



MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM ANNOUNCES PROGRAMMING UPDATE FOR **MEROLA GRAND FINALE** AS THE PROGRAM PRIORITIZES THE SAFETY OF ITS PARTICIPATING ARTISTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (20 July 2021) – Based on an abundance of caution the acclaimed **Merola Opera Program** has announced a programming update for its **Merola Grand Finale**, to be presented live July 31 at the Golden Gate Park Bandshell. Following an occurrence in which artist health and safety COVID protocols were compromised by a number of participants, the decision has been made to prioritize the well-being of young artists, faculty, staff, and other participating artists, and to proceed with a reduced number of onsite participants and a greater focus on virtual training for the duration of this year’s program.

After exploring numerous possible alternatives, it has been determined that this difficult step would help ensure the safest environment for the final week and a half of the summer training program and the Merola Grand Finale. Says Jean Kellogg, Executive Director of the Merola Opera Program, “It was a heartbreaking decision, but the safety of our young artists and production team is paramount.”

The public will still have the opportunity to enjoy a free outdoor performance featuring outstanding young artists from the Merola Opera Program performing a thrilling array of selections from some of opera’s most brilliant works. The **Merola Grand Finale** will be presented at 2:00pm, Saturday, July 31, at the **Golden Gate Park Bandshell**, John F. Kennedy Drive and Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive, San Francisco. Admission is FREE and open to the public. (Limited reserved seating is available for Merola members Gold Circle and above.)

All Merola participants can be seen next month in “Back Home: Through the Stage Door,” a digital production filmed on location in early July at the historic Herbst Theatre, with the entire 2021 Merola ensemble performing classics and lesser known gems. Free on-demand streaming of “Back Home: Through the Stage Door” will be available to Merola members beginning August 13, and free to the public beginning August 27. For more information or to become a Merola member, visit www.merola.org.

San Francisco Opera Center Artistic Director Carrie-Ann Matheson and General Manager Markus Beam noted, “The health and well-being of our artists, faculty, and staff has been and must remain our top priority,” adding that some participants will continue their Merola summer training virtually. The 2021 Merola Stage Director Audrey Chait, as originally announced, will direct the Merola Grand Finale.

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, pianist/coaches, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow with master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, coaches, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertoire, languages, diction, acting, stage movement, and professional development. 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 their participation, offering aid for essential career development expenses including coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In summer 2020, the company initiated the Merola Artists Emergency Fund to offer much-needed financial assistance to those artists who lost wages and incurred unreimbursed expenses as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: The **Merola Grand Finale** offers the public a free outdoor performance featuring outstanding young artists from the Merola Opera Program performing a thrilling array of selections from some of opera's most brilliant works. The concert will be directed by 2021 Merola Stage Director Audrey Chait.

WHEN: **2:00pm, Saturday, July 31** - Free live public performance

WHERE: **Golden Gate Park Bandshell**, John F. Kennedy Drive and Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive, San Francisco

TICKETS: Admission is FREE and open to the public. (Limited reserved seating is available for Merola members Gold Circle and above.)

STREAM: **Friday, August 20** – Video performance becomes available online to Merola members

Friday, September 3 – Public release of video performance

INFO: For information or to become a Merola member, visit <http://merola.org>.

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