



**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM SUMMER FESTIVAL
PRESENTS MOZART'S
LE NOZZE DI FIGARO AUGUST 1 AND 3**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 2, 2013 – The Merola Opera Program presents Mozart's beloved comic opera, *Le nozze di Figaro*, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 1 and 2 p.m. Saturday, August 3 at the Everett Auditorium at 450 Church Street in San Francisco.



The cast features baritone **John Arnold** as Figaro; soprano **Maria Valdes** as Susanna; bass-baritone **Thomas Richards** as Dr. Bartolo; mezzo-soprano **Daryl Freedman** as Marcellina; mezzo-soprano **Rihab Chaieb** as Cherubino; baritone **Joseph Lattanzi**, who participated in Merola in 2012, as Count Almaviva; tenor **Casey Finnigan** as Don Basilio; soprano **Jacqueline Piccolino**, who participated in Merola in 2012 and is a current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow as Countess

Almaviva; bass-baritone **Rhys Lloyd Talbot** as Antonio; tenor **Matthew Newlin** as Don Curzio; and soprano **Alisa Jordheim** as Barbarina. Acclaimed conductor **Xian Zhang** will conduct the production and celebrated stage director **Robin Guarino** will direct.

Mozart's comic opera, *Le nozze di Figaro*, follows the story of Figaro, Count Almaviva's sidekick, and his plans to marry his love, Susanna. The plot twists humorously as Count Almaviva meddles with Figaro's plans, spurring the Countess to plan revenge against her philandering husband. A series of comedic mix ups and mistaken identities ensue before all lessons are learned and happiness is restored.

Rising star Xian Zhang currently serves as Music Director of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi and has been Artistic Director of the NJO: Dutch Orchestra and Ensemble Academy since 2011. Previously, she held the position of New York Philharmonic's Associate Conductor and was the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair, having previously been their Assistant Conductor. Xian Zhang made a successful debut as an opera conductor with *La bohème* for English National Opera in 2007 and an equally impressive debut with De Nederlandse Opera in Robert Lepage's double-bill of Stravinsky's *Renard* and *Le Rossignol* in 2012. Future plans



include *La forza del destino* for Washington National Opera in the fall of 2013 as well as appearances at Welsh National Opera and she will make her debut at La Scala in 2014.

Robin Guarino is a protégé of renowned stage director and Mozart specialist Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. She has worked as stage director at The Metropolitan Opera with James Levine where she staged productions of *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and most recently the HD broadcast production of *Der Rosenkavalier*. She received widespread critical acclaim for her stage productions at Glimmerglass Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Wolf Trap Opera, Virginia Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Eos Orchestra, and the BAM Next Wave Festival. Upcoming new productions include a world premiere by composer, Lembit Beecher with Gotham Chamber Opera and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Orlando Paladino at The Manhattan School of Music and *Dialogue of the Carmelites* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Committed to working with living composers and the development of new works she has directed workshops and world premiere's of operas by composers such as Mark Adamo, Doug Cuomo, David Del Tredici, Deborah Drattell, Jake Heggie, Ned Rorem and Martin Hennessy. Dedicated to training young singers, director Robin Guarino holds the J. Ralph Corbett Distinguished Chair of Opera at Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She served as the Dramatic Advisor of the Juilliard Opera Theater from 2004-2008.

The Merola Opera Program is dedicated to the continuing education and training of the finest young operatic talent and the development of this talent into professional opera singers, coaches and stage directors of the highest artistic caliber. 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 long-term financial stability and fundraising, and is grateful to the hundreds of loyal members, donors and foundations who support the program.

About *Le nozze di Figaro*

Count Almaviva's crafty sidekick Figaro is preparing to marry his sweetheart Susanna. But Figaro becomes rightfully concerned that the philandering Count Almaviva has designs on his bride-to-be and becomes twisted in his own plot to outwit the Count. Meanwhile the Countess, distraught by her unfaithful husband, is planning her own revenge: a plot filled with disguises, false clues and deception. After a number of hilarious mix ups and mistaken identities, the Count learns his lesson, Figaro gets the girl and the family-friendly comic opera ends with celebrations all around.

To download artist pictures, visit www.box.net/merola.

Casting for the August 1 and 3 *Le nozze di Figaro* is as follows:

Figaro	John Arnold
Susanna	Maria Valdes
Dr. Bartolo	Thomas Richards
Marcellina	Daryl Freedman
Cherubino	Rihab Chaieb

Count Almaviva	Joseph Lattanzi
Don Basilio	Casey Finnigan
Countess Almaviva	Jacqueline Piccolino
Antonio	Rhys Lloyd Talbot
Don Curzio	Matthew Newlin
Barbarina	Alisa Jordheim

This production is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust, the Bernard Osher Foundation, and the Frances K. and Charles D. Field Foundation. Xian Zhang is sponsored by Darla and Richard Bastoni. Robin Guarino is sponsored by Miss Ursula Grunfeld.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: 2013 Merola Summer Festival Calendar of Performances

Merola Opera Program Presents

The Rape of Lucretia

Benjamin Britten

Sung in English with English supertitles

7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 11

2 p.m. Saturday, July 13

Everett Middle School Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

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

Merola Opera Program Presents

Schwabacher Summer Concert

7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 18

Everett Middle School Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$40/\$25

Merola Opera Program Presents

Schwabacher Summer Concert

2 p.m. Saturday, July 20

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

FREE

Merola Opera Program Presents

Le nozze di Figaro

W.A. Mozart

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

7:30 p.m. Thursday, August 1

2 p.m. Saturday, August 3

Everett Middle School Auditorium, 450 Church Street, San Francisco

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

Merola Opera Program Presents

Merola Grand Finale and Reception

7:30 p.m. Saturday, August 17

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

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

Reception begins at 10 p.m. in the Opera House Café

*Reception tickets are an additional \$50 each

For information on how to become a Merola member, please call (415) 565-6427 or visit www.merola.org.

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

PHOTO CREDIT:

Joseph Lattanzi, Maria Valdes, John Arnold, Jacqueline Piccolino / Kristen Loken
Le nozze di Figaro Cast / 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 30 positions. Throughout the summer, 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.