



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Merola Opera Program 2016 Summer Festival presents Conrad Susa's *Transformations*  
July 21 and 23 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in San Francisco**

**(San Francisco, June 9, 2016)** The Merola Opera Program presents Conrad Susa's *Transformations*, led by conductor Neal Goren and director Roy Rallo, in two performances Thursday, July 21 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 23 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in San Francisco.

The cast of *Transformations* features Merola 2016 artists soprano Teresa Castillo as Princess/Gretel, soprano Shannon Jennings as Anne Sexton/Witch, mezzo-soprano Chelsey Geeting as Good Fairy/Witch, tenor Boris Van Druff as Rumpelstiltskin/Truman Capote, tenor Brian Michael Moore as Caged Man/Dog, tenor Isaac Frishman as Prince/Fox/Hansel, baritone Andrew G. Manea as Irons Hans/Wolf, and bass Matthew Anchel as King/Hare.

*Transformations* (1973), based on the late Anne Sexton's Pulitzer Prize winning book, is a highly personal telling of some of Grimm's fairy tales. More nearly short stories, the texts were arranged with Anne Sexton's approval to emphasize the subplot, which concerns a "middle-aged witch" who gradually becomes a vulnerable beauty slipping into a nightmare.

Conductor Neal Goren is the Founding Artistic Director of Gotham Chamber Opera, where he conducted 18 critically acclaimed productions such as Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (with period instruments), and Britten's *Albert Herring*. Goren has conducted throughout the U.S. and in Europe while also serving as a frequent judge of vocal competitions throughout the U.S. As a recital accompanist, Goren has performed with Leontyne Price (as her exclusive musical collaborator), Kathleen Battle, Harolyn Blackwell, Haken Hagegard, Thomas Hampson, and many others. He has been a member of the faculty of the graduate opera department of the Mannes College of Music since 1992.

Returning director Roy Rallo has staged numerous productions for Merola, including *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 2011 and the Schwabacher Summer Concerts in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. He recently directed *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at San Francisco Opera. Known for his progressive style, Rallo's past work includes a new production of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* for the Opéra National de Bordeaux and a new music-theater piece, the *Methusalem Projekt*, for the Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar. Marsha Ginsberg is the scenic designer, and Christine Cook is the costume designer for *Transformations*; Jax Messenger is the lighting designer and Marcelo Donari is the hair/wig and makeup designer.

Tickets are \$65, \$45 and \$15 for students with ID, and may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com). The box office is open Monday from 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm.

## **ABOUT 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 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 29 positions. Throughout the summer, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coachings with opera's most accomplished singers and performers. Participants, which include singers, apprentice coaches, and an apprentice stage director, also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement. The Merola program artists appear in public performances throughout the summer. The Merola Opera Program Summer Festival includes two staged operas, a scenes program, and a concert.

Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. Merola is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation. In the past year alone, more than \$150,000 was distributed to more than 100 artists, supporting their essential career development costs including coachings, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship program.

In 2016, the Merola Opera Program will have two returning Merola artists, Adelaide Boedecker, soprano (2014), and Tara Curtis, mezzo-soprano (2015).

Many Merola events are available only to members. Merola members enjoy the opportunity to sit in on select master classes and attend other special events with the young artists for a behind-the-scenes look at the training process. For information on how to join, visit <http://merola.org/join>. This season, Merola is proud to announce the return of the *Merola ConneXion* program, which provides up to 50 full memberships to Northern California junior high and high school students, plus college undergraduate and graduate students. Each membership includes passes to Merola's productions, master classes, and special events. Interested students can find the application online by visiting [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org).

A full season calendar follows below. To download artist pictures, visit <https://merolaoperaprogram.box.com/s/invt4m0id7qtg7s21be2o6ubw6zv9yr>  
or

<https://merolaoperaprogram.app.box.com/s/ex5i5cuwjytwmkmkppqawt7lumh6qcbc/1/6257867329>

For more information about the Merola Opera Program, please visit [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org) or call (415) 936-2324.

## **CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

### **2016 Merola Opera Summer Festival *Calendar of Performances***

Tickets for all performances are on sale now and may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330. The box office is open Monday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm.

#### **Thursday, July 7 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 9, 2:00 pm**

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

Merola Opera Program presents the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**

A thrilling evening of scenes from beloved operas performed by the 2016 Merola young artists.

Repertoire includes selections from Handel, Stravinsky, Wagner, Poulenc, Rossini, and R. Strauss.

Conducted by Eric Weimer and directed by Omer Ben Seadia.

**Tickets:** \$40 | \$25 | \$15 students with ID. Tickets can be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

**Thursday, July 21 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 23 at 2:00 pm**

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco  
Merola Opera Program presents *Transformations (Conrad Susa)*  
(performed in English with English supertitles)

Conductor - **Neal Goren**

Director - **Roy Rallo**

Scenic Design - **Marsha Ginsberg**

Costume Design - **Christine Crook**

Lighting Design - **Jax Messenger**

Hair/wig and Makeup Design - **Marcelo Donari**

#1, Princess/Gretel - **Teresa Castillo**

#2, Anne Sexton/Witch - **Shannon Jennings**

#3, Good Fairy/Witch - **Chelsey Geeting**

#4, Rumpelstiltskin/Truman Capote - **Boris Van Druff**

#5, Caged Man/Dog - **Brian Michael Moore**

#6, Prince/Fox/Hansel - **Isaac Frishman**

#7, Iron Hans/Wolf - **Andrew G. Manea**

#8, King/Hare - **Matthew Anchel**

What happens to your favorite Brothers Grimm fairy tale characters after they go into the woods? Composer Conrad Susa uses Anne Sexton's poetry to take an irreverent look at what happens after happily ever after.

Tickets: \$65 | \$45 | \$15 Students with ID. Tickets can be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

**Thursday, August 4 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 6 at 2:00 pm**

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

Merola Opera Program presents *Così fan tutte (Mozart)*

(performed in Italian with English supertitles)

Mozart's sharply observed take on romance and fidelity mixes sophisticated comedy and biting drama in a deliciously complex tale that asks the question - Is there such a thing as true love? Casting to be announced.

Tickets: \$65 | \$45 | \$15 Students with ID. Tickets can be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

**Saturday, August 20 at 7:30 pm**

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

Merola Opera Program presents the **Merola Grand Finale** and receptions

Celebrate with the 2016 Merola young artists one last time before they head out to dazzle audiences around the world! The Merola Grand Finale is an exciting evening at the War Memorial Opera House, featuring scenes from some of opera's most thrilling moments. Casting and program to be announced in July.

Tickets: \$45 Orchestra Premium & Grand Tier Premium | \$35 Orchestra and Grand Tier | \$25 Dress Circle. Tickets can be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

Merola welcomes a new addition this year – a Merola Grand Night Mix pre-performance reception in the Veterans Building's recently renovated Green Room from 6 pm-7 pm, featuring an open wine bar and light nibbles. Tickets are \$25. A post-performance reception (10 pm) with the artists takes place in the War Memorial Veterans Building's Green Room. A separate \$50 ticket is required for admission to the post-performance reception. For reception tickets, please call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

**PRESS:** For information, contact Jean Catino Shirk at [jean@shirkmedia.com](mailto:jean@shirkmedia.com) or (510) 332-4195, or Rachel Krasner, Marketing & Events Assistant, at [rkrasner@merola.org](mailto:rkrasner@merola.org) or (415) 936-2320. To download artist pictures, visit <https://merolaoperaprogram.box.com/s/invt4m0id7qtg7s21be2o6ubw6zvh9yr> or <https://merolaoperaprogram.app.box.com/s/ex5i5cuwjytiwmkmpqawt7lumh6qcbc/1/6257867329>.