



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PRESENTS **L'ANIMA NAPOLETANA**

A SOUTHERN ITALIAN THEMED VOCAL/PIANO RECITAL

7:00pm, Thursday, June 25, 2026

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (21 May 2026) – San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** kicks off its 2026 season with *L’Anima Napoletana*, a Neapolitan-inspired vocal/piano recital celebrating the lyrical richness and emotional depth of Southern Italy. Widely recognized as the premier training ground for emerging opera singers, pianists, and stage directors, this summer’s program features 28 artists selected by Merola from over 1,500 international applicants. The 2026 cohort reflects a global community, with participants from Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America. Curated by Merola faculty member **Mario Antonio Marra**, *L’Anima Napoletana*, draws on the late 19th and early 20th centuries, offering up an array of songs ranging from folk-inspired melodies to refined romantic harmonies that explore themes of love, longing, joy, and nostalgia. This recital will resonate with warmth and passion, bringing to life the spirited rhythms of the region and offering an intimate portrait of a musical tradition that bridges popular song and classical music. The program will showcase the extraordinary talent of 12 Merola artists, seven singers and five pianists, performing works that illuminate the essence of Southern Italy. *L’Anima Napoletana* will be presented at 7:00pm, Thursday, June 25, 2026, at the **San Francisco Conservatory of Music Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$55; \$75; \$25 (ages 25 and under)), the public may visit merola.org or call the San Francisco Box Office at **415-864-3330**.

“*L’Anima Napoletana* is a celebration of a musical language that lives at the intersection of the intimate and the expressive,” says Curator **Mario Antonio Marra**. “These songs carry the soul of Southern Italy, rooted in folk tradition yet shaped by extraordinary lyric refinement, and they invite performers to communicate with both technical precision and emotional honesty. This program allows our artists to explore that balance, creating a space where storytelling, color, and human connection take center stage.”

The Merola artists featured in *L’Anima Napoletana* include soprano **Shannon Crowley** (Virginia Beach, Virginia), mezzo-soprano **Stella FitzGerald** (Austin, Texas), tenor **Chester Seungyup Han** (Seoul, South Korea), bass **Theo Harrah** (Louisville, Kentucky), soprano **Charlotte Kelso** (Adelaide, Australia), tenor **Cole McIlquham**, (Osseo, Wisconsin), tenor **Logan Wagner** (Villa Hills, Kentucky), and pianists **Sakurako Jayne Abe** (Hokkaido, Japan), **Eric Head** (Fairmont, Minnesota), **Deven Shah** (Erie, Pennsylvania), **Tony Stauffer** (Montreal, Québec, Canada) and **Yue Qi Zhang** (Nanjing, Jiangsu, China).

This recital will be sung in Italian and Neapolitan dialect, with English supertitles, and feature 23 works that take audiences on an emotional journey through powerful stories told with expressive music and text. *L'Anima Napoletana* showcases pieces by more recent composers such as Bixio's "Parlami d'amore Mariu" and Cioffi's "'Na sera 'e maggio." These will be presented alongside beloved classics from earlier eras, including Rossini's "La Danza," "Marechiare" by Tosti, "Pecché?" by Pennino, "'O marenariello" by Gambardella, and "Mattinata" by Leoncavallo.

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

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

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WHEN: 7:00pm, June 25, 2026

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

TICKETS: \$55; \$75; \$25 (ages 25 and under)

For more information on how to become a member, visit merola.org/membership. Tickets and more information are available at merola.org or by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at 415-864-3330.

Patrons can also save on tickets by purchasing the full four-production Merola Summer Festival package. Receive 10% off when purchasing between Friday, May 1 and Wednesday, June 24.

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 and Group Sales are open Monday, 10:00am-5:00pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am-6:00pm.

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MEDIA: Contact Paige D'Encarnacao, CBCO Public Relations & Marketing paige@cb-pr.com | 415-570-2623

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