

---

## Houston Grand Opera to Open 2016 with *The Marriage of Figaro (January 22)* and *Rusalka (January 29)*

Houston, January 5, 2016— **Houston Grand Opera (HGO)** opens its 2016 winter repertory on January 22 with an inventive staging by multiple-award-winning theater director **Michael Grandage** of Mozart’s genial farce, *The Marriage of Figaro*. Performances continue through February 7. Co-produced by HGO and the Glyndebourne Festival and premiered at Glyndebourne in 2012, this production, set in 1970s Spain with sets and costumes by award-winning designer **Christopher Oram**, was hailed for its beauty and for affirming “Mozart’s comic masterpiece as both of its time and perennially modern” (*Sunday Times*). HGO is delighted to bring this elegant staging to Houston under the direction of **Ian Rutherford**, who worked with Grandage and toured the production following its Glyndebourne run.

For this *Figaro*, HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** has assembled a cast of rising stars, starting with Glyndebourne’s 2013 *Figaro*, Czech baritone **Adam Plachetka**, who makes his HGO debut after success in the role both at Glyndebourne and recently at Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he delivered a “firm-toned...sympathetic Figaro” (*Chicago Tribune*). Singing the Count, also from the Glyndebourne production, is the versatile HGO Studio alumnus **Joshua Hopkins**, who “unfurled a robust and polished baritone” (*Houston Chronicle*) for his HGO portrayal of the Pilot in Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright’s *The Little Prince* in December 2015.

Soprano **Ailyn Pérez** appears as the Countess, returning to HGO after a moving portrayal of Desdemona in *Otello* and rave reviews for her performances as the opportunistic young soprano Tatyana Bakst in Jake Heggie’s *Great Scott* at The Dallas Opera in the fall of 2015. In an unusual approach to Cherubino, the role will be sung by soprano **Lauren Snouffer** (rather than the usual mezzo-soprano), an HGO Studio alumna who gave a “resplendent” (*New York Times*) performance as Agnes in Tanglewood’s 2013 concert version of George Benjamin’s *Written on Skin*. This will be a professional role debut. Soprano **Heidi Stober**, also an HGO Studio alumna, who *Opera News* recently called “one of today’s most exciting singers,” will take the role of Susanna.

Early music specialist **Harry Bicket**, artistic director of The English Concert and chief conductor of Santa Fe Opera, will make a much anticipated HGO debut on the podium. He will concurrently lead HGO’s *Rusalka*.

On January 29, HGO presents Dvořák’s lyrical fairy tale, *Rusalka*, for the first time since 1991, in a new production by the Tony and Olivier nominated theater director **Melly Still** that premiered at Glyndebourne in 2009. Set and costume designer **Rae Smith** and lighting designer **Paule Constable** created the supernatural environment of an enchanted lake and surrounding forest in which the eerie story, rooted in the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale “The Little Mermaid,” comes to life.

The Glyndebourne production featured Houston favorite soprano **Ana María Martínez** (Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2010–11) as the ill-fated water nymph Rusalka, a role she reprised last year at Lyric Opera of Chicago and will now perform at HGO. Critical to the performance is the character’s ability to hold the stage after surrendering her power of speech in exchange for becoming human. *Opera News* declared Martínez’s Chicago portrayal to be “one of the great soprano performances of the present era” in that house.

The Prince will be sung by the American tenor **Brian Jagde** in his HGO debut. A winner of the Birgit Nilsson Prize at the Operalia competition, he is an alumnus of San Francisco Opera’s Merola and Adler young artist programs. **Richard Paul Fink**, the Grammy Award–winning HGO Studio alumnus who was last seen at HGO in *Lohengrin* (2009), will sing Vodník, the water sprite. Ježibaba the witch will be sung by mezzo-soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Jill Grove**, who recently performed the role at Lyric Opera of Chicago and New Orleans Opera. Soprano **Maida Hundeling**, a frequent guest at Prague State Opera, will make her HGO debut in the role of the Foreign Princess.

English director **Donna Stirrup** is the Revival Director, with Harry Bicket on the podium.

This season also includes the world premiere of *Prince of Players* by eminent American composer **Carlisle Floyd** (Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2015–16), opening March 5, three months before Mr. Floyd’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Wagner’s *Siegfried*, the third installment of **La Fura dels Baus’s** imaginative *Ring* cycle featuring a new generation of Wagnerians, including tenor **Jay Hunter Morris** in the title role and star soprano **Christine Goerke** as Brünnhilde, opens April 16, and the Houston debut of Broadway sensation **Rob Ashford’s** take on the classic **Rogers & Hammerstein** musical *Carousel* rounds out the main-stage season beginning April 22. Through its community collaboration program HGOco, the company will present in May the world premiere of *The Root of the Wind Is Water*, a chamber opera by composer **David Hanlon** and librettist **Stephanie Fleischmann** about the impact of hurricanes on the Texas Gulf coast.

The full list of events for the HGO season is provided below. More information is available at [HGO.org](http://HGO.org).

\* \* \* \* \*

## 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.

---

### **Houston Grand Opera: 2015–16 Season**

\* *Company debut*  
\*\* *HGO Studio artist*  
# *Former HGO Studio artist*

#### **Mozart: The Marriage of Figaro**

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

**January 22, 24m, 30; Feb. 3, 5, 7m, 2016**

Figaro	Adam Plachetka *
Susanna	Heidi Stober #
Count Almaviva	Joshua Hopkins #
Countess Almaviva	Ailyn Pérez
Cherubino	Lauren Snouffer #
Dr. Bartolo	Peixin Chen #
Marcellina	Catherine Cook
Conductor	Harry Bicket *
Production	Michael Grandage
Revival Director	Ian Rutherford
Set and Costume Designer	Christopher Oram
Original Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Movement Director	Ben Wright *
Chorus Master	Richard Bado #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

*A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera*

#### **Dvořák: Rusalka**

Sung in Czech with projected English translation

**January 29, 31m; Feb. 6, 9, 12, 2016**

Rusalka	Ana María Martínez #
Prince	Brian Jagde *
Vodník, a water sprite	Richard Paul Fink #
Ježibaba, a witch	Jill Grove #
Foreign Princess	Maida Hundeling *
Conductor	Harry Bicket
Production	Melly Still *
Revival Director	Donna Stirrup *
Set and Costume Designer	Rae Smith *
Original Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Movement Director	Rick Nodine *
Chorus Master	Richard Bado #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

*Production created by Glyndebourne Festival Opera*

**World Premiere****Carlisle Floyd: Prince of Players**

Sung in English with projected text

**March 5, 11, 13m, 2016**

Edward Kynaston	Ben Edquist **
Margaret Hughes	Mane Galoyan **
Charles II	Chad Shelton #
Sir Charles Sedley	Joseph Evans
Villiers, Duke of Buckingham	Scott Quinn #
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Director	Michael Gieleta *
Set Designer	Shoko Kambara *
Costume Designer	Gregory Gale *
Lighting Designer	Renée Brode

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

*Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera**Based on Compleat Female Stage Beauty by Jeffrey Hatcher**By Special Arrangement with Lionsgate***Wagner: Siegfried**

Sung in German with projected English translation

**April 16, 20, 23, 28; May 1m, 2016**

Siegfried	Jay Hunter Morris
Wanderer (Wotan)	Iain Paterson
Brünnhilde	Christine Goerke
Mime	Rodell Rosel
Alberich	Christopher Purves
Erda	Meredith Arwady
Fafner	Andrea Silvestrelli
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Production	La Fura dels Baus
Director	Carlus Padrissa
Set Designer	Roland Olbeter
Costume Designer	Chu Uroz
Lighting Designer	Peter van Praet
Projection Designer	Franc Aleu
Movement/Associate Director	Esteban Muñoz

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

*A co-production of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia, and Maggio Musicale, Florence***Rodgers & Hammerstein: Carousel****April 22, 24m, 27, 29, 30; May 6, 7, 2016**

Billy Bigelow	Duncan Rock *
Julie Jordan	Andrea Carroll #
Carrie Pipperidge	Lauren Snouffer #
Nettie Fowler	Stephanie Blythe *
Mrs. Mullen	Helen Anker*
Enoch Snow	Alexander Lewis *
Jigger Craigin	Ben Edquist **
Conductor/Chorus Master	Richard Bado #
Director/Choreographer	Rob Ashford
Set Designer	Paolo Ventura *
Costume Designer	Catherine Zuber
Original Lighting Designer	Neil Austin

Sound Designer Andrew Harper  
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

*A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago*

**World Premiere**

**David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann: The Root of the Wind Is Water**

**May 2016**

Eliza Goodman Sofia Selowsky \*\*

Lucy Goodman Mane Galoyan \*\*

Additional casting TBA

**Media Contact:** Christine Cantrell, [Christine@elmorepr.com](mailto:Christine@elmorepr.com), (713) 524-0661

**Director of Communications:** Judith Kurnick, [jkurnick@hgo.org](mailto:jkurnick@hgo.org) (713) 546-0240

[HGO.org](http://HGO.org)

[facebook.com/houstongrandopera](https://facebook.com/houstongrandopera)

[twitter.com/hougrandopera](https://twitter.com/hougrandopera)

# # #

HOUSTON  
**Methodist**<sup>™</sup>  
LEADING MEDICINE

Official Health Care Provider  
for Houston Grand Opera

TENENBAUM  
CLASSIC JEWELERS

Preferred Jeweler of Houston Grand Opera

UNITED 

Official Airline of Houston Grand Opera