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CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM’S

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA AUGUST 4, 5, 6 and 7

SAN FRANCISCO—July 25, 2011—The Merola Opera Program presents Gioachino Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia August 4, 5, 6 and 7 at the Herbst Theatre. In this production, the leading role of Rosina will be shared by Canadian soprano Suzanne Rigden and mezzo-soprano Renée Rapier, who is returning to Merola for a second summer. Singing the romantic role of Count Almaviva are tenors Heath Huberg and Daniel Curran. The iconic role of Figaro will be performed by baritones Jonathan Michie and Mark Diamond. Canadian baritone, and Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Finals winner, Philippe Sly and Bay Area native John Maynard will share the role of the scheming Dr. Bartolo. Rounding out the casts will be mezzo-soprano Deborah Nansteel and soprano Marina Boudart Harris as Berta, and San Francisco bass Adam Lau and Chinese national Peixin Chen as the music teacher, Don Basilio.

The opera will be double cast: Suzanne Rigden, Deborah Nansteel, Heath Huberg, Jonathan Michie, Philippe Sly, and Adam Lau will appear on August 4 and 6; Renée Rapier, Marina Boudart Harris, Daniel Curran, Mark Diamond, John Maynard, and Peixin Chen on August 5 and 7.

Conductor and Merola alumnus Mark Morash will lead members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in this production directed by renowned stage director Roy Rallo, who plans to stage this production incorporating the commedia dell’arte style that is inherent in this comic opera. Rallo recently staged the acclaimed new production of Strauss’ Ariadne auf Naxos for the Opéra National de Bordeaux and created a new music-theater piece, the Methusalem Projekt, for the Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar. He staged Merola’s Schwabacher Summer Concert in both 2009 and 2010.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles, the four performances of Il barbiere di Siviglia are scheduled for August 4 (8:00 p.m.), August 5 (8:00 p.m.), August 6 (2:00 p.m.) and August 7 (2:00 p.m.) 2011. The Merola Opera Program’s 2011 Summer Season will also include the Merola Grand Finale at the War Memorial Opera House August 20 (7:30 p.m.).

The Merola Opera Program is dedicated to the continuing education and training of the finest young operatic talent and the development of this talent into professional opera singers, coaches and stage directors of the highest artistic caliber. Merola operates in close artistic collaboration with San Francisco Opera but is an independent nonprofit organization. Governed by a separate board of directors, Merola is responsible for its own long-term financial stability and fundraising, and is grateful to the hundreds of loyal members, donors and foundations who support the Program.

Tickets for Il barbiere di Siviglia are affordably priced at $60 and $40, in addition to a student price of $25.* and for the Schwabacher Summer Concert at $40 and $25, in addition to a student price of
ABOUT IL BARIERE DI SIVIGLIA

Il barbiere di Siviglia is an opera buffa in two acts by Gioachino Rossini with a libretto by Cesare Sterbini. Based on the French play Le Barbier de Séville ou la Précaution inutile by Pierre Beaumarchais, Il barbiere di Siviglia follows the lovely Rosina, who is being courted by both her guardian, Dr. Bartolo and the wealthy Count Almaviva. In an attempt to win her love, and on the advice of the crafty Figaro, Count Almaviva disguises himself as a poor student and sneaks into her household disguised as a music teacher. With Figaro’s help, Count Almaviva wins Rosina’s heart, but the suspicious Dr. Bartolo comes close to discovering the lovers’ plans to elope and sets his own plans to marry Rosina in motion with the help of his friend Don Basilio. Figaro uses all his skills of deception, and bribery, to bring about a happy ending, and in the end the lovers marry. One of the top-ten most performed operas in the world, this popular score contains many delights including Figaro’s famous aria, “Largo al factotum della città.”

This production is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Frances K. & Charles D. Field Foundation, and Rusty Rolland & the Schick Foundation. Supertitles will be provided by Il Cenacolo Italian Cultural Club. Mark Morash is generously sponsored by Darla and Richard Bastoni, Barbara K. Jackson, Miss Vivienne E. Miller and an anonymous donor. Roy Rallo is generously sponsored by Miss Ursula Grunfeld.

Casting and production team for Il barbiere di Siviglia is as follows:
Il barbiere di Siviglia
by Gioachino Rossini /Libretto by Cesare Sterbini
Sung in Italian with English supertitles
Herbst Theatre
Tickets: $60/$40
Call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 to purchase tickets Monday 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. or Tuesday-Friday 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m. or visit www.sfopera.com to purchase online.

CAST: Thursday, August 4 at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 6 at 2:00 p.m.
Rosina—Suzanne Rigden
Count Almaviva—Heath Huberg
Figaro—Jonathan Michie
Dr. Bartolo,—Philippe Sly
Don Basilio—Adam Lau
Berta—Deborah Nansteel

**CAST: Friday, August 5 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, August 7, 2:00 p.m.**
Rosina—**Renée** Rapier
Count Almaviva—Daniel Curran
Figaro—Mark Diamond
Dr. Bartolo—John Maynard
Don Basilio—Peixin Chen
Berta—Marina Boudart Harris

**Production Team:**
Conductor—Mark Morash
Director—Roy Rallo
Scenic Designer—Erik Flatmo
Costume Designer—Kristi Johnson
Lighting Designer—Jax Messenger
Hi-resolution photography for this production may be downloaded at [www.box.net/merola](http://www.box.net/merola)