



## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

SHERI GREENAWALD TO RETIRE AT CLOSE OF 2020, CAPPING  
DISTINGUISHED 18-YEAR TENURE AS DIRECTOR OF SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA CENTER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM



Sheri Greenawald: Kristen Loken/2020; Scott Wall/2013; Ron Scherl/San Francisco Opera's *Manon* 1986

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 4, 2020) — San Francisco Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald—the brilliant lyric soprano, artistic director, insightful teacher and tireless champion of young artists—will retire from the Company at the close of 2020, capping a distinguished career including nearly two decades at the helm of San Francisco Opera's acclaimed young artist training programs and as artistic director of the Merola Opera Program.

“From the moment I joined the Company in 2005, Sheri Greenawald was always someone I could talk to openly about opera without artifice or judgment,” said San Francisco Opera Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock. “Through her storied career onstage and in her work with young artists, Sheri has always seen opera as an art form open to all. She articulates the artistry of singing in wonderfully tangible concepts that can connect with both singers and audiences. Sheri unlocks doors that can uplift singers in

transformative ways. She has nurtured the careers of more than 500 artists over her two decades directing the Adler and Merola programs, and the legacy that she leaves is unique and extraordinary. All of us at San Francisco Opera will miss Sheri dearly and wish her happiness and success as she turns the page to a new chapter."

Sheri Greenawald has been the director of the Opera Center for San Francisco Opera and artistic director for the Merola Opera Program since 2002. San Francisco Opera Center's Adler Fellowship training program provides young artists with major operatic potential a supportive environment in which to develop and flourish through intensive training, study and performance as resident artists of the Company. Adler Fellows are chosen from participants of the prestigious Merola Opera Program, one of the foremost opera training programs for aspiring singers, coach accompanists and stage directors. San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program have introduced budding stars to the international opera stage, and its graduates are active throughout the world as performers, production artists, arts professionals and educators. A search for Greenawald's successor is underway.

The programs' alumni include soprano Elza van den Heever (Merola 2003/04; Adler Fellow 2005–07) and baritone Lucas Meachem (Merola 2003; Adler Fellow 2004–05). Van den Heever, who sings Leonora in the Company's new production of *Fidelio* this fall, stated: "It would not be an exaggeration to say that I am where I am today because of Sheri Greenawald. With her extraordinary intuition and ear, she took me under her wing and guided me through my crucial and life-altering transition from mezzo-soprano to soprano. She believed in me and my talent even when I did not. Sheri has been an incredible influence in my life, and as a young singer introduced me to a broader landscape both vocally and philosophically which has made all the difference. Her vast experience through her own incredible career, her never-ending inquisitive mind, her deep knowledge of the voice, and above all else, her search for truth and beauty have shaped her into one of the finest voice teachers and most caring individuals I know—and one to whom I am forever grateful."

Meachem, whose recent Company appearances include *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Barber of Seville*, and in last fall's *Romeo and Juliet*, said: "When you meet Sheri Greenawald, you instantly learn that she is one of a kind. Her infectious passion, her relentless curiosity, her palpable kindness—she stands out in not only the opera world but

all walks of life, and everyone can appreciate a soul such as hers. I can safely say that Sheri occupies a significant place in the hearts of all of her students, and especially mine. I owe her so much. She has shown me many facets of performing that I employ every day to face the stage. Sheri, thank you for that, I'm always indebted to you."

Reflecting on her extraordinary career, Sheri Greenawald shared: "For nearly 50 years, I have had the privilege to work in a profession that I love. But it is time, at age 72, to begin a new chapter in my life. I look to explore other artistic adventures in music, and I want to work seriously on my photography. There are hundreds of books to be read and poems to be written. I have been so extremely lucky to work at San Francisco Opera these last 18 years and to work with the wonderful people at the Merola Opera Program. I have rejoiced at the amazing talent that we have nurtured and introduced to the world. And I have loved working with my brilliant staff, without whom I would not have succeeded. I thank the community of music lovers who support this art form that has sustained me through these 50 years."

Greenawald continued: "I was so fortunate to have been a soprano who worked happily for 30 years, singing music that was always inspiring, with fabulous colleagues who made the journey so amusing. I have been a voice teacher to all types of voices, from opera singers to church choir singers; I have directed operas, employing skills I learned at the hands of the greats in the business; I have cast many, many operas for Merola with my colleague Mark Morash, and I have led an administrative staff that has been nonpareil. There are no regrets! I wish all the best to those maintaining the continuum of the classical music business, and I will be watching and listening happily from my aerie, wherever that may be."

On April 25, Merola Opera Program will honor Sheri Greenawald at their [Merola 2020 Spring Benefit Gala](#). Merola Chairman Patrick Wilken said: "Sheri's unparalleled artistic leadership has enhanced the pivotal role the Merola Opera Program plays in launching the careers of young opera artists. Her passion for finding the most promising singers, accompanists and directors, and then providing a nurturing, yet demanding, environment for them to hone their craft has left an indelible mark on the opera art form." Jean Kellogg, Merola Executive Director, added: "I never fail to marvel at Sheri's total devotion to our young artists and their training, and her brilliant 'ear' for identifying the talents who are the future of opera, including taking a chance on 'wild card' singers who don't fit the

conventional mold. Her wonderful rapport with the Merola staff, board and members makes her an amazing friend and colleague. We wish Sheri all the best in her retirement. She will be greatly missed by all of us at Merola."

Sheri Greenawald has had a distinguished international operatic singing career as a soprano, noted in particular for her enormous range of roles. She made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1978 (Marzelline in *Fidelio*), followed by roles including Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Cendrillon, Cordelia (*Lear*) and Manon (*Manon*). She has sung leading roles with, among others, the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Venice's La Fenice, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Paris' Châtelet Theater, Welsh National Opera, Seattle Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Netherlands Opera, Santa Fe Opera, LA Opera, Naples' Teatro San Carlos and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Greenawald is featured on several recordings, including the role of Birdie in Blitzstein's *Regina*. A graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, Greenawald completed the Professional Studies Program at The Juilliard School of Music and has received a Rockefeller Grant, a NEA Grant and the title of Seattle Opera Association's Artist of the Year in 1998. She has taught privately and was a visiting artist at the University of Charleston, an Artist-in-Residence at the University of Northern Iowa, vocal coach of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program in 1999 and opera director for the program in 2000. She has also given master classes at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. She was a professor of voice and opera at the Boston Conservatory and directed for the Opera Studio. Since May 2002, Greenawald has been the Director of the San Francisco Opera Center and Artistic Director for the Merola Opera Program.

#### San Francisco Opera Center

San Francisco Opera Center was created in 1982 by then-General Director Terence A. McEwen to oversee the operation and administration of education and training programs initiated by Kurt Herbert Adler. Currently under the guidance of Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald and Opera Center Director of Musical Studies Mark Morash, the Opera Center has trained and introduced young artists from around the world to the international opera stage through its programs. Initially founded as the San Francisco Opera Affiliate Artists program in 1975, the Adler Fellowship program is one of the world's most prestigious performance-oriented residencies offering advanced young artists intensive individual training, coaching, professional seminars and a wide range of performance opportunities. A short list of Adler alumni includes sopranos Sarah Cambridge, Leah Crocetto, Amina Edris, 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, Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen and Gerald Thompson; tenors Brian Jagde, Daniel Montenegro, Sean Panikkar, Pene Pati, Kyle van Schoonhoven, Alek Shrader and Noah Stewart; baritones Eugene Brancoveanu, Mark Delavan and Lucas Meachem; bass-baritones Ryan Kuster, John Relyea, Philip Skinner, Daniel Sumegi and Dale Travis; and basses John Ames and Kenneth Kellogg.

### Merola Opera Program

The Merola Opera Program is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coach accompanists and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow, presents operatic works that reach a diverse audience and provides community outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. 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.

For more information on the San Francisco Opera Center, Adler Fellowship and Merola Opera Program, visit [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com) and [merola.org](http://merola.org).

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