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**The Merola Opera Program Recognizes Patricia Racette with the Merola Distinguished Alumni Award on January 7**

(San Francisco) The Merola Opera Program is pleased to recognize Merola 1988 alumna Patricia Racette with the Merola Distinguished Alumni Award in a ceremony on Thursday, January 7, 2016, in San Francisco. The ceremony is an invitation-only event for members of Merola's Gold Circle and above. Those wishing to join Merola may find information at [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org).

The Merola Distinguished Alumni Award has been previously presented to numerous Merola alums, including Susan Graham, Thomas Hampson, conductor Patrick Summers, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, and Dolora Zajick.

Ms. Racette was one of 22 young artists in the 1988 Merola Opera Program, where, among other roles, she first portrayed one of her signature roles, Cio-Cio-san in *Madama Butterfly* at an outdoor concert at Villa Montalvo in Saratoga, CA. Following her summer with Merola, Ms. Racette was chosen to be a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow from 1989 - 1991. She has been seen most recently at the San Francisco Opera in *Susannah* (2014), *Madama Butterfly* (2014), *Show Boat* (2014), *Dolores Claiborne* (2013), and *Mefistofele* (2013).

Ms. Racette has been a consistent presence in the most acclaimed opera houses, including The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, and many others in the United States. Internationally, she has appeared in leading roles at the Royal Opera House, the English National Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro Comunale di Firenze, Opera di Genova, Bayerische Staatsoper, Vienna Staatsoper, Teater an der Wien, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Opera Australia in Sydney, and the Saito Kinen Festival among others.

Known as a great interpreter of Janáček and Puccini, she has gained particular acclaim for her portrayals of the title roles of *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Jenůfa*, *Kátya Kabanová*, and all three leading soprano roles in *Il Trittico*. Her varied repertoire has encompassed the leading roles of Mimì and Musetta in *La Bohème*, Violetta in *La Traviata*, Elisabeth in *Don Carlos*, Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, Marguerite in *Faust*, Mathilde in *Guillaume Tell*, Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Margherita in Boito's *Mefistofele*, and the title roles of *Manon Lescaut*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and *Luisa Miller*. She has championed new music in leading roles of world premieres with other works of Tobias Picker, Carlisle Floyd, and Paul Moravec. She continues to perform Nedda in *Pagliacci*, The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, Alice in *Falstaff*, Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes*, Madame Lidoine in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, as

well as her recent and upcoming additions of the title roles in *Salome*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *La Voix Humaine*, and *La Fanciulla del West*.

About the Merola Opera Program, Ms. Racette said "Merola opened my world and changed my life, giving me the training, support, and opportunities that I appreciate and value to this day. There is no better training program."

Jayne Davis, Chairman of the Merola Opera Program said, "After Patricia's summer in Merola, she performed an extraordinary *Madama Butterfly* on the 1988 Western Opera Theater tour throughout the USA. She excelled night after night in that challenging role and has reprised it many times with great success. Since then, her repertoire has grown dramatically to make her one of the most versatile singers today, with memorable vocal beauty and emotion delivered in every performance. She is one of Merola's proudest success stories, and we are thrilled to present her with our highest commendation, The Merola Distinguished Alumni Award."

For 58 years, the Merola Opera Program has been the cornerstone of San Francisco Opera's training and performance progression for promising young artists. Each summer, young artists from the United States and around the world are brought to San Francisco for 12 weeks of intensive studies and performance opportunities under the guidance of renowned teachers and performers. Besides Patricia Racette, Merola alums include opera superstars Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Thomas Hampson, Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Rolando Villazón, Deborah Voigt, and Dolora Zajick among many others.

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.

For information on the Merola Opera Program, visit [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org).