Fall 2019 Newsletter



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If I Were You

In 2019, Merola marked a milestone in its 62-year history the world premiere of our first-ever opera commission, *If I Were You* by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer. It was a memorable summer both for audiences and for those involved in creating this vibrant new work of art, which received rave reviews.

"This summer, I had the unforgettable experience of working with two casts of current Merola participants to create the world premiere of If I Were You, my new opera with librettist Gene Scheer. It had long been a dream of mine to write a full-length stage work especially for Merola to celebrate its legacy and spotlight its important place in the world of opera. It was absolutely thrilling to work with these talented young artists, to watch them grow and blossom, learn and explore, create something new, and to witness their dedication and professionalism." —Jake Heggie

"Thank you so much to Merola for taking a chance on me. Thank you to Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer for such a unique and amazing show and for writing such a fun and powerful role. Thank you to Keturah Stickann for your incredible direction and artistry, and Nicole Paiement for your leadership. And a special thank you to my colleagues for putting up with my craziness while bringing the devil to life."

—Brennan Blankenship (Brittomara)

"Merola Opera Program has a winner with its first commissioned work,"

— San Francisco Examiner

"It has been the highlight of my career working on our world premiere at Merola! The whole program is so wonderful, but getting to create a role and work with Jake and Gene, Keturah, and Nicole has been really special! And our colleagues were wonderful—you couldn't ask for sweeter, more talented scene partners or counterparts in the other cast! I am so happy to have done this, and so proud of our new show!"



"...a work of inventiveness and expressive urgency," — San Francisco Chronicle Datebook

"It has always been a dream of mine to create and premiere a role in opera and getting to do that this summer in If I Were You at Merola has been incredible. I've loved every second on stage and in rehearsal with my crazy talented castmates, director, pianists, and conductor." — Edith Grossman (Rachel)

"It is not often that I reach an opera's end thinking 'I could sit through this again right this moment.' But that is how I felt. Such an eminently satisfying artistic event deserves to be replicated and cheered to the rafters, as it was on this occasion."

– Opera Today

—Nicholas Huff (Fabian)

Meet and Mingle with the Merolini

JUNE 10, 2019



1 Anna Dugan and Peter Felleman; 2 Salvatore Atti, Lindsay MacDermid, Timothy Murray, Edward Laurenson, and Anne Morton; 3 Esther Tonea and Susan York; 4 Tom Foutch, Milton Mosk, Brandon Scott Russell, Janet Cluff, Bob Ryan; 5 Anne-Marie MacIntosh and Bernice Lindstrom; 6 Brandon Scott Russell, Sheri Greenawald, Stefan Egerstrom, and Salvatore Atti; 7 Amber R. Monroe; 8 Thomas Farren, Dr. Ranveig N. Elvebakk, and Cara Collins; 9 Michael Kalkstein, Patricia Westley, and Susan English; 10 Andrew King; 11 Silvia Lin, Jeff Byrnes, and Larry Lin

Warren Jones Master Class

JUNE 19, 2019



 Warren Jones and William Woodard;
Warren Jones, Nicholas Roehler, and Cara Collins;
Amber R. Monroe with Christopher Koelzer;
Michael Day

Kevin Murphy Master Class

JUNE 27, 2019



Hyeree Shin with Christopher Koelzer and Kevin Murphy;
Elisa Sunshine and Kevin Murphy;
Salvatore Atti;
Rafael Porto, Kevin Murphy, and Michael Day

From the Executive Director



The summer of 2019 marked the culmination of the journey Merola began in 2015 with our first-ever commission of a new opera. It was a thrill to watch two casts of Merolini bring a new work to life, working with composer Jake Heggie, librettist Gene Scheer, conductor Nicole Paiement, and director Keturah Stickann. I hope you were able to attend one of the world

premiere performances of *If I Were You* as well as our exciting 2019 Schwabacher Summer Concert and the Merola Grand Finale.

In these pages, you'll find a look back at the memorable 2019 Merola summer, including the public performances and the master classes and other special behind-the-scenes events (pp. 4-5). We share thoughts on *If I Were You* from Jake, critics, and some of the cast members (p. 1). We also remember the incomparable Vivienne Miller, an amazing friend of Merola whom we lost this summer (p. 3).

We already miss the 2019 Merolini, but Sheri Greenawald and Mark Morash, our wonderful artistic director and director of musical studies, are currently on a national audition tour selecting the 2020 Merola artists. We can't wait to meet this new group next summer, watch their artistic growth, and see them perform in *Le nozze di Figaro, Postcard from Morocco*, the Schwabacher Summer Concert, and the Merola Grand Finale.

I look forward to sharing the next chapter in the Merola journey with you. :

Jean Kello

Warmest wishes, Jean Kellogg



Jean Kellogg, Executive Director Ruben B. Pimentel, Jr., Director of Marketing and Communications Tracy Grant, Director of Contributed Giving Mark Shattuck, Director of Finance and Administration Amy Kessler, Donor Relations and Events Manager Amanda Carmen Pursell, Community Engagement Manager Lauren Hewitt, Artists' Services Manager Cindy Ho, Bookkeeper Hilda Li, Marketing and Development Assistant

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In Memoriam: Vivienne E. Miller





Natalie Image, Vivienne Miller, and Cody Quattlebaum.

Maureen Clark , Vivienne Miller, and Sheri Greenawald

Longtime Merola Opera Program member and supporter Vivienne E. Miller died peacefully at her Mill Valley home on Sunday, June 23, 2019.

Vivienne was born in Buffalo, New York in 1922. Her mother, Claire Silverman, was a pioneer in sales long before this was a common occupation for women. Vivienne spent time as a child with her grandparents in the company of her aunts, Charlotte and Evelyn Cohen. As a child, she loved visiting her Grandpa Max at his farm in upstate New York. After one of her visits, Max reported to Claire, "Your daughter just ate 34 tomatoes!" Her love for tomatoes never ended—neither did her love for the opera. She was taken to her first performance at the age of 4, and the rest is history.

Vivienne was an adventuresome, widely travelled woman and had a fierce sense of independence starting at an early age. She attended the University of Buffalo, and following World War II, she moved to Germany where she lived for about six years. There, she observed the Nuremberg Trials. She spoke some French and Yiddish, but her German was perfect.

Vivienne was a counselor and a home economics teacher at Galileo High School in San Francisco for more than 40 years and was a resident in a very special neighborhood of Mill Valley where her neighbors became her family.

In addition to the Merola Opera Program, she was a dedicated supporter of the Adler Fellowship Program at the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Symphony. There wasn't an opera she didn't know. These musical organizations became her social life, as did the Mill Valley Library where she was a star of the book sales.

A life well-lived is one where one's presence has served many people and that epitomizes Vivienne's life. She left her mark on whomever she met. (***)

A Look Back at Merola Opera Program's **2019 Summer Festival**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTEN LOKEN AND FRANK WING

If I Were You

by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer

AUGUST 1 & 4-PEARL CAST



 Esther Tonea and Cara Collins; 2 Michael Day; 3 Esther Tonea and Cara Collins with Alice Chung, Rafael Porto, Stefan Egerstrom, Patricia Westley, Timothy Murray, and Victor Starsky; 4 Cara Collins, Esther Tonea, Edith Grossman, Timothy Murray, Chelsea Lehnea, and Amber R. Monroe; 5 Edith Grossman, Rafael Porto, and Timothy Murray;
Patricia Westley and Esther Tonea World Premiere Herbst Theatre, San Francisco

AUGUST 3 & 6-EMERALD CAST



 Anne-Marie MacIntosh and Nicholas Huff;
Nicholas Huff;
Nicholas Huff;
Brennan Blankenship;
Nicholas Huff, Brennan Blankenship, and Rafael Porto;
Brennan Blankenship;
Rafael Porto and Timothy Murray;
Elisa Sunshine, Anne-Marie MacIntosh, and Brandon Scott Russell;
Anne-Marie MacIntosh and Brennan Blankenship Relive the Summer 2019 Season!

Schwabacher Summer Concert

JULY 11 & 13 · SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC



Chelsea Lehnea, Anna Dugan, Amber R. Monroe, and Alice Chung;
Salvatore Atti and Chelsea Lehnea;
Jeff Byrnes, Anna Dugan, and Victor Starsky;
Andrew Dwan;
Stefan Egerstrom and Hyeree Shin;
Hyeree Shin and Alice Chung

Merola Grand Finale

AUGUST 17 · WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE





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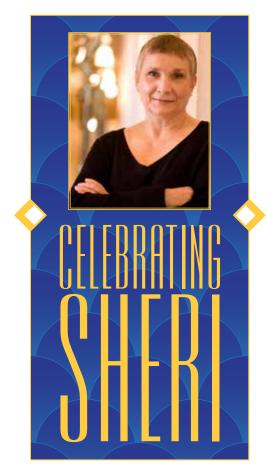


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