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 90th 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 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.

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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.

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

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

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