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**Merola Opera Program presents its 2015 Grand Finale performance
Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 pm at the War Memorial Opera House in
San Francisco**

**Merola 2015 artists perform staged scenes and musical excerpts from
work by Verdi, Bellini, Gounod, Rossini, Tchaikovsky, Jake Heggie,
Offenbach, Humperdinck, Nicolai, and Mascagni**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 21, 2015 – The [Merola Opera Program's](#) Summer Festival concludes with its 2015 artists performing in the Merola Grand Finale Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 pm at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco. Conductor Antony Walker will lead the orchestra and 2015 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Mo Zhou will stage the program, featuring works by Gounod, Bellini, Tchaikovsky, Jake Heggie, Nikolai, Verdi, Rossini, Humperdinck, Mascagni, and Offenbach. The performance is a culmination of the 12-week Merola Opera training program, and all 23 of the 2015 Merola singers will perform, under the coaching and direction of their fellow artists. A special artists' reception follows the Grand Finale (tickets sold separately).

The program and casting for the August 22 Merola Grand Finale is as follows (not listed in performance order):

Overture

Faust (Gounod)

"Mais ce Dieu, que peut-il pour moi?"

Faust – Soonchan Kwon

Méphistophélès – Zachary Elmassian

La Sonnambula (Bellini)

"Care campagna...Come per me sereno...Sovra il sen la man mi posa"

Amina - Kathryn Bowden

Chorus - tutti Merolini

The Queen of Spades (Tchaikovsky)

"Vy tak pyechalni... Ya vas lyublyu"

Prince Yeletsky – Sol Jin

Lisa – Meredith Mecum

Moby Dick (Jake Heggie)
“Ah, Starbuck, it is a mild wind”
Captain Ahab – Michael Papincak
Starbuck – Alex DeSocio

Die lustige Weiber von Windsor (Nicolai)
“Als Büblein klein an der Mutter Brust”
Falstaff – Scott Russell
Ein Bürger – Zachary Elmassian
Chorus – tutti Merolini Men

Il Trovatore (Verdi)
“Condotta era in ceppi”
Azucena – Tara Curtis
Manrico – Michael Papincak

Simon Boccanegra (Verdi)
“Favella il Doge ad Amelia Grimaldi?...Orfanella il tetto umile m'accogliea”
Amelia – Toni Marie Palmertree
Boccanegra – James Ioelu

Moby Dick (Jake Heggie)
“Captain Ahab? I must speak with you”
Starbuck – Alex DeSocio
Captain Ahab – Michael Papincak
Queequeg – James Ioelu
Chorus – tutti Merolini Men

Iolanta (Tchaikovsky)
“Shto skazhet on?...Gaspod' moy yesli grishen ya?”
King René – Ming Zhao

Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)
“Dunque io son”
Rosina – Ashley Dixon
Figaro – Austin Siebert

Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)
“Va! Je t'ai pardonné...Nuit d'Hyménée”
Juliette – Amina Edris
Roméo – Christopher Bozeka

Die lustige Weiber von Windsor (Nicolai)
“Horch! Die Lerche singt in Hain”
Fenton – Alasdair Kent
Slender – Soonchan Kwon
Dr. Caius – Austin Siebert

The Queen of Spades (Tchaikovsky)

“Uzh polnach blizitsya”
Lisa – Meredith Mecum

Hänsel und Gretel (Humperdinck)
“Gretel, ich weiss den Weg nicht mehr!”
Gretel – Madison Leonard
Hänsel – Nicole Woodward
Sandman – Toni Marie Palmertree

Cavalleria Rusticana (Mascagni)
“Oh, il signore vi manda”
Santuzza – Raehann Bryce-Davis
Alfio – Kihun Yoon

Les Contes d’Hoffmann (Offenbach)
“Tu ne chanteras plus?...Chère enfant que j’appelle”
Antonia – Cree Carrico
Voice of the Mother – Ashley Dixon
Dr. Miracle – Brad Walker

Les Contes d’Hoffmann (Offenbach)
“Hélas, mon coeur s’égare encore”
Giulietta – Raehann Bryce-Davis
Nicklausse – Nicole Woodward
Hoffmann – Christopher Bozeka
Pitichinaccio – Alasdair Kent
Dapertutto – James Ioelu
Schlémil – Ming Zhao
Chorus - tutti Merolini

Since his conducting debut in 1991, Antony Walker has appeared on stages across the UK, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the United States. He recently conducted *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with the Washington National Opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* with the West Australian Opera, and *Carmen* at the Pittsburgh Opera, where he serves as music director. His upcoming engagements include The Metropolitan Opera and Washington Concert Opera.

2015 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Mo Zhou honed her craft this summer working with world-renowned directors on Merola’s summer productions, and steps into the director’s role herself with the Grand Finale. A native of Nanjing, China, she has participated in productions at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre Pittsburgh, Manhattan School of Music, and Simpson College Opera. She has worked with Mary Zimmerman, Robert Longbottom, Jonathan Eaton and several other notable figures. This fall, she is the Marcus Directing Fellow at The Juilliard School.

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 2015 singers. The five 2015

Merola apprentice coaches, Edoardo Barsotti, Kirill Kuzmin, Samuel Emanuel, Aaron Breid, and Robert Bosworth, are involved in musical preparations for the concert.

ABOUT MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

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, Thomas Hampson and Patrick Summers.

The 2015 Merola Grand Finale is graciously underwritten, in part, by the Blanche Thebom Trust and the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust. Antony Walker is generously sponsored, in part, by Darla and Richard Bastoni. The reception is generously sponsored by Fred M. Levin & Nancy Livingston, The Shenson Foundation in Memory of Ben & A. Jess Shenson.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Merola Opera Program Presents

Merola Grand Finale

Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 pm

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

PROGRAM: The 2015 Merola Opera Program artists perform staged scenes and musical excerpts from works by Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Bellini, Hoffmann, Jake Heggie, Offenbach, Mascagni, Humperdinck, Nicolai, Gounod, and Rossini

Tickets: \$45 Grand Tier & Orchestra Prime/\$35 Orchestra/\$25 Dress Circle/\$15 Students with ID

Artists reception begins at 10 pm in the Opera House Café (*Reception tickets are an additional \$50 each)

Tickets for the performance 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.

For more information about Merola, please visit www.merola.org or phone (415) 936-2324.

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