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Houston Grand Opera Presents *The Little Prince* for Holiday Season

Audience Favorite Features Child Performers, Children's Chorus

Houston, November 16, 2015—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) will usher in the holidays with Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright's whimsical opera, *The Little Prince*, December 4–20 in the Cullen Theater at the Wortham Theater Center. *The Little Prince* has charmed audiences around the world since HGO mounted the world premiere in 2003. The opera has traveled to cities across the United States, Europe, and South Korea. HGO last revived the production in Houston in 2004.

Based on the classic children's story by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, this appealing work has been called "an enchanting opera that is both faithful to the book and satisfying to the child and adult alike" (*Financial Times*). The *Houston Chronicle* wrote, "Portman's *The Little Prince* was unfailingly attractive—simple, communicative, touching." The WWII-era tale of a young prince who visits from another planet has been translated into more than 250 languages and dialects. The story's simple yet profound themes of childhood, love, and innocence have proven timeless.

For the 2003 world premiere of *The Little Prince*, HGO brought together a stellar creative team: composer Rachel Portman, whose score for the film *Emma* won an Oscar and who has since penned the scores to *Beloved* and *Belle*; British librettist Nicholas Wright, an Olivier Award-winning playwright; and Francesca Zambello, a long-time collaborator with HGO who is now artistic director of Washington National Opera and the Glimmerglass Festival. The sets and costumes were designed by the late Maria Björnson of *Phantom of the Opera* fame.

HGO's revival will be directed by Ellen Douglas Schlaefer, who has worked with the production since its creation. HGO Head of Music Staff Bradley Moore conducts. Emily Senturia, also of HGO's music staff, will conduct three performances.

Newcomers Andy Jones of Houston (age 11) and Cohle H. Smith of Humble (age 12) will share the role of the Little Prince. For the majority of performances HGO Studio alumnus Joshua Hopkins reprises his 2004 portrayal of the Pilot, in which he displayed a "clarion baritone and an appealing, warm stage presence" (*Houston Press*). HGO Studio baritone Ben Edquist will perform the Pilot on December 17 and 19. The

Snake/Vain Man will be sung by American tenor John Kapusta, who recently played the role at Washington National Opera and will be making his HGO debut. HGO Studio artist Sofia Selowsky will sing the Fox.

The Little Prince also prominently features a 20-person children's chorus. "Usually, in bigger, typically tragic operas, children are the spots of innocence and brightness," HGO Children's Chorus Director Karen Reeves explains. "Here, they are protagonists; they play birds, lamps, stars, and help the Prince narrate the story." HGO Children's Chorus singers range in age from 7 to 17.

The Little Prince is generously supported by lead funders The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation, The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, and The Cullen Foundation.

Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright: The Little Prince
Based on the book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Production by Francesca Zambello

Sung in English with projected text

December 4, 6m, 9‡, 11‡, 13m‡, 16, 17†, 18, 19†, 20m, 2015

The Little Prince	Andy Jones * Dec. 4, 6m, 11, 13m, 16, 18, 20m Cohle H. Smith * Dec 9, 17, 19
The Pilot	Joshua Hopkins # Ben Edquist **†
The Snake/The Vain Man	John Kapusta *
The Fox	Sofia Selowsky **
Conductor	Bradley Moore Emily Senturia #‡
Production	Francesca Zambello
Revival Director	Ellen Douglas Schlaefer
Set and Costume Designer	Maria Bjørnson
Original Lighting Designer	Rick Fisher
Children's Chorus Director	Karen Reeves
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Children's Chorus	

* *Company debut*

** *HGO Studio artist*

Former HGO Studio artist

† *Alternate cast/ date*

‡ *Alternate conductor/ date*

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Skylight Opera Theatre, Boston Lyric Opera and the Wang Center for the Performing Arts, and Tulsa Opera

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Commissioned through a generous gift of Kathryn and David Berg in memory of Larry Pfeffer

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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 57 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. 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 200,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

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