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## Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2015 Winners

*Four Singers Awarded Top Honors at 27th Annual Eleanor McCollum  
Competition*

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HOUSTON, Texas, February 6, 2015 – Houston Grand Opera announced today the winners of the Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers that occurred on the evening of February 5 at the Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theater.

**1<sup>st</sup> Place prize** of \$10,000 was awarded to **Mane Galoyan**, soprano.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place prize** of \$5,000 went to **Christopher Bozeka**, tenor.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place prize** of \$3,000 was won by **Federico De Michelis**, bass-baritone.

**Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award** of \$2,000 went to tenor **Yongzhao Yu**. New this year, this award was established by renowned soprano and HGO Studio alumna Ana María Martínez to identify a developing young singer with exceptional promise who would greatly benefit from this additional support of his or her continued training. Ms. Martínez won first prize in the competition in 1994.

**Audience Choice Award** of \$1000 was won by tenor **Yongzhao Yu**.

Winners of the Concert of Arias, one of the most highly esteemed singing competitions in the United States, were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges that included HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** and HGO Managing

Director **Perryn Leech**. Atlanta Symphony Music Director **Robert Spano** served as guest judge. Accompanied by HGO Head of Music Staff **Bradley Moore**, eight finalists participated in the competition.

“Thanks to the support of the Houston community, this competition is now in its 27th year, and the post-concert dinner has grown to be a sold-out annual event,” said Perryn Leech, managing director of HGO. Added Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, “Our audience loves to experience emerging operatic talent at such a high standard.”

Concert of Arias supporters raised over \$550,000. All proceeds benefit the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and Houston Grand Opera Studio’s ongoing outreach efforts to identify, attract, and nurture young artists who have the potential for major careers in opera. Past prize-winners who are now leading international artists include Jamie Barton, Stephanie Blythe, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, and Ryan McKinny.

Chaired by **Jana and John Scott Arnoldy**, the Concert of Arias began with a champagne reception before 800 guests arrived in the Cullen Theater to enjoy the competition. As the judges made their decisions, guests enjoyed a performance by current HGO Studio members and were able to vote for their pick for the Audience Choice Award. Following the concert more than 500 artists, patrons, and underwriters were seated for the sold-out dinner in the Grand Foyer catered by Jackson and Company to celebrate the evening’s honoree, **Mariquita Masterson**, for her many years of generous support of HGO and the Studio.

Thursday’s concert was the final event in a months-long process that began when 500 singers and 22 pianists applied to compete. Auditions were conducted in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Cincinnati, and Houston. After careful deliberation, 12 singers were chosen to compete in the final round of the competition, from which eight finalists were selected to perform in the Concert of Arias. In the days leading up to the event, finalists were given the opportunity to learn more about HGO and work closely with HGO musical staff to refine their performances.

Since its inception more than 30 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown to be one of the most highly respected young artist programs in the country. Each of the young artists in the HGO Studio has access to a learning environment that emphasizes practical experience within the professional opera world. This includes coaching sessions with industry professionals, small supporting and/or study roles in HGO main-stage productions, and a variety of concert engagements.

The evening’s guests included Chairs Jana and John Scott Arnoldy, Honoree Mariquita Masterson, Anne and Dr. John Mendelsohn (HGO Board chair), Judith and Richard Agee, Denise and Philip Bahr, Pat Breen, Donna and Robert Bruni, Anne and Albert Chao, Donna Josey Chapman, Bobbie-Vee and Jerry Cooney, Marianne and David Duthu, Jackson D. Hicks and Milton Townsend, Elizabeth and Richard Husseini, Caroline and Perryn Leech (HGO managing director), Beth Madison and Ralph Burch, Frances Marzio, Cynthia Petrello, Jill and Allyn Risley, Glen Rosenbaum, Kristina and Paul Somerville, Dian and Harlan Stai, Susan and Dr. C. Richard Stasney, HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers and Beau Miller, Phoebe Tudor, John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer, Marcia and Alfredo Vilas, and Margaret Alkek

Williams and Jim Daniel. The competition awards were presented by the Methodist Hospital System, the official health care provider for Houston Grand Opera.

**1<sup>st</sup> place \$10,000**

Mane Galoyan

Soprano—Armenia

Mane Galoyan participated in HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy last May. She has won a number of prestigious awards, most recently a 2014 prize in the Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition in Dusseldorf, Germany; first prize in the International Singing Competition by Bibigul Tulegenova in Kazakhstan; and fourth prize in the Sixth International Competition of Young Opera Singers in Ningbo, China, after which she was invited back to China to participate in Christmas concerts given by the competition laureates. Other prestigious honors include the gold medal at the Seventh Open Youth Delphic Games in Kazakhstan, the President of Armenia Youth Prize, and second prize in the International Opera Singers Competition in St. Petersburg. She has toured in the United States with the YerazArt program and in Great Britain within the framework of the young talent support program of the All Armenia Fund.

**2<sup>nd</sup> place \$5,000**

Christopher Bozeka

Tenor—United States

Chris Bozeka is pursuing a master's degree at the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music (CCM), where he has appeared as Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*, Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, and the Narrator in *Owen Wingrave*. Bozeka was a winner at the 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions–Ohio District. Last summer, he appeared in the Castleton Festival, alternating as B. F. Pinkerton and Goro in *Madame Butterfly* and appearing as a featured soloist in U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's *Law and Opera* lecture. Bozeka was seen previously at the Castleton Festival under the baton of Lorin Maazel as Joe in *La fanciulla del West*, Cassio in *Otello*, and as a featured soloist alongside Neil Schicoff in *A Salute to Britten and Tchaikovsky*. He has also sung Joe with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Galicia, Sam Polk in *Susannah* with Undercroft Opera, and Marco in *The Gondoliers* at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, where he earned his bachelor's degree.

**3<sup>rd</sup> place winner \$3,000**

Federico De Michelis

Bass-baritone—Argentina

Born in Buenos Aires, Federico De Michelis was a member of the Opera Studio of Teatro Argentino de La Plata, where he performed Antonio in *Il viaggio a Reims*, El Hombre Mayor in Gerardo Gandini's contemporary opera *Ciudad Ausente*, Johann in *Werther*, Narrator from Nino Rota's *I due timidi*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, Plutone in *Il ballo dell'ingrate*, and Tempo from *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*. Since 2012, he has been training at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain, studying with Ryland Davies, Tom Krause, and Manuel Cid and performing in some of the most important concert halls in Spain. His repertoire includes Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Tom and Sam in *A Masked Ball*, and Dr.

Grenvil in *La traviata*. During summer 2014 he made his debut with the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Weigold. He is expected to make his debut at Teatro Real, Madrid, early in 2016.

**Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award \$2,000**

Yongzhao Yu

Tenor—China

In 2012, Yongzhao Yu began work on a master’s degree in the opera department of the [Shanghai Conservatory of Music](#). He performed Alfredo in *La traviata* and in February 2012, he participated in a special Valentine’s Day concert opera performance in the concert hall of the Shanghai Oriental Art Center. He was selected for membership in the Shanghai International Vocal Music Master Class in the summer of 2012. He performed in a special concert titled “Greetings of Love” in the Grand Theatre of the Suzhou Culture and Arts Center in March 2013, followed in May by an “Eternal Verdi” concert in Shanghai in honor of the bicentenary of Verdi’s birth. His awards include third prize in bel canto in the Shanghai division of the 15<sup>th</sup> National Youth Singer TV Competition, second prize in the men’s division of the Beijing International Music Competition, and first prize in the Opera Concorso.

**Audience Choice Award \$1000**

Youngzhao Yu

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**About Houston Grand Opera**

Since its inception in 1955, Houston Grand Opera has grown from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. HGO enjoys a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 56 world premieres and seven American premieres since 1973. In addition to producing and performing world-class opera, HGO contributes to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation through a diverse and innovative program of performances, community events, and education projects that reaches the widest possible public. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and has won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards—the only opera company to have won all three honors.

Through HGOco, Houston Grand Opera creates opportunities for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to observe, participate in, and create art. Its *Song of Houston* project is an ongoing initiative to create and share work based on stories that define the unique character of our city and its diverse communities. Since 2007, HGOco has commissioned 16 new works along with countless innovative community projects, reaching more than one million people in the greater Houston metropolitan area. The NEXUS Initiative is HGO’s multi-year ticket underwriting program that allows Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy world-class opera without the barrier of price. Since 2007 NEXUS has enabled more than 175,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

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