



TWENTY-NINE YOUNG ARTISTS FROM
SIX COUNTRIES AND ACROSS THE U.S. PRESENT
MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM'S 62nd SEASON
2019 SUMMER FESTIVAL INCLUDES WORLD PREMIERE OF "IF I WERE YOU" BY
JAKE HEGGIE/GENE SCHEER, PLUS THE SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT
AND MEROLA GRAND FINALE
July 11 – August 17, 2019
Performances in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (28 February 2019) – San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 62nd season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. The 2019 Merola Summer Festival announces this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants from as far away as Brazil, South Korea, New Zealand, and Colombia, as well as across the U.S. Along with the announced world premiere of *If I Were You* (August 1-6) by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, the singers will perform in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** (July 11 & 13) and **Merola Grand Finale** (August 17). The 2019 Merola Summer Festival includes performances in San Francisco at various locations. Individual event tickets and information available at www.merola.org or 415-864-3330.

Schwabacher Summer Concert – July 11 & 13

Star-crossed lovers, brothers separated at birth, a deal with the devil, a comic marriage, and a jaded courtesan longing for true love. Some of the most exciting moments in opera come to life as Merola's young artists perform staged scenes from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il trovatore*, *Faust*, *Die schweigsame Frau*, and *La rondine* in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. With performances in French, German, and Italian (with supertitles), the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be conducted by Craig Kier, Director of the Maryland Opera Studio at The University of Maryland, and directed by Jose Maria Condemi (Merola 1999/2000), the Carol Franc Buck Distinguished Chair and the Director of Opera and Musical Theater at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM). *The Schwabacher Summer Concert will be presented 7:30pm, July 11 and 2:00pm, July 13 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.*

WORLD PREMIERE: *If I Were You* – August 1-6

If I Were You, by distinguished American composer Jake Heggie and noted librettist Gene Scheer, will be the first-ever commissioned work in the Merola Opera Program's 62-year history. Loosely based on the novel *Si j'étais vous* by the French-American writer Julien Green, *If I Were You* is a contemporary story of identity with echoes of classical literature, from *Faust* to *Jekyll and Hyde*. The lead character is Fabian Hart, an aspiring writer who yearns for adventure and a way out of his stifling existence. Brittomara, a shape-shifting devil, appears to him in

many guises, finally offering Fabian a supernatural power that will allow the writer to transfer his soul into other people's bodies, living their lives as their own souls languish in a shadowy netherworld. Thus begins the journey of *If I Were You* as Fabian moves his increasingly lost soul from person to person in search of a better identity, leaving a trail of human wreckage and hollow shells. It will be conducted by Nicole Paiement, Founder and Artistic Director of Opera Parallèle, and directed by Keturah Stickann, best known for bringing to stage new productions of *Orphée*, *Rigoletto*, and *La rondine*, among many others. ***If I Were You*** will be presented August 1-6 (times below) at the Herbst Theatre with two alternating casts.

Merola Grand Finale – August 17

The Summer Festival concludes August 17 with the **Merola Grand Finale**, a concert at the War Memorial Opera House featuring the 29 young artists of the 2019 Merola Opera Program, who will showcase a dazzling array of opera's most exciting arias and ensembles. Conducted by Maestro George Manahan, Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra and Portland Opera, and directed by 2019 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Greg Eldridge, this evening showcases the hard work and extraordinary talent of the Merolini. ***The Merola Grand Finale*** will be presented 7:30pm, Saturday, August 17, at the War Memorial Opera House. Following the performance, audiences may join the Merola artists for a celebration in the Veterans Building Green Room (separate ticket required).

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coaches, accompanists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow and offers outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. Throughout the summer 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants, participate in master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement. Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. It is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation, offering aid for essential career development expenses including coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program. Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists, who have gone on to impressive careers in opera, including Anna Netrebko, Ailyn Pérez, Patricia Racette, Nadine Sierra, Elza van den Heever, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Brian Jagde, Stuart Skelton, Rolando Villazón, Quinn Kelsey, Thomas Hampson, Lucas Meachem, and Patrick Summers, among many others.

This year's Merola Opera Program artists include:

Sopranos

Anna Dugan, *Cranford, New Jersey*
Chelsea Lehnea, *Chattanooga, Tennessee*
Anne-Marie MacIntosh, *Langley, BC, Canada*
Amber Monroe, *Youngstown, Ohio*
Hyeree Shin, *Cheonan, South Korea*
Elisa Sunshine, *San Clemente, California*
Esther Tonea, *Buford, Georgia*
Patricia Westley, *Santa Barbara, California*

Mezzo-sopranos

Brennan Blankenship, *Klein, Texas*
Alice Chung, *Loma Linda, California*
Cara Collins, *Amarillo, Texas*
Edith Grossman, *Elma, New York*

Tenors

Salvatore Atti, *Buffalo, New York*
Michael Day, *Rockford, Illinois*
Nicholas Huff, *Kenosha, Wisconsin*
Brandon Russell, *Springfield, Missouri*
Victor Starsky, *Richmond Hills, Queens, New York*

Baritones

Jeff Byrnes, *Baton Rouge, Louisiana*
Edward Laurenson, *Auckland, New Zealand*
Timothy Murray, *Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin*
Laureano Quant, *Barranquilla, Colombia*

Bass-Baritones

Andrew Dwan, *Mountain View, California*
Rafael Porto, *São Paulo, Brazil*

Bass

Stefan Egerstrom, *Brooklyn Center, Minnesota*

Apprentice Coaches

Andrew King, *Syracuse, New York*
Christopher Koelzer, *Sunnyvale, California*
Nicholas Roehler, *Allentown, Pennsylvania*
William Woodard, *Normal, Illinois*

Apprentice Stage Director

Greg Eldridge, *Melbourne, Australia*

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 62nd season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. The 2019 Merola Summer Festival announces this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants from as far away as Brazil, South Korea, New Zealand, and Colombia, as well as across the U.S. Along with the announced world premiere of *If I Were You* (August 1-6) by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, the singers will perform in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** (July 11 & 13) and **Merola Grand Finale** (August 17).

WHEN: **Schwabacher Summer Concert:**
7:30pm, Thursday, July 11 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
2:00pm, Saturday, July 13 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Tickets: \$35-\$55

If I Were You:

7:30pm, Thursday, August 1* – Herbst Theatre

2:00pm, Saturday, August 3** – Herbst Theatre

2:00pm, Sunday, August 4* – Herbst Theatre

7:30pm, Tuesday, August 6** – Herbst Theatre

Tickets: \$35-\$80

**Pearl cast*

***Emerald cast*

Merola Grand Finale:

7:30pm, Saturday, August 17 – War Memorial Opera House

Tickets: \$25-\$50

Reception tickets: \$75

WHERE: **San Francisco Conservatory of Music**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco
Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco
War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

TICKETS: Tickets go on sale to Merola members Monday, March 4, and to the public Wednesday, March 20.

Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. \$15 student tickets available in limited quantity in advance at San Francisco Opera Box Office.

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit <http://merola.org> or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **415-864-3330**. The box office is open Monday, 10:00am-5:00pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am-6:00pm.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/MerolaOperaProgram>