



**MEROLA  
OPERA PROGRAM**

## **MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM KICKS OFF ITS 62<sup>ND</sup> SEASON WITH THE SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT**

**July 11 & 13 in San Francisco**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (20 May 2019) – San Francisco’s acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, commences its 62<sup>nd</sup> season with a showcase of the program’s rising stars in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. A jaded courtesan longing for true love, star-crossed lovers, a comic marriage, a deal with the devil, and brothers separated at birth all take the stage as Merola’s talented young artists bring some of opera’s most exciting moments to life by performing scenes from *La rondine*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Die schweigsame Frau*, *Faust*, and *Il trovatore*. The **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be performed **7:30pm, Thursday, July 11** and **2:00pm, Saturday, July 13** at the **San Francisco Conservatory of Music’s Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco. For tickets or more information, visit [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org) or call **(415) 864-3330**.

Among the scenes to be performed are selections from Giacomo Puccini’s re-imagining of Viennese operetta, *La rondine* (*The Swallow*). Daring to give love one last chance, a glamorous courtesan leaves her wealthy protector for a beguiling young man in this bittersweet story of love and loss. The artists performing selections from Act 1 will be Amber Monroe (Soprano), Hyeree Shin (Soprano), Salvatore Atti (Tenor), Victor Starsky (Tenor), Jeff Byrnes (Baritone), Chelsea Lehnea (Soprano), Anna Dugan (Soprano), Alice Chung (Mezzo-soprano), Laureano Quant (Baritone), Andrew Dwan (Bass-Baritone), and Stefan Egerstrom (Bass).

Also presented will be scenes from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a tragic opera by Gaetano Donizetti. Loosely based on Sir Walter Scott’s historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*, this three-act opera follows the story of a suffering woman pressured to marry the wrong man, culminating in one of the most astonishing mad scenes in all of opera. Merola artists Chelsea Lehnea (Soprano), Alice Chung (Mezzo-soprano), and Salvatore Atti (Tenor) will perform selections from Act 1, Scene 4.

Before there was “The Bachelor,” there was *Die schweigsame Frau* (*The Silent Woman*), a comic opera by Richard Strauss with a libretto by Stefan Zweig after Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene* (*The Silent Woman*). This opera follows the story of Sir Morosus, a retired British naval officer who is averse to noise of any kind. He disinherits his nephew Henry for joining an opera and decides to find himself a young bride who should be as quiet as possible. Composed at a difficult time in Strauss’ life and amidst political upheaval, *Die schweigsame Frau* was banned after four performances following its 1935 premiere and was not heard again until 1946. Selections from Act 2, Scenes 3 and 4 will be performed by Hyeree Shin (Soprano), Stefan Egerstrom (Bass), Laureano Quant (Baritone), Chelsea Lehnea (Soprano), and Alice Chung (Mezzo-soprano).

Charles Gounod's *Faust* draws upon Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play based on the German legend of a man who sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for knowledge and power. Full of memorable music and a storyline that captures the struggle between faith, morality, and sin, *Faust* remains one of opera's most popular, tuneful, and sophisticated works. Selections from Act 4, Scenes 5-8 will be performed by Anna Dugan (Soprano), Alice Chung (Mezzo-soprano), Chelsea Lehnea (Soprano), Salvatore Atti (Tenor), Laureano Quant (Baritone), and Andrew Dwan (Bass-Baritone).

Rounding out the program are selections from *Il trovatore*, a four-act opera by Giuseppe Verdi full of rousing choruses, gorgeous arias, and heroic numbers. Known for its fiery characters, extreme dramatic situations, and virtuosic demands on singers, this story of witchcraft, murder, and vengeance is a tragic masterpiece. Anna Dugan (Soprano), Alice Chung (Mezzo-soprano), Victor Starsky (Tenor), and Jeff Byrnes (Baritone) will perform the final scenes from Act 4.

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. Productions since the beginning of his tenure include Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Blitzstein's *Regina*, and Rossini's *L'occasione fa il ladro*.

The concerts will be directed by Jose Maria Conde (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). He was also the Artistic Director of Opera Santa Barbara from 2010 until 2015, where he oversaw artistic planning and the Studio Artists Program.

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.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, commences its 62<sup>nd</sup> season with a showcase of the program's rising stars in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. A jaded courtesan longing for true love, star-crossed lovers, a comic marriage, a deal with the devil, and brothers separated at birth all take the stage as Merola's talented young artists bring some of opera's most exciting moments to life by performing scenes from *La rondine*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Die schweigsame Frau*, *Faust*, and *Il trovatore*.

**SHOWS:** **7:30pm, Thursday, July 11**  
**2:00pm, Saturday, July 13**  
San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., San Francisco

**TICKETS:** \$35-\$55

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>