



**MEROLA  
OPERA PROGRAM**

**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM CONCLUDES 2018 SUMMER FESTIVAL WITH THE  
MEROLA GRAND FINALE  
August 18 in San Francisco**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (13 July 2018) – San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, culminates its 2018 Summer Festival with the **Merola Grand Finale**, featuring the 2018 Merola young artists in a dazzling array of opera’s most exciting arias and ensembles. Conducted by Dean Williamson, the acclaimed conductor now completing his third season as music director at Nashville Opera, and directed by 2018 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Marcus Shields, this evening showcases the hard work and extraordinary talent of the Merolini. The **Merola Grand Finale** will be performed **7:30pm, Saturday, August 18** and at the **War Memorial Opera House**, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. For tickets or more information, visit [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org) or call **(415) 864-3330**.

The repertoire for the **Merola Grand Finale** will showcase selections from a variety of operas, including Rossini’s *Otello*, Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), Massenet’s *Thaïs*, Puccini’s *La rondine*, Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale* and *La fille du régiment*, Smetana’s *Prodaná Nevěsta*, Leoncavallo’s *Zazá*, Mascagni’s *L’amico Fritz*, Verdi’s *Don Carlo* and *Rigoletto*, Cilea’s *Adriana Lecouvreur*, Bellini’s *La sonnambula*, Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse*, Strauss’ *Capriccio*, Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, and Berlioz’s *Béatrice et Bénédict*.

Throughout the season, artistic staff members work closely with Merolini to choose arias and ensembles to be performed at the Merola Grand Finale. Among the young artists performing are:

- SeokJong Baek, baritone
- Zhengyi Bai, tenor
- Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad, apprentice coach
- Kendra Berentsen, soprano
- Annie Brooks, apprentice coach
- Christopher Colmenero, tenor
- Cheyanne Coss, soprano
- Matthew Gemmill, apprentice coach
- Megan Grey, mezzo-soprano
- Anne Maguire, mezzo-soprano
- Addison Marlor, tenor
- James Maverick, apprentice coach
- Simone McIntosh, mezzo-soprano
- Andrew Moore, bass-baritone
- Brian Michael Moore, tenor
- Thomas Morris, apprentice coach
- Marlen Nahhas, soprano
- Brittany Nickell, soprano
- Christopher Oglesby, tenor
- Ted Allen Pickell, bass-baritone
- Jacob Scharfman, baritone
- Marcus Shields, apprentice stage director
- Charles Sy, tenor
- Alexandra Urquiola, mezzo-soprano

- Patricia Westley, soprano
- Jaeman Yoon, baritone
- WooYoung Yoon, tenor
- Meigui Zhang, soprano
- Xiaomeng Zhang, baritone

Widely known for his perceptive and commanding style, Dean Williamson will be conducting the young Merolini in the opera program's final concert of the 2018 Summer Festival. From leading *Don Pasquale* for Intermountain Opera Bozeman to the Emmy-nominated *Le comte Ory* that he conducted for Des Moines Metro Opera, Williamson's ambitious and versatile career in standard contemporary repertoire has earned him worldwide acclaim. He has also performed throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe as accompanist with some of the world's leading singers in venues such as Weill Recital Hall, the Wieniawski Society, and Merkin Hall.

The concert will be directed by 2018 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Marcus Shields, whose work ranges in scale from performance art to fully produced theater, where he blends his various skills (pianist/singer/visual artist/director) into cross-disciplinary pieces that push the boundaries of genre. Shields has also served on the directing staff of the Atlanta Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and the Curtis Institute of Music. He is the recipient of the 2017 Drama League Opera Directing Fellowship in conjunction with the Metropolitan Opera and Wolf Trap Opera.

Now in its 61<sup>st</sup> season, 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 presents outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. Throughout the summer, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertoire, 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 financial aid for 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 Adler Fellowship Program. Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists, who have gone on to extensive careers in opera, including Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Rolando Villazon, Thomas Hampson, and Patrick Summers among many others.

#### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, culminates its 2018 Summer Festival with the **Merola Grand Finale**, featuring the 2018 Merola young artists in a dazzling array of opera's most exciting arias and ensembles. Conducted by Dean Williamson, the acclaimed conductor now completing his third season as

music director at Nashville Opera, and directed by 2018 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Marcus Shields, this evening showcases the hard work and extraordinary talent of the Merolini.

**WHEN:** 7:30pm, Saturday, August 18

**SHOWS:** War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

**TICKETS:** *Performance tickets: \$25-\$50*  
*Reception tickets: \$75*

**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, 10am-5pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10am-6pm.

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**MEDIA:** Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.  
650.327.1200 | [sydney@cb-pr.com](mailto:sydney@cb-pr.com)

Ruben Pimentel, Merola Director of Marketing & Communications  
415.936.2323 | [rpimentel@merola.org](mailto:rpimentel@merola.org)

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