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CHANGE OF PRODUCTION TEAM ANNOUNCED

Kevin Newbury to Direct *Mary Stuart* at Houston Grand Opera in 2012

Houston, TX., September 19, 2011 — **Houston Grand Opera (HGO)** has announced a change of plans for its current season: in lieu of a previously-announced new production of Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*, it will present the Minnesota Opera production of that opera, directed by Kevin Newbury, with sets designed by Neil Patel and costumes by Jessica Jahn.

Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, who will conduct *Mary Stuart* at HGO, said, "I am thrilled to welcome Kevin Newbury back to HGO for his focused and forceful production of Donizetti's unique operatic rarity, *Mary Stuart*. This production promises to be the perfect vehicle for the divine Joyce DiDonato's first essay of the great and enigmatic title role."

Mary Stuart is the sixth and final opera in the company's 2011-12 season; it stars mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato in the title role, with soprano Katie Van Kooten as her cousin, Elizabeth I. Eric Cutler sings the role of Leicester and Robert Gleadow is Talbot. *Mary Stuart* opens on Saturday, April 21, 2012 and continues through May 4, 2012. The company had originally announced a new production by the creative team of Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser, with sets and costumes by Christian Fenouillat and Agostino Cavalca.

"My excitement is tinged with some regret that we could not find artistic agreement with the originally planned producers, Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser," said Mr. Summers, adding, "Still, situations of discord often bring about wonderfully fortuitous outcomes, and this is one of those instances."

(Cont'd.)

"After long and careful consideration and conversations with Moshe and Patrice, we determined that our visions for this particular opera differed significantly, so HGO reached a decision to present Kevin Newbury's wonderful production instead," stated Perryn Leech, HGO's managing director. "We feel that it serves the work exceptionally well. We hope to have the opportunity to work with Moshe and Patrice in the future."

A native New Yorker, Kevin Newbury directed *The Magic Flute* at Houston Grand Opera in 2008. He has directed at a number of leading American opera companies, including Minnesota Opera, Santa Fe opera, Portland opera and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. He has also directed for Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Bard Summerscape, l'Opéra de Montréal, the San Francisco Symphony, Glimmerglass Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, New York City Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and Opera Colorado.

Scenery and properties for the production, which premiered at Minnesota Opera last year, were designed by Neil Patel and costumes designed by Jessica Jahn, and were constructed by The Minnesota Opera Shops. The *Examiner* wrote, "Director Kevin Newbury vigorously alternates between sweeping choral moments and intimate private lamentations... the inspired pairing of Neil Patel's set design with D. M. Wood's lighting design... showing an uncanny ability to shift a scene's atmosphere through subtle visual cues."

Founded in 1955, Houston Grand Opera is an internationally-renowned opera company with a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 43 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.

Mary Stuart is supported in part by

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