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## Houston Grand Opera to Give World Premiere of *Some Light Emerges* March 16 and 17

*Opera by Laura Kaminsky, Mark Campbell, and Kimberly Reed  
Celebrates Houston's Iconic Rothko Chapel*

Houston, January 16, 2017—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) will present the world premiere of ***Some Light Emerges***, a chamber opera created by the acclaimed team of composer **Laura Kaminsky** and librettists **Mark Campbell** and **Kimberly Reed**, on **March 16 and 17** at 7:30 p.m., at the **Ballroom at Bayou Place**. *Some Light Emerges* celebrates Houston's iconic **Rothko Chapel**, which is internationally known as a home for a major artist's work, an ecumenical sanctuary, and a global rallying place for human rights. *Some Light Emerges* will be HGO's 63<sup>rd</sup> world premiere and is presented under the auspices of HGOco, which connects the company's creative resources with the diverse and vibrant Houston community. *Some Light Emerges* will be directed by **Robin Guarino** and conducted by **HGO Head of Music Staff Bradley Moore**.

In the mid-1960s, Dominique de Menil, the renowned art collector and a key player in Houston's contemporary art scene, commissioned the noted American artist Mark Rothko to create a series of paintings and the ideal gallery in which to house them. Mrs. de Menil also envisioned that the resultant Rothko Chapel, which opened in 1971, would serve as a spiritual space.

Based on an original concept by Mark Campbell, *Some Light Emerges* is set mostly within the Rothko Chapel and chronicles the direct and tangential intersections of five people across four decades who visit the chapel as well as the struggles and triumphs of Dominique de Menil in realizing her dream. Through the personal stories of its characters, both moving and humorous, *Some Light Emerges* reveals

how political and spiritual conflicts can be better understood and ultimately resolved through art while honoring the people who create and support such art.

“In our libretto we chose to examine the reasons people go to the Rothko Chapel, which Dominique de Menil envisioned as a place for people ‘of all faiths or no faith,’ ” explains Kimberly Reed. Mark Campbell continues, “Kim and I brought together five individuals of different ethnicities, classes, and cultural backgrounds—all of whom have profound experiences in the chapel. At the same time we show how Dominique de Menil envisioned and finally realized her dream.”

Adds Laura Kaminsky, “When I was four years old, my mother took me to a painting class for kids at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. We walked together through a gallery of huge Rothko paintings. They had a powerful effect on me and in class I tried to emulate his work and make an abstract red painting, completely unlike the landscapes my classmates were making. I’ve been a fan of abstraction ever since.”

The Ballroom at Bayou Place audience will be seated around the stage in an octagon resembling the octagonal shape of the Rothko Chapel. The set will include actual benches borrowed from the chapel and a reproduction of a desk used by Dominique de Menil. “The Ballroom at Bayou Place provides an open yet neutral setting, allowing the audience to participate in the shaping of the space to represent the chapel. Whether you are a regular visitor to the Rothko Chapel or not, you will be drawn into this captivating story,” notes HGOco Director Carleen Graham.

The role of Dominique de Menil will be sung by soprano **Yelena Dyachek**. A first-year artist in the HGO Studio, she was a winner of the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and will sing the First Secretary in HGO’s production of John Adams’s *Nixon in China* later this month. Soprano **Amy Petrongelli** will portray Margie; her recent appearances include an art song recital for the University of Michigan's inaugural Latin American Music Festival, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, and Haydn’s *Creation* at Carnegie Hall with the Masterworks Festival Chorus. The role of Tom will be sung by bass-baritone **Christian Pursell**, who portrayed a party guest in the 2016 Cincinnati Opera premiere of Gregory Spears’s *Fellow Travelers*. Frequent HGO collaborator **Cecilia Duarte** will sing Alicia. She created the role of Renata in the company’s world premiere of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* and appeared in the 2016 world premiere of David Hanlon’s *After the Storm*. Albert will be sung by tenor **Karim Sulayman**, an active chamber musician whose performance of French chamber works at the U.K.’s Roman River Festival later this season will be recorded by the BBC. Mezzo-soprano and first-year HGO Studio artist **Zoie Reams** plays Cece. Earlier this season she sang the alto Winged Angel in the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* and later this month will appear as the Third Secretary in *Nixon in China*.

Composer Laura Kaminsky’s opera *As One* (libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed) premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014 to critical acclaim and was subsequently produced at Utah State University, Berkeley’s West Edge Opera, and D.C.’s Urban Arias. It recently made its European debut in Berlin, and other companies, including Opera Colorado, will produce the work in 2017. Upcoming works include a Piano Quintet for Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt Quartet (2017) and a third opera with collaborators Campbell and Reed called *Today It Rains*, commissioned by Opera Parallèle for a 2018–19 season premiere.

Kaminsky is currently composer-in-residence at American Opera Projects and on the faculty at Purchase College Conservatory of Music/SUNY.

Librettist Mark Campbell has written 15 operas and five musicals including *Silent Night*, which premiered at Minnesota Opera, received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in Music and has been produced by many other American opera companies. Other operas include *Later the Same Evening*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *As One*, *Volpone*, and *Bastianello/Lucrezia*. Campbell has eight new works premiering in the next two years including major commissions for Minnesota Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and Santa Fe Opera.

Filmmaker/librettist Kimberly Reed's *Prodigal Sons*, a "whiplash doc that heralds an exciting talent" (*SF Weekly*), which premiered at Telluride Film Festival, has been shown at 100+ festivals and broadcast worldwide and garnered 14 awards including the FIPRESCI Prize. Reed is also working on *Dark Money*, a documentary about campaign finance reform. A New York Foundation for the Arts fellow, she has had residencies at Yaddo, Hermitage Artist Retreat, and Squaw Valley Community of Writers. She has made several national television and radio appearances and is one of *Filmmaker* magazine's "25 New Faces of Independent Film."

Robin Guarino has directed opera, musical theater, film, and new works at major theaters and opera companies across North America. The holder of the J. Ralph Corbett Distinguished Chair of Opera at the Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music since 2008, she is also artistic director of *Opera Fusion: New Works*, a collaboration with Cincinnati Opera funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that has workshopped and developed new operas including *Doubt*, *Champion*, *Shalimar the Clown*, *Morningstar*, *Fellow Travelers*, *Meet John Doe*, and *Some Light Emerges*. She most recently directed the workshop of Ricky Ian Gordon and Lynne Nottage's opera *Intimate Apparel*, which was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and Lincoln Center Theater for their new works initiative.

## Performance Details:

### *Some Light Emerges*

**WHEN:** Thursday, March 16, and Friday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas St., Houston, TX 77002

**TICKETS:** \$25. General Admission tickets available at HGO.org or by phone at 713-228-OPERA (6737)

#### **CAST:**

*Dominique de Menil:* Yelena Dyachek  
*Margie:* Amy Petrongelli  
*Tom:* Christian Pursell  
*Alicia:* Cecilia Duarte  
*Albert:* Karim Sulayman  
*Cece:* Zoie Reams

#### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Composer: Laura Kaminsky  
Librettists: Mark Campbell/Kimberly Reed  
Conductor: Bradley Moore  
Stage Director: Robin Guarino

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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 62 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 create, participate in, and observe 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 225,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

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