



**MEROLA**  
OPERA PROGRAM



**SAN FRANCISCO**  
**OPERA CENTER**

## SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES CONTINUES MARCH 19

Concert Features Tenor Michael John Butler, Baritone Olivier Zerouali,  
Pianists Julian Garvue and Ji Youn Lee

Program Includes Songs by  
Francis Poulenc, Robert Schumann, Lee Hoiby and Richard Strauss



Michael John Butler, Olivier Zerouali, Julian Garvue, Ji Youn Lee

Tickets available at [sfopera.com/srs](https://sfopera.com/srs) and (415) 864-3330

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (February 28, 2025) — The Schwabacher Recital Series, presented by Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center, continues with the second concert of its 41st season on Wednesday, March 19 in the Barbro Osher Recital Hall at San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Bowes Center.



Barbro Osher Recital Hall. Photo: Matthew Washburn

The March 19 recital highlights the artistry of four 2024 Merola Opera Program graduates: tenor Michael John Butler, baritone Olivier Zerouali, and pianists Julian Garvue and Ji Youn Lee. Works in the program include Francis Poulenc's *Le Travail du Peintre* and *Calligrammes*, Robert

Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Lee Hoiby's *I Was There: Five Poems of Walt Whitman* and songs by Richard Strauss.

American tenor **Michael John Butler** is poised to emerge as a major contender on the international opera scene, with a voice described as having a "bright, ringing quality throughout his range" and a "plush, resonant middle voice with vibrant high notes" (OperaWire). Butler debuted with Washington National Opera as the Mission Coordinator in Jeanine Tesori's *Grounded* and reprised the role in workshop with The Metropolitan Opera. In 2024, he made his international debut as Martin in Copland's *The Tender Land* with Teatro Regio di Torino and recently performed Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Merola Opera Program. An alumnus of Des Moines Metro Opera and a Renée Fleming Artist at Aspen Music Festival, Butler has performed Fenton in *Falstaff* with Sir Bryn Terfel, the title role of Gounod's *Faust* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. A Washington, D.C. native, he is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma in Opera Studies at The Juilliard School.

Baritone **Olivier Zerouali** is a first-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow. As a Merola Opera Program participant he performed Silvio in a scene from *Pagliacci* and Malatesta in a scene from *Don Pasquale*. In 2023 he was Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* with the Glimmerglass Festival. His other roles include Robert in *Iolanta*, Slook in Rossini's *Il Cambiale di Matrimonio*, Betto in *Gianni Schicchi*, Brother in Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Pandolfe in *Cendrillon*, the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Zaretsky/Captain in *Eugene Onegin*. Zerouali completed his undergraduate studies at SUNY Purchase's Conservatory of Music, is currently completing his master's degree at Yale University and has received training with the Merola Opera Program, Glimmerglass Festival, Young Artists Vocal Academy of Houston Grand Opera, Highlands Opera Studio and Berlin Opera Academy.

Pianist/vocal coach **Julian Garvue** is passionate about music in all its forms. As a first-year Domingo Colburn Stein Young Artist at LA Opera, Garvue will help prepare *Così fan tutte* and *Ainadamar* in the spring of 2025. He will also attend Wolf Trap as a Coaching Fellow this summer. With the Merola Opera Program in 2024, Garvue worked with many luminaries of the vocal/piano world, such as Carrie-Ann Matheson, Martin Katz, Warren Jones, Kevin Murphy and Mario Marra, and performed harpsichord continuo for *Don Giovanni*. In 2023, he attended Music Academy of the West as a fellow of the Lehrer Vocal Institute where he worked as a pianist/coach on their production of *La Bohème*. Garvue graduated with both his Master of Music degree and Performer's Certificate in Collaborative Piano from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.

First-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow **Ji Youn Lee** is an accomplished pianist who recently completed her Master of Music degree in Collaborative Piano at The Juilliard School. She earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the New England Conservatory (NEC). While at

NEC, she was awarded first place in the Concerto Competition and performed with the New England Conservatory Symphony. Lee has collaborated with renowned orchestras, including the Brockton Symphony, the Broad Street Orchestra and the Hawaii Symphony. Other notable achievements include prizes from the Duo Competition at the Music Academy of the West, the Ke'alohe International Piano Competition and the Jacob Flier International Piano Competition. A participant in the 2024 Merola Opera Program, Lee played and coached *Don Giovanni* and the third act of *La Bohème* for the Schwabacher Summer Concert. Her rich experiences with Merola deepened her understanding of vocal collaboration and enhanced her appreciation of the opera art form.

**APRIL 10, TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER**  
**LEAH CROCETTO AND CARRIE-ANN MATHESON**



Leah Crocetto, Carrie-Ann Matheson

The final concert of this season's Schwabacher series on April 10 at the Taube Atrium Theater showcases the artistic collaboration between soprano **Leah Crocetto** and pianist **Carrie-Ann Matheson**. Leah Crocetto, the distinguished 2008 Merola alumnus and former Adler Fellow, has portrayed Liù in *Turandot*, Mimì in *La Bohème* and the title roles of Verdi's *Luisa Miller* and *Aida* on the War Memorial Opera House stage. In addition to being in high demand as a recital pianist, Carrie-Ann Matheson is the artistic director of San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program. They will perform music by Clara Schumann, Sergei Rachmaninov and Gustav Mahler, among others.

**TICKETS AND INFORMATION**

Tickets (general seating) are \$30 and can be purchased at the San Francisco Opera Box Office (301 Van Ness Avenue), by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at [sfopera.com/srs](https://sfopera.com/srs).

Please note: Student rush tickets, subject to availability, are available for \$15 at each venue 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 Barbro Osher Recital Hall is located on the 11th floor of San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Bowes Center at 200 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

The Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater is 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 at 401 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

To ensure flexibility for patrons, no-fee exchanges will be accepted up to two hours before performances. Patrons may donate tickets for a tax deduction until curtain time.

### 2025 SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES

Presented by Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center

*Artists and programs subject to change.*

**Wednesday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m.**

Barbro Osher Recital Hall (Bowes Center, 200 Van Ness Ave, 11th floor, San Francisco, CA 94102)

**Michael John Butler**, tenor

**Olivier Zerouali**, baritone

**Julian Garvue**, piano

**Ji Youn Lee**, piano

PROGRAM includes:

- *Le Travail du Peintre* (Francis Poulenc)
  - Pablo Picasso
  - Marc Chagall
  - Georges Braque
  - Juan Gris
  - Paul Klee
  - Joan Miró
  - Jacques Villon
- *Dichterliebe* (Robert Schumann)
  - Im wunderschönen Monat Mai
  - Aus meinen Tränen spriessen
  - Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne
  - Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'
  - Ich will meine Seele tauchen
  - Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome
  - Ich grolle nicht
  - Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen

- Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen
- Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen
- Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen
- Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen
- Ich hab' im Traum geweinet
- Allnächtlich im Traume
- Aus alten Märchen winkt es
- Die alten, bösen Lieder
- *I Was There: Five Poems of Walt Whitman* (Lee Hoiby)
  - Beginning My Studies
  - I Was There
  - Joy, Shipmate, Joy!
  - O Captain! My Captain!
  - A Clear Midnight
- *Calligrammes* (Poulenc)
  - L'Espionne
  - Mutation
  - Vers le Sud
  - Il pleut
  - La Grâce exilée
  - Aussi bien que les cigales
  - Voyage
- Lieder from Op. 27 (Richard Strauss)
  - Heimliche aufforderung
  - Morgen
  - Cäcilie

Thursday, April 10, at 7:30 p.m.

Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater (Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave, fourth floor, San Francisco, CA 94102)

Leah Crocetto, soprano

Carrie-Ann Matheson, piano

Program includes works by Clara Schumann, Sergei Rachmaninov and Gustav Mahler, among others.

#### ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER

San Francisco Opera Center operates under the auspices of San Francisco Opera. The Opera Center was created in 1982 to coordinate the Company's numerous affiliate programs that provide a continuing sequence of performance and career development opportunities to gifted young professional singers and pianists. Under the guidance of San Francisco Opera Center

Artistic Director **Carrie-Ann Matheson** and General Manager **Markus Beam**, the Opera Center enables young artists of major operatic potential to develop their craft through intensive training and performance.

Founded in 1977 as the San Francisco Affiliate Artists Opera Program, Adler Fellowships are salaried, performance-oriented residencies for the most advanced young artists. Each year, a select group of exceptionally talented singers and pianists from the Merola Opera Program are invited to continue their training through the Adler Fellowship, a program named after former San Francisco Opera General Director Kurt Herbert Adler.

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows are trained in musical technique and preparation, foreign language skills, acting technique and movement, as well as financial management, leadership development, mental and emotional resilience, physical health and wellness, and other skills necessary for a musical career in the twenty-first century. Adler singers are often cast in mainstage roles and leading cover assignments, while Adler pianists work closely with the San Francisco Opera music staff to help prepare mainstage operas.

The program has launched the careers of many of the artists performing on our stage and on stages around the world. Alumni of the Adler Fellowship Program include sopranos Julie Adams, Amina Edris, Elza van den Heever, Patricia Racette, Nadine Sierra, Ruth Ann Swenson and Deborah Voigt; mezzo-sopranos Daniela Mack, Zanda Švėde and Dolora Zajick; countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen; tenors Brian Jagde, David Lomeli, Amitai Pati, Pene Pati and Stuart Skelton; baritones Alfredo Daza, Mark Delavan, Joo Won Kang and Lucas Meachem; bass-baritones Philip Skinner, Philippe Sly and John Relyea; and bass Kenneth Kellogg.

### ABOUT MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

Widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, pianists and stage directors, the **Merola Opera Program** 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 young operatic artists the rare opportunity of studying, coaching and participating in master classes with established professionals for twelve weeks. Participants also perform in complete opera productions, concerts and recitals. Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. Merola was the first young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation through Career Grants.

In addition to members of the Adler Fellowship, alumni of the Merola Opera Program include Leona Mitchell, Ailyn Pérez, Carol Vaness, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Rolando Villazón, Thomas Hampson, Quinn Kelsey, Patrick Summers and numerous other opera luminaries.

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.

Merola Opera Program is the lead sponsor of the Schwabacher Recital Series.

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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The Schwabacher Recital Series is sponsored, in part, by Merola Opera Program and endowed in perpetuity by the generosity of celebrated Bay Area singer, scholar and teacher James Schwabacher.

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

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To obtain further press information, including artist headshots, please visit [sfopera.com/press](http://sfopera.com/press) or contact:

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