



**MEROLA**  
OPERA PROGRAM

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** / June 20, 2017

**Merola Opera Program 2017 Summer Festival continues with two fully-staged performances of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* on August 3 at 7:30 pm and August 5 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music**



*(l to r: Samantha Hankey, Anthony Ciaramitaro, Chuck Hudson)*

**(San Francisco, CA – June 20, 2017)** - The acclaimed [Merola Opera Program](http://merola.org), one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the United States, continues its 2017 Summer Festival with a Merola favorite, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Thursday, August 3 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 5 at 2 pm at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Mezzo-soprano Samantha Hankey, a 2017 winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, sings the role of Angelina, and Prince Ramiro is sung by tenor Anthony Ciaramitaro. Mezzo-soprano Edith Grossman is Tisbe, bass baritone Andrew Hiers is Don Magnifico, and Clorinda is sung by soprano Natalie Image. The role of Dandini is portrayed by bass-baritone Christian Pursell, and Alidoro is sung by bass-baritone Szymon Wach. Mark Morash, Director of Musical Studies for San Francisco Opera, conducts, and Chuck Hudson is the director. Tickets for the performances range from \$50 to \$75, with a limited number of \$15 student tickets available, and are on sale at San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330, [merola.org](http://merola.org) or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season performances of *La Cenerentola* evoke a great artistic tradition of past notable performances of the opera staged by Merola Opera artists, including the 1997 Stern Grove appearance by mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato during her summer as a Merola artist, performing the lead role for the first time, and mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack's performance as Angelina during the Merola Opera 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season in 2007.

In addition to his role as Director of Musical Studies for San Francisco Opera Center, Mark Morash has led productions and concerts with the Merola Opera Program and Western Opera Theater. His work with the San Francisco Opera Center has included such varied repertoire as *Così fan tutte*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Donizetti's *Rita*, Pasatieri's *The Seagull*, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, and Ibert's *Angélique*. As a collaborative pianist, Morash's performances have taken him throughout North America, Japan and Russia. He has worked with such renowned artists as Michael Schade, Tracy Dahl and Sheri Greenawald, and he has accompanied numerous emerging singers in San Francisco Opera Center's esteemed Schwabacher Debut Recitals.

Director Chuck Hudson has directed opera productions at major international companies including Cape Town Opera (South Africa), Cincinnati Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Atlanta Opera, Sacramento Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Opera Cleveland, Seattle Opera, San Francisco Opera Center, Wolf Trap Opera, and Opera Santa Barbara, among others. He has directed award-winning theatre productions in New York and regionally, including The Pearl Theatre, The Chester Theater, Cape May Stage, The Children's Theatre Festival of Houston, New City Theatre, and Chicago's Fox Valley Shakespeare Festival. In addition to directing professional artists, Hudson continues to focus on his work with artists in training. He was a co-creator of Seattle Opera's Young Artist Program, where he directed productions as well as created and instructed specialized classes on acting and movement for singers. He also uses his experience as a performer, director, and coach in his many master classes and private coachings at various professional artist training programs for singers and actors.

To download artist pictures, visit: <https://merolaopera.box.com/v/2017ArtistHeadshots>

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *La Cenerentola* on August 3 and 5 at San Francisco Conservatory of Music are \$50 and \$70, in addition to a student price of \$15\*. Tickets may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [merola.org](http://merola.org) or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com). The box office is open Monday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm. \*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 2017 MEROLA 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SUMMER FESTIVAL SEASON**

The Merola Opera Program launches its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary season with a nod to its monumental history while forging a new path for young opera artists. Its 2017 season opened June 11 with a Benefit Gala at San Francisco City Hall and Concert at Herbst Theatre, and featured some of the most illustrious participants from past Merola programs. The 60<sup>th</sup> season continues with two Schwabacher Summer Concerts on July 6 and 9; stagings of Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, Holst's *Sāvitri*, and Walton's *The Bear* in a triple bill (July 20 and 22); Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (August 3 and 5); and the annual Merola Grand Finale performance August 19 at the War Memorial Opera House.

For the 2017 Merola Opera Program, held from May 29 to August 19, 23 singers, five apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director participate in the intensive opera training program, representing five countries and the United States. More than 600 young artists auditioned around the United States for this highly selective, all expenses paid, 12-week summer program. The artists chosen for the 2017 program come from around the world, including Canada, Poland, China, Colombia, and Mexico, plus 14 different states in the U.S.

Opera luminaries Alan Darling, Jane Eaglen, Warren Jones, Martin Katz, and Robert Morrison, lead public master classes for the young artists, which may be attended by Merola members. Guest teachers include Richard Battle, Deborah Birnbaum, Steven Blier, Nicola Bowie, Alessandra Cattani, Tracy Dahl, Peter Grunberg, Robin Guarino, Peter Kazaras, Bruce Lamott, James Morris, Patricia Kristof Moy, Kevin Murphy, John Parr, and César Ulloa, who provide training in voice, foreign languages, operatic repertory, diction, acting, career management, and

stage movement. Apprentice coaches and the apprentice stage director have a 12-week program and singers have an 11-week program.

## **ABOUT MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM**

The Merola Opera Program is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coach accompanists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow, presents operatic works that reach a diverse audience, and provides community outreach through educational programs for students and the general public.

Named for San Francisco Opera's first general director, Gaetano Merola, the Merola Opera Program began during the 1954-55 season and established its full training program in 1957. Each fall, more than 800 young artists apply to the Program. During the 12-week summer training program, they have the rare opportunity of studying, coaching, and participating in master classes with established professionals. Participants also perform in two fully-staged opera productions, the Schwabacher Summer Concert, and the Merola Grand Finale, all with full orchestra. All participants are provided full scholarships, along with free travel and housing.

Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists including Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Rolando Villazón, Thomas Hampson, and Patrick Summers, among many others.

In the past six decades, over 1,236 individual participants have experienced the transformative Merola Opera Program, many of whom have become world-renowned artists in the pages of operatic history. Between 1957 and 2016, 354 sopranos, 174 mezzo-sopranos, 5 contraltos, 5 countertenors, 211 tenors, 176 baritones, 71 bass-baritones, 82 basses, 136 apprentice coaches, and 22 apprentice stage directors have received invaluable and life-changing training and financial support from the Merola Opera Program. The impact of the equally impressive Merola faculty and artists has left a grand presence on operatic stages across the globe, and the program continues to surpass its own standard of excellence in quality and vision with each passing season.

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 fundraising, primarily from loyal members and foundations. Merola provides a nurturing environment for young opera artists of the highest caliber to hone their skills and invites passionate supporters to be part of the journey. For information on the Merola Opera Program, please visit [merola.org](http://merola.org).

**PRESS ONLY:** For more information on the individual 2017 Merola Opera Program participants, please visit <http://merola.org/2017artists>. To download headshots of the 2017 Merola artists, please visit <https://merolaopera.box.com/v/2017ArtistHeadshots>. No password required; for media use only. To download the highest resolution, select photo and then press the "download" button on the top right.

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

### **2017 Merola Opera Summer Festival *Calendar of Performances***

Tickets for all San Francisco performances may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or by visiting [merola.org](http://merola.org) or [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com). The box office is open Monday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm. Tickets for the Bing Concert Hall performance on the Stanford University campus may be purchased online at [live.stanford.edu](http://live.stanford.edu); by calling (650) 724-2464; or in person at 327 Lasuen Street on the Stanford University campus.

#### **Thursday, July 6 at 7:30 pm**

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

#### **Sunday, July 9 at 2:30 pm**

Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University, Palo Alto

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

Featuring staged scenes from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, Moore's *Ballad of Baby Doe*, Massenet's *Thaïs*, von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, and Weill's *Street Scene*, accompanied by full orchestra, with English supertitles.

Tickets: \$45/\$25 (SF) and \$40 /\$30 (Stanford)

Anne Manson, conductor

David Lefkovich, director

Kendra Berentsen, Mathilda Edge, Felicia Moore, Alexandra Razskazoff, sopranos

Alice Chung, mezzo-soprano

Andres Acosta, Xingwa Hao, tenors

Dimitri Katotakis, Thomas Glass, baritones

**Program:**

Moore – *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Act 1, Scenes 2 and 3

Donizetti – *Lucrezia Borgia*, Act 1

Von Weber – *Der Freischütz*, from Act 2, Scenes 8 and 9

Massenet – *Thaïs*, from Act 2

Mascagni – *Cavalleria rusticana*

Weill – *Street Scene*, from Act 1, Scene 7

**Thursday, July 20 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 22 at 2 pm**

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

Merola Opera Program presents *La serva padrona* (Pergolesi), *Sāvitrī* (Holst), and *The Bear* (Walton)

(English supertitles will accompany each opera)

A triple bill of fully-staged, one-act operas. *La serva padrona* is a quintessential operatic work that links history to the present with relatable characters in the form of a cunning young maid and her aging master. In *Sāvitrī*, Holst reaches into the Mahābhārata, one of the great epics of ancient India, focusing on the tale of Death outsmarted by a young woman. The program closes with Walton's *The Bear*, where a widow faithful to the memory of her late husband finds unexpected love.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

Christopher Ocasek, conductor

Peter Kazaras, director

Jana McIntyre, Kelsea Webb, sopranos

Ashley Dixon, mezzo-soprano

Addison Marlor, tenor

Daniel Noyola, Daniel Weigel, Cody Quattlebaum, bass-baritones

**Thursday, August 3 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 5 at 2 pm**

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

Merola Opera Program presents *La Cenerentola* (Rossini)

(performed in Italian with English supertitles)

In Rossini's warmhearted retelling of the Cinderella story, the evil stepmother has become a wicked stepfather, the fairy godmother a philosopher, and the slipper has been swapped for a bracelet. Goodness and kindness triumph and melody reigns supreme.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

Mark Morash, conductor

Chuck Hudson, director

Natalie Image, soprano

Edith Grossman, Samantha Hankey, mezzo-sopranos

Anthony Ciaramitaro, tenor

Andrew Hiers, Christian Pursell, Szymon Wach, bass-baritones

**Saturday, August 19 at 7:30 pm**

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

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

Celebrate with the 2017 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. Program and casting to be announced at a later date.

Concert Tickets: \$50/\$40/\$25. Post-performance Reception Tickets: \$75

Post-performance reception (10 pm) with the artists takes place at the War Memorial Veterans Building's Green Room. A separate ticket (\$75) is required for admission to the reception. For reception tickets, please call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.