



MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM

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Merola Opera Program 2017 Summer Festival continues with performances of three fully-staged one-act operas, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, Holst's *Sāvītri*, and Walton's *The Bear*, on July 20 at 7:30 pm and July 22 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music



(l to r: Cody Quattlebaum, Kelsea Webb, Christopher Ocasek)

(San Francisco, CA – June 13, 2017) - The acclaimed [Merola Opera Program](#), one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the United States, continues its 2017 Summer Festival during its 60th Anniversary season with a triple bill of fully-staged, one-act operas, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, Holst's *Sāvītri*, and Walton's *The Bear*, on Thursday, July 20 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 22 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. This production is conducted by Christopher Ocasek and directed by Peter Kazaras. Tickets for the performances range from \$50 to \$70, with a limited number of \$15 student tickets available.

Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (*The Servant Turned Mistress*), which dates to 1733, is a quintessential operatic work that links history to the present with relatable characters in the form of a cunning young maid (soprano Jana McIntyre) and her aging master (bass-baritone Daniel Noyola). McIntyre returns for her second season in a row with the Merola program. In *Sāvītri* (1908), Holst reaches into the Mahābhārata, one of the great epics of ancient India, focusing on the tale of Death outsmarted by a young woman. Singing *Sāvītri* in these performances are soprano Kelsea Webb in the title role, tenor Addison Marlor as Satyavān and bass-baritone David Weigel as Death. Weigel was a Merola artist in 2013. The opera was one of several works the English composer wrote that

were heavily influenced by his fascination with Indian mythology. The performances close with Walton's *The Bear*, from 1967, where a widow (mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon, Merola 2015, as Popova), faithful to the memory of her late husband, finds unexpected love. Daniel Noyola sings the role of Luka, and bass-baritone Cody Quattlebaum, who was also a part of the Merola Program in 2016, is Smirnov.

Conductor [Christopher Ocasek](#) is recognized for his rising international career, having conducted with orchestras and in opera houses throughout Europe and the United States. Ocasek works on the conducting staff at both the San Francisco Opera and Washington National Opera, where his work as principal guest conductor and assistant/cover conductor have led him to collaborations with renowned stage directors such as Francesca Zambello, David Pountney, Calixto Bieito, and Peter Kazaras, among others. Ocasek has also fostered a growing relationship with Marilyn Horne and Music Academy of the West, and has also built a strong relationship with the Juilliard School. As a conductor of opera, Ocasek has performed throughout the U.S. and Europe, leading celebrated productions of *Carmen*, Mark Adamo's *Little Women*, *La Tragédie de Carmen*, *Cendrillon*, *The Mikado*, and *The Medium*, among others.

Director [Peter Kazaras](#) currently serves as Director of Opera and Music Theater at UCLA. Previously, he was the Seattle Opera's Artistic Advisor and Artistic Director of the Young Artist Program. Earlier in his career, he received worldwide acclaim as an operatic tenor, performing at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, and Vienna Opera, among many others. He has directed at educational programs such as the Wolf Trap summer program, the Chautauqua Institute Voice Department, the Academy of Vocal Arts, the Hartt College of Music, and Florida State University. Kazaras has worked with the Merola Opera Program several times, directing *Postcard from Morocco*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *The Medium*.

Casting for *La serva padrona*, *Sāvītri*, and *The Bear* on July 20 and July 22 is as follows:

La serva padrona (Pergolesi)

Serpina – Jana McIntyre

Uberto – Daniel Noyola

Sāvītri (Holst)

Satyavān – Addison Marlor

Sāvītri – Kelsea Webb

Death – David Weigel

The Bear (Walton)

Popova – Ashley Dixon

Luka – Daniel Noyola

Smirnov – Cody Quattlebaum

To download artist pictures, visit: <https://merolaopera.box.com/v/2017ArtistHeadshots>

TICKETS: Tickets for *La serva padrona*, *Sāvītri*, and *The Bear* on July 20 and 22 at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak Street, San Francisco, are \$50 and \$70, in addition to a student price of \$15*. Tickets may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting merola.org or www.sfopera.com. The box office is open Monday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm. *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.

ABOUT THE 2017 MEROLA 60th ANNIVERSARY SUMMER FESTIVAL SEASON

The Merola Opera Program launches its 60th anniversary season with a nod to its monumental history while forging a new path for young opera artists. Its 2017 season opened June 11 with a Benefit Gala Dinner and Concert, which featured some of the most illustrious participants from past Merola programs. The 60th season continues with two Schwabacher Summer Concerts on July 6 and 9; stagings of Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*,

Holst's *Sāvitrī*, and Walton's *The Bear* in a triple bill (July 20 and 22); Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (August 3 and 5); and the annual Merola Grand Finale performance August 19 at the War Memorial Opera House.

For the 2017 Merola Opera Program, held from May 29 to August 19, 23 singers, five apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director participate in the intensive opera training program, representing five countries and the United States. More than 600 young artists auditioned around the United States for this highly selective, all expenses paid, 12-week summer program. The artists chosen for the 2017 program come from around the world, including Canada, Poland, China, Colombia, and Mexico, plus 14 different states in the U.S.

Opera luminaries Alan Darling, Jane Eaglen, Warren Jones, Martin Katz, and Robert Morrison, lead public master classes for the young artists, which may be attended by Merola members. Guest teachers include Richard Battle, Deborah Birnbaum, Steven Blier, Nicola Bowie, Alessandra Cattani, Tracy Dahl, Peter Grunberg, Robin Guarino, Peter Kazaras, Bruce Lamott, James Morris, Patricia Kristof Moy, Kevin Murphy, John Parr, and César Ulloa, who will provide training in voice, foreign languages, operatic repertory, diction, acting, career management, and stage movement. Apprentice coaches and the apprentice stage director have a 12-week program and singers have an 11-week program.

ABOUT MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

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, presents operatic works that reach a diverse audience, and provides community outreach through educational programs for students and the general public.

Named for San Francisco Opera's first general director, Gaetano Merola, the Merola Opera Program began during the 1954-55 season and established its full training program in 1957. Each fall, more than 800 young artists apply to the Program. During the 12-week summer training program, they have the rare opportunity of studying, coaching, and participating in master classes with established professionals. Participants also perform in two fully-staged opera productions, the Schwabacher Summer Concert, and the Merola Grand Finale, all with full orchestra. All participants are provided full scholarships, along with free travel and housing.

Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists including Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Rolando Villazón, Thomas Hampson, and Patrick Summers, among many others. In the past six decades, over 1,236 individual participants have experienced the transformative Merola Opera Program, many of whom have become world-renowned artists in the pages of operatic history. Between 1957 and 2016, 354 sopranos, 174 mezzo-sopranos, 5 contraltos, 5 countertenors, 211 tenors, 176 baritones, 71 bass-baritones, 82 basses, 136 apprentice coaches, and 22 apprentice stage directors have received invaluable and life-changing training and financial support from the Merola Opera Program. The impact of the equally impressive Merola faculty and artists has left a grand presence on operatic stages across the globe, and the program continues to surpass its own standard of excellence in quality and vision with each passing season.

Merola operates in close artistic collaboration with San Francisco Opera, but is an independent nonprofit organization, governed by a separate board of directors. Merola is responsible for its own fundraising, primarily from loyal members and foundations.

Merola provides a nurturing environment for young opera artists of the highest caliber to hone their skills and invites passionate supporters to be part of the journey. For information on the Merola Opera Program, please visit Merola.org.

PRESS ONLY: For more information on the individual 2017 Merola Opera Program participants, please visit <http://merola.org/2017artists>. To download headshots of the 2017 Merola artists, please visit <https://merolaopera.box.com/v/2017ArtistHeadshots>. No password required; for media use only. To download the highest resolution, select photo and then press the "download" button on the top right.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

2017 Merola Opera Summer Festival *Calendar of Performances*

Tickets for all San Francisco performances may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting merola.org or sfopera.com. The box office is open Monday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm. Tickets for the Schwabacher Summer Concert at Bing Concert Hall at Stanford University on July 9 may be purchased online at live.stanford.edu; by calling (650) 724-2464; or in person at 327 Lasuen Street on the Stanford University campus.

Thursday, July 6 at 7:30 pm

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

Sunday, July 9 at 2:30 pm

Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University, Palo Alto

Merola Opera Program presents the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**

Featuring staged scenes from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, Moore's *Ballad of Baby Doe*, Massenet's *Thaïs*, von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, and Weill's *Street Scene*, accompanied by full orchestra, with English supertitles.

Tickets: \$45/\$25 (SF) and \$40/\$30 (Stanford)

Anne Manson, conductor

David Lefkovich, director

Kendra Berentsen, Mathilda Edge, Felicia Moore, Alexandra Razskazoff, sopranos

Alice Chung, mezzo-soprano

Andres Acosta, Xingwa Hao, tenors

Dimitri Katotakis, Thomas Glass, baritones

Program:

Moore – *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Act 1, Scenes 2 and 3

Donizetti – *Lucrezia Borgia*, Act 1

Von Weber – *Der Freischütz*, from Act 2, Scenes 8 and 9

Massenet – *Thaïs*, from Act 2

Mascagni – *Cavalleria rusticana*

Weill – *Street Scene*, from Act 1, Scene 7

Thursday, July 20 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 22 at 2 pm

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

Merola Opera Program presents *La serva padrona* (Pergolesi), *Sāvitri* (Holst), and *The Bear* (Walton)

(English supertitles will accompany each opera)

A triple bill of fully-staged, one-act operas. *La serva padrona* is a quintessential operatic work that links history to the present with relatable characters in the form of a cunning young maid and her aging master. In *Sāvitri*, Holst reaches into the Mahābhārata, one of the great epics of ancient India, focusing on the tale of Death outsmarted by a young woman. The series closes with Walton's *The Bear*, where a widow faithful to the memory of her late husband finds unexpected love.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

Christopher Ocasek, conductor

Peter Kazaras, director

Jana McIntyre, Kelsea Webb, soprano

Ashley Dixon, mezzo-soprano

Addison Marlor, tenor

Daniel Noyola, Daniel Weigel, Cody Quattlebaum, bass-baritone

Program:

Pergolesi – *La serva padrona*

Holst – *Sāvitri*

Walton – *The Bear*

Thursday, August 3 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 5 at 2 pm

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

Merola Opera Program presents *La Cenerentola* (Rossini)

(performed in Italian with English supertitles)

In Rossini's warmhearted retelling of the Cinderella story, the evil stepmother has become a wicked stepfather, the fairy godmother a philosopher, and the slipper has been swapped for a bracelet. Goodness and kindness triumph and melody reigns supreme. Casting to be announced at a later date.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

Saturday, August 19 at 7:30 pm

War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Merola Opera Program presents the **Merola Grand Finale** and reception

Celebrate with the 2017 Merola young artists one last time before they head out to dazzle audiences around the world! The Merola Grand Finale is an exciting evening at the War Memorial Opera House, featuring scenes from some of opera's most thrilling moments. Program and casting to be announced at a later date.

Concert Tickets: \$50/\$40/\$25. Post-performance Reception Tickets: \$75

Post-performance reception (10 pm) with the artists takes place at the War Memorial Veterans Building's Green Room. A separate ticket (\$75) is required for admission to the reception. For reception tickets, please call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.