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**Merola Opera Program 2016 Summer Festival opens with Schwabacher
Summer Concerts July 7 at 7:30 pm and July 9 at 2 pm
at San Francisco Conservatory of Music**

SAN FRANCISCO, May 5, 2016 – The acclaimed [Merola Opera Program](#), one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the United States, opens its 2016 Summer Festival with the popular Schwabacher Summer Concerts Thursday, July 7 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 9 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Conducted by Eric Weimer and directed by Omer Ben Seadia, the Schwabacher Summer Concert features this year's Merola Opera artists performing extended scenes from operas including Handel's *Serse*, Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, R. Strauss's *Arabella*, Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. Tickets for the concerts at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music range from \$25 to \$40, with a limited number of \$15 student tickets.

Eric Weimer worked with Merola Opera artists as a resident coach for many summers (1991, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013), and returns to the Merola Opera Program this year in the capacity of conductor. He has established himself as one of the pre-eminent coaches and assistant conductors in the international opera world. Through his work at some of the world's leading companies, primarily Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera, he has prepared some 200 productions, collaborating with most of the world's greatest opera conductors and virtually all the major singers active on the international opera stage.

After participating as apprentice stage director in the 2014 Merola Opera Program, emerging Israeli director Omer Ben Seadia returns to direct the Schwabacher Summer Concerts. Ben Seadia is a graduate of the Opera Directing program at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she directed numerous productions including *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti), *Le Docteur Miracle* (Bizet), and *Saint John's Passion* (Bach). She has previously directed an array of repertoire, including *The Golden Vanity* (Britten), *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (Ullmann), *Brundibár* (Krása), and most recently *L'italiana in Algeri* (Rossini) at Opera Santa Barbara. She has been on staff at Houston Grand Opera, The Israeli Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and The International Vocal Arts Institute.

Casting for the July 7 and July 9 Schwabacher Summer Concert is as follows:

Serse (George Frideric Handel)
Serse – Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen
Arsamene – Taylor Raven
Elviro – Nicholas Boragno
Romilda – Jana McIntyre
Atalanta – Mary Evelyn Hangley

The Rake's Progress (Igor Stravinsky)
Tom Rakewell – Josh Lovell
Nick Shadow – Nicholas Boragno
Baba the Turk – Tara Curtis

Arabella (Richard Strauss)
Waldner – Nicholas Boragno
Ein Zimmerkellner – Josh Lovell
Zdenka – Jana McIntyre
Matteo – Kyle van Schoonhoven
Arabella – Mary Evelyn Hangley

Lohengrin (Richard Wagner)
Elsa – Sarah Cambidge
Lohengrin – Kyle van Schoonhoven

Dialogues des Carmélites (Francis Poulenc)
La Prieure – Tara Curtis
Mère Marie – Taylor Raven
Blanche – Jana McIntyre
Le Médecin – Nicholas Boragno

Le Comte Ory (Gioachino Rossini)
Le Comte Ory – Josh Lovell
Isolier – Taylor Raven
La Comtesse Adèle – Jana McIntyre
Ragonde – Tara Curtis
Chorus – tutti

To download artist pictures,
visit: <https://merolaoperaprogram.box.com/s/ex5i5cuwjytwmkmkpqawt7lumh6qcbc>

TICKETS:

Tickets for the July 7 and July 9 Schwabacher Summer Concerts are \$25 and \$40, 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 between 10 am to 5 pm Monday and from 10 am to 6 pm Tuesday through Friday or online at 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.

ABOUT THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

Led artistically by San Francisco Opera Center Director and internationally acclaimed soprano Sheri Greenawald, the Merola Opera Program is an independent nonprofit organization that 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 Program typically receives more than 900 applications for approximately 30 positions. Merola artists, who include singers, apprentice coaches and an apprentice stage director, participate in master classes and private coaching with opera luminaries. The artists also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement among other disciplines.

Twenty-three singers, five apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director, representing four countries, will participate in the 59th season of the Merola Opera Program from May 31 to August 20. Nearly one third of this season's artists come from countries outside the United States, including artists from Italy, Ukraine, New Zealand, and Canada, and the US artists hail from 12 states, including California, New York, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Ohio, Maryland, and Missouri. For more information about Merola, please visit www.merola.org or phone (415) 936-2324.

The Schwabacher Summer Concert is named in memory of James H. Schwabacher (1920-2006). Mr. Schwabacher, a noted singer and scholar, was not only instrumental in the establishment and development of the Merola Opera Program, he became its heart and soul, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the next generation of vocal talent. He provided vital financial and administrative stewardship to Merola, serving as President of the Board of Directors for 29 years and subsequently as Chairman of the Board for 15 years.

This concert is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Grace A. Diem and Alice E. Siemons Foundation, the Frances K. and Charles D. Field Foundation, the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust, the Bernard Osher Foundation, and Rusty Rolland and the Schick Fund.

Eric Weimer is generously sponsored, in part, by Darla and Richard Bastoni.

Omer Ben Seadia is generously sponsored, in part, by Terri and Bob Ryan.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Thursday, July 7 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 9 at 2 pm
Merola Opera Program: Schwabacher Summer Concert
San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak Street, San Francisco

Eric Weimer, conductor
Omer Ben Seadia, director

Sarah Cambidge, Mary Evelyn Hangle, Jana McIntyre, sopranos
Tara Curtis and Taylor Raven, mezzo-sopranos
Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, countertenor
Josh Lovell and Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenors
Nicholas Boragno, bass-baritone

PROGRAM:

Handel – *Serse*, Act 1, Scenes 1 - 6

Serse – Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen
Arsamene – Taylor Raven
Elviro – Nicholas Boragno
Romilda – Jana McIntyre
Atalanta – Mary Evelyn Hangle

Stravinsky - *The Rake's Progress*, Act 2, Scenes 1 and 3

Tom Rakewell – Josh Lovell
Nick Shadow – Nicholas Boragno
Baba the Turk – Tara Curtis

Strauss - *Arabella*, Act 1

Waldner – Nicholas Boragno
Ein Zimmerkellner – Josh Lovell
Zdenka – Jana McIntyre
Matteo – Kyle van Schoonhoven
Arabella – Mary Evelyn Hangle

Wagner – *Lohengrin*, Act 3, Scene 2

Elsa – Sarah Cambidge
Lohengrin – Kyle van Schoonhoven

Poulenc - *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, Act 1, Scene 4

La Prieure – Tara Curtis
Mère Marie – Taylor Raven
Blanche – Jana McIntyre
Le Médecin – Nicholas Boragno

Rossini - *Le Comte Ory*, Act 2, No. 11 and 12

Le Comte Ory – Josh Lovell
Isolier – Taylor Raven
La Comtesse Adèle – Jana McIntyre
Ragonde – Tara Curtis
Chorus – tutti

TICKETS: \$40/\$25/\$15 (students). Tickets may be purchased by calling San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 from 10 am to 5 pm Monday and 10 am to 6 pm Tuesday through

Friday or online at 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.*

2016 MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM SUMMER FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES

Merola Opera Program Presents

***Transformations* by Conrad Susa**

Thursday, July 21 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 23 at 2 pm

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$65 | \$45 | \$15 Students with ID

Merola Opera Program Presents

***Così fan tutte* by Mozart**

Thursday, August 4 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 6 at 2 pm

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$65 | \$45 | \$15 Students with ID

Merola Opera Program Presents

Merola Grand Finale

Saturday, August 20, 7:30 pm

War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

Program to be announced

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

Merola Grand Mix Pre-Reception

Saturday, August 20, 6 pm – 7 pm

Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

Merola welcomes a new addition this year – a Merola Grand Finale pre-performance reception in the Veterans Building's recently renovated Green Room, featuring an open wine bar and light nibbles.

Tickets: \$25

Merola Grand Finale Post-Reception

Saturday, August 20, 10 pm

Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

Following the Merola Grand Finale performance, meet the 2016 Merola artists and enjoy hors d'oeuvres and beverages in the Green Room at the Veterans Building.

Tickets: \$50