



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PRESENTS
**SCHWABACHER SUMMER
CONCERT**

July 11 & 13 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (29 May 2024) – Bay Area audiences are invited to revel in the passion and melody of classic opera, as the young artists of the 2024 **Merola Opera Program** perform extended scenes from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, Gounod's *Faust*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Puccini's *La bohème*, and Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Performed with a full orchestra, the *Schwabacher Summer Concert* will be conducted by internationally acclaimed conductor **Louis Lohraseb**, with staging by **Omer Ben Seadia** (Merola '14). Assisting in this program is the up-and-coming stage director, choreographer, and Merola participant **Anna Theodosakis** (Merola '24) who will stage the excerpt from *La bohème*. The *Schwabacher Summer Concert*, the second production in the **Merola Opera Program's** Summer Festival, will be presented at 7:30pm, Thursday July 11, and 2:00pm, Saturday, July 13, at the **San Francisco Conservatory of Music Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$35/\$65 - single tickets, \$10 for ages 25 and under or those attending their first Merola production), visit merola.org/summer or call the San Francisco Box Office at **415-864-3330**.

The Merola artists featured in the *Schwabacher Summer Concert* include sopranos **Hannah Cho, Alexa Frankian, Elizabeth “Hanje” Hanje, Mary Hoskins, and Tessa McQueen**; mezzo-sopranos **Lucy Joy Altus, Simona Genga, Lindsay Martin, and Kara Morgan**; tenors **Nathan Bryon, Giorgi Guliashvili, Angelo Silva, and Samuel White**; baritones **Sihao Hu and Olivier Zerouali**; and bass-baritone **Benjamin Sokol**.

The program features a selection from Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, libretto by Felice Romani. Based on the play by Victor Hugo, this work follows the infamous daughter of Pope Alexander VI and her tragic encounter with the young nobleman Gennaro with whom she shares

a secret history. Also on the bill is a scene from Jules Massenet's charming *Cendrillon*, libretto by Henri Cain. A retelling of the classic fairytale *Cinderella*, Massenet's account frames the heroine as a passionate, determined orphan who would rather die than live without her love, whilst her Prince conjures a softer romantic hero than in other versions. Added to the mix are relentless stepsisters, a tough-as-nails stepmother, a magical fairy godmother, and an ineffectual father for a rollicking good tale.

The concert moves from fairytale to verismo with a scene from *Pagliacci*, Ruggero Leoncavallo's story of love, heartbreak, and betrayal. Set among a traveling commedia dell'arte troupe in Southern Italy, the opera follows the simmering passions of the jealous director, the leading lady, and her lover, and features some of the most dramatic music in the operatic canon. Act III of Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème*, libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, will also be featured. In 1830's Paris, young artists debate, drink, and struggle for existence, in this classic love story.

Also on the program is a scene from the meta opera about an opera, Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. This 1912 work combines commedia dell'arte with opera seria as it depicts an opera company forced to work with a burlesque troupe in staging a Greek myth. The *Schwabacher Summer Concert* rounds out with the entire third act of Charles Gounod's gorgeous French-Romantic *Faust*, libretto by Jules Barbier. Ranging from lyrical and playful to sardonic and chilling, the work centers on Faust's fixation on the beautiful Marguerite, for whom he makes a bargain with the devil – bringing ruin to them both.

ABOUT MAESTRO LOUIS LOHRASEB

Since his professional debut at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma in 2019, **Louis Lohraseb** has established himself as a conductor on the international stage, with subsequent debuts at the Semperoper Dresden, Los Angeles Opera, and Komische Oper Berlin. Following his mainstage debut conducting *Tosca* at Los Angeles Opera, Lohraseb was immediately re-engaged for *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *La traviata*. In 2023-24, he debuted at Staatsoper Hamburg (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Atlanta Opera (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and with the Peoria Symphony. Recent seasons have included Semperoper Dresden (*Carmen*), Komische Oper Berlin (*La traviata*), Opera Sarasota (*Thérèse*), *La rondine* and *Don Giovanni* at Indiana University Opera Theatre, and gala concerts with Yale Opera and Summer Opera Tel Aviv. He was young artist with LA Opera. In April 2024, he was the recipient of the Eva and Marc Stern Artist Award which recognizes artists with deep connections to LA Opera and serves as an expression of gratitude for past, present, and future contributions to the company's creative endeavors.

ABOUT DIRECTOR OMER BEN SEADIA

Director **Omer Ben Seadia** (Merola '14) is known for her inventive, thoughtful, and socially conscious productions. She worked with Israeli Opera for more than a decade, garnering a reputation for classic repertoire. Beginning in 2012, she began to work extensively in the United States, and has since 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 ANNA THEODOSAKIS

Stage director and choreographer **Anna Theodosakis** (Merola '24) is a rising figure in the operatic scene. Her directing and assistant directing credits include Edmonton Opera, the University of British Columbia, the Canadian Opera Company, Glenn Gould School, Brott Opera, Against the Grain Theatre, Saskatoon Opera, The Banff Centre, Toronto Summer Music Festival, Parks Canada, Musique 3 Femmes, Muskoka Opera Festival, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, MYOpera, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Theodosakis also has a background in choreography, with credits including Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Gershwin's *Of Thee I Sing*, Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Weill's *Street Scene*. Theodosakis currently teaches acting and dance for the University of Toronto's Opera Division. She served as a sessional lecturer in Theatre Techniques and Staging & Directing for the University of British Columbia.

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. 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](https://www.merola.org).

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Bay Area audiences are invited to revel in the passion and melody of classic opera, as the young artists of the 2024 **Merola Opera Program** perform extended scenes from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, Gounod's *Faust*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Puccini's *La bohème*, and Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Performed with a full orchestra, the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be conducted by internationally acclaimed Maestro **Louis Lohraseb**, with direction by **Omer Ben Seadia** (Merola '14). Assisting in this program is the up-and-coming stage director, choreographer, and Merola participant **Anna Theodosakis** (Merola '24) who will stage the excerpt from *La bohème*.

WHEN: 7:30pm, Thursday, July 11 & 2:00pm, Saturday, July 13

WHERE: **San Francisco Conservatory of Music Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall**
50 Oak St., San Francisco

TICKETS: \$35/\$65 (single tickets), \$10 (ages 25 and under or those attending their first Merola production with code MEROLANEW)

Save 20 percent when tickets are purchased for all four productions* in the 2024 season. Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Group Sales can be contacted at 415-621-4403.

**Discount is valid through June 10, 2024. 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 merola.org 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). The Group Sales office is open Monday, 10:00am-5:00pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am-6:00pm.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/schwabachersummerconcert2024>