



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWENTY-NINE ARTISTS FROM TEN COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN TWELVE-WEEK INTENSIVE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

Conductors Mark Morash, Eric Melear, Martin Katz and Ari Pelto Lead Performances this Summer, Including André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Schwabacher Summer Concert, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Merola Grand Finale

SAN FRANCISCO, March 18, 2014 – Twenty-three singers, five apprentice coaches and one apprentice stage director, representing ten countries, will participate in the 57th season of the Merola Opera Program from June 2 to August 17. More than 900 artists vied for the 29 coveted spots in the 2014 summer program. Offered free of charge for all participants, the prestigious Merola Opera program is unique in the industry in many ways. Merola is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation. In the past year alone, more than \$150,000 was distributed to more than 100 artists supporting varied needs from coaching to language classes to audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship program. Selected through an extensive world-wide audition and application process, nearly one third of this season's artists come from countries outside the United States, including: Canada, China, Taiwan, Italy, South Korea, Russia, Iran, Poland and Israel. This year, the program will have three returning Merola artists, Casey Candebat (Merola 2012), Sahar Nouri and Rhys Lloyd Talbot (both Merola 2013).



The 2014 Merola artists will participate in an intensive 11-week training program—12 weeks for the apprentice coaches and the apprentice stage director—which will include master classes with opera luminaries Warren Jones, Jane Eaglen, Eric Owens, Steven Blier and Carol Vaness. Guest teachers Patrick Carfizzi, Eric Weimer, Alessandra Cattani, Deborah Birnbaum and Chuck Hudson provide training in voice, foreign languages, operatic repertory, diction, acting and stage movement. Merola members will enjoy the opportunity to sit in on select master classes for a behind-the-scenes look at the training process.



Performance is a key element of the program throughout the summer. Participants will appear in public performances during the Merola Opera Program summer festival, which includes two staged operas, a scenes program and a concert. The 2014 festival opens with André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with a new reduction of the orchestral score by Peter Grunberg commissioned by Merola, directed by Jose Maria Condemi (Merola 1999, 2000) and conducted by Mark Morash (Merola 1987) at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 10, and 2 p.m. Saturday, July 12, at Everett Auditorium. The season continues

with the Schwabacher Summer Concert, conducted by Eric Melear (Merola 2002) and directed by Roy Rallo at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 17 at Everett Auditorium and 2 p.m. Saturday, July 19 in a free outdoor concert at Yerba Buena Gardens. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, led by director, production designer and visual artist James Darrah and conducted by world-renowned pianist and conductor Martin Katz, will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 31 and 2 p.m. Saturday August 2 at Everett Auditorium. The festival concludes with the annual Merola Grand Finale with the orchestra led by internationally acclaimed conductor Ari Peltolte and directed by apprentice stage director Omer Ben Seadia at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, August 16 on the main stage of the magnificent War Memorial Opera House.

One of the world's most prestigious young artist training programs, the Merola Opera Program was founded in 1957 and has since served as a proving ground for thousands of artists. Ten of these internationally acclaimed alumni—nine singers and one stage director—will appear with the San Francisco Opera this summer and fall: Susan Graham (Merola 1987), Patricia Racette (Merola '88), Dolora Zajick (Merola 1983), Thomas Hampson (Merola 1980), Mark Delavan (Merola 1985), Daniela Mack (Merola 2007) and Alek Shrader (Merola 2007).



Tickets for all performances may be purchased starting May 5 by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330. The box office is open Monday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

This season, Merola is proud to announce its new Student Membership Program, which will provide up to 40 full memberships to Bay Area high school upperclassmen and college students. Each membership includes tickets to Merola's productions, master classes and special events. Interested students can find the application on line by visiting www.merola.org. Deadline to apply is April 18.

For more information about Merola, please visit www.merola.org or call (415) 551-6299.

A full season calendar follows the artist announcement below. To download artist pictures, visit www.box.net/merola.

ARTIST LISTING:

Sopranos

Julie Adams, Burbank, California
Adelaide Boedecker, Sarasota, Florida
Maria Fasciano, Niagara Falls, New York
Karen Chia-Ling Ho, Taipei, Taiwan
Yujin Kim, Deajeon, South Korea
Talya Lieberman, Forest Hills, New York
Amanda Woodbury, Dallas, Texas

Mezzo-sopranos

Eliza Bonet, Atlanta, Georgia
Shirin Eskandani, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Nian Wang, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Tenors

Casey Candebat, New Orleans, Louisiana
Mingjie Lei, Hengyang, Hunan, China

Chong Wang, Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China
Benjamin Werley, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Baritones

Gideon Dabi, Highland Park, New Jersey
Alexander Elliott, Florence, South Carolina
Thomas Gunther, Muscatine, Iowa
Edward Nelson, Santa Clarita, California

Bass-baritones

Matthew Stump, Goshen, Indiana
Rhys Lloyd Talbot, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Szymon Wach, Lublin, Poland

Basses

Anthony Reed, Alexandria, Minnesota
Scott Russell, Roanoke, Virginia

Apprentice Coaches

Edoardo Barsotti, Lucca, Tuscany, Italy
Ronny Michael Greenberg, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Kirill Kuzmin, Moscow, Russia
Sahar Nouri, Tehran, Iran
Blair Salter, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Apprentice Stage Director

Omer Ben Seadia, Tel-Aviv, Israel

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: 2014 Merola Summer Festival Calendar of Performances

Merola Opera Program

A Streetcar Named Desire

André Previn

Sung in English with English supertitles

7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 10

2 p.m. Saturday, July 12

Everett Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$60/\$40/\$25

Merola Opera Program

Schwabacher Summer Concert

7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 17

Everett Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$40/\$25

Merola Opera Program

Schwabacher Summer Concert

2 p.m. Saturday, July 19

Yerba Buena Gardens, Mission St. between 3rd and 4th Streets

FREE

Merola Opera Program

Don Giovanni

W.A. Mozart

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 31

2 p.m. Saturday, August 2

Everett Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$60/\$40/\$25

Merola Grand Finale and Reception

7:30 p.m. Saturday, August 16

War Memorial Opera House

Tickets: \$45 Orchestra Premium & Grand Tier Premium/\$35 Orchestra/\$25 Dress Circle

Reception begins at 10 p.m. in the War Memorial Opera House Lower Level Café

(Reception tickets are an additional \$50 each)

TICKETS

Tickets for all performances may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330. The box office is open Monday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

PHOTO CREDIT

Casey Candebat in Merola's *La finta giardiniera* 2012 / Kristen Loken

Sahar Nouri in Martin Katz Master Class 2013 / Kristen Loken

Rhys Lloyd Talbot in Merola's Schawbacher Summer Concert 2013 / Kristen Loken

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Led artistically by San Francisco Opera Center Director and internationally acclaimed soprano Sheri Greenawald, the Merola Opera Program is an independent nonprofit organization which 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 Merola Opera Program typically receives more than 800 applications for approximately 29 positions. Throughout the summer, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coachings with opera luminaries. Participants – who include singers, apprentice coaches and an apprentice stage director – also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting and stage movement.

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