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60th ANNIVERSARY
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PRESS RELEASE

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Houston Grand Opera Raises \$623,000 at 60th Anniversary Celebration with Gala Concert featuring Opera Star Joyce DiDonato

Houston, March 26, 2015—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) celebrated 60 years of producing and performing world-class opera in Houston at a gala anniversary concert in the Wortham Theater Center’s Cullen Theater on Thursday, March 19. Featuring renowned mezzo-soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Joyce DiDonato**, the spectacular evening included seven hundred guests in attendance and raised \$623,000 to support the Houston Grand Opera Endowment.

The evening began with event chair **Terrylin G. Neale** hosting a VIP Champagne reception for event underwriters, followed by the concert in the Cullen Theater featuring Joyce DiDonato, the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers**, and artists of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. Having just completed Metropolitan Opera performances in Rossini’s *La donna del lago*, Ms. DiDonato only the night before performed a concert at Carnegie Hall as part of her Perspectives series. Some of her selections for HGO’s diamond anniversary concert came from *La donna del lago* and her Carnegie Hall program. Selections included “Dì, cor mio” from *Alcina*, “Oh, di sorte crudel” from *Le nozze di Lammermoor* and “All the Things You Are” from *Very Warm for May*.

Winner of the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Classical Vocal Solo, Kansas-born DiDonato began her international opera career after training in the HGO Studio for two seasons (1996–1998) and has reappeared in HGO main stage productions in such leading roles as Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* (2011) and the title role in *Mary Stuart* (2012).

Following the concert, approximately two hundred event underwriters enjoyed a celebratory dinner on the Brown Theater stage. Led by principal Jackson Hicks, Jackson and Company served a delectable menu of citrus nage lobster with grilled fennel and herb-infused grapefruit, medallions of veal tenderloin in lemon artichoke sauce, and a cherry and hazelnut tart.

During the dinner, Ms. DiDonato performed two numbers accompanied by Patrick Summers on the piano – "I Love a Piano" by Irving Berlin and "My Funny Valentine" by Rodgers & Hart.

“Our diamond anniversary is as much about Houston Grand Opera's future as its past," said HGO Managing Director **Perryn Leech**. "To have such wonderful support from our beloved Joyce DiDonato, who we trained and nurtured, and from our generous patrons honors our past, our present and our future. This celebration and the funds raised help to ensure that HGO will continue as one of America's premier opera companies."

Generous underwriters of the event included Margaret Alkek Williams, Joan and Stanford Alexander, Jana and John Scott Arnoldy, BBVA Compass, Ursula and Dr. Saúl Balagura, Janice Barrow, Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson, Tony Bradfield and Kevin Black of Tenenbaum & Company, Chevron, Jane and Robert Cizik, ConocoPhillips, Karl-Heinz and Dr. Gudrun Becker/Dr. Gary L. Hollingsworth and Dr. Ken Hyde, Jackson and Company, Beth Madison, Frances Marzio, Franci Neely, Petrello Family Foundation, Gloria Portela and Dick Evans, Mrs. Sybil F. Roos, Glen A. Rosenbaum/Yolanda and Bill Knull, Schlumberger Limited, Dian and Harlan Stai, John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer.

The impressive list of other notable attendees included Anne and John Mendelsohn (HGO's Chairman of the Board), David Gockley (Former HGO General Director), Janice Barrow, Alex and Astley Blair, Dian and Harlan Stai, Barbara and Pat McCelvey, Phoebe and Robert Tudor, Beth Madison, Frances Marzio, Melanie Jarrell and Al Lasher, Cynthia and Anthony Petrello, Lynn Wyatt with guest The Right Honorable Countess of Carnarvon, Jana Arnoldy, Marguerite Swartz, Cathy and Joe Cleary, Janet Kelly and John Carrig, Mary Ann and Larry Faulkner, Margaret Williams and Jim Daniel, and Jackson Hicks and Milton Townsend.

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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 cultures. 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 superlative 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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