



**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM
BRINGS ITALIAN SPLENDOR TO
2026 BENEFIT GALA,
LA BELLA VOCE: A NIGHT OF MEROLA
City Club of San Francisco
Saturday, March 7**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (9 February 2026) — The **Merola Opera Program** invites guests to an evening of Italian splendor at its 2026 Benefit Gala, *La Bella Voce: A Night of Merola*, on March 7 at the distinguished San Francisco City Club. Chaired by **Robert Beadle** and exclusively sponsored by **Diane B. Wilsey**, the gala will celebrate *la dolce vita* with gourmet cuisine, handcrafted cocktails, fine wines, and enchanting musical performances. The evening will honor **Bernice Lindstrom**, a devoted longtime supporter of Merola, for her unwavering dedication and passion for the arts. Guests will be serenaded by **Merola alumni**, including current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows, and will have the opportunity to bid on Merola’s renowned “**Signature Events**,” making it an unforgettable night of elegance, artistry, and Italian charm. All funds raised will support the Merola Opera Program, the internationally renowned tuition-free training program that cultivates the opera stars of tomorrow. Merola Opera Program’s 2026 Benefit Gala, *La Bella Voce: A Night of Merola*, will be held starting at 5:30pm, Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the San Francisco City Club, 155 Sansome St., 10th Floor, San Francisco. For tickets (\$550), the public may visit merola.org/annual-gala. Sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting Alek Shrader via email at ashrader@merola.org or by phone at 415-936-2317.

The 2026 Merola Benefit Gala will honor **Bernice Lindstrom**, a cherished and longtime supporter of the Merola Opera Program and opera in the Bay Area. Lindstrom’s extraordinary generosity—most notably through her sustained commitment to artist sponsorships—has had a profound and lasting impact on the development of emerging opera artists. Her dedication has helped nurture countless young singers at a pivotal moment in their careers, directly shaping the future of the art form.

Merola alumni and current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows—including **Sadie Cheslak** (’25), **Brian Cho** (’25), **Alexa Frankian** (’24/’25), **Sofia Gotch** (’25), **Mary Hoskins** (’24), **Ji Youn Lee** (’24), and **Gabriel Natal-Báez** (’25)—will perform a program pairing classic Italian opera and song with American musical theater favorites, under the direction of **Carrie-Ann Matheson**, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Opera Center.

Patrons will have the opportunity to vie for Merola’s trademark “**Signature Events**,” a highly coveted series of intimate, salon-style performances hosted in private homes and unique venues throughout the Bay Area. These exclusive experiences feature world-class artists, featuring Merola alumni, in an up-close setting, offering guests a rare chance to engage with extraordinary talent beyond the traditional stage. Each “Signature Event” is accompanied by curated drinks and appetizers creating a refined yet relaxed atmosphere that celebrates artistry, connection, and the joy of live



performance. Last year’s “Signature Events” sold out entirely, and event sponsors will once again enjoy early access to registration, ensuring they can secure a place at these unforgettable gatherings.

The 2026 Benefit Gala Committee is chaired by **Robert Beadle** and includes **Jennifer Brahm, Dr. James Cross, Sylvia R. Lindsey, Ronny Michael Greenberg, Dr. Pamela Zell Rigg, Ruth Uchimura, Zarana Udani, Carol Weitz, and Patrick Wilken**. Proceeds from the gala will benefit the Merola Opera Program for aspiring opera singers, pianists, and stage directors. This one-of-a-kind program cultivates future opera stars through master classes, private coaching with leading artists, and comprehensive training in repertoire, languages, diction, acting, and stage movement.

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, coaches, 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, providing a comprehensive curriculum with a strong emphasis on developing the “whole” artist. This includes personal and leadership development, financial planning, mental and physical wellness, as well as public relations and branding. 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. Learn more at merola.org.


FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: The **Merola Opera Program** invites guests to an evening of Italian splendor at its 2026 Benefit Gala, *La Bella Voce: A Night of Merola*, on March 7 at the distinguished San Francisco City Club. Chaired by **Robert Beadle**, the gala will celebrate *la dolce vita* with gourmet cuisine, handcrafted cocktails, fine wines, and enchanting musical performances. The evening will honor **Bernice Lindstrom**, a devoted longtime supporter of Merola, for her unwavering dedication and passion for the arts. Guests will be serenaded by **Merola alumni**, including current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows, and will have the opportunity to bid on Merola’s renowned “**Signature Events**,” making it an unforgettable night of elegance, artistry, and Italian charm. All funds raised will support the Merola Opera Program, the internationally renowned tuition-free training program that cultivates the opera stars of tomorrow.

WHEN: 5:30pm, Saturday, March 7, 2026

WHERE: San Francisco City Club
155 Sansome St., 10th Floor

TICKETS: **\$550 per person**. For more information or to purchase tickets, the public may visit: merola.org/annual-gala



Sponsorship packages are also available, offering enhanced benefits including recognition, preferred seating, and early access to “Signature Events.” For more information on sponsorship opportunities, please contact Alek Shrader at ashrader@merola.org or (415) 936-2317.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/merolabenefitgala26/>