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Left: Jean Kellogg, Marika Yasuda, Mark Morash ('87), Anna Smigelskaya, Shiyu Tan, Yang Lin at Meet the Young Artists (July 10). Right: Behind the Scenes with Sheri Greenawald and Chris Bragg. Photo by Amy Kessler.

Online Enrichment Program

In July 2020 Merola debuted an online enrichment program for the young artists selected for the 2020 program. This online programming, created after the cancellation of the 2020 training program due to COVID-19, included a series of public Master Chats with performing arts luminaries. The 29 young artists, who were unable to travel to San Francisco, have all been invited to participate in the Merola Opera Program in 2021, as their schedules allow.

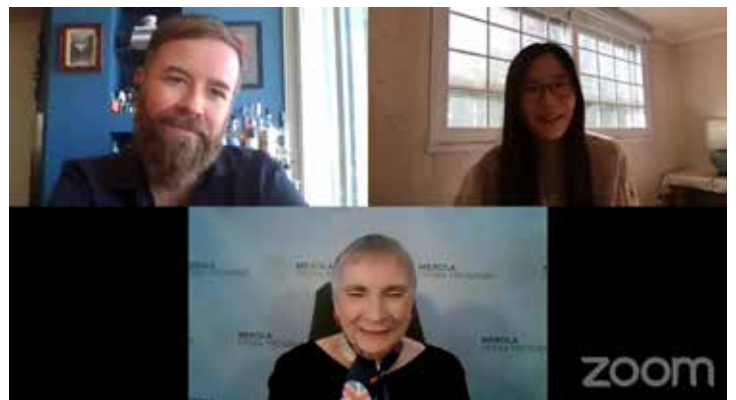
The young artists received online instruction from Lyric Opera of Chicago's master vocal coach Alan Darling, internationally acclaimed stage director Chuck Hudson, world-renowned collaborative pianist Martin Katz, San Francisco Opera's Italian diction coach Alessandra Cattani, stage director/master teacher Tara Faircloth (Merola '06), Director of the Program for Singers at Ravinia Festival's Steans Institute master vocal coach Kevin Murphy, San Francisco Opera's French diction coach Patricia Kristof Moy, conductor and San Francisco Opera Center Director of Musical Studies Mark Morash (Merola '87), and San Francisco Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald.

As part of the online enrichment program, the young artists were able to engage with performing arts luminaries Susan Graham (Merola '87), Francesca Zambello, David Garrison, Eun Sun Kim, and Gregory Henkel in a series of Master Chats. These conversations were hosted by Sheri Greenawald, and broadcast live on Merola's YouTube channel (youtube.com/merolaoperaprogram) where you can watch them now.

On July 8, the first chat took place with world-renowned American mezzo-soprano Susan Graham. She shared stories and reflections of her career and time at Merola with Sheri including their personal history together. Susan Graham said, "Merola planted this seed, and then all of this stuff grew out of that."

Merola members were treated to an exclusive online Meet the Young Artists event on July 10. Sheri Greenawald had lead lively conversations with the groups of artists about their musical backgrounds, unusual hobbies, family stories, and nerdy pursuits.

Francesca Zambello, the General Director of The Glimmerglass Festival and the Artistic Director of Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center, joined Sheri on July 16 for the second Master Chat. She spoke about her big debut and her experiences in the opera world saying, "Being in the ready position is really how the breaks happen."



San Francisco Opera's Gregory Henkel and Eun Sun Kim with Sheri Greenawald (July 30).

Continued on page 2.

Online Enrichment Program (continued)

On July 23 the third Master Chat of the series highlighted Broadway stage and television actor and director David Garrison. He discussed crossover music and how he landed his first big job, and answered questions from the young artists about his part in the musical *Wicked*. Garrison will direct Merola's 2021 production of Dominick Argento's vivid one-act opera, *Postcard from Morocco*.

The final Master Chat of the summer featured San Francisco Opera's Eun Sun Kim and Gregory Henkel. Eun Sun Kim was recently named the Caroline H. Hume Music Director Designate of San Francisco Opera and Gregory Henkel, Managing Director: Artistic, casts San Francisco Opera productions and oversees the San Francisco Opera Center. They shared their early musical experiences, how they started working together, their passion for learning languages, and more. Eun Sun Kim said, "Only through language can you really understand the composer's world."

Watch now on Merola's YouTube Channel: youtube.com/merolaoperaprogram



Left: Sheri Greenawald hosts Susan Graham ('87) on July 8 for Merola's first Master Chat. Right: Behind the Scenes view of Sheri Greenawald.



Left: Sheri Greenawald with David Garrison on July 23. Right: Sheri Greenawald with Francesca Zambello on July 16.



Left: Behind the Scenes of Merola's Master Chat Series. Right: Jean Kellogg, Sheri Greenawald, Emily Blair, Jesse Mashburn, and Samson McCrady at Meet the Young Artists on July 10.



Left: Jean Kellogg, Sheri Greenawald, Andrew Dwan ('19), Celeste Morales, Isabel Signoret, and Thomas Lynch at Meet the Young Artists on July 10. Right: Merola Opera Program's Hilda Li and Kathy Rose work on the Master Chat broadcast.

From the Executive Director



Dear friends,

In a typical year, our fall newsletter is a chance to look back on the productions and master classes and other events that have filled a busy Merola summer, along with photos of the wonderful friendships that formed between our members and the Merolini. However, we are all now used to the fact that nothing is typical in 2020. We so missed

having our young artists in San Francisco this summer. But they did gather together virtually in July for online enrichment, including language study, acting classes, and mentoring with some of our gifted master coaches. The young artists have told us how much this chance to stretch their artistic wings meant to them. As they got to know each other through virtual events, we hope you enjoyed getting to know them in our four Master Chats with opera luminaries and our virtual Meet the 2020 Young Artists. The young artists also received financial assistance from Merola, and the online enrichment and interaction with each other and with faculty helped prepare them for 2021, when we hope to bring them to San Francisco for a full summer training program. In these pages, you'll find memories of our virtual events and a glimpse of the young artists we'll get to know in person next summer (pages 1-2).

While we look to the future, we continue to do everything we can to support our alumni who are now having engagements canceled into the fall and winter. We've begun phase two of the Merola Artists Emergency Fund, making a second round of grants to Merolini from 2015-2019 who have had work and opportunities canceled as a result of COVID-19. You'll find an update on page 5.

I have truly missed gathering with you, toasting our Merolini at receptions, and sharing our excitement about the amazing new talents we would come to know in a usual Merola summer. As Merola weathers the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are more grateful than ever for the support of members like you, and for those who have made planned gifts to our endowment. We are fortunate to have received two very special bequests recently from Vivienne E. Miller and Phillip L. Eaton. You can read more about these gifts on page 4.

I hope to see you at some of our virtual events this fall—and in person when we can safely hear our Merolini make music again.

With all best wishes,

Jean Kellogg

In Memoriam: Joel Revzen



The Merola Opera Program is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Joel Revzen, 2008 Merola Grand Finale Conductor, due to complications relating to COVID-19. Maestro Revzen had worked as an assistant conductor with The Metropolitan Opera since 1999 and made his Met conducting debut in 2017 leading performances of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. He was 74.

Revzen studied conducting, piano, accompanying, and ear training at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. He received his bachelors and masters in conducting at Juilliard.

Prior to his time at the Met, he worked with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Berkshire Opera, Arizona Opera, and the Aspen Festival.

Additional credits include work with Classical Tahoe, Mayshad Music Festival, and guest conducting for Prague Symphony, Prague Chamber Orchestra, Janáček Philharmonic, Orchestra National de Lyon, Orchestra Capital de Toulouse, Philharmonique de Radio France, the National Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Florida Philharmonic, National Arts Center Orchestra (Canada), and the Chamber Orchestra of San Remo (Italy).

He is survived by his wife, Cindy, his daughter, Shira, and all of his family and friends.



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The Legacies of Phillip L. Eaton and Vivienne E. Miller

In addition to the wonderful ongoing support of our members who contribute every year, Merola is fortunate to have a strong endowment thanks to gifts that our supporters have made as part of their estate planning and during their lifetimes. In keeping with best practices for a nonprofit, Merola withdraws no more than 5% of its endowment each year, either to support specific initiatives or for general operations. In addition to endowment support, Merola still needs to fundraise more than 50% of its budget annually, but the endowment gives the organization a greater level of stability as we plan for our future, particularly in uncertain times like these.

Recently Merola was the recipient of two notable new gifts to our endowment from the estates of longtime Merola members Phillip L. Eaton and Vivienne E. Miller.

The Phillip L. Eaton Endowment Fund

Phillip was a former teacher (both high school and college), who began supporting Merola more than thirty years ago. He passed away in 2003 and his estate came to Merola last year upon the death of his partner, James C. Robinson. This seven-figure gift is the second-largest endowment contribution Merola has received in its 63-year history. To acknowledge this extraordinary gift, Merola is creating the Phillip L. Eaton Endowment Fund, which will provide critical operational support for our organization for decades to come.

The Vivienne E. Miller Scholarship Fund

Vivienne, also a former teacher (high school English), was a stalwart supporter of Merola for more than three decades. Her smiling face and cheerful presence were a fixture at nearly every Merola event. For more than twenty years Vivienne sponsored a soprano each Merola summer, and formed lifelong bonds

with many of these emerging artists. In recognition of her generosity, Merola is creating the Vivienne E. Miller Scholarship Fund, as part of the Merola endowment, so that her six-figure bequest will continue to support a promising young soprano each year, in perpetuity. All who knew and loved Vivienne are thrilled to think of her legacy living on with each new singer her Scholarship Fund supports.

These legacy gifts will play a vital role in ensuring Merola can continue its mission to train and nurture the next generation of opera talent. We are sincerely grateful to Phillip and Vivienne for investing so generously in the future of opera.

How your giving can make an impact for generations to come:

Merola Scholarship Fund levels:

From \$100,000 (partial scholarship) to \$500,000 (full scholarship)

Master Teacher, Director, and Conductor Endowment levels:

From \$250,000 to \$500,000 (variable by role and production)

Career Grant Endowment levels:

Starting at \$50,000

More named endowment opportunities are available. All those who make planned gifts of any amount to Merola are members of the Merola Legacy Society. For further information about including Merola in your estate plans or to inform us of pre-existing arrangements, contact Jean Kellogg at (415) 936-2321 or jkkellogg@merola.org.



Elizabeth Baldwin ('12), Vivienne E. Miller, and Hadleigh Adams ('12).

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Left: Martin Katz Master Class featuring Mary Evelyn Hangley ('16) and Jonathan Brandani ('16). Center: Salvatore Atti ('19). Right: Jonathan Brandani ('16), Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen ('16), and Nicolò Sbuelz ('16) at Meet the Merolini.

Merola Artists Emergency Fund

As Merola alumni continue to have engagements canceled, now into the fall and winter, Merola has begun phase two of the Merola Artists Emergency Fund to support alumni from 2015-2019 who have had work canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In phase one we made 54 grants to alumni for a total of \$140,000. So far in phase two (which began July 10) we have made 21 grants totaling \$51,000.

We continue to receive applications and to hear from our alumni how much these grants mean to them. This recent letter from Jonathan Brandani (Merola '16) eloquently sums up the impact of the program:

"It is hard to express with words the sense of gratitude that I feel because of the Merola Artists Emergency Fund that you have granted me. As musicians we know what it means to work hard every day, to make sacrifices and to strive to get better professional chances—but even in the hardest moments one can find new energy and more motivation in our strength, which is our love for music.

This time, however, circumstances are very different and we find ourselves almost completely robbed of the opportunity of making music together.

Since last February I have been in lockdown in Italy, where I had come to conduct productions in various opera houses. If things don't improve, as of today I don't anticipate to be able to work until spring 2021.

I have always felt very lucky to be part of the Merola family, but even more so now; I realize how privileged I am to receive help and support through Merola and I want you to know that your generosity, once again, has deeply touched me. Beyond the practical economic relief provided, your gesture has a much deeper significance, one that gives me hope for a brighter future and that will let me be forever thankful for the generous support of caring patrons of the arts like you."

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