

Patrick Summers

Artistic & Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Perryn Leech

Managing Director

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Christine Cantrell

christine@elmopr.com
713-524-0661

Judith Kurnick

HGO Director of Communications
jkurnick@hgo.org
713-546-0240

Houston Grand Opera Announces Cast for Second Mariachi Opera, *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, featuring Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán May 13, 16, and 17, 2015

Houston, March 30, 2015—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) announced today the cast members set to appear in the much-anticipated mariachi production *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past Is Never Finished*, featuring internationally renowned ensemble **Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán**. *El Pasado* is the second mariachi opera from the creative team of **José “Pepe” Martínez** and **Leonard Foglia**, who collaborated to create the international hit *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna/To Cross the Face of the Moon*, with Mariachi Vargas, which HGO premiered in 2010 and reprised in 2013. HGO will close its 60th anniversary season with three performances of *El Pasado* on May 13, 16, and 17, 2015, in the Wortham Theater Center. The opera will be sung in Spanish and English with projected translations. The *Chicago Tribune* calls *El Pasado* “an audience-grabber with heart...with all the sweetness and tang of a freshly-made margarita.”

Soprano **Abigail Santos Villalobos**, tenor **Daniel Montenegro**, baritone **Paul La Rosa**, and baritone **Ricardo Rivera** will star in the emotional opera that follows one family’s journey through multiple generations. All will be making their HGO debuts. The cast also features **Vanessa Alonzo**, **Luis Ledesma**, **Cassandra Zoe Velasco**, **Sebastien E. De La Cruz**, **Octavio Moreno**, and **Miguel Nuñez**. Houstonians Alonzo and Moreno appeared in HGO’s *Cruzar*, Ledesma sang Escamillo in HGO’s 1998 production of *Carmen*. The other artists will be making their HGO debuts. De La Cruz is the 13-year-old mariachi who captivated audiences as a semifinalist on NBC’s *America’s Got Talent* in 2012 and performed the National Anthem during the 2013 NBA Finals.

El Pasado is directed by **Leonard Foglia**, with sets and projections by **Elaine McCarthy**, costumes by **Scott Marr**, and lighting by **Chris Maravich**. **David Hanlon** is the music supervisor.

In Morelos, Mexico, in 1910, the son of a wealthy European landowner falls in love with a humble Mexican servant girl living on his family’s hacienda. The story begins on the eve of the Mexican Revolution and blazes a riveting path through forbidden passion, the fight for freedom, and political destiny all the way to the modern-day United States.

HGO’s commission of the world’s first mariachi opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna/To Cross the Face of the Moon*, with Mariachi Vargas, not only enchanted audiences in Houston, but went on to hit runs in Paris, San Diego, Chicago, Tucson, and Phoenix. HGO brought *Cruzar* back to Houston in 2013 for three sold-out performances. The company will present *El Pasado* fresh from its March world premiere at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Cruzar, the first mariachi opera, was described by the *Chicago Tribune* as “[a] moving story with universal appeal, performed with enormous zest and color...” The *Houston Chronicle* observed, “The mariachi music by José “Pepe” Martínez...[is] suave and melodious, [and] its almost unceasing glow reaches into the souls of the characters.”

Like its predecessor, *El Pasado* is presented under the auspices of HGOco, the company’s community collaboration and education initiative, as part of its *Song of Houston* project. *Song of Houston* tells the stories of the diverse communities that call Houston home. The award-winning program is currently developing new work including *O Columbia*, a chamber opera by composer Gregory Spears and librettist Royce Vavrek that examines the past, present, and future of the American spirit of exploration. The creative process for this work has included gathering stories from NASA astronauts and other members of Houston’s NASA community around their experiences of space exploration. *O Columbia* will premiere in September, 2015.

HGO’s presentation of *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past Is Never Finished* is made possible through the generous support of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony G. Petrello; Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai; National Endowment for the Arts; Bank of America; H-E-B; The Humphreys Foundation; Beirne, Maynard and Parsons LLP; Novum Energy; and Yellow Cab.

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

Houston Grand Opera

*HGO debut

+ current or former HGO Studio artist

El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past Is Never Finished

May 13, 16, 17m, 2015

Music: José “Pepe” Martínez

Libretto: Leonard Foglia

with Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán

Amorita: Abigail Santos-Villalobos*

Luis: Daniel Montenegro*

Enrique: Paul La Rosa*
Acalán: Ricardo Rivero*
Juana: Vanessa Alonzo
Isabel/Dolores: Cassandra Zoe Velasco*
Augustino: Luis Ledesma
Daniel: Sebastien E. De La Cruz*
Xihuitl: Octavio Moreno+
Miguel/Hotel Manager: Miguel Nuñez*

Performed in Spanish and English with surtitles
Tickets and Information: HGO.org / 713-228-6737

A co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago

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

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

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