



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM ANNOUNCES 2023 SEASON

SUMMER FESTIVAL INCLUDES A TRANSFORMATIVE RECITAL, *THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA*, SEMI-STAGED CONCERT OF SCENES FROM CLASSIC OPERAS, AND
MEROLA GRAND FINALE

June 29 – August 19, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (23 March 2023) – One of the most prestigious opera training programs in the world, San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** has announced its 2023 season. This year’s talented cohort of participants, announced last month, is made up of 28 young artists, selected from more than 1300 applicants, who hail from the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Cuba, France, South Korea, Wales, Costa Rica, China, and across the United States and Canada. “The 2023 Merola Opera Program will bring some of the world’s brightest young operatic talent to the Bay Area,” said **Carrie-Ann Matheson**, San Francisco Opera Center Artistic Director, and **Markus Beam** (Merola ’02), San Francisco Opera Center General Manager. “As a premiere training program, we choose our artistic projects by first asking what will most serve the development of our participants. We are excited to offer a summer of varied musical and theatrical performances encompassing themes of tragedy, love, rebirth, and renewal, and are eagerly anticipating this journey of discovery with each of our 28 Merolini, and with our world class faculty.” The 2023 Merola Summer Festival kicks off on June 29 with ***Metamorphosis: Recovery, Renewal, and Rebirth***, an illuminating voice and piano recital at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall that celebrates the beautiful and sophisticated aspects of transformation, followed by a fully staged production of Benjamin Britten’s ***The Rape of Lucretia***, performed on July 13 and 15 at the Herbst Theatre. Memorable works from the classic opera repertoire will be highlighted in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**, a semi-staged concert of extended scenes performed with full orchestra on August 3 and 5 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall. The season comes to a sensational end on August 19 with the **Merola Grand Finale**, an electrifying concert featuring all the 2023 Merola participants, presented at the War Memorial Opera House, with a reception following in The Green Room. Individual performance tickets are available now to Merola members and to the public beginning April 6 at 11:00 AM at www.merola.org or by calling the San Francisco Box Office at (415) 864-3330. Discover the season at www.merola.org/calendar.

The 2023 Merola Summer Festival performance schedule includes:

***Metamorphosis: Recovery, Renewal, and Rebirth* • 7:30 PM, June 29, 2023 • San Francisco Conservatory of Music**

The 2023 Merola Summer Festival kicks off with an uplifting vocal and piano recital featuring a rich array of songs that explore the many facets of transformation. At a tumultuous time in the world, this recital focuses on themes of change and growth with songs from Alma Mahler, Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Robert Owens, Florence Price, and many others. The illuminating program will take the audience on a journey from desolation to hope. Merola's Artistic Director Carrie-Ann Matheson joins forces with Nicholas Phan, who worked with Merola in 2021 on its *What the Heart Desires* recital, to curate the musical offerings.

The Rape of Lucretia • 7:30 PM, July 13 & 2:00 PM, July 15, 2023 • Herbst Theatre, San Francisco

The season continues with a fully staged production of Benjamin Britten's ***The Rape of Lucretia***, libretto by Ronald Duncan, approached through a current lens. Although based on ancient Roman history, the opera and its content will be explored as it relates to today's climate, with post-performance discussions that bring the creative team together with audience members in an open format. Set to one of Britten's most searing and lyrical scores, ***The Rape of Lucretia*** offers eight roles suited to young voices, making this challenging piece an excellent vehicle for the burgeoning Merola artists. The opera follows Lucretia, a dedicated spouse who becomes a horrific target in a brutal game of sex and power. This emotionally charged chamber opera that has become a part of the standard operatic repertoire worldwide explores issues that sadly remain starkly relevant today. Maestro Judith Yan returns to Merola to conduct ***The Rape of Lucretia***, while German stage director Jan Eßinger makes his U.S. debut to put his stamp on the production. Equally adept at conducting symphony, opera, and ballet, Maestro Yan has conducted for major companies in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America. Known for bringing a fresh directorial perspective, Eßinger has helmed dozens of acclaimed productions throughout Europe, notably at the Theater Heidelberg, Opernhaus Zürich, Theater Koblenz, Philharmonie de Luxemburg, and many others.

Schwabacher Summer Concert • 7:30 PM, August 3, 2023 & 2:00 PM, August 5, 2023 • San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Bay Area audiences are invited to revel in the drama and melody of classic opera during the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**, when the young artists of the 2023 Merola Opera Program perform extended scenes from works by Donizetti, Handel, Verdi, and others. Featuring a full orchestra, the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be conducted by Maestro Steven White and directed by Omer Ben Seadia (Merola '14). With a vibrant repertoire of over 65 titles, Maestro White's extensive operatic engagements have included performances throughout North America, including an acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut in 2010. Known for her inventive, thoughtful, and socially conscious productions, Merola alum Ben Seadia began to work extensively in the U.S. in 2012 after more than a decade with the Israeli Opera.

Merola Grand Finale • 7:30 PM, August 19, 2023 • War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco

The 2023 season comes to a triumphant end with the **Merola Grand Finale**, featuring all the young artists in a dazzling array of opera's most brilliant works. Conducted by Maestro Kelly Kuo and directed by 2023 Merola Stage Director Tania Arazi Coombs, this evening showcases

the extraordinary talent of this year's cohort. Kuo was seen with Merola last season, where he made his company debut for last year's critically acclaimed 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.

This year's distinguished faculty members include:

Voice Teachers:

Deb Birnbaum
Julia Faulkner
Rhoslyn Jones
Gerald Martin Moore*
Cesar Ulloa

Master Coaches:

John Churchwell
Alan Darling
Warren Jones*
Martin Katz*
Jonathan Kelly
Mario Antonio Marra
Carrie-Ann Matheson*
Kevin Murphy
Nicholas Phan

Artist in Residence:

Rolando Villazón*

**Will be featured in public master classes reserved for Merola members.*

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, pianist/coaches, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow through master classes and private coachings 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 was the first 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. Since Matheson and Beam formed the new Merola artistic team in 2021, the program has redoubled its efforts to provide exciting new curricula and added focus on preparing the burgeoning artists for extramusical aspects of a performance career. Learn more at www.merola.org.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: One of the most prestigious opera training programs in the world, San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** has announced its 2023 season, bringing the future of young operatic talent to the Bay Area. This year's cohort of participants, which was announced last month, is made up of 28 young artists who hail from the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Cuba, France, South Korea, Wales, Costa Rica, and China, as well as across the United States and Canada. The 2023 Merola Summer Festival kicks off on June 29 with ***Metamorphosis: Recovery, Renewal, and Rebirth***, an illuminating recital at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall that celebrates the beautiful and sophisticated aspects of transformation, followed by a fully staged production of Benjamin Britten's ***The Rape of Lucretia***, performed on July 13 and 15 at the Herbst Theatre. Memorable works from the classic opera repertoire will be highlighted in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**, a semi-staged concert of extended scenes performed with full orchestra on August 3 and 5 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall. The season comes to a sensational end on August 19 with the **Merola Grand Finale**, an electrifying concert featuring all the 2023 Merola participants, presented at the War Memorial Opera House, followed by a reception in The Green Room.

WHEN: ***Metamorphosis: Recovery, Renewal, and Rebirth***
7:30 PM, Thursday, June 29 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall
Tickets: \$55/\$80

The Rape of Lucretia
7:30 PM, Thursday, July 13 – Herbst Theatre, San Francisco
2:00 PM, Saturday, July 15 – Herbst Theatre, San Francisco
Tickets: \$55/\$80

Schwabacher Summer Concert
7:30 PM, Thursday, August 3 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall
2:00 PM, Saturday, August 5 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall
Tickets: \$55/\$80

Merola Grand Finale and Reception
7:30 PM, Saturday, August 19 – War Memorial Opera House
*Tickets: \$28/\$43/\$53 (includes a \$3 facility fee) Reception Tickets: \$75**
**The reception will take place in The Green Room at the Veterans Building*

WHERE: **San Francisco Conservatory of Music**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco
Herbst Theatre and Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco
War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

TICKETS: Tickets are currently on sale for Merola members, and will be available to the public Thursday, April 6, 2023, at 11:00 am at www.merola.org.

Save 20% when tickets are purchased for all four productions* in the 2023 season. Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Student tickets (\$15-\$18) are also available in limited quantity at the San Francisco Opera Box Office with a valid ID.

**Discount is valid through June 12, 2023. Available by phone or in person at the San Francisco Opera Box Office only. Not available online. All four performances must be purchased at the same time. The discount does not include the Merola Grand Finale Reception, and cannot be combined with any other discounts.*

INFO: For more information or to order tickets, please visit www.merola.org or call the San Francisco Box Office at **(415) 864-3330**. The box office is open Monday, 10:00 AM-5:00 PM, and Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM-6:00 PM (Saturday phones only).

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/merola2023/>