



## MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF ADVISORY COUNCIL

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (28 September 2018) – Concluding its highly successful 61<sup>st</sup> season, the Merola Opera Program announces the establishment of an Advisory Council, comprised of leaders in the field of opera performance, young artist training, arts administration, performing arts, and philanthropy. In recognition of the significant contributions they have made to the world of opera and the arts community, the following individuals have been invited and have accepted positions on the Merola Advisory Council: San Francisco Opera General Director Emeritus **David Gockley**; world famous mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** (Merola '87); renowned composer **Jake Heggie**; Seattle Opera General Director Emeritus **Speight Jenkins**; acclaimed collaborative pianist, conductor, and educator **Martin Katz**; retired Metropolitan Opera distinguished arts administrator **Sarah Billingham Solomon**; and renowned dramatic soprano **Deborah Voigt** (Merola '85).

Members of the Advisory Council will assist Merola in furthering its mission of seeking out the world's finest young opera talent and developing them into professional artists of the highest caliber, as well as enhancing and broadening the international recognition of the Merola Opera Program. Throughout their two-year terms, members of the Advisory Council will be asked to share their knowledge in service to Merola's mission, and may also advise and assist on specific initiatives.

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coaches, accompanists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow and offers outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. Throughout the summer 29 Merola artists, selected from ~800 international applicants, participate in master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement. Offered free of charge for 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 participation, offering aid for essential career development expenses including coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program. Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists, who have gone on to impressive careers in opera, including Anna Netrebko, Ailyn Pérez, Patricia Racette, Nadine Sierra, Elza van den Heever, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Brian Jagde, Stuart Skelton, Quinn Kelsey, Rolando Villazón, Thomas Hampson, Lucas Meachem, and Patrick Summers, among many others.

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**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos will be available here:  
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/MerolaAdvisoryCouncil>