



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PRESENTS
SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT

at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall
7:30pm August 3 and 2:00pm August 5, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (29 June 2023) – Bay Area audiences are invited to revel in the high drama and opulent melodies of classic opera as artists from the 2023 Merola Opera Program perform extended scenes from works by Donizetti, Handel, Verdi, and others in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. Featuring a full orchestra, the concert will be conducted by Maestro Steven White, and directed by Omer Ben Seadia (Merola '14) and Tania Arazi Coombs (Merola '23). 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 has worked extensively in the U.S. since 2012, after more than a decade with the Israeli Opera. Tania Arazi Coombs, who is participating in the current Merola summer program, will direct a scene from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. The **Schwabacher Summer Concert, the second production in Merola's Summer Festival**, will be presented at 7:30pm, Thursday August 3, and 2:00pm, Saturday, August 5, at the **San Francisco Conservatory of Music**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$55/\$80), visit merola.org/summer or call the San Francisco Box Office at **(415) 864-3330**.

The young artists featured in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** include sopranos **Georgiana Adams, Juliette Chauvet, Shan Hai, and So ry Kim**; mezzo sopranos **Lucy Joy Altus and Joanne Evans**; contralto **Cecelia Steffen McKinley**; tenors **Daniel Luis Espinal, Thomas William Kinch, Sahel Salam, and Demetrious Sampson, Jr.**; baritones **Eleomar Cuello, Kevin Godínez, and**

Samuel Kidd; and bass-baritone **Finn Sagal**; with musical preparation by pianists **Nicole Marie Cloutier**, **Julian Grabarek**, **Hyemin Jeong**, **Pei-Hsuan Tiana Lin**, and **Deborah Robertson**.

The program features selections from **George Frideric Handel**'s ***Giulio Cesare***, the composer's most popular opera. With a libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym, this remarkably vivid work is based on one of the defining historical moments from the Roman Civil War: the meeting of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra in Egypt. Full of soaring arias, larger-than-life characters, and dreamy melodies, this thrilling work offers some of the most vocally ravishing and dramatically diverse arias in all opera.

Also on the bill will be a scene and duet from **Gaetano Donizetti**'s ***L'elisir d'amore*** with libretto by Felice Romani. An elixir that is guaranteed to induce love offers a merry chase for the principals in this delightful opera, bursting with delectable music.

Audiences will be rewarded with scenes from **Ambroise Thomas**' ***Hamlet***, with a libretto by Michel Carré and Jules Barbier, based on a French adaptation by Alexandre Dumas and Paul Meurice of Shakespeare's play. This work offers ravishing arias for a coloratura soprano in the role of Ophélie (famously performed by Nellie Melbe, Maria Callas, Joan Sutherland, and others), and a thrilling baritone star turn for the title melancholy Dane.

Representing more modern work will be excerpts from ***Silent Night***, by American composer **Kevin Puts**, with a multilingual libretto by Mark Campbell. Based on the Oscar-nominated 2005 French film *Joyeux Noël*, *Silent Night* recounts the true story of a spontaneous cease-fire among Scottish, French, and Germans during World War I. Merola singers will perform a scene from Act I of this work, which received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Music.

The Schwabacher Summer Concert rounds out with selections from triumphant works by **Giuseppe Verdi**, including two scenes from Act 2 of ***Rigoletto*** with libretto by Francesco Maria Piave. This heartbreaking tale of jealousy, revenge, and tragedy remains one of the most

popular operas worldwide. Merolini will also perform the entire Act 2 from Verdi's passionate penultimate opera, **Otello**, created with librettist Arrigo Boito, offering up show-stopping arias, duets, and choral tutti, for a brilliant climax.

ABOUT MAESTRO STEVEN WHITE

Praised by *Opera News* as a conductor who “squeezes every drop of excitement and pathos from the score,” Maestro **Steven White** is one of North America's premiere operatic and symphonic conductors. With a vibrant repertoire of over sixty-five titles, Maestro White's extensive operatic engagements have included performances with the New York City Opera, Opéra de Montréal, Vancouver Opera, Opera Colorado, Pittsburgh Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Baltimore, New Orleans Opera, and many others. He has conducted for the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, the Mozarteum und Salzburg Kulturvereinigung Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony, the Spoleto Festival, the Colorado Symphony, the Nashville Symphony, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, and London's Philharmonia Orchestra for a CHANDOS recording of arias featuring his wife, soprano Elizabeth Futral. He is also in demand as an adjudicator of prestigious music and vocal competitions, including auditions for the Metropolitan Opera National Council and the Jensen Foundation. Maestro White serves as Artistic Director of Opera Roanoke, with which he has been associated for two decades.

ABOUT DIRECTOR OMER BEN SEADIA

Director **Omer Ben Seadia** (Merola '14) is known for inventive, thoughtful, and socially conscious productions. While garnering a name in the classic repertoire, she has also won praise for developing and promoting new opera all over the world. Past appearances include Portland Opera, Curtis Institute of Music, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Chautauqua Opera Company, Houston Grand Opera, Calgary Opera, Utah Opera, Cincinnati Opera, The Florentine Opera, The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Aspen School of Music and Festival, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Opera Colorado, Wolf Trap Opera, Atlanta Opera, Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Santa Barbara, and Tulsa Opera, among others. Ben Seadia is deeply committed to the development and training of young artists and has taught acting for the Houston Grand Opera Studio and Young Artist Vocal Academy (YAVA), the Ryan Opera Center (Lyric Opera of Chicago), Santa Fe Opera, the Merola Opera Program, Rice University, the International Vocal Arts Institute (IVAI), the Canadian Vocal Academy Institute (CVAC), the Aspen Music Festival, and the Dandelion Opera Institute.

ABOUT TANIA ARAZI COAMBS

Born in Cumaná, Venezuela, **Tania Arazi Coams** is a versatile performer, writer, and stage director of opera, plays, and musical theatre. Arazi Coams' most recent directing project was her award-winning original play, *Stoptlight*. As a director and an assistant director, she has

worked with the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, DiCapo Opera Theatre, Southern Illinois Music Festival, New Opera St. Louis, Station Theatre, Armory Free Theatre, Parkland College Theatre, and Champaign Urbana Theatre Company. Arazi Coombs previously served as the Producer/Director of Opera/Music Theater at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where she directed the main stage opera productions, as well as several programs of musical theatre and operatic scenes.

ABOUT MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

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 coaching sessions 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 Carrie-Ann Matheson and Markus 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 merola.org.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

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WHEN: **7:30pm, Thursday, August 3**
2:00pm, Saturday, August 5

WHERE: **San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco**

INFO: For more information or to order tickets (\$55/\$80), visit merola.org/summer or call the San Francisco Box Office at **(415) 864-3330**. The box office is open

Monday, 10:00am-5:00pm, and Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00am-6:00pm
(Saturday phones only).

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MEDIA: Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co. PR
sydney@cb-pr.com

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