



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM CANCELS 2020 TRAINING PROGRAM AND FESTIVAL

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (4 May 2020) – **Merola Opera Program** has announced, for the first time in its 63 year history, the cancellation of its summer training program and Summer Festival, including all public performances, public master classes, and events scheduled to take place July 9 to August 22, 2020, in accordance with local and global efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus). While this decision is a deep disappointment to the organization and the 29 talented young artists who were selected from more than 800 international applicants, Merola is making plans to provide the young artists accepted into the program with access to financial support and online enrichment opportunities, plus each artist will have the ability to return as a participant in next year’s 2021 fully reconstituted summer program. The online enrichment Merola will offer is intended to help ensure the artists’ continued artistic development in advance of their participation in the 2021 program. Current ticketholders to this summer’s performances will be contacted and will have the option to donate the value of their tickets or receive a refund. For more information, please visit www.merola.org or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **415-864-3330**. The box office is open by phone only, Monday, 10:00am-5:00pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am-6:00pm. NOTE: Patrons who do not respond by July 3 will automatically be issued a refund.

After exploring numerous alternatives, Merola determined that cancellation was the safest and most prudent course of action for the young artists, faculty, and staff members of the organization, as well as its loyal supporters and the community at large. “We can’t focus on what might have been,” said San Francisco Opera Center Director and Merola Artistic Director Sheri Greenawald. “We must focus on finding ways of exploring this talent in our current reality. As we flatten the curve of the virus, we will elevate our efforts to do what Merola does best: train young artists.” 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 with 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. (The company recently initiated [the Merola Artists Emergency Fund](#) to offer much-needed financial assistance to those artists who have lost wages and incurred unreimbursed expenses as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Board President Barbara Bruser Clark and Board Chairman Patrick Wilken said, "While we have heavy hearts at the moment, we still have much to be grateful for during this difficult period: the far-reaching impact Merola training has had for more than six decades, which can be seen on opera stages locally and globally, as well as our deeply committed members and donors who have helped ensure that we have the financial strength to weather this crisis and stay true to our mission." While the cancellation was a difficult decision to make, Merola is confident that it will emerge from this crisis and present a full slate of performances next summer featuring the best and brightest of opera's next generation. Said Merola Executive Director Jean Kellogg, "As we navigate this unprecedented situation, Merola is more grateful than ever to the individuals and institutions who support us, allowing us to continue to nurture the young artists who are the future of opera. Our members and supporters truly are the lifeblood of our program."

Individuals interested in supporting the Merola Artists Emergency Fund to assist young opera talent impacted by COVID-19 cancellations, can visit merola.org/emergency-fund.

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