



**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM SUMMER FESTIVAL PRESENTS
THE MEROLA GRAND FINALE**

Presented at the War Memorial Opera House on August 16



SAN FRANCISCO, July 25, 2014 – The Merola Opera Program’s Summer Festival concludes with the popular Merola Grand Finale at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 16, at the War Memorial Opera House. Conductor Ari Pelto will lead the orchestra and 2014 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Omer Ben-Seadia will stage this varied musical program featuring works by Boito, Donizetti, Handel, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, Mozart, Offenbach, Poulenc, Rossini, Strauss, Stravinsky and Verdi.

“It is an honor for me to be working with this year’s extraordinary group of singers and pianists on the Merola Grand Finale. Together we’ll be presenting a vital evening of opera and relishing in a tremendous program that features various styles and forms for us and the audience to enjoy.” said 2014 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Omer Ben-Seadia. “We can’t wait to share with the audience the culmination of an extraordinary journey we have taken together this summer, refining our crafts and leading the path into thrilling new worlds.”

Conductor **Ari Pelto** is Artistic Advisor of Opera Colorado and Principal Guest Conductor of Opera Memphis. With performances that have been called poetic, earthy, vigorous and highly individual, he is in demand at elite opera houses, ballets, symphonies and conservatories throughout the United States. Recent highlights and upcoming opera house engagements include *La bohème* with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the St. Louis Symphony, *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Chautauqua, *Rusalka* and *La bohème* at Boston Lyric Opera, *Romeo et Juliet* at Minnesota Opera, and *The Magic Flute*, *Figaro*, and *Hansel and Gretel* at Portland Opera. He has also been a regular guest conductor of the Atlanta Ballet. Commenting on a performance of Prokofiev’s *Cinderella*, the Atlanta Journal Constitution wrote, “Under Ari Pelto’s baton, the orchestra has never sounded better, nor the chemistry between pit and stage been quite so palpable.” In 2012, he collaborated with Twyla Tharp on the premiere of her new ballet, *The Princess and the Goblin*.

Merola’s 2014 Apprentice Stage Director **Omer Ben-Seadia** most recently worked with the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music by directing Gaetano Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*. Robin Guarino, the J. Ralph Corbett Distinguished Chair in Opera, referred to Omer as having “the maturity, the vision and the artistic craft to lead a main stage production.”

The first Merola Grand Finale was held in 1957 as both a concert and an audition for San Francisco Opera’s general director. In 1976 the concert was opened to the public as the Merola artists’ final performance of the summer. Showcasing the progress made by the Merola artists during the course of the program and highlighting their unique talents, this year’s Merola Grand Finale will feature all 23 Merola 2014 singers. The five 2014 Merola apprentice coaches, **Edoardo Barsotti**, **Ronny Michael**

Greenberg, Kirill Kuzmin, Sahar Nourian and Blair Salter, are involved in musical preparations for the concert.

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.

The Merola Opera Program fully underwrites each participant's travel, housing, coaching and educational expenses, as well as all production costs associated with the summer schedule and a weekly stipend for each participant. Alumni of the program include Joyce di Donato, Sylvia McNair, Patricia Racette, Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Anna Netrebko, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Brian Asawa, Jess Thomas, Rolando Villazón and Thomas Hampson as well as Patrick Summers.

The 2014 Merola Grand Finale is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Blanche Thebom Trust and the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust. Ari Pelto is sponsored, in part, by Darla and Richard Bastoni. The Merola Grand Finale Reception is sponsored by Fred M. Levin & Nancy Livingston, and The Shenson Foundation in memory of Ben & A. Jess. Shenson.

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

Casting for the August 16 Merola Grand Finale is as follows (not listed in performance order):

Les mamelles de Tirésias (Poulenc)

“Public, attendez sans impatience”

Le directeur **Thomas Gunther**

Hamlet (Thomas)

“Vains regrets!...Monseigneur! Ophélie...Doute de la lumière”

Ophélie **Amanda Woodbury**

Hamlet **Edward Nelson**

Rodelinda (Handel)

“Eduige, t'inganni...Di Cupido impiego i vanni”

Garibaldo **Rhys Lloyd Talbot**

La Fille du regiment (Donizetti)

“La voilà...Au bruit de la guerre”

Marie **Yujin Kim**

Sulpice **Scott Russell**

Zazà (Leoncavallo)

“Zazà, piccolo zingara”

Cascart **Gideon Dabi**

Ariadne auf Naxos (Strauss)

“Kindskopf! Merkt auf!”

Zerbinetta **Talya Lieberman**

Composer **Shirin Eskandani**

La clemenza di Tito (Mozart)

“Deh, per questo istante solo”

Sesto **Nian Wang**

Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti)

“Vieni, la mia vendetta...Qualunque sia l'evento”

Alfonso **Anthony Reed**

Rustighello **Mingjie Lei**

I Pagliacci (Leoncavallo)

“Silvio! A quest'ora...Decidi il mio destin”

Nedda **Maria Fasciano**

Silvio **Alexander Elliott**

Tonio **Gideon Dabi**

Così fan tutte (Mozart)

“La mia Dorabella...È la fede della femmina...Una bella serenata”

Ferrando **Mingjie Lei**

Guglielmo **Rhys Lloyd Talbot**

Don Alfonso **Anthony Reed**

Mefistofele (Boito)

“L'altra notte in fondo al mare”

Margherita **Karen Chia-ling Ho**

The Rake's Progress (Stravinsky)

“Vary the song...Come master...My tale shall be told”

Tom Rakewell **Benjamin Werley**

Nick Shadow **Matthew Stump**

La Cenerentola (Rossini)

“Sì, tutto cangerà...Là del ciel”

Alidoro **Szymon Wach**

Cenerentola **Shirin Eskandani**

Rigoletto (Verdi)

“La donna è mobile...Un dì se ben rammentomi”

Gilda **Adelaide Boedecker**

Maddalena **Eliza Bonet**

Il Duca **Chong Wang**

Rigoletto **Gideon Dabi**

Sparafucile **Anthony Reed**

La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein (Offenbach)

“Vous aimez la danger...Ah! Que j'aime la militaire!”

Duchesse **Eliza Bonet**

Chorus **Tutti Merolini**

L'amico Fritz (Mascagni)

“Suzel, buon dì...Tutto tace”

Suzel **Julie Adams**

Fritz **Casey Candebat**

Falstaff (Verdi)

“Volgiti e mira...Tutto nel mondo è burla”

Alice	Julie Adams
Nannetta	Adelaide Boedecker
Dame Quickly	Eliza Bonet
Meg	Shirin Eskandani
Fenton	Benjamin Werley
Dr. Caius	Chong Wang
Bardolfo	Casey Candebat
Falstaff	Matthew Stump
Pistola	Scott Russell
Chorus	tutti Merolini

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: 2014 Calendar of Performances

**Merola Opera Program Presents
Merola Grand Finale and Reception**

7:30 p.m. Saturday, August 16

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

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

*Reception tickets are an additional \$50 each

TICKETS:

Tickets for the August 17 Merola Grand Finale are \$25, \$35 and \$45. Reception tickets are \$50. Tickets for the performance 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 or online at www.sfopera.com.

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

PHOTO CREDITS:

Tutti Merolini 2014 / 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, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coaching 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.

