



**MEROLA**  
OPERA PROGRAM

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**Merola Opera Program's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season opens June 11 with Benefit Gala and Concert, with performances by Merola alumni from the last four decades including Julie Adams, John Churchwell, Kristin Clayton, Catherine Cook, Tracy Dahl, Quinn Kelsey, Bojan Knezevic, Mark Morash, Pene Pati, Issachah Savage, Zanda Švėde, Deborah Voigt, and Dolora Zajick**



*(l to r: Deborah Voigt, Dolora Zajick, Mark Morash)*

**(San Francisco, CA – April 12, 2017)** The [Merola Opera Program](#) launches its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season on Sunday, June 11 with a Benefit Gala at City Hall and a concert immediately following at Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, featuring some of the acclaimed Merola program's most illustrious participants. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert will feature performances by Merola alumni from the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and current and recent participants, including: soprano Deborah Voigt (1985); mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick (1983); Mark Morash, pianist and Merola Opera Program Music Director (1987); and soprano Tracy Dahl (1985); soprano Kristin Clayton (1993), mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook (1990), Bojan Knezevic, bass-baritone (1992, 1993, 1994), and John Churchwell, pianist (1996); baritone Quinn Kelsey (2002); 2013 Merola graduates mezzo-soprano Zanda Švėde and tenors Pene Pati and Issachah Savage; soprano Julie Adams, and bass Anthony Reed, all from 2014; Amina Edris and Toni Marie Palmertree, sopranos; and Brad Walker, bass-baritone, both from 2015; and 2016 artists Sarah Cambidge, soprano; Amitai Pati and Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenors; Andrew G. Manea, baritone; John Elam and Jennifer Szeto, pianists; and director Aria Umezawa.

The evening will begin with an elegant cocktail reception in the historic Rotunda of San Francisco City Hall. A special collection of Signature Events will be the focus of the silent auction, where guests can bid on an exciting array of once-in-a-lifetime, intimate recitals and receptions featuring Merola alumni in private homes and other exclusive settings. Dinner will be held in the North Light Court, where guests will be seated with the new 2017 Merola artists, who will be training and performing beginning in June and throughout the summer. The evening's celebrations will continue in the beautiful Herbst Theatre with the concert, featuring aforementioned Merola alumni from the past four decades. Following the concert, there will be a festive dessert after-party with dancing in the Veterans Building Green Room, where guests can mingle with the concert artists and the 2017 Merolani.

The concert begins at 8 pm with performances from two of Merola's most well-known successes, Deborah Voigt and Dolora Zajick, joined by the 2017 Merolani for "Belle nuit, o nuit d'amour," from Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. Soprano Julie Adams, who sings Mimi this summer in San Francisco Opera's *La Boheme*, and tenor Pene Pati will sing the duet "Suzel, buon di" from Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz*.

Baritone Quinn Kelsey, who stars this summer in SF Opera's *Rigoletto*, sings "Nemico della patria" from *Andrea Chenier* (Giordano). Canadian soprano Tracy Dahl is featured in "Oui, pour ce soir...Je suis Titania" from *Mignon* (Thomas). The two singers also perform the duet from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, "Appressati, Lucia...Il pallor funesto orrendo."

Dolora Zajick sings "Voi la sapete" from Mascagni's *Cavaleri rusticana*, and she and tenor Issachah Savage sing "Madre, non dormi?...Ai nostri monti" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. Savage also teams with mezzo-soprano Zanda Švėde for "Mon coeur s'ouvre ta voix," from *Samson et Dalilah* (Saint-Saëns), and soprano Sarah Cambridge, for "Siegmond heiss' ich" from Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

In a nod to the greatest classic musicals of Broadway, Deborah Voigt and Catherine Cook sing "Anything you can do" from Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*, and soprano Kristin Clayton and bass-baritone Bojan Knežević perform "You are love" from *Showboat* (Kern). Cook, Amitai Pati, and Andrew G. Manea sing "I am easily assimilated" from Bernstein's *Candide*, and rejoin Pene Pati, soprano Amina Edris, all the Merolani, and all the 2017 Adler Fellows in "Make our garden grow" from *Candide* for the rousing finale.

## **ABOUT THE 2017 MEROLA SUMMER FESTIVAL SEASON**

For the 2017 Merola Opera Program held from June 5 to August 19, twenty-three singers, five apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director will 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, will 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 will 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.

Following the Benefit Gala and Concert on June 11, the Merola 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season will continue with the Schwabacher Summer Concerts, in which the Merola artists present extended staged scenes from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, Moore's *The 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. The first performance will take place at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on July 6. A second performance will take place on July 9 at Bing Concert Hall, Merola's first performance on the Peninsula in over a decade, as part of Stanford Live's *Summer at the Bing*. A full season calendar follows. For more information about the Merola Opera Program, please visit [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org) or call (415) 936-2324.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to our generous sponsors and long-time Merola members: Barbara K. Jackson, Anniversary Gala Concert Sponsor, and Miss Vivienne E. Miller, 2017 Merola Artists Dinner Sponsor. Thank you as well to Hafner Winery, Breathless Sparkling Wines, Partage Winery, Bright Wine Fund, Nob Hill Gazette, Red Carpet Bay Area, and elizabethW for their donations and support to ensure the success of this event.

The 60th Anniversary Gala Honorary Committee members are Ross Armstrong, M.D.; Jack Calhoun & Trent Norris; Ms. Annette Campbell-White & Dr. Ruediger Naumann-Etienne; Reid & Peggy Dennis; Carol & Dixon Doll; Priscilla & Keith Geeslin; David Gockley & Linda Kemper; Pitch & Cathie Johnson; Gretchen B. Kimball; Karen J. Kubin; Fred M. Levin & Nancy Livingston; Jane Mudge; Bill & Mary Poland; The Honorable & Mrs. George P. Schultz; Matthew & Kate Shilvock; David H. Stull & Jessica Downs; Michael Tilson Thomas & Joshua Robison; Diane B. Wilsey; and Dr. Jay Xu.

The Gala Chair is Robert B. Mison. Gala Dinner Co-Chairs are Nafiseh Lindberg & Pamela Zell Rigg. Rusty Rolland is Honorary Concert Chair. Signature Event Co-Chairs are Dr. James Tristan Cross & Patrick Wilken. Corporate Sponsor Co-Chairs are Pamela J. George & Christopher E. Wiseman.

The 60th Anniversary Gala Committee is Mark Bright, Carlyn Clause, Hugh J. Coughlin, Jayne Davis, Mary Henderson, Dana Turkington Horner, William W. Kwan, M.D., Suzanne Gelber Rinaldo, Dr. David D. Stein, Blanche Germain Streeter, and Carol A. Weitz.

## **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 the San Francisco Opera. Founded in 1957 and named for San Francisco Opera's founder, Gaetano Merola, the program celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017 and 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 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 coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship program.

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 members (including students in the Merola ConneXion program) 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.

**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 go on sale Monday, April 17 and 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 go on sale in early June and may be purchased online at [live.stanford.edu](http://live.stanford.edu); by calling (650) 724-2464; or in person at 327 Lasuen Street, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305.

#### **Sunday, June 11 at 5:15 pm**

Merola Opera Program 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala

San Francisco City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco

5:15 pm: Doors open for cocktail reception

6:15 pm: Dinner begins

Guests will be escorted to Herbst Theatre in the War Memorial Veterans Building to enjoy the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert and dessert after-party

Gala Tickets (includes cocktail reception, dinner, concert, and dessert after-party): \$600 and \$1500

#### **Sunday, June 11 at 8:00 pm**

Merola Opera Program 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert

War Memorial Veterans Building, Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

Deborah Voigt, Dolora Zajick, Issachah Savage, Quinn Kelsey, and many more noted Merola alums return for an evening of song and Merola memories in honor of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Merola Opera Program.

Tickets: \$60 (concert only).

#### **Program:**

*Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Offenbach)

“Belle nuit, o nuit d’amour”

Deborah Voigt, Dolora Zajick, 2017 Merola artists

*L'amico Fritz* (Mascagni)

“Suzel, buon dì”

Julie Adams, Pene Pati

*Samson et Dalilah* (Saint-Saëns)

“Mon coeur s’ouvre ta voix”

Zanda Švėde, Issachah Savage

*Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti)

“Appressati, Lucia...Il pallor funesto orrendo”

Tracy Dahl, Quinn Kelsey

*Candide* (Bernstein)

“I am easily assimilated”

Catherine Cook, Amitai Pati, Andrew G. Manea

*Die Walküre* (Wagner)

“Siegmund heiss’ ich”

Issachah Savage, Sarah Cambridge

**Showboat** (Kern)

“You are love”

Kristin Clayton, Bojan Knežević

**Cavalari rusticana** (Mascagni)

“Voi la sapete”

Dolora Zajick

**Mignon** (Thomas)

“Oui, pour ce soir...Je suis Titania”

Tracy Dahl

**Andrea Chenier** (Giordano)

“Nemico della patria”

Quinn Kelsey

**Annie Get Your Gun** (Berlin)

“Anything you can do”

Deborah Voigt, Catherine Cook

Text revised by Clifford Cranna

**Il Trovatore** (Verdi)

“Madre, non dormi?...Ai nostri monti”

Dolora Zajick, Issachah Savage

**Candide** (Bernstein)

“Make our garden grow”

Pene Pati, Amina Edris, tutti Adlers, tutti Merolini

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

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

**Sunday, July 9, 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. The singers and full program will be announced at a later date.

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

**Thursday, July 20 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, July 22 at 2:00 pm**

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

Merola Opera Program presents ***La Serva Padrona* (Pergolesi), *Sāvītri* (Holst), and *The Bear* (Walton)**

(English supertitles will accompany each opera)

A triple bill of 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 *Sāvītri*, 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 series closes with Walton’s *The Bear*, where a widow faithful to the memory of her late husband finds unexpected love. Casting to be announced at a later date.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

**Thursday, August 3 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, August 5 at 2:00 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. Casting to be announced at a later date.

Tickets: \$70/\$50

**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.