



2009 SCHWABACHER DEBUT RECITAL SERIES OPENS WITH TENOR ALEK SHRADER ON FEBRUARY 8

**27th Season begins with recital by tenor Alek Shrader performing works by
Britten, Schumann, and Liszt, accompanied by John Parr**

SAN FRANCISCO (January 29, 2009)—San Francisco Opera Center begins the 27th season of the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series on Sunday, February 8, 2009 at 5:30 pm with tenor and second-year Adler Fellow, Alek Shrader. Shrader will sing a program of recital favorites, including songs by Benjamin Britten and Henri Duparc; Franz Liszt's *Wilhelm Tell*; and Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. Shrader's program will conclude with a popular trio of arias by Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini. He will be accompanied by pianist and San Francisco Opera Head of Music Staff John Parr.

Tenor Alek Shrader was last seen at San Francisco Opera in 2008 as Arbace in *Idomeneo* and Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love for Families*. He also sang the role of Victorin in *Die Tote Stadt* and stepped in for Ramón Vargas in two performances of *The Elixir of Love*. An alumnus of the Merola Opera Program and Music Academy of the West, he is a 2008 winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and received a Sarah Tucker Grant earlier this year from the Richard Tucker Foundation. Shrader is one of three singers featured in the Metropolitan Opera's documentary film, *The Audition*, which will be shown as a part of the Met's series of high-definition presentations in theaters nationwide on April 19, 2009. In addition to his work with SFO, John Parr is a vocal coach at the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth and the creator of a series of vocal and chamber recitals at Old First Church in San Francisco.

Tickets & Information

All performances take place at Temple Emanu-El's Martin Meyer Sanctuary (Two Lake Street, at Arguello, in San Francisco). Single tickets for the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series are \$20; a four-recital subscription is \$60—a 25% discount. Tickets may be purchased by calling the San Francisco Opera Box Office (Mon., 10 am-5 pm; Tues.-Fri., 10 am-6 pm) at (415) 864-3330. Student rush tickets are available for \$10 at Temple Emanu-El 30 minutes prior to each recital (limit of two tickets per person; valid ID is required), subject to availability.

PROGRAM 1: Sun. February 8, 5:30 pm

Alek Shrader, tenor

John Parr, piano

Current Adler Fellow Alek Shrader will present an evening of diverse and lovely music, featuring works by Britten and Schumann, and Liszt's *Wilhelm Tell*. Come hear the 2008 Metropolitan Opera National Council winner and fast-rising Rossini tenor in a concert of recital favorites.

PROGRAM 2: Sun. February 15, 5:30 pm

Quinn Kelsey, baritone

Peter Grunberg, piano

The Washington Post praises Quinn Kelsey as having a "fine, full and fluid baritone voice." The Merola Opera Program alumnus recently made his San Francisco Opera debut as Marcello in *La Bohème* and will perform majestic works from Mahler and Mussorgsky, and poignant songs of Finzi.

PROGRAM 3: Sun. March 8, 5:30 pm

James Benjamin Rodgers, tenor

Mark Morash, piano

Last seen in the title role of Merola Opera Program's *Albert Herring* in 2008 and recent winner of the Lotte Lenya Competition, James Benjamin Rodgers will sing selections from Rachmaninoff and Tosti, and *Winter Words* by Britten.

PROGRAM 4: Sun. April 5, 5:30 pm

New York Festival of Song's Steven Blier, piano

with Leah Crocetto, soprano; Renée Tatum, mezzo-soprano; and Andrew Bidlack, tenor

New York Festival of Song's Steven Blier presents *Kurt Weill's Berlin*. Enjoy an evening of the irony, satire, and sentiment of Kurt Weill, with contributions from Tucholsky, Eisler, and Hollaender. Blier will be joined by 2009 Adler Fellows Leah Crocetto, soprano; Renée Tatum, mezzo-soprano; and Andrew Bidlack, tenor.

About the Artists

Second-year Adler Fellow **Alek Shrader** made his San Francisco Opera debut this season as Victorin in *Die Tote Stadt* and has since sung Arbace (*Idomeneo*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love for Families*) and stepped in for Ramón Vargas in two performances of *The Elixir of Love*. The Oklahoma native made his professional debut as Count Almaviva (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and returned to that company last summer as Giovanni in Martín y Soler's *Una Cosa Rara*. Last year, he appeared in the title role of *Le Comte Ory* and as George (*Our Town*) with the Juilliard Opera Center. Other roles in his repertoire include Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Fenton (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Le Chevalier (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and Tony (*West Side Story*). An alumnus of the Merola Opera Program and Music Academy of the West, he sang Don Ramiro in Merola's 2007 production of *La Cenerentola*. Shrader is a 2008 winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and received a Sarah Tucker Grant earlier this year from the Richard Tucker Foundation.

John Parr is San Francisco Opera's Head of Music Staff. A native of Birmingham, U.K., Parr studied piano at the Royal Northern College of Music with Sulamita Aronovsky and musicology at Manchester University. He worked for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden from 1985-88, touring with the company to Japan and Korea in 1986. He was engaged at Scottish Opera from 1988-90. In 1991 Parr joined the Lower Saxony State Opera in Hannover, Germany, where he was head of music staff and musical assistant to music directors George Alexander Albrecht, Christof Perick and Andreas Delfs, specializing in Wagner and Strauss operas. During this time he developed an extensive series of lieder recitals and chamber music programs for the company, and also broadcast on SFB Radio Berlin and on NDR Television. With San Francisco Opera, Parr has developed and performed in numerous recital programs. Since 2002 he has worked as a coach at the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth and has also given recitals in the Wagner Museum there. In June 2005 he initiated a series of vocal and chamber music recitals entitled "Basically British" at Old First Church in San Francisco.

About the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series

The Schwabacher Debut Recital Series has been endowed in perpetuity by the generosity of the late James Schwabacher. A celebrated Bay Area singer, recitalist, scholar, and teacher, James Schwabacher was a co-founder of the Merola Opera Program. The annual Schwabacher Debut Recital Series presents recitals by singers who have participated in the programs of the San Francisco Opera Center and offers Bay Area audiences the unique opportunity to hear gifted young singers in an intimate setting. For over twenty years, the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series has introduced the artistry of world-renowned opera singers, including Susan Graham, Anna Netrebko, Deborah Voigt, Brian Asawa and Thomas Hampson. The recitals offer a rare opportunity to hear a wealth of song literature ranging from Baroque masterpieces and Romantic-era classics to newly commissioned works.

About San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program

San Francisco Opera Center was created in 1982 by then-General Director Terence A. McEwen to oversee the operation and administration of the education and training programs initiated by Kurt Herbert Adler in 1954. Providing a coordinated sequence of performance and study opportunities for young artists, San Francisco Opera Center represents a new era in which young artists of major operatic potential can develop through intensive training and performance, under the aegis of

a major international opera company. Now under the guidance of its fourth director, Sheri Greenawald, and San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley, the Opera Center has trained and introduced many young stars from around the world to the international opera stage through its resident artist programs such as the Adler Fellowship.

Initially founded as the San Francisco Opera/Affiliate Artists program, the Adler Fellowship Program is one of the nation's most prestigious training programs for advanced singers. Each year, Adler Fellows are sponsored by individual donors to help cover the cost of their fellowship. Sponsorships range from \$5,000-\$100,000, and sponsors affiliated with the Adler Program have the opportunity to attend private studio classes with the Fellows and develop nurturing relationships with them. Alumni from the Adler Fellowship Program include sopranos Laura Claycomb, Nicolle Foland, Nancy Gustafson, Mary Mills, Patricia Racette, Ruth Ann Swenson and Deborah Voigt; mezzo-sopranos Zheng Cao and Dolora Zajick; countertenor Brian Asawa; baritones Mark Delavan and David Okerlund; and bass-baritones Monte Pederson and John Relyea.

One of the oldest and most acclaimed training programs of its kind, the Merola Opera Program for aspiring opera professionals offers up-and-coming singers, coach-accompanists and stage directors the opportunity of intense study and performance during an eleven-week summer program. Each year, hundreds of artists from throughout the world vie for approximately 30 coveted spots in the summer program. Admission is based solely on talent rather than financial ability; there is no charge to the participants. Named for San Francisco Opera's first general director, Gaetano Merola, the program began during the 1954-55 Season and established its full training program in 1957. Alumni of the program include Sylvia McNair, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Brian Asawa, Thomas Hampson, Rolando Villazón, and Patrick Summers. An independent non-profit organization, the Merola Opera Program operates in collaboration with San Francisco Opera Center and San Francisco Opera.

For more information on the San Francisco Opera Center and the Adler Fellowship and Merola Opera Program, visit www.sfopera.com.

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For further press information, please visit www.sfopera.com/press or contact Julia Inouye [415.565.6430 / jinouye@sfopera.com] or Robin Freeman [415.565.6451 / rffreeman@sfopera.com].