



MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA CENTER

**MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER
PRESENT 2026 SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES**

**Beginning April 1, Three Recitals
Showcase Artists in Intimate Concert Programs**



Schwabacher Recitals at the Taube Atrium Theater and Osher Recital Hall.
(Photos: Kristen Loken, Matthew Washburn)

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

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 3, 2026) — Now in its 42nd year, the Schwabacher Recital Series, presented by Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center, returns this spring with a series of three recitals at San Francisco Opera's Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater (April 1), First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco (May 5) and San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Barbro Osher Recital Hall at the Bowes Center (June 16). All concerts begin at a new curtain time of 7 p.m. The series presents emerging and esteemed artists from around the globe, primarily alumni or faculty of Merola Opera Program, performing an eclectic selection of song literature in the intimacy of a recital setting.

APRIL 1, TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER
MARY HOSKINS, OLIVIER ZEROUALI, JI YOUN LEE
Curated by Nicholas Phan



Mary Hoskins, Olivier Zerouali, Ji Youn Lee

The series opens on April 1 with three 2024 Merola alumni and second-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows: soprano **Mary Hoskins**, baritone **Olivier Zerouali** and pianist **Ji Youn Lee**. The evening's program, curated by tenor **Nicholas Phan**, will be Hugo Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*, a set of 46 German songs with text drawn from Paul Heyse's poetry.

Soprano **Mary Hoskins** has been hailed as a "standout" with a voice that is "clear and utterly effortless" (The Opera Tattler). Last year with San Francisco Opera, she performed roles in Mozart's *Idomeneo* and Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking*, and covered Kitty Hart in *Dead Man Walking* and Second Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*. As a participant of the Merola Opera Program, her assignments included the title role in the final scene of *Ariadne auf Naxos* in the Schwabacher Summer Concert, as well as an excerpt from *Fidelio* and Strauss' showstopping aria "Zweite Brautnacht" from *Die Ägyptische Helena* for the Merola Grand Finale concert. Hoskins won first place at the 2024 Palm Springs Opera Guild Vocal Competition and in 2022 and 2023 performed as a studio artist with Wolf Trap Opera, covering the title role of Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* and performing in the festival's 2020 recorded scenes concert as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, Mary in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* and the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*. Other notable roles include the title roles of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and Handel's *Theodora*. She is a two-year alumna of Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices.

Last year with San Francisco Opera, baritone **Olivier Zerouali** performed the roles of Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Motorcycle Cop in *Dead Man Walking* and a Trojan Man in *Idomeneo* and covered the role of Schaunard in *La Bohème*. While in the Merola Opera Program, he sang Silvio in the love duet from *Pagliacci*, was a featured soloist on the chamber music recital: *Song As Drama*, covered the role of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* and performed Malatesta in a scene from *Don Pasquale* at the Merola Grand Finale. He has sung the roles of Robert in *Iolanta*, Slook in Rossini's *Il Cambiale di*

Matrimonio, Betto in *Gianni Schicchi* and Brother in Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, all with Yale Opera Theatre. In 2023 he bowed as Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* for his debut with the Glimmerglass Festival. Other roles include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Pandolfe in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Zaretsky/Captain in *Eugene Onegin*. He workshopped two new operas with Highlands Opera Studio: Olivia Shortt's *The Museum of the Lost and Found* and Ashley Au's *Inertia*. Zerouali completed his undergraduate studies at SUNY Purchase's Conservatory of Music and his master's degree at Yale University.

Adler Fellow **Ji Youn Lee** is an accomplished pianist who recently completed her Master's of Music in Collaborative Piano at The Juilliard School. She earned a Bachelor's of Music in Piano Performance from the New England Conservatory (NEC), graduating with honors in 2020. While at NEC, she was awarded first place in the Concerto Competition and performed with the New England Conservatory Symphony at Jordan Hall. Last year, she was on the San Francisco Opera music staff for *La Bohème*, *Dead Man Walking* and *Bohème Out of the Box*. Lee has previously collaborated with 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. During her time in the Merola Opera Program, Lee played and coached the third act of *La Bohème* for the Schwabacher Summer Concert and helped musically prepare *Don Giovanni*. Her rich experiences with Merola deepened her understanding of vocal collaboration and enhanced her appreciation of the opera art form.



Nicholas Phan is a Grammy Award-winning lyric tenor, curator and educator celebrated for his expressive artistry and versatility across a wide-ranging repertoire spanning nearly 500 years. In 2010 he co-founded Art Song Chicago, where he serves as artistic director, to promote art song and vocal chamber music. Praised by the Chicago Classical Review as “the kind of thoughtful, intelligent programming that should be a model,” his programs examine themes of identity, highlight underrepresented voices from history and illuminate the relevance of music from all periods to the present day.

MAY 5, FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO
GABRIEL NATAL-BÁEZ AND TZU KUANG TAN



Gabriel Natal-Báez, Tzu Kuang Tan

The second recital, *Paths of the Heart*, on May 5, features two 2025 Merola Opera Program graduates: baritone Gabriel Natal-Báez and pianist Tzu Kuang Tan. The artists will perform in a program starting with selections from *Songs of Travel* by Vaughan Williams and songs by Franz Schubert. The duo then embarks on an exploration of Spanish literature with *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* by Maurice Ravel (based on the Cervantes classic novel) and M. Ortega's *Dos Canciones del Romancero Gitano de Federico García Lorca*, which was inspired by García Lorca's poetry about the romances of Romani women. The concert closes with Latin-American songs by Luis Antonio Ramírez, Manuel Ponce, Astor Piazzolla and Alfonso Esparza Oteo.

Gabriel Natal-Báez is a Puerto Rican baritone and first-year Adler Fellow with a blossoming career in opera, art song and concert work. As a versatile singer with a repertoire that spans from the Baroque and Classical eras to contemporary works, Natal-Báez finds his greatest artistic expression in the Romantic and Bel Canto repertoire. A 2026 semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, Natal-Báez has performed Marullo in *Rigoletto* with Teatro Lirico d'Europa and Le Podestat in *Le Docteur Miracle*. At Rice University, he has appeared as Beaumarchais in *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*, and covered Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. In May 2025, he premiered the role of the Explorer in Theo Chandler's new chamber opera, *Breathe in Light*. As a participant in the Merola Opera Program, he covered the role of Raimbaud in *Le Comte Ory* and performed on *Songfest: A Grand Night for Singing*. His versatility also extends to the vibrant world of Zarzuela, where he has participated in multiple productions with Ópera de Puerto Rico. Recently, he sang alongside his teacher and renowned soprano Ana María Martínez in *Noche Española*, a concert celebrating Latino Heritage Month with Zarzuela and Latin American repertoire. In addition to his work as a singer, Natal-Báez holds a bachelor's degree in humanities with a concentration in painting.

Pianist Tzu Kuang Tan is a "stunning talent, with ability to express the most profound emotions" (Seen and Heard International) who has "performed with as much delicacy, mood shifts, and

dynamic variation as one could wish for" (Voce di Meche). Originally from Malaysia, Tan has performed as a song pianist and chamber musician in many venues throughout the United States, Singapore, Austria and Malaysia. He recently released the single "Aubade With A Chance of Rain" by Tom Cipullo, alongside mezzo-soprano and former Merolini Joanne Evans. Recent career highlights include a 2023 performance at the Music Academy of the West, where he appeared with Evans as part of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition prize. In 2024, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in Zankel Hall, performing alongside mezzo-soprano Ruby Dibble (Merola, 2025), as a participant in Carnegie Hall SongStudio. Tan is a member of Houston Grand Opera's Butler Studio. Previously, he was a member of the music staff at the Butler Opera Center at the University of Texas at Austin, where he conducted his first opera, *Audition Fever* by Tzu-Chin Hsu. Tan is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Texas at Austin, where he studies under Tamar Sanikidze.

JUNE 16, BARBRO OSHER RECITAL HALL
KYLE KETELSEN AND CARRIE-ANN MATHESON



Kyle Ketelsen, Carrie-Ann Matheson

On June 16, the final concert of this year's Schwabacher series will showcase the artistic collaboration between bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** and pianist **Carrie-Ann Matheson**. Their program will feature songs by Ravel, Bizet, Gounod and Mozart.

American bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** is in regular demand by the world's leading opera houses and orchestras for his vibrant and handsome stage presence and distinctive vocalism. He made his San Francisco Opera debut as Escamillo in *Carmen* in 2006, and he reprised the role in 2019. At the beginning of the 2025–26 Season, Ketelsen returned to the Metropolitan Opera in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. With San Francisco Opera from June 7–27, he sings Orest in *Elektra* under the baton of Music Director Eun Sun Kim. Also this season, he appears at Munich's Bavarian State Opera in a new production of Gounod's *Faust* and a revival of Weber's *Der Freischütz*. He joins Hamburg State Opera for performances of *Salome* and *Elektra*, and appears with the Madison Symphony Orchestra for its annual Christmas concert series. In the 2024–25 Season, Ketelsen made his Salzburg Festival debut as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, which he also sang in Munich. He

appeared in a new production of *Faust* with the Canadian Opera Company as Méphistophélès and sang Adahm in *Die ersten Menschen* with the Dutch National Opera. He returned to Hamburg for his role debut as Orest and appeared as Howard in Lyric Opera of Chicago's premiere of Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners*. In concert, he performed *Der Freischütz* with Kammerakademie Potsdam.

San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program Artistic Director **Carrie-Ann Matheson** has a multi-faceted international career as a pianist, conductor, educator and leadership coach. A native of Canada, Matheson began her career at the Metropolitan Opera as assistant conductor, prompter, pianist and vocal coach. Following her time at the Met, she joined the conducting and coaching staff at Opernhaus Zürich and worked at festivals, including Salzburger Festspiele and the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival. As a recital pianist, her collaborations with many of the world's leading opera singers include Piotr Beczala, Benjamin Bernheim, Diana Damrau, Joyce DiDonato, Jonas Kaufmann and Rolando Villazón. Matheson made her conducting debut at Opernhaus Zürich, where she led works such as *La Finta Giardiniera*, *Don Pasquale* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Passionate about nurturing the next generation of artists, Matheson has been master class clinician and guest coach at Canadian Opera Company, Wiener Staatsoper, Opernhaus Zürich, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Music Academy of the West, Yale University, University of Toronto and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is an International Coaching Federation certified personal and leadership coach, specializing in working with artists who are striving to achieve their full potential.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets (general seating) are \$30; a series package for all three recitals is \$75. 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.

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 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.

The First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco (UUSF) is located at 1187 Franklin Street (near Geary Boulevard).

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.

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.

2026 SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES

Presented by Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center

Artists and programs subject to change.

Wednesday, April 1, at 7 p.m.

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

Mary Hoskins, soprano
Olivier Zerouali, baritone
Ji Youn Lee, pianist

Nicholas Phan, curator

PROGRAM:

- *Italienisches Liederbuch* (Hugo Wolf)
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Tuesday, May 5, at 7 p.m.

First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco (1187 Franklin Street near Geary Boulevard), San Francisco, CA 94109)

Gabriel Natal-Báez, baritone
Tzu Kuang Tan, piano

PATHS OF THE HEART program includes:

- Selections from *Songs of Travel* (Vaughan Williams)
 - The Vagabond
 - Let Beauty Awake
 - The Roadside Fire
 - Youth and Love
 - Whither Must I Wander?
 - Bright Is the Ring of Words
- Song selections (Franz Schubert)
 - Prometheus
 - Wanderers Nachtlied
 - Geistes-Gruß

- Der Atlas
 - *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (Maurice Ravel)
 - *Dos Canciones del Romancero Gitano de Federico García Lorca* (M. Ortega)
 - Latin-American song selections:
 - Lucero del alba (Luis Antonio Ramírez)
 - Estrellita (Manuel Ponce)
 - Los pájaros perdidos (Astor Piazzolla)
 - Dime que si (Alfonso Esparza Oteo)
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Tuesday, June 16, at 7 p.m.

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

Kyle Ketelsen, bass-baritone

Carrie-Ann Matheson, pianist

Program includes works by Maurice Ravel, Georges Bizet, Charles Gounod and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER AND MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

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.

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 and merola.org.

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 or contact:

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