



TWENTY-NINE YOUNG ARTISTS FROM  
SIX COUNTRIES AND ACROSS THE U.S. PARTICIPATE IN  
**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM'S 63<sup>rd</sup> SEASON**  
2020 SUMMER FESTIVAL INCLUDES SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT,  
*POSTCARD FROM MOROCCO, LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,*  
AND THE MEROLA GRAND FINALE  
July 9 – August 22, 2020  
Performances in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (26 March 2020) – After debuting its first-ever commissioned work in the program's history last season, San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, returns with a new group of rising opera stars for its 63<sup>rd</sup> season. The 2020 Merola Summer Festival showcases this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants. The artists, all currently studying in the United States, originally come from as far away as Germany, South Korea, Russia, China, and Colombia, as well as across the U.S. and Canada. The singers will perform in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** (July 9 & 11), *Postcard from Morocco* (July 23 & 25), *Le nozze di Figaro* (August 6 & 8), and the **Merola Grand Finale** (August 22). The 2020 Merola Summer Festival includes performances in San Francisco at the handsome, recently renovated Presidio Theatre (new location) and the War Memorial Opera House. Individual event tickets and information available at [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org) or 415-864-3330.

"We are eagerly anticipating another group of outstanding young artists this summer at Merola," said Jean Kellogg, Executive Director of Merola Opera Program, "And we look forward to providing them with intensive training from some of the finest master teachers in the country to further their careers. At this time we are moving ahead as planned. Our Merola participants are scheduled to arrive here on June 2, with public performances starting July 9. We are closely monitoring the situation relating to COVID-19 and will assuredly heed all safety measures and government mandates to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Should it become necessary to truncate or postpone the Merola 2020 Summer Festival, we will immediately contact our patrons and all tickets purchased will be transferable/refundable as requested."

**Schwabacher Summer Concert – July 9 & 11**

A deal with the devil, a heroine striving to avoid entrapment in a harem, the test of time against true love, a woman forced into a convent by her aristocratic family to cover up a scandal, and the devastating effects of jealousy. Some of the most exciting moments in opera come to life as Merola's young artists perform staged scenes from *Faust*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Vanessa*, *Suor Angelica*, and Rossini's *Otello* in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. Performed in French,

Italian, and English (with supertitles), the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be conducted by Ari Pelto, Music Director at Opera Colorado, and directed by Robin Guarino, acclaimed for staging major opera productions for San Francisco Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, and Tulsa Opera, among many others. *The Schwabacher Summer Concert will be presented 7:30pm, Thursday, July 9 and 2:00pm, Saturday, July 11 at the Presidio Theatre.*

**Postcard from Morocco – July 23 & 25**

Seven mysterious strangers come together at a train station in an ambiguous, exotic locale in Dominick Argento's vivid one-act opera, **Postcard from Morocco**. Based on Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* and set to a libretto by John Donahue, the opera unfolds like a stream of consciousness, exposing the characters' prejudices and virtues. An eclectic mix of forms, **Postcard from Morocco** incorporates cabaret and operetta, while also borrowing from ragtime and other forms of popular music. Conducted by Antony Walker, Music Director of Pittsburgh Opera and Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera, and directed by David Garrison, Tony-nominated Broadway stage and television actor/director, **Postcard from Morocco** will be presented 7:30pm, Thursday, July 23 and 2:00pm, Saturday, July 25 at the Presidio Theatre.

**Le nozze di Figaro – August 6 & 8**

Based on Pierre Beaumarchais' stage comedy *La folle journée*, **Le nozze di Figaro** is the first of three great collaborations between Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Italian librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. Set in Spain, this work features a tangled web of comedy, romance, misadventure, and mistaken identity. **Le nozze di Figaro** will be conducted by Mark Morash (Merola '87) and directed by Peter Kazaras, Director of Opera UCLA. *Sung in Italian with supertitles, Le nozze di Figaro will be presented 7:30pm, Thursday, August 6 and 2:00pm, Saturday, August 8 at the Presidio Theatre.*

**Merola Grand Finale – August 22**

The Summer Festival concludes August 22 with the **Merola Grand Finale**, a concert at the War Memorial Opera House featuring the 29 young artists of the 2020 Merola Opera Program, who will showcase a dazzling array of opera's most exciting arias and ensembles. Conducted by Nicholas McGegan, Emeritus Music Director of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, and directed by 2020 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Audrey Chait, this evening showcases the hard work and extraordinary talent of the Merolini. *The Merola Grand Finale will be presented 7:30pm, Saturday, August 22 at the War Memorial Opera House. Following the performance, audiences may join the Merola artists for a reception and celebration in the Veterans Building Green Room (separate ticket required).*

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coach 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 more than 800 international applicants, participate in master classes and private coachings 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, Rolando Villazón, Thomas Hampson, Quinn Kelsey, Lucas Meachem, Timothy O’Leary, and Patrick Summers, among many others.

This year’s Merola Opera Program artists include:

### **Sopranos**

Emily Blair, *Hoffman Estates, Illinois*  
Catherine Goode, *Friendswood, Texas*  
Magdalena Kuźma, *New York, New York*  
Celeste Morales, *San Antonio, Texas*  
Ashley Marie Robillard, *Norton, Massachusetts*  
Mikayla Sager, *Vancouver, BC, Canada*  
Johanna Will, *Dresden, Germany*

### **Mezzo-sopranos**

Gabrielle Barkidjija, *River Forest, Illinois*  
Gabrielle Beteag, *Atlanta, Georgia*  
Jesse Mashburn, *Hartselle, Alabama*  
Nikola Printz, *Novato, California*  
Isabel Signoret, *Miami, Florida*

### **Tenors**

Victor Cardamone, *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*  
Gabriel Hernandez, *Tampa, Florida*  
Philippe L’Esperance, *Grafton, Massachusetts*  
WooYoung Yoon, *Seoul, South Korea*  
Tianchi Zhang, *Huainan, Anhui, China*

### **Baritones**

Thomas Lynch, *Lynbrook, New York*  
Samson McCrady, *Tucson, Arizona*  
Laureano Quant, *Barranquilla, Colombia*

### **Bass-baritones**

Ben Brady, *Denver, Colorado*  
Andrew Dwan, *Mountain View, California*  
Seungyun Kim, *Cheong-ju, South Korea*

### **Apprentice Coaches**

Yang Lin, *Shanghai, China*  
Michael McElvain, *Chicago, Illinois*  
Anna Smigelskaya, *Saint Petersburg, Russia*  
Shiyu Tan, *Changsha, Hunan, China*  
Marika Yasuda, *Williamsburg, Virginia*

### **Apprentice Stage Director**

Audrey Chait, *Menlo Park, California*

### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** After debuting its first-ever commissioned work in the program’s history last season, San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most

prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, returns with a new group of rising opera stars for its 63<sup>rd</sup> season. The 2020 Merola Summer Festival showcases this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants. The artists, all currently studying in the United States, originally come from as far away as Germany, South Korea, Russia, China, and Colombia, as well as across the U.S. and Canada. The singers will perform in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** (July 9 & 11), **Postcard from Morocco** (July 23 & 25), **Le nozze di Figaro** (August 6 & 8), and the **Merola Grand Finale** (August 22). The 2020 Merola Summer Festival includes performances in San Francisco at the handsome, recently renovated Presidio Theatre (new location) and the War Memorial Opera House.

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**WHEN/  
WHERE:**

**Schwabacher Summer Concert:**

**Presidio Theatre**, 99 Moraga Ave., San Francisco

7:30pm, Thursday, July 9

2:00pm, Saturday, July 11

*Tickets: \$35-\$55*

**Postcard from Morocco:**

**Presidio Theatre**, 99 Moraga Ave., San Francisco

7:30pm, Thursday, July 23

2:00pm, Saturday, July 25

*Tickets: \$55-\$80*

**Le nozze di Figaro:**

**Presidio Theatre**, 99 Moraga Ave., San Francisco

7:30pm, Thursday, August 6

2:00pm, Saturday, August 8

*Tickets: \$55-\$80*

**Merola Grand Finale:**

**War Memorial Opera House**, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

7:30pm, Saturday, August 22

*Tickets: \$25-\$50*

*Reception tickets: \$75*

**TICKETS:** Tickets go on sale to Merola members Tuesday, March 31, and to the public Tuesday, April 14.

Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. \$15 student tickets available in limited quantity in advance at San Francisco Opera Box Office.

Buyers will receive a 20% discount\* if they purchase tickets to all four summer productions by phone or in-person at the San Francisco Opera Box Office.

\*Valid through June 22, 2020. All four performances must be purchased at the same time. This purchase does not include the Merola Grand Finale reception and cannot be combined with other discounts.

**INFO:** For information or to order tickets visit <http://merola.org> or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **415-864-3330**. The box 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:  
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/MerolaOperaProgram>