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**Houston Grand Opera Announces Finalists for the 23rd Annual  
Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers—*Concert Of Arias***

**Eight Finalists to Compete  
Legendary Mezzo-Soprano Frederica von Stade to Serve as Guest Judge**

Houston, TX – Houston Grand Opera announced the finalists today in the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers to be presented in the annual *Concert of Arias* on **Thursday, February 3, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.** in the Cullen Theater of the Wortham Center. Now in its twenty-third year, *Concert of Arias* is the final round of the annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, which exists to discover talented young singers who might be possible future members of the HGO Studio. This year's competition will feature eight finalists: tenor **Mark Van Arsdale**, bass-baritone **Noel Bouley**, baritone **Mark Diamond**, baritone **Thomas Florio**, bass **Adam Lau**, mezzo-soprano **Nicole Rodin**, soprano **Lauren Snouffer**, and soprano **Jessica Stavros**.

*Concert of Arias 2011* is chaired by **Marianne and David Duthu** and honors **Dr. and Mrs. C. Richard Stasney** for their many contributions to HGO.

Joining HGO General Director and CEO **Anthony Freud** and HGO Music Director **Patrick Summers** as guest judge will be the beloved and distinguished mezzo-soprano **Frederica von Stade**, whom the *New York Times* has described as “one of America’s finest artists and singers.” Mrs. von Stade is in Houston singing the role of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking* at HGO; these performances mark her farewell to the opera stage.

This year HGO received more than 700 applications from around the world from young singers interested in competing for top honors at *Concert of Arias*. After auditions in four cities across the U.S. in November 2010, twenty semi-finalists were flown in for a weekend of auditions. Finalists perform opera’s most popular arias and compete for coveted fellowships in the acclaimed HGO Studio, and \$25,000 in cash prizes. The audience also has the opportunity to participate in the evening’s events when they choose their favorite singer for the Audience Choice Award (underwritten by **Vincent & Elkins, LLP**).

The evening also features performances by current artists of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, one of the world’s finest young artist training programs.

Prior to the program there will be a champagne reception sponsored by **Pommery Champagne** and **The Tasting Room** at 6:00 p.m. and following the concert, there will be a celebration dinner prepared by **Jackson and Company** in the Wortham Center's Grand Foyer for the artists, patrons, and underwriters.

Individual tickets for the concert are available for \$36-\$76. For ticket and general information, call **(713)-228-OPERA** or view online at [www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org).

All proceeds from *Concert of Arias 2011* benefit The Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and Houston Grand Opera Studio's ongoing outreach efforts to identify, attract and nurture the best vocal talent in the United States. Distinguished Studio alumni who now enjoy major careers include Albina Shagimuratova, Denyce Graves, Eric Halfvarson, Joyce DiDonato, Richard Paul Fink, Bruce Ford, Susanne Mentzer, Ana María Martínez, and Raymond Very.

Founded in 1955, Houston Grand Opera is an internationally-renowned opera company with a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 41 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. HGO contributes to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation through a diverse, innovative and balanced program of performances, events, community and education projects that reaches the widest possible public. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and it is the only opera company to have won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards. HGO's performances are broadcast nationally on the WFMT Radio Network, and internationally via the European Broadcast Union.

### **Finalist Bios:**

#### **Mark Van Arsdale**, tenor

Tenor Mark Van Arsdale is a member of the studio at L'Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg, France, where he performs this season as Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Nadir in Cherubini's *Ali Baba ou Les quarante voleurs* and Marcellus in Thomas's *Hamlet*. His recent engagements include Mr. Erlanson in Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis and with the Boston Pops at Tanglewood and Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, also at Tanglewood. The Denver, Colorado native has also appeared in Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe* with Central City Opera. Mr. Van Arsdale's concert engagements include Handel's *Messiah* with the Apollo Chorus of Chicago, the Lafayette Bach Chorale and the Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra. He holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University and a master's degree from Indiana University and is the recipient of a career grant from the National Society of Arts and Letters.

#### **Noel Bouley**, bass-baritone

Bass-baritone Noel Bouley won the Sam Adams Award for "Acting on the Lyric Stage" last season for his portrayal of George in *Of Mice and Men* at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), where he earned a master's degree and is a candidate for an artist diploma. The Houston native made his Lincoln Center debut in 2009 singing the bass solos in Haydn's *Missa in Tempore Belli* and Mozart's *Requiem*. Roles in his repertoire include the title role of Verdi's *Falstaff*, Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Collatinus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and Professor Bhaer in Adamo's *Little Women*. He holds a bachelor's degree in vocal performance and music education from Louisiana State University.

#### **Mark Diamond**, baritone

Baritone Mark Diamond, a native of Augusta, Georgia, is a candidate for a master's degree from University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). The baritone is the recipient of a 2010 Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshana Foundation. Mr. Diamond recently made his Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra debut singing the baritone solo in Handel's *Messiah* and performed the Fauré *Requiem* with Wesley Chancel Choir and Orchestra. His operatic credits

include Bob in Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief* and Damis in Mechem's *Tartuffe* at Capitol City Opera, Count Almaviva in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Dr. Gregg in Moore's *Gallantry* with Georgia Southern Opera and Top in Copland's *The Tender Land* at Glimmerglass. This coming summer he will participate in the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, where he will perform the title role of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

**Thomas Florio**, baritone

Baritone Thomas Florio appears on the Grammy-nominated recording of Mark Campbell's *Volpone*, which was released on Wolf Trap label in 2009. He won the 2010 National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Artist Award competition, and will perform debut recitals at Carnegie Hall and the NATS National Convention in conjunction with that award. An alumnus of the 2010 Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, he appeared there as Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. Also in 2010, he made his Cincinnati Symphony debut as the bass soloist in Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Vesprae solennes de confessore*. Mr. Florio's other concert credits include Handel's *Messiah* with the Lafayette Symphony. Mr. Florio holds a bachelor's degree from James Madison University, and a master's degree in music from Indiana University.

**Adam Lau**, bass

Bass Adam Lau recently earned a master's degree from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. His recent credits include Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Symphony and Opera Academy of the Pacific, the Bartender in Bolcom's *A Wedding* at Music Academy of the West and Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and King Louis XVI in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Aspen Music Festival. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2008 as a Baobab and a Hunter in Portman's *The Little Prince*. This year he will make his role debut as Timur in Puccini's *Turandot* at West Bay Opera, and will sing Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* with the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera.

**Nicole Rodin**, mezzo-soprano

Mezzo-soprano Nicole Rodin is a candidate for a master's degree from the New England Conservatory, where her credits include Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Dinah in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Hansel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* by Richard Strauss. This summer, Ms. Rodin will be an apprentice artist at Central City Opera, where she will sing Mercédès in Bizet's *Carmen* and Rosine in Pasatieri's *Signor Deluso*. Nicole made her Boston Lyric Opera debut as Rosina in performances of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and will return to that company later this year to sing Hansel in performances of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. Her other credits include Nicklausse in Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* and the Second Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with the Janiec Opera Company.

**Lauren Snouffer**, soprano

Soprano Lauren Snouffer is a candidate for a graduate degree from the Juilliard School of Music in New York. She is featured as a soloist on the Grammy-nominated recording of Tarik O'Regan's *Threshold of Night* (Harmonia Mundi), and on a recent recording of Christopher Berg's *Four songs on Poems of Vladimir Nabokov*. She made her Alice Tully Hall debut last season in a concert of baroque music led by William Christie. Her recent performance credits include Phénice and La Gloire in Lully's *Armide* at the Théâtre des Gennevilliers in Paris with Mercury Baroque and Tirsi in the Handel cantata *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* under the baton of Nicholas McGegan. Upcoming performances include Kurtág's *Messages of the Late R.V. Troussova* in Alice Tully Hall with the new music ensemble AXIOM and Ruth Baldwin in John Musto's *Later the Same Evening* with Glimmerglass Opera this coming August.

**Jessica Stavros**, soprano

Soprano Jessica Stavros holds a professional certificate from the Opera Institute in Boston, a master's degree from Manhattan School of Music and a bachelor's degree from Biola University in Los Angeles. At the Music Academy of the West, Ms. Stavros has performed the roles of Mimì in Puccini's *La bohème*, Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Victoria Corelli in the West Coast premiere of William Bolcom's *A Wedding*. She created the role of Mrs. P (The Hat) in Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* with the Incite Festival in New York, and reprised it in Boston and Atlanta. She is the recipient of a Career Bridges Grant from The Schuyler Foundation and a Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Shoshana Foundation. This coming summer, Ms. Stavros will join Glimmerglass Opera as a Young American Artist.

Presenters

**Marianne and David Duthu**

**Nancy and Rich Kinder**

**Estate of Eleanor Seale McCollum**

Stars

**Bobbie-Vee and Jerry Cooney**  
**Beth Madison / Madison Benefits Group**  
**Andrew Schirrmeister**

**Dian and Harlan Stai**  
**Susan and Dr. C. Richard Stasney**

Champagne Reception Underwriter



Directors



**Vinson & Elkins**

Dinner Wine Underwriter

**Altamura Vineyards & Winery**

