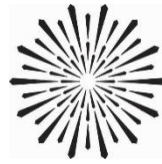


SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA CENTER



MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER AND MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PRESENT
2019 SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES**

**February 13: Tenor WooYoung Yoon, baritone SeokJong Baek
and pianist Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad**

February 27: Baritone David Pershall with pianist John Churchwell

April 3: Soprano Mary Evelyn Hanglely, tenor Christopher Oglesby and pianist Mark Morash

**April 24: Pianist Martin Katz with 2019 Adler Fellows Mary Evelyn Hanglely, Ashley Dixon,
Zhengyi Bai and Christian Pursell**

Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater

Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and sfopera.com

SAN FRANCISCO (January 23, 2019) — San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program present the 36th season of the Schwabacher Recital Series, opening on February 13 and continuing through April 24. The four-recital series offers music lovers an opportunity to hear opera's next generation of stars in the intimate and state-of-the-art Taube Atrium Theater in San Francisco.

Since 1983, the Schwabacher Recital Series has introduced gifted young artists to Bay Area audiences. The recitals provide significant opportunities for emerging singers and pianists to explore the art song repertoire, and audiences the chance to hear a wealth of song literature ranging from Baroque masterpieces and Romantic-era classics to newly commissioned works. The annual series showcases the exemplary artists who have participated in the prestigious training programs of San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program, whose residencies offer intensive individual coaching and performance opportunities to young professional international artists.

Tenor **WooYoung Yoon** and baritone **SeokJong Baek** share the stage on **February 13** for the opening recital of the series, accompanied by pianist **Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad** (Merola 2018; first-year Adler Fellow). Baek will sing Poulenc's *Chansons Gaillardes* and Mahler's youthful song cycle *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*). Yoon follows with Richard Strauss' Vier Lieder, Op. 27 ("Ruhe, meine Seele!," "Cäcilie," "Heimliche Aufforderung," "Morgen!") and Jake Heggie's *Friendly Persuasions: Homage to Poulenc*—composed in 2008, the four songs set to poetry by Gene Scheer is based on four transformative friendships and meetings in Francis Poulenc's life. The

program is completed by one of opera's most beautiful duets, "Au fond du temple saint" from *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*), as well as folk songs from the singers' native South Korea.

Tenor WooYoung Yoon (Merola 2018) brought down the house with the show-stopping "Ah! Mes amis" from *La Fille du Régiment* at last summer's Merola Grand Finale. He recently made his debut in Italy as Don José in *Carmen* with the Trentino Music Festival and later this year sings Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with New Jersey State Opera. Baritone SeokJong Baek (Merola 2018; first-year Adler Fellow) recently sang Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*) as a resident artist of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Other credits include *La Traviata* (Germont) with Aspen Music Festival and *Das Land des Lächelns* (Tschang) and *Le Roi l'a dit* (Gautru) with the Manhattan School of Music.

On **February 27**, the Schwabacher Recital Series presents baritone **David Pershall** and pianist and San Francisco Opera Head of Music Staff **John Churchwell** (Merola 1996). Their program includes Beethoven's only song cycle, *An die Ferne Geliebte*; Mahler's *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*; Gerald Finzi's *Earth and Air and Rain*; and songs by Rachmaninoff. Pershall (Merola 2008) made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2016 as Roucher in *Andrea Chénier*, returning in 2017 as Lescaut in *Manon* and as Silvio in last fall's *Pagliacci*. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "passionate and resonant," the American baritone has appeared as Marcello (*La Bohème*) at Salzburger Landestheater, Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) and Schaunard (*La Bohème*) at the Metropolitan Opera, Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) at Washington National Opera, Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at Boston Lyric Opera, Belcore (*L'Elisir d'Amore*) at Minnesota Opera, and Orestes (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) and Manfredo (*L'Amore dei Tre Re*) at Poland's Beethoven Easter Festival. Pershall's many awards include top honors at the George London and Gerda Lissner competitions.

The series continues on **April 3** with soprano **Mary Evelyn Hangley** and tenor **Christopher Oglesby** with pianist and San Francisco Opera Center Director of Musical Studies **Mark Morash** (Merola 1987). The artists will survey works by Schubert (*Auf dem Strom*), Britten (Canticle III "Still Falls the Rain"), R. Strauss (Sechs Lieder, Op. 19), Dvořák (*Cigánské Melodie*), Charles Ives and Gabriel Fauré (selected songs) and Italian duets by various composers. Mary Evelyn Hangley (Merola 2016; first-year Adler Fellow) recently performed the role of Anna Sørensen in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* at Glimmerglass Festival and this spring will be featured in the Verdi Requiem at her alma mater, SUNY Fredonia, where she will also hold a two-day recital and masterclass residency. Tenor Christopher Oglesby (Merola 2018; first-year Adler Fellow) debuted as Tom Rakewell in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with the Merola Opera Program. He recently performed with the Utah Symphony as a soloist in Handel's *Messiah* and was a Resident Artist at Utah Opera, where he sang Tybalt in *Roméo et Juliette*.

Martin Katz, the "dean of collaborative pianists" (*Los Angeles Times*), leads a quartet of 2019 San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows—soprano **Mary Evelyn Hangley**, mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon**, tenor **Zhengyi Bai**, and bass-baritone **Christian Pursell**—in the final recital of the series on **April 24**. The program features Samuel Barber's *Hermit Songs* and selections from Hugo Wolf's *Mörrike Lieder* and

Johannes Brahms' *Deutsche Volkslieder*. One of the world's busiest collaborators, Martin Katz has appeared and recorded regularly with celebrated vocal soloists such as Cecilia Bartoli, Lawrence Brownlee, José Carreras, Marilyn Horne, Karita Mattila, Samuel Ramey and Frederica von Stade. A pivotal figure in the training of countless singers and pianists, for the past three decades he has taught at the University of Michigan School of Music where he chairs the program in collaborative piano.

A 2018 Grand Finals winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Ashley Dixon (Merola 2015/2017; second-year Adler Fellow) made her San Francisco Opera debut this fall as an Angel First Class in Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Zhengyi Bai (Merola 2018; first-year Adler Fellow), who entered college as a piano major in China before discovering his true instrument, won the Los Angeles District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and appeared as Alessandro in Merola Opera Program's production of Mozart's *Il Re Pastore*. Christian Pursell (Merola 2017; second-year Adler Fellow) appeared in four Company productions last year, including Sir Walter Raleigh in *Roberto Devereux*, and this April sings Samuel and Doeg in Handel's *Saul* with Nicholas McGegan and the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Tickets & Information

All recitals take place at the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater, a state-of-the-art performance venue utilizing the Constellation® acoustic system from Berkeley-based Meyer Sound. The Taube Atrium Theater is part of San Francisco Opera's Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera, located on the fourth floor of the Veterans Building (401 Van Ness Avenue) in San Francisco.

Tickets (general seating) are \$30; a series package (all four recitals) is \$100. Tickets can be purchased at the San Francisco Opera Box Office (301 Van Ness Avenue) in person, by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com/srs (four-recital package available only in-person or by phone). Student rush tickets, subject to availability, are available for \$15 at the Taube Atrium Theater (401 Van Ness Avenue) 30 minutes prior to each recital (limit of two tickets per person; valid ID is required). Artists, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change.

The Schwabacher Recital Series is endowed in perpetuity by the generosity of the late James Schwabacher and sponsored by the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust. A celebrated Bay Area singer, recitalist, scholar and teacher, James Schwabacher was a co-founder of the Merola Opera Program.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos generously provided by Piedmont Piano Company.

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2019 SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES

Presented by San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program

Recitals take place at the Taube Atrium Theater

(Veterans Building (Fourth Floor), 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco)

Wednesday, February 13 at 7:30 p.m.

WooYoung Yoon, tenor
SeokJong Baek, baritone
Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad, piano

PROGRAM:

Francis Poulenc / *Chansons Gaillardes*
Gustav Mahler / *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*
Richard Strauss / *Vier Lieder, Op. 27*
Jake Heggie / *Friendly Persuasions: Homage to Poulenc*
HeeGap Kim / *Nostalgia* (Korean song)

Wednesday, February 27 at 7:30 p.m.

David Pershall, baritone
John Churchwell, piano

PROGRAM:

Ludwig van Beethoven / *An die Ferne Geliebte*
Gustav Mahler / *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*
Sergei Rachmaninoff / *Selected songs*
Gerald Finzi / *Earth and Air and Rain*

Wednesday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m.

Mary Evelyn Hangle, soprano
Christopher Oglesby, tenor
Mark Morash, piano

PROGRAM:

Franz Schubert / *Auf dem Strom*
Benjamin Britten / *Canticle III "Still Falls the Rain"*
Richard Strauss / *Sechs Lieder, Op. 19*
Antonín Dvořák / *Cigánské Melodie*
Charles Ives / *Selected songs*
Gabriel Fauré / *Selected songs*

Italian duets (various composers)

Wednesday, April 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Martin Katz, piano

Mary Evelyn Hangley, soprano

Ashley Dixon, mezzo-soprano

Zhengyi Bai, tenor

Christian Pursell, bass-baritone

PROGRAM:

Hugo Wolf / Selections from *Mörike Lieder*

Samuel Barber / *Hermit Songs*

Johannes Brahms / Selections from *Deutsche Volkslieder*

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. Under the guidance of San Francisco Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald and San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock, the Opera Center has trained and introduced many young stars from around the world to the international opera stage through its resident artist programs.

Initially founded as the San Francisco Opera/Affiliate Artists program in 1975, the **Adler Fellowship Program** is one of the nation's most prestigious performance-oriented residencies for the most advanced young singers and pianists. Each year, Adler Fellows are sponsored by individual donors and institutional funders to help cover the cost of their fellowship, 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 Jane Archibald, Susannah Biller, Leah Crocetto, Heidi Melton, Melody Moore, Patricia Racette, Nadine Sierra, Ruth Ann Swenson, Elza van den Heever and Deborah Voigt; mezzo-sopranos Zheng Cao, Kendall Gladen, Daveda Karanas, Maya Lahyani, Daniela Mack, Renée Tatum and Dolora Zajick; countertenors Brian Asawa, Ryan Belongie and Gerald Thompson; tenors Andrew Bidlack, Brian Jagde, Daniel Montenegro, Matthew O'Neill, Sean Panikkar, Alek Shrader and Noah Stewart; baritones Eugene Brancoveanu, Alfredo Daza, Mark Delavan, Austin Kness, Lucas Meachem and James Westman; bass-baritones Joshua Bloom, Ryan Kuster, John Relyea, Philip Skinner, Daniel Sumegi and Dale Travis; and basses John Ames and Kenneth Kellogg.

Widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coaches, and stage directors, the **Merola Opera Program**, which celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2017, has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists. Many Merola alumni are now among the most

recognized names in the opera world. Every summer the program offers 29 young artists the rare opportunity of studying, coaching and participating in master classes with established professionals for twelve weeks. Participants also perform in two complete opera productions with orchestra and two summer concerts. Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. Merola is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation. The Merola Opera Program is a financially independent organization with a separate 501(c)3 which operates in close collaboration with the San Francisco Opera Center and San Francisco Opera. In addition, only Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship program. Since 2015, Merola Opera Program has been the sole sponsor of three of the four annual Schwabacher Recitals through the generosity of the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust. This season, the Merola sponsored recitals are made possible through the generosity of Jennifer and Chris Brahm, Jayne and Peter Davis, Jean Shuler and the Jack H. Lund Charitable Trust.

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

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This press release and photographs of the artists featured in the 2019 Schwabacher Recital Series are available at sfopera.com/about-us/press-room/press-releases/2019-Schwabacher-Recitals.

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