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## Houston Grand Opera Announces New Title for May World Premiere

*After the Storm* replaces *The Root of the Wind Is Water*

Houston, February 15, 2016— Houston Grand Opera’s recently announced chamber opera about Gulf Coast hurricanes that will premiere in Houston on May 13 and in Galveston on May 15 will now be titled *After the Storm*. The previously announced title was *The Root of the Wind Is Water*. *After the Storm*, by composer **David Hanlon** and librettist **Stephanie Fleischmann**, and directed by **Matthew Ozawa**, will be HGO’s 61st world premiere. The opera will be presented under the auspices of HGOco, the company’s community collaboration and education initiative.

Developed through historical research and interviews with residents of Galveston and Houston, this riveting chamber opera is rooted in one family’s crisis in the midst of a natural disaster. As a massive hurricane hurtles towards the Gulf Coast, a Galvestonian torn about whether to leave her home is haunted by storms past. A story of loss, resilience, and the power of community, *After the Storm* mines the legacy of the Great Storm of 1900 and Hurricane Ike in 2008 on the region.

The name change follows an intensive week-long workshop in Houston during which the creative team and cast explored and refined the opera together. “Part of the immense value of a workshop process like HGO’s,” says librettist Stephanie Fleischmann, “is the opportunity to reflect, listen, and learn about a new work in collaboration with others—and the freedom to make changes in response to what we learn.”

Adds composer David Hanlon: “It became clear to us during the workshop that the title *After the Storm* resonated with the story we are telling in ways that felt too apt and profound to pass up. We’re proud to present this opera under this title, which evokes not just the devastation of storms past and present but also the rebuilding that follows.”

World premiere performances of *After the Storm* will be held on **May 13 at 7 p.m. at the Wortham Theater Center** and on **May 15 at 7 p.m. at The Grand 1894 Opera House** in Galveston.

The cast of *After the Storm* features artists of the Houston Grand Opera Studio: mezzo-soprano **Sofia Selowsky** as Eliza Goodman and soprano **Mane Galoyan** as Lucy Goodman. Rounding out the cast are soprano **Lindsay Russell** as Bettie/Bea, mezzo-soprano **Cecilia Duarte** as Harriet/First Responder, tenor **Mark Thomas** as Isaiah/Pastor's Son, and baritone **Mark Diamond**, an HGO Studio alumnus, as Cyclone Goodman/Wilbur.

Composer David Hanlon's 2013 HGOco-commissioned opera *Past the Checkpoints*, which he also conducted, was performed throughout Texas and was featured by Opera America in its 2014 New Works Showcase. The *Houston Chronicle* praised the work as "accessible, relevant, and important." In 2014 HGOco premiered his chamber vocal piece *The Ninth November I Was Hiding*. Hanlon, a former Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera and an HGO Studio alumnus, acted as music advisor for HGO's world premiere of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek's *O Columbia*, and led the mariachi operas *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* and *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina* at HGO, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Diego Opera, and Arizona Opera.

Playwright and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann has contributed libretti for the opera *The Long Walk* (music by Jeremy Howard Beck), commissioned by American Lyric Theater, which premiered at Opera Saratoga in July 2015 and will be presented at Utah Opera in 2017, and for the klezmer opera *The Property* (music by Wlad Marhulets) for Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited program. Her music theater works include *The Sweetest Life* (music by Saskia Lane) and *The Secret Lives of Coats and Red Fly/Blue Bottle* (music by Christina Campanella).

Stage director Matthew Ozawa directed HGO's 2014 hit production of *A Little Night Music* and led the 2013 world premiere of HGOco's *The Memory Stone*. Recent directing credits include *Nabucco* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the world premiere of *Hand Eye* with eighth blackbird at Carnegie Hall and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the American premiere of *Arizona Lady* at Arizona Opera, the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Second Nature* for Lyric Unlimited, and the world premiere of *Tsuru* with Houston Ballet at the Asia Society Texas Center. Ozawa is the founder and artistic director of Mozawa, a performing arts company that generates creative and cultural hybrid works of art.

Since 2007, HGOco has commissioned 18 new works and three song cycles and has conducted innovative community projects reaching more than one million people in the Greater Houston metropolitan area. HGOco creates opportunities for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to observe, participate in, and create art. Through projects like *After the Storm*, HGOco endeavors to make opera relevant to its changing audiences by connecting the company with the diverse Houston community through collaboration.

*After the Storm* is made possible through generous support by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ConocoPhillips, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, the Albert and Anne Chao/Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation, and Bank of America.

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## **World Premiere**

**David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann: *After the Storm***

Sung in English with projected text

**May 13 at 7 p.m. at Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theater**

## May 15 at 7 p.m. at The Grand 1894 Opera House in Galveston

Eliza Goodman	Sofia Selowsky *
Lucy Goodman	Mane Galoyan *
Bettie/Bea	Lindsay Russell
Harriet/First Responder	Cecilia Duarte
Isaiah/Pastor's Son	Mark Thomas
Cyclone Goodman/Wilbur	Mark Diamond **
Conductor	David Hanlon**
Stage Director	Matthew Ozawa

\* *HGO Studio artist*

\*\* *Former HGO Studio artist*

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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 58 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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