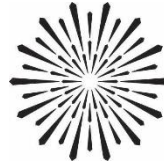


MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA CENTER

SCHWABACHER RECITAL SERIES CONTINUES:

MAY 5 BARITONE GABRIEL NATAL-BÁEZ AND PIANIST TZU KUANG TAN

**JUNE 16 BASS-BARITONE KYLE KETELSEN, PIANIST CARRIE-ANN MATHESON
WITH 2026 MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**



Gabriel Natal-Báez and Tzu Kuang Tan (May 5); Kyle Ketelsen and Carrie-Ann Matheson (June 16)

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

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 1, 2026) — The Schwabacher Recital Series, presented by Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center, continues its 42nd season next week with a concert of songs by Vaughan Williams, Schubert, Ravel and Latin American composers performed by baritone Gabriel Natal-Báez and pianist Tzu Kuang Tan (Tuesday, May 5, 7 p.m. at First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco). The last recital of this year's series features bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen, pianist Carrie-Ann Matheson and several 2026 participants of the Merola Opera Program in a program of works by Verdi, Duparc, Rossini, Puccini and Mozart, among others (Tuesday, June 16, 7 p.m. at Barbro Osher Recital Hall). The Schwabacher Recital 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.

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

On Tuesday, May 5, baritone **Gabriel Natal-Báez** and pianist **Tzu Kuang Tan**, two 2025 Merola Opera Program graduates, perform their program titled *Paths of the Heart*. The evening begins 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) and Miquel 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.

A 2026 winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, **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. This spring, he portrayed Marcello in San Francisco Opera's touring production of *Bohème Out of the Box*. 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 2022 performance at the Music Academy of the West, where he appeared with Evans as part of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition. 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
WITH 2026 PARTICIPANTS OF MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM

On June 16, the final concert of this year's Schwabacher series will showcase bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen and pianist Carrie-Ann Matheson with participants of the 2026 Merola Opera Program: Shannon Crowley, soprano; Charlotte Kelso, soprano; Chester Seungyup Han, tenor; Ryan Bryce Johnson, tenor; baritone Paul Jang; and Deven Shah, pianist. Their program will feature songs by Ravel, Duparc, Rossini, Verdi, Schira and Respighi, along with excerpts from Act I of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Act II of Puccini's *Tosca*.

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 performed the title role of *Don Giovanni* with the Metropolitan Opera. From June 7–27, he returns to San Francisco as 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 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. 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 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.

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 from Goethe (Franz Schubert)
 - Prometheus
 - Geistes-Gruß
 - Wandrers Nachtlied
 - Der Atlas
 - *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (Maurice Ravel)
 - *Dos Canciones del Romancero Gitano de Federico García Lorca* (Miquel Ortega)
 - Latin American song selections:
 - Lucero del alba (Luis Antonio Ramírez)
 - Estrellita (Manuel Ponce)
 - Los pájaros perdidos (Astor Piazzolla)
 - Dime que sí (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

with 2026 Merola Opera Program participants

Shannon Crowley, soprano

Charlotte Kelso, soprano

Chester Seungyup Han, tenor

Ryan Bryce Johnson, tenor

Paul Jang, baritone

Deven Shah, pianist

Program includes:

- *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (Maurice Ravel)
- Song selections (Henri Duparc)
 - L'invitation au voyage
 - Chanson triste
 - Phidylé
- L'invito (Gioachino Rossini)
- Stornello (Giuseppe Verdi)
- Sognai (Francesco Schira)

- Il poveretto (Verdi)
- Nebbie (Ottorino Respighi)
- "Là ci darem la mano" from Act I of *Don Giovanni* (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)
- "Ed or fra noi, parliam da buoni amici" from Act II of *Tosca* (Giacomo Puccini)

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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