



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

SHERI GREENAWALD PRESENTED WITH
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MEDAL

Retiring San Francisco Opera Center Director and Merola Opera Program
Artistic Director Acknowledged for Extraordinary Service



Sheri Greenawald

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (December 10, 2020) — San Francisco Opera Center Director and Merola Opera Program Artistic Director **Sheri Greenawald**, whose December 2020 retirement was announced in March, received the San Francisco Opera Medal at a special Zoom event organized by San Francisco Opera and Merola Opera Program. The Opera Medal, the Company’s highest honor, was awarded to Greenawald for her extraordinary service and leadership with the Company.

San Francisco Opera Tad and Dianne Taube General Director **Matthew Shilvock** said: “On Sunday, November 11, 1978, a house debut was made by a young Marzeline in *Fidelio*. On that day a journey began that would encompass many roles on the War Memorial stage and a twenty-year tenure leading two of the greatest opera training programs in the world. I wonder what that young Marzeline, Sheri Greenawald, would have said at that time if you had told her that 42 years later she would have made one of the most indelible impacts in the history of this Company. The San Francisco Opera Medal was established by Kurt Herbert Adler in recognition of extraordinary artistic service over an extended period. The medal has been awarded to many of the great

luminaries who have worked with the Company including Leontyne Price, Birgit Nilsson, Joan Sutherland, Marilyn Horne and Thomas Stewart, to name but a few. It is hard to imagine someone more deserving of joining this list than Sheri. Extraordinary artistic service over an extended period defines her relationship with San Francisco Opera.”

Shilvock co-hosted the virtual event with San Francisco Opera’s Managing Director: Artistic **Gregory Henkel** and Association President **Keith Geeslin**, introducing a series of speakers and musical performances by Opera Center and Merola alumni mezzo-sopranos **Ashley Dixon** and **Daniela Mack**, tenors **Pene Pati** and **Alek Shrader**, along with San Francisco Opera Head of Music Administration **John Churchwell** and pianists **Allen Perriello** and **Lorenzo Di Toro**. Among the distinguished guests who joined the Zoom to honor Greenawald were San Francisco Opera General Director Emeritus **David Gockley**, New York Philharmonic President and CEO **Deborah Borda**, Merola Vice Chairman **Jayne Davis**, Greenawald’s artistic advisor and manager **Matthew Epstein**, former Santa Fe Opera General Director **Richard Gaddes** and soprano, Merola graduate and former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow **Karen Slack**.

After making her 1978 debut with San Francisco Opera in *Fidelio*, Greenawald exhibited her artistic versatility in a number of leading roles with the Company including Laretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Cordelia in Reimann’s *Lear* and the title roles of Massenet’s *Cendrillon* and *Manon*. She returned to the Company in 2002 to head the San Francisco Opera Center and provide artistic leadership to Merola Opera Program. The San Francisco Opera Center’s Adler Fellowship provides young artists with a supportive environment in which to develop and flourish as resident artists of the Company. The Adler Fellows are chosen from participants of the prestigious Merola Opera Program, a leading program for aspiring singers, coach accompanists and stage directors. During her 18 years at the helm of these elite training programs, Greenawald mentored more than 500 young artists, many of whom are the art form’s leaders today as performers, arts professionals and educators.

Greenawald said: “To be included on a list that includes the likes of Leontyne Price and Kurt Herbert Adler is such an honor. The list of previous Opera Medal recipients includes many singers who were my inspiration and guideposts. To think that anything I did would put me in their company is truly amazing, and I know that my parents would be glowing with pride. I think of the many people who helped me ‘become me,’ from my first voice teacher Charles Matheson to Thomas Pasatieri, my first friend in New York City, and Matthew Epstein who kept my feet walking forward in the business. I must mention my teacher Audrey Langford, who was the first teacher who ever asked me about the actual anatomy of singing. I also think of David Gockley, who took a risk with me at Houston Grand Opera and became such an important force in my life! I also think of the other companies across the country who literally kept *me* in business and those general directors who welcomed me such as Kurt Herbert Adler, Speight Jenkins, John Crosby, Richard Gaddes and Jonathan Dudley. And I thank my friends at UCSF Voice and Swallowing, especially Soha Al-Jurf and Sarah Schneider, who helped round out my education as a trainer.

“They let me ‘play,’ and I learned from playing with my colleagues. I think of directors who really guided me, especially my beloved Alden twins, David and Christopher, who were my constant playmates in NYC. I think of Edo de Waart, who sat me down and showed me how to properly mark a score! And MTT who allowed me to play on stage again! And I think of all my beautiful colleagues who joined me in this amazing effort to create beautiful theater, and I think of all the people who have made these last 18 years some of the most rewarding of my life ... all my colleagues at San Francisco Opera and Merola. I cannot thank Mark Morash and Chris Bragg enough for having been my rocks. And Jo Ann McStravick, who made me laugh even when I didn’t want to. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Inaugurated in 1970 when former general director Kurt Herbert Adler awarded the first medal to soprano Dorothy Kirsten, the San Francisco Opera Medal is the Company’s highest honor. Along with beloved vocal soloists, past awardees include music directors Donald Runnicles and Nicola Luisotti, composer John Adams, artist David Hockney and dramaturg Dr. Clifford “Kip” Cranna.

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