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## Houston Grand Opera Elects New Board Chair, Extends Contract of Managing Director

*Jim Crownover will begin term in August. Perryn's Leech's new 5-year contract reflects organizational successes, reaffirms new leadership model*

Houston, March 4, 2016—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) has elected Jim Crownover as chair of its board of directors and extended the contract of Managing Director Perryn Leech until 2021, it was announced today. Crownover will serve a two-year term beginning August 1, 2016, succeeding John Mendelsohn. Dr. Mendelsohn served for three years (one and a half terms) during a period of growth for the company.

Jim Crownover has been a member of HGO's board of directors since 1987 and has served on the executive and governance committees. He has been a member of the board of the company's endowment fund since 2011. He and his wife, Molly, are also members of HGO's Laureate Society and Founders Council. In 1998 Crownover retired from a 30-year career with McKinsey & Company, Inc., where he led the firm's Southwest practice, co-headed the energy practice, and was a member of the board of directors. He currently serves on the boards of Chemtura Corporation, Weingarten Realty, Republic Services, Inc., and FTI Consulting.

A current trustee of the Houston Ballet and overseer of Rice University's Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business, he is a trustee emeritus and past chairman of the board of trustees of Rice University. He has been a trustee of the Houston Zoo, Project Grad Houston, and St. John's School, and is a past chairman of the United Way's Houston Campaign as well as a two-time recipient of the United Way's Volunteer of the Year Award.

Perryn Leech has overseen HGO's business and operational activities since 2011, when he was appointed managing director as part of a new leadership structure that also elevated the company's music director, Patrick Summers, to the new position of artistic and music director. Summers's contract will come up for renewal in 2018.

HGO Chairman of the Board John Mendelsohn said, “Jim Crownover’s impressive leadership has helped many great Houston institutions grow even stronger. His drive, dedication, and expertise are particularly welcome as we plan for HGO’s long-term future. During the past five years—a time when many performing arts companies have struggled—Houston Grand Opera has grown its season and its audience, completed a historic fundraising campaign, secured long-term union labor contracts, and become a more secure organization. Under Perryn Leech’s expert management the company is operating at peak efficiency while maintaining the high standards to which we are all committed. On behalf of the board, I am delighted that he will continue to work closely with our outstanding artistic and music director, Patrick Summers, and with Jim Crownover on guiding HGO forward.”

Said Jim Crownover, “HGO’s stellar record of artistic and business accomplishment is one of Houston’s great cultural success stories. It is a privilege to follow John Mendelsohn in working with this dedicated board and outstanding leadership team to shape an ever more exciting future for the role of opera in Houston.”

Said Perryn Leech, “I am thrilled and honored to be asked to continue my partnership with my extraordinary colleague Patrick Summers as we plan to build on the successes of the last few years. Houston has been home to my family and me for the past nine years and I feel privileged that we are set to be here for at least another five and a half years. HGO is a company of extraordinary and dedicated staff that provide an environment in which our performers, orchestra, chorus, technicians, and production teams can concentrate on producing their best work. I look forward to continuing working hard with Patrick, Jim Crownover and our board, trustees, donors, and supporters, as we continue to build this great company.”

Added HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, “I have profound respect for Jim Crownover’s long and impressive experience and so am beyond excited that he has agreed to chair Houston Grand Opera, an organization over which he has always had enormous influence. To have such an intelligent, articulate, engaged, and opera-loving man at the helm of our company fills me with excitement for our work together. And I look forward to continued work with my closest professional colleague, Perryn, as we continue to develop and grow our successful partnership together. Houston Grand Opera is fortunate to have his fiscal and managerial oversight and his tireless and profound dedication to the company.”

Houston Grand Opera announced its 62<sup>nd</sup> season at the end of January. The main-stage season will include 42 performances of seven productions, including two free community performances.

In the spring of 2012, Leech led the successful development and adoption of the company’s new strategic plan, *A Voice for Houston*, which firmly established the business and artistic vision from 2012–2017. The plan called for sustainable growth within a balanced and sound business model based on the three pillars of excellence, relevance, and affordability. In the fall of 2012, the company launched a historic fundraising campaign under the successful guidance of Chief Advancement Officer Gregory S. Robertson, *Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera*, which exceeded its goal of raising \$165 million by December 31, 2014, raising \$172 million. Attendance during 2014–15 virtually matched that of the 2013–14 season, which had shown a 3% increase over the previous year and a 28% increase over the 2009–10 season. Total sales represented 93% of capacity.

Perryn Leech was named HGO's managing director in May 2011 after previously serving the company as technical and production director and chief operating officer. A native of Brighton, England, Leech has worked with all of the United Kingdom's major opera companies and many other arts festivals in the U.K. and across Europe. He served Welsh National Opera (WNO) as technical director, Cardiff Theatrical Services as managing director, and English National Opera (ENO) as production manager. Some of his career highlights include planning, managing, and implementing WNO's move into its new home theater, the Wales Millennium Centre, in 2004; and overseeing the world premieres of the Olivier Award-winning opera *Jephtha* at WNO and Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* at ENO.

Leech is currently chairman of the board for Theater District Houston, a board member and chair of the Artistic Services Committee for Opera America, co-chair of the arts and culture committee for Super Bowl LI and secretary for the Wortham Center Operating Company. He served on Houston's first Arts and Cultural Planning Committee and was recently appointed by the new mayor, Sylvester Turner, to Houston's Quality of Life Transition Committee.

#### 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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