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**Merola Opera Program 2015 Summer Festival presents double bill of
Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Menotti's *The Medium* July 23 and 25
at the Cowell Theater in San Francisco**

SAN FRANCISCO, June 10, 2015 – The artists of the acclaimed [Merola Opera Program](#), one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the United States, perform a double bill of two one-hour operas, *The Medium* by Gian Carlo Menotti and Giacomo Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, on Thursday, July 23 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 25 at 2 pm at the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Sung in English and Italian, respectively, with English supertitles, the operas are directed by Peter Kazaras and conducted by Mark Morash, director of musical studies for San Francisco Opera Center.

The cast for *The Medium* features 2015 Merola artists soprano Madison Leonard as Monica, mezzo-soprano Nicole Woodward as Madame Flora (Baba), soprano Kathryn Bowden as Mrs. Gobineau, bass-baritone Austin Siebert as Mr. Gobineau, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon as Mrs. Nolan, and Alasdair Kent as Toby.

The cast for *Gianni Schicchi* features baritone Kihun Yoon as Gianni Schicchi, soprano Cree Carrico as Lauretta, mezzo-soprano Tara Curtis as Zita, tenor Christopher Bozeka as Rinuccio, tenor Alasdair Kent as Gherardo, soprano Kathryn Bowden as Nella, bass-baritone Brad Walker as Betto, bass-baritone Zachary Elmassian as Simone, bass-baritone Austin Siebert as Marco, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon as Ciesca, baritone Sol Jin as Spinelloccio and Guccio, bass Scott Russell as Amantio di Nicolao, and bass Mingo Zhao as Pinellino.

Blurring the lines between reality and the supernatural, Menotti creates a triangle between the mystical, love, and tragedy in *The Medium*. A fake psychic suddenly believes her powers are real, and her consequent actions throw a dark shadow over the lives of her daughter and servant.

Puccini packs a punch of comedy and wit into his one-act opera *Gianni Schicchi*. When the family patriarch dies, his relatives battle over the estate. Hilarity and deceit ensue as a con man is called in to settle the dispute.

Stage director Peter Kazaras returns in July following his acclaimed productions for the Merola Opera Program of *Albert Herring* in 2008, *Postcard from Morocco* in 2012, and *The Rape of Lucretia* in 2013. Kazaras is well known for both his singing and directing. He is Professor of Music and Director of Opera Studies at UCLA and has served as Artistic Director of the Seattle Opera Young Artist Program.

Conductor Mark Morash is Director of Musical Studies for San Francisco Opera Center. He has led productions and concerts with the Merola Opera Program and Western Opera Theater. His work with the San Francisco Opera Center has included such varied repertoire as *Così fan tutte*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Barber of Seville*, Donizetti's *Rita*, Pasatieri's *The Seagull* and Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. He has appeared in recital with such renowned artists as Michael Schade, Leah Crocetto, Elza van den Heever and Quinn Kelsey.

Tickets for *The Medium* and *Gianni Schicchi* are \$45 and \$65, in addition to a student price of \$15. Tickets for all performances may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 from 10 am to 5 pm Monday and 10 am to 6 pm Tuesday through Friday or online at www.sfopera.com.

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CASTING:

The Medium (Gian Carlo Menotti)

Monica	Madison Leonard
Toby	Alasdair Kent
Madame Flora (Baba)	Nicole Woodward
Mrs. Gobineau	Kathryn Bowden
Mr. Gobineau	Austin Siebert
Mrs. Nolan	Ashley Dixon

Gianni Schicchi (Giacomo Puccini)

Gianni Schicchi	Kihun Yoon
Lauretta	Cree Carrico
Zita	Tara Curtis
Rinuccio	Christopher Bozeka
Gherardo	Alasdair Kent
Nella	Kathryn Bowden
Betto	Brad Walker
Simone	Zachary Elmassian
Marco	Austin Siebert
Ciesca	Ashley Dixon
Spinelloccio	Sol Jin
Amantio di Nicolao	Scott Russell
Pinellino	Ming Zhao

Guccio

Sol Jin

ABOUT THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

Led artistically by San Francisco Opera Center Director and internationally acclaimed soprano Sheri Greenawald, the Merola Opera Program is an independent nonprofit organization that operates in collaboration with the San Francisco Opera. Founded in 1957 and named for San Francisco Opera's founder, Gaetano Merola, the Program is recognized as one of the most prestigious operatic training programs in the world.

The Program typically receives more than 800 applications for approximately 30 positions. Twenty-three singers, five apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director, representing seven countries, are participating in the 58th season of the [Merola Opera Program](#) from June 8 to August 22. Nearly one third of this season's artists come from countries outside the United States, including artists from Australia, China, Italy, New Zealand, Russia and South Korea, and the US artists hail from 15 states, including California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Idaho.

Opera luminaries Jane Eaglen, Martin Katz, Malcolm Martineau, James Morris, and Antony Walker will offer public master classes for the 2015 Merola artists as part of their intensive 11-week training program. Guest teachers Richard Battle, Steven Blier, Deborah Birnbaum, Alan Darling, Peter Grunberg, Robin Guarino, Bruce Lamott, Kevin Murphy, Ann Murray, John Parr, and Cesar Ulloa provide training in voice, foreign languages, operatic repertory, diction, acting and stage movement. Apprentice coaches and the apprentice stage director have a 12-week program. For more information about Merola, please visit www.merola.org or phone (415) 551-6299.

This production of *The Medium* and *Gianni Schicchi* is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Frances K. and Charles D. Field Foundation, the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust, the Bernard Osher Foundation, and the Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation. Mark Morash is generously sponsored, in part, by Barbara K. Jackson, Miss Vivienne E. Miller, and Hiroko Prather. Peter Kazaras is generously sponsored, in part, by Haggai Niv, Mike and Rusty Rolland, and Bob and Terri Ryan.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Thursday, July 23 at 7:30 pm AND Saturday, July 25 at 2 pm
Merola Opera Program: *The Medium* by Gian Carlo Menotti and *Gianni Schicchi* by Giacomo Puccini

Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco

Mark Morash, conductor

Peter Kazaras, director

Two one-hour operas, sung in English (*The Medium*) and Italian (*Gianni Schicchi*), with English supertitles

TICKETS: \$40/\$25/\$15 (students). Tickets may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday or online at www.sfopera.com. *Student tickets must be purchased in person at the Box Office window, located inside the War Memorial Opera House at 301 Van Ness Ave. Valid student ID is required.*

COMING IN AUGUST:

Thursday, August 6 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 8 at 2 pm

Merola Opera Program: *Don Pasquale* (Gaetano Donizetti)

(sung in Italian with English supertitles)

Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco

Warren Jones, conductor

Nic Muni, director

Norina - Amina Edris, soprano

Pasquale – James Ioelu, bass-baritone

Ernesto – Soonchan Kwon, tenor

Malatesta – Alex DeSocio, baritone

Ulises Alcala - costume design

Donald Eastman - scenery design

PROGRAM: In Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, true love wins when the old skinflint Pasquale tries to force his nephew to marry for money, and gets a lesson he'll never forget.

TICKETS: \$65/\$45/\$15 for students with ID. Tickets may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 from 10 am to 5 pm Monday and 10 am to 6 pm Tuesday through Friday or online at www.sfopera.com. *Student tickets must be purchased in person at the Box Office window, located inside the War Memorial Opera House at 301 Van Ness Ave. Valid student ID is required.*

Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 pm

Merola Opera Program: Merola Grand Finale and Reception

War Memorial Opera House, 300 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Antony Walker, conductor

Mo Zhou, director

PROGRAM: To be announced. Post-performance reception* (10 pm) with the artists, Opera House Lower Level Café.

TICKETS: \$45 Grand Tier and Orchestra Premium/\$35 Orchestra and Grand Tier/\$25 Dress Circle/\$15 Students with ID. *Reception tickets are an additional \$50 each. Tickets may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 from 10 am to 5 pm Monday and 10 am to 6 pm Tuesday through Friday or online at www.sfopera.com. For reception tickets, please call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330. *Student tickets must be purchased in person at the Box Office window, located inside the War Memorial Opera House at 301 Van Ness Ave. Valid student ID is required.*