



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM ANNOUNCES ONLINE ENRICHMENT, “MASTER CHATS” DISCUSSION SERIES

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (24 June 2020) – San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** announced plans to debut online coaching and instruction for the young artists selected for the 2020 program, and a public series of master chats with performing arts luminaries, who will share their artistic and career experiences with the artists unable to take part in this year’s training program and Summer Festival, which were canceled due to COVID-19. The young artists will receive online instruction from Lyric Opera of Chicago’s master vocal coach Alan Darling, internationally acclaimed stage director Chuck Hudson, world-renowned collaborative pianist Martin Katz, San Francisco Opera’s Italian diction coach Alessandra Cattani, stage director/master teacher Tara Faircloth, Director of the Program for Singers at Ravinia Festival’s Steans Institute master vocal coach Kevin Murphy, San Francisco Opera’s French diction coach Patricia Kristof Moy, conductor and San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Director of Musical Studies Mark Morash, and San Francisco Opera Center Director and Merola Artistic Director Sheri Greenawald. This virtual programming will enable Merola to provide meaningful content to the 29 talented young artists, who are unable to travel to San Francisco this summer but who have all been invited to participate in the Merola Opera Program next summer, as their schedules allow.

In lieu of this summer’s live performances, the public is invited to join San Francisco Opera Center Director and Merola Artistic Director Sheri Greenawald for free **Master Chats with Luminaries from the Performing Arts World**, a series of four conversations to be broadcast live on YouTube. Music lovers will be given an exclusive look behind-the-scenes, as experts from opera and Broadway stages share their insights and experience. These online offerings (**July 8 – 30**) include free public access to **Master Chats with Luminaries from the Performing Arts**

World (dates below). A special **Meet the Young Artists** program (July 10) will be available to Merola Members only. For more information, please visit www.merola.org.

Master Chat with Susan Graham – July 8

Hosted by Sheri Greenawald

Hailed by *The New York Times* as “an artist to treasure,” world-renowned American mezzo-soprano Susan Graham (Merola ‘87) rose to the highest echelon of international performers within a few years of her professional debut, mastering an astonishing range of repertoire and genres along the way. A familiar face at New York’s The Metropolitan Opera, Graham also maintains a strong international presence at such key venues as Paris’s Théâtre du Châtelet, Santa Fe Opera, and the Hollywood Bowl. She won a Grammy Award for her collection of Ives songs, and has also been recognized throughout her career as one of the foremost exponents of French vocal music.

Master Chat with Susan Graham will be presented 4:00pm, Wednesday, July 8.

Meet the Young Artists – July 10

Hosted by Sheri Greenawald. Moderated by Merola Executive Director Jean Kellogg

Featuring interviews with the young artists selected for the 2020 training program with a Q&A session with the audience, **Meet the Young Artists** gives Merola Members an exclusive opportunity to get to know the next generation of opera talent.

Meet the Young Artists will be presented 4:00pm, Friday, July 10 for Merola Members only.

Master Chat with Francesca Zambello – July 16

Hosted by Sheri Greenawald

Francesca Zambello is an internationally recognized director of opera and theater, as well as the General Director of The Glimmerglass Festival and the Artistic Director of The Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center. Her American directing debut took place at the Houston Grand Opera with a production of *Fidelio*. She debuted in Europe at Teatro La Fenice in Venice with *Beatrice di Tenda* and has since staged new productions at major theaters and opera houses in Europe and across the U.S. Zambello has worked at more than 50 major opera houses including The Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Paris Opera, the Bolshoi, Munich State Opera, Covent Garden, and Australian Opera. Her work has also been seen at many of the world's major festivals. Zambello takes a special interest in new music theater works, innovative productions, and in producing theater and opera for wider audiences.

Master Chat with Francesca Zambello will be presented 4:00pm, Thursday, July 16.

Master Chat with David Garrison – July 23

Hosted by Sheri Greenawald

Broadway stage and television actor and director David Garrison began his career as a member of the resident company at the Tony Award-winning Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. Although he is known for his television roles, Garrison is primarily a theater actor, particularly in musicals. His Broadway appearances include *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*, for which he

received a Tony Award nomination, *Wicked*, *The Visit*, *Titanic*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Bells Are Ringing*, and *A History of the American Film*. Garrison will direct Merola's 2021 production of Dominick Argento's vivid one-act opera, *Postcard from Morocco*.

Master Chat with David Garrison will be held at 4:00pm, Thursday, July 23.

Master Chat with Eun Sun Kim and Gregory Henkel – July 30

Hosted by Sheri Greenawald

Following "a company debut of astonishing vibrancy and assurance" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) in *Rusalka*, Korean conductor Eun Sun Kim has been named the Caroline H. Hume Music Director of San Francisco Opera. In addition to her growing North American presence, Kim is a regular guest conductor at many important European opera houses. Gregory Henkel is San Francisco Opera's Managing Director: Artistic.

Master Chat with Eun Sun Kim and Gregory Henkel will be presented 4:00pm, Thursday, July 30.

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, coaches, 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.)

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** announced plans to debut online coaching and instruction for the young artists selected for the 2020 program, and a public series of master chats with performing arts luminaries, who will share their artistic and career experiences with the artists unable to take part in this year's training program and Summer Festival, which were

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WHEN: **Master Chat with Susan Graham:**

4:00pm, Wednesday, July 8

Meet the Young Artists*:

4:00pm, Friday, July 10

*Available to Merola Members only

Master Chat with Francesca Zambello:

4:00pm, Thursday, July 16

Master Chat with David Garrison:

4:00pm, Thursday, July 23

Master Chat with Eun Sun Kim and Gregory Henkel:

4:00pm, Thursday, July 30

TICKETS: **Master Chats with Luminaries from the Performing Arts World** will be FREE and available to the public, while **Meet the Young Artists** will only be available to Merola Members.

INFO: For more information, please visit <http://merola.org>.

MEDIA: Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co. PR
sydney@cb-pr.com

Ruben Pimentel, Merola Director of Marketing & Communications
415.936.2323 | rpimentel@merola.org