



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

**Presented at the War Memorial Opera House on August 17**

**SAN FRANCISCO, July 30, 2013** – The Merola Opera Program’s Summer Festival concludes with the popular Merola Grand Finale at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 17 at the War Memorial Opera House. Conductor John DeMain will lead San Francisco Opera Orchestra members and 2013 Merola Apprentice Stage Director George Cederquist will stage this varied musical program featuring works by Barber, Bernstein, Britten, Gounod, Handel, Korngold, Massenet, Monteverdi, Offenbach, Purcell, Rossini and Wagner.

“The Merola Grand Finale is, for all of us Merolini, one of the highlights of the summer. It’s our chance to show how much we’ve grown and how much potential we have,” said 2013 Merola Apprentice Stage Director George Cederquist. “My goal is to create a staged concert that is celebratory, beautiful and fluid. This is not the time for highly conceptual work. My aim is to help my singer-colleagues sound great, act great and look great, and I intend to do just that.”



Conductor **John DeMain** is Music Director of the Madison Symphony and Artistic Director of Madison Opera. A much sought after guest conductor of orchestras and opera companies around the world, Mr. DeMain is a regular guest of The Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, The Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera and New York City Opera. For 18 years, he served as musical partner to David Gockley as Music Director Houston Grand Opera. During that partnership with David Gockley, Maestro DeMain led a history-making production of George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, which he subsequently recorded for RCA and won the Grammy Award, Tony Award as well as France’s Grand Prix du Disque He also served as Artistic Director of Opera Pacific for 10 years and as Artistic Director of Opera Omaha.

Already a respected young director, **George Cederquist** was one of only 10 Americans to receive the 2011-2012 German Chancellor Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the first Stage Director ever to win this prestigious award. Next season, he will be Resident Artist Stage Director at Pittsburgh Opera under the mentorship of General Director Christopher Hahn. He will serve as Assistant Director for each of the company’s four main stage productions and will direct a new production of Gregory Spears’ opera *Paul’s Case*.

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 2013 singers. The five 2013 Merola apprentice coaches are involved in musical preparations for the concert.

Mezzo-soprano Kate Allen is the 2013 Zheng Cao Scholar. Merola Opera Program created the Zheng Cao Opera Fund in 2012 with a generous initial gift from Annette Campbell-White, in honor of the talented mezzo-soprano (Merola 1994) who lost her valiant battle with cancer earlier this year. Each summer the fund sponsors one incoming Merola artist—either an Asian/Pacific artist or a mezzo-soprano. As San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley so eloquently put it, “Zheng had more than a lovely, fruity, lyric mezzo-soprano voice. She infused every life situation around her with a sense of great joy, fun and heartfelt sincerity. She was in a class by herself with regard to how people responded to her.” Through the generosity of her many friends and admirers, the Zheng Cao Opera Fund has grown to nearly \$180,000 since its inception. With only a small draw on the fund each year, the Zheng Cao Fund covers a significant portion of the artist's training and housing costs in addition to any special visa or travel costs associated with bringing an Asian/Pacific artist to San Francisco. The fund's first recipient was Chinese tenor Yi Li (Merola 2012).

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 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.

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, Thomas Hampson, Rolando Villazón as well as Patrick Summers.

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

**To download artist pictures, visit [www.box.net/merola](http://www.box.net/merola).**

**Casting for the August 17 Merola Grand Finale is as follows (not listed in performance order):**

***Lohengrin*** (Wagner)

“Mein lieber Schwann”

Lohengrin                    **Issachah Savage**

***Lohengrin*** (Wagner)

“Ortrud! Wo bist du?”

Elsa                            **Aviva Fortunata**

Ortrud                         **Daryl Freedman**

***Billy Budd*** (Britten)

“Claggart, John Claggart, beware!”

Captain Vere                 **Robert Watson**

Billy Budd                    **Alex DeSocio**

John Claggart                **Thomas Richards**

***Manon*** (Massenet)

“Restons ici... Voyons, Manon...J’ai marqué l’heure du départ”

Manon                         **Maria Valdes**

Des Grieux                  **Pene Pati**

***Vanessa*** (Barber)

“Is it still snowing?...Must the winter come so soon?...Do not utter a word”

Erika                          **Rihab Chaieb**

Vanessa                      **Linda Barnett**

***Il ritorno d’Ulisse*** (Monteverdi)

“Dormo ancora?”

Ulisse                         **Joseph Lattanzi**

***La Cenerentola*** (Rossini)

“Ma dunque io sono un ex?...Un segreto d’importanza”

Dandini                      **Efraín Solís**

Magnifico                  **John Arnold**

***Ariodante*** (Handel)

“Vanne pronto, Odoardo...Voli colla sua tromba”

Il Ré                            **Rhys Lloyd Talbot**

***Luisa Miller*** (Verdi)

“Il padre tuo...Tu puniscimi, o signore...A brani, a brani, o perfido”

Luisa                         **Jacqueline Piccolino**

Wurm                         **David Weigel**

*Sapho* (Gounod)

“Où suis-je?...O ma lyre immortelle”

Sapho **Zanda Švėde**

*Die Freischütz* (Weber)

“Nein, länger trag’ ich nicht die Qualen...Durch die Wälder, durch die Auen”

Max **Casey Finnigan**

*Ascanio in Alba* (Mozart)

“Dal tuo gentil sembiante”

Fauno **Alisa Jordheim**

*La belle Héléne* (Offenbach)

“C’est le ciel qui m’envoie”

Hélele **Kate Allen**

Paris **Matthew Newlin**

*Die tote Stadt* (Korngold)

“Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen”

Fritz **Chris Carr**

*Dido and Aeneas* (Purcell)

“Thy hand Belinda...When I am laid in earth”

Dido **Katie Hannigan**

*Candide* (Bernstein)

“Make our garden grow”

Candide **Pene Pati**

Cunegonde **Maria Valdes**

Old Lady **Kate Allen**

Governor **Casey Finnigan**

Maximillian **Rhys Talbot**

Pangloss **David Weigel**

Chorus **tutti Merolini**

2013 Summer Festival Season Sponsors include the Al Garren Fund, the Bernard Osher Foundation, the Frances K. and Charles D. Field Foundation, the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts and Rusty Rolland and the Schick Foundation.

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: 2013 Calendar of Performances**

**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, CA 94114  
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, CA 94102  
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

**TICKETS:**

Tickets for the August 17 Merola Grand Finale are \$25, \$35 and \$45, 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 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](http://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.*

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

**PHOTO CREDIT:**

John DeMain / Prasad Associates

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