 6 at the Blue Shield of California Theatre, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (13 July 2022) – **Merola Opera Program** continues its 2022 season with a fully staged production of Mozart's ***Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)***, giving the public the opportunity to see Merola's exciting 2022 participants performing full operatic roles, conducted by Kelly Kuo, Associate Director of American Lyric Theatre and Music Director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra. Taking the form of a singspiel, a comic opera with spoken dialogue, ***Die Zauberflöte*** evokes intimacy, mysticism, and wit—with a dollop of humor—set to musical brilliance. Director Gina Lapinski directs this production, bringing the work's colorful characters to life—from a handsome young prince to a silly bird-catching sidekick and the mysterious Queen of the Night. Lapinski has been a stage director for the Metropolitan Opera for more than two decades. The production will feature the groundbreaking costumes created by Dame Zandra Rhodes for San Diego Opera, in a vivid setting brought to life with projections by award-winning designer Ian Winters, enhancing the setting by designer Stephen D. Mazzeno. ***Die Zauberflöte*** will be presented at 7:30pm, Thursday, August 4 & 3:00pm, Saturday, August 6 at the **Blue Shield of California Theatre at YBCA**, 700 Howard St., San Francisco. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$55/\$80 plus \$1 per ticket facility fee), the public may visit www.merola.org/calendar.

Mozart's final opera, ***Die Zauberflöte*** premiered at Vienna's Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden in September 1791, just two months before the brilliant composer's death. Its popularity was such that it received its 100th performance just a year later, in November 1792. Since then, ***Die Zauberflöte*** has been performed in nearly every country of Europe and throughout the world. Featuring a libretto by Mozart's close colleague Emanuel Schikaneder, this work remains a staple of today's opera repertory. Last performed by the Merola Opera Program in 1998, the company returns with a marvelous, family-friendly production of this beloved work.

The young artists featured in ***Die Zauberflöte*** include: soprano **Chelsea Lehnea** as Pamina, tenor **Sahel Salam** as Tamino, baritone **Scott Lee** as Papageno, bass **Edwin Jhamaal Davis** as Sarastro, soprano **Maggie Kinabrew** as the Queen of the Night, tenor **Chance Jonas-O'Toole** as Monostatos, soprano **Adia Evans** as the First Lady, mezzo-soprano **Erin Wagner** as the Second Lady, mezzo-soprano **Veena Akama Makia** as the Third Lady, bass-baritone **Le Bu** as the Speaker, soprano **Ashley Marie Robillard** as Papagena, soprano **Olivia Prendergast** as the First Spirit, countertenor **Cody Bowers** as the Second Spirit, mezzo-soprano **Maggie Renéé** as the Third Spirit, tenor **Daniel Luis Espinal** as the First Priest, baritone **Andres Cascante** as the Second Priest, tenor **Moisés Salazar** as the First Armored Man, and bass-baritone **Seungyun Kim** as the Second Armored Man.

ABOUT KELLY KUO:

Praised by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* as “a leader of exceptional musical gifts, who has a clear technique on the podium and an impressive rapport with audiences,” conductor **Kelly Kuo** makes his company debut with the Merola Opera Program for this production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. In 2021, Maestro Kuo was named Associate Artistic Director of American Lyric Theatre and Music Director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra, while continuing his duties as Artistic Director of the Oregon Mozart Players. Recent engagements include productions with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Opera Orlando, Opera Columbus, Wolf Trap Opera, the Brevard Music Center, and concerts with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Sunriver Music Festival, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and Ballet Fantastique. Maestro Kuo has also served on the conducting staff of Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Pacific, Atlanta Symphony, and Cincinnati Symphony. In 2008, Maestro Kuo became the first conductor of Asian descent to lead a performance at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Since then, he has returned to lead the Chicago premiere of Charlie Parker’s *Yardbird* and performances featuring artists of the Ryan Opera Center. Upcoming engagements include a return to Opera Columbus, as well as appearances with New Orleans Opera and the Olympia Symphony Orchestra. A recipient of a Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistant Award, Maestro Kuo continues to concertize as a keyboardist and is the only pianist to have studied with two pupils of the Russian virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz.

ABOUT GINA LAPINSKI:

Director **Gina Lapinski** has been a stage director for the Metropolitan Opera for more than two decades. Her latest productions with the Metropolitan Opera include Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Puccini’s *Tosca*, Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, and Handel’s *Rodelinda*. Lapinski was also recently found directing *Rigoletto* (Die Staatsoper Unter den Linden, with Bartlett Sher); Verdi’s *Aida* (Salzburger Festspiele, with Shirin Neshat); and Wagner’s *Der fliegende holländer* (Opéra de Québec and the Metropolitan Opera, with François Girard)—either as the stage director or associate stage director. Upcoming engagements include productions of Ambroise Thomas’s *Hamlet*, Puccini’s *Tosca*, Verdi’s *Falstaff*, and Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*—all with the Metropolitan Opera. As a dramatic coach and stage director, Lapinski has appeared with OperaFest Sewanee’s 2021 Sewanee Summer Music Festival and the Sewanee WinterFest 2021. Additional career highlights include the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (dramatic coach), NOA Opera Production Competition 2021 (adjudicator), The CoOPERative Program (dramatic coach), and Martina Arroyo Prelude to Performance, Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*, and Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (stage director).

ABOUT THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM:

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, pianists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow through master classes and private coaching with opera’s most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertoire, languages, diction, acting, stage movement, and professional development. Offered free of charge to 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 their participation, offering aid for essential career development expenses including coaching, language classes, and audition travel.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **Merola Opera Program** continues its 2022 season with a fully staged production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)*, giving the public the opportunity to see Merola’s exciting 2022 participants performing full operatic roles, conducted by Kelly Kuo, Associate Director of American Lyric Theatre and Music Director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra. Taking the form of a singspiel, a comic opera with spoken dialogue, *Die Zauberflöte* evokes intimacy, mysticism, and wit—with a dollop of humor—set to musical brilliance. Director Gina Lapinski directs this production, bringing the work’s colorful characters to life—from a handsome young prince to a silly bird-catching sidekick and the mysterious Queen of the Night. Lapinski has been a stage director for the Metropolitan Opera for more than two decades. The production will feature the groundbreaking costumes created by Dame Zandra Rhodes for San Diego Opera, in a vivid setting brought to life with projections by award-winning designer Ian Winters, enhancing the setting by designer Stephen D. Mazzeno.

WHEN: 7:30pm, Thursday, August 4
3:00pm, Saturday, August 6

WHERE: **Blue Shield of California Theatre at YBCA**, 700 Howard St., San Francisco

TICKETS: \$55/\$80 plus \$1 per ticket facility fee

INFO: For more information or to order tickets, please visit www.merola.org/calendar or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **(415) 864-3330**. In-person purchases can also be made at **301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco**.

The box office is open Monday, 10:00am–5:00pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am–6:00pm.

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MEDIA: Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co. PR
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos will be available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/diezauberflote/>