Houston Grand Opera opens 2017–18 season in the George R. Brown Convention Center with Verdi’s *La traviata* (Oct. 20) and Handel’s *Julius Caesar* (Oct. 27)

Houston, October 10, 2017— Houston Grand Opera will open its 63rd season with a new production of Verdi’s most romantic opera, *La traviata*, October 20–November 11 in the new HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston. Handel’s *Julius Caesar*, a Baroque opera reset in the golden age of 1930s Hollywood, opens the following week and runs October 27–November 11. HGO is transforming an exhibit hall in the convention center into an intimate theater after being displaced from its creative home at the Wortham Theater Center by Hurricane Harvey. Every seat will be less than 100 feet from the stage. The space will also give audiences insight into and connection to the theatrical process, in what the company is calling “unconventional opera.” Tickets are available at [HGO.org](http://HGO.org); seating at the HGO Resilience Theater will be assigned in early October. All HGO ticket buyers to *La traviata* and/or *Julius Caesar* will receive a code for a $30 credit per ticket from Lyft to use for rides to and from the GRB ($15 per ride). Parking for HGO’s performances will be available at the Avenida North garage located at 1815 Rusk Street, across from HGO’s new venue. A sky bridge connects the parking garage to the GRB, and there will be clear signage to direct patrons to the theater. More information about parking can be found [here](http://HGO.org).

**VERDI’s LA TRAVIATA – New production**
Oct. 20–Nov. 11: **Sacrificing everything for the sake of love.** In Verdi’s most romantic opera, the dazzling heroine, Violetta Valéry, a high-class Parisian courtesan, gives up her lavish lifestyle for the first man she’s ever loved, only to lose it all. This is an ideal first-timers’ opera, the one that made Julia Roberts’s character cry in the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*. Star coloratura soprano and HGO Studio alumna Albina Shagimuratova returns as Violetta, and tenor **Dimitri Pittas**, acclaimed as Nemorino in HGO’s 2016 production of *The Elixir of Love*, sings Alfredo. Romanian baritone **George Petean** makes his HGO debut as Germont before performing the role later in the season at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and the Metropolitan Opera. Noted Off-Broadway director **Arin Arbus** returns to HGO to direct this new production filled with lavish sets and grand costumes, and emerging talent **Eun Sun Kim** makes her North American conducting debut, while Verdi’s famous score beautifully paints a glittering Paris—a combination sure to provide an experience of truly gripping theater.

*La traviata* will launch HGO’s new multidisciplinary initiative **Seeking the Human Spirit.** The six-year (2017–23) initiative is designed to emphasize spiritual themes in opera and expand and deepen Houstonians’ connections to opera and to art. Three mainstage productions and various events and activities each season will explore a different theme: the theme for the 2017–18 season is sacrifice. *La traviata* considers what someone will sacrifice for love.

**HANDEL’s JULIUS CAESAR**

Oct. 27–Nov. 10: **Handel goes to Hollywood.** Togas are out and glam is in with this *Julius Caesar*. Set on a 1930s movie backlot in the enchanted golden age of Hollywood, this Baroque opera comes to life as a big movie musical complete with an art deco Egyptian pyramid, glitzy costumes, and a platinum-blond knockout Cleopatra. History buffs can enjoy the story, and music lovers will revel in the vocal pyrotechnics of Handel’s most famous opera about love and conflict in this charming 2003 HGO production by **James Robinson**. The stellar cast includes countertenors **Anthony Roth Costanzo** (HGO’s 2017–18 Lynn Wyatt Great Artist) as Caesar and **David Daniels**, widely agreed to have helped redefine the opera world’s understanding of countertenors, as Ptolemy. Soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Heidi Stober** returns to HGO as Cleopatra after her 2016 performances as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe**, who appeared as Nettie Fowler in Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *Carousel* at HGO in 2016, returns to the role of Cornelia, which she last performed in 2002. The role of Sextus will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Megan Mikailovna Samarin**, who sang Siébel in HGO’s 2016 *Faust*, and Argentine bass and former HGO Studio artist **Federico De Michelis**, familiar to HGO audiences as Angelotti in *Tosca* (2015) and **Thomas Betterton** in Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players* (2016) will perform Achillas. Both will be giving their first performances as alumni of the HGO Studio. **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers** conducts.
HGO’s 2017–18 season at Resilience Theater continues with the world premiere of composer Ricky Ian Gordon and librettist Royce Vavrek’s holiday opera The House without a Christmas Tree (November 30–December 17). In January, at a location still to be announced, HGO will present its first performances in a quarter century of Richard Strauss’s revenge-filled Elektra (January 19–February 2), with virtuoso soprano Christine Goerke in the tempestuous title role and 2016 Richard Tucker Award–winner and HGO Studio alumna Tamara Wilson in her role debut as Chrysothemis, under the baton of Patrick Summers; and Rossini’s ever-popular comedy, The Barber of Seville (January 26–February 10), with a cast that includes the HGO debut of baritone Lucas Meachem as Figaro, the return of tenor David Portillo as Count Almaviva, HGO Studio alumna Sofia Selowsky as Rosina, and the eagerly anticipated return of HGO Studio alumnus Eric Owens, Musical America’s 2017 Vocalist of the Year, as Don Basilio, conducted by Julian Wachner. In April, HGO will give the first presentations of Leonard Bernstein’s classic musical West Side Story (April 20–May 6) by a major American opera house, with a new production by Francesca Zambello featuring HGO Studio alumni Andrea Carroll and Norman Reinhardt as Maria and Tony, conducted by Timothy Myers; and Bellini’s grand-scale tragedy Norma (April 27–May 11), showcasing the role debut of stellar dramatic soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska in the notoriously difficult title role, with HGO Studio alumni Jamie Barton (the 2015 Tucker Award winner) as Adalgisa and HGO Studio alumnus Chad Shelton as Pollione, in a production by acclaimed director Kevin Newbury and conducted by Patrick Summers.

For updates on the company’s season and other developments, please visit www.hgo.org/resilencetheater.

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Houston Grand Opera: 2017–18 Season

* Company debut
** HGO Studio artist
# Former HGO Studio artist
† Alternate cast

Verdi: La traviata
Sung in Italian with projected English translation
October 20, 22m, 28, Nov. 1, 3, 5m†, 11†, 2017

Violetta Valéry Albina Shagimuratova #
Mane Galoyan ** †

Alfredo Germont Dimitri Pittas
Yongzhao Yu ** †

Giorgio Germont George Petean *
Sol Jin ** †
Conductor: Eun Sun Kim *
Director: Arin Arbus
Set Designer: Riccardo Hernandez
Costume Designer: Cait O’Connor *
Lighting Designer: Marcus Doshi *
Choreographer: Austin McCormick *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Canadian Opera Company

**Handel: Julius Caesar**
Sung in Italian with projected English translation
October 27, 29m, Nov. 4, 8, 10, 2017

Julius Caesar: Anthony Roth Costanzo *
Cleopatra: Heidi Stober #
Cornelia: Stephanie Blythe
Sextus: Megan Mikailovna Samarin #
Ptolemy: David Daniels
Achillas: Federico De Michelis #

Conductor: Patrick Summers
Director: James Robinson
Set Designer: Christine Jones
Costume Designer: James Schuette
Lighting Designer: Marcus Doshi
Associate Director: Michael Shell *
Fight Director: Adam Noble

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

A Houston Grand Opera production

**World Premiere**
**The House without a Christmas Tree**
A Chamber Opera in One Act
Based on The House without a Christmas Tree, a book by Gail Rock
Music by Ricky Ian Gordon; Libretto by Royce Vavrek
Sung in English with projected English text
November 30, Dec. 2, 3m, 6, 8, 10m, 14, 16m, 17m, 2017

Addie Mills: Lauren Snouffer #
James Addison Mills III (“Dad”): Daniel Belcher #
Miss Thompson/: Heidi Stober #
Helen Mills/
Adelaide Mills
Grandma Mills: Patricia Schuman
Conductor: Bradley Moore
Director: James Robinson
Set Designer: Allen Moyer
Costume Designer: James Schuette
Lighting Designer Christopher Akerlind
Juvenile Chorus Director Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Juvenile Chorus

Commissioned and produced by Houston Grand Opera

R. Strauss: Elektra
Sung in German with projected English translation
January 19, 21m, 27, 31, Feb. 2, 2018

Elektra Christine Goerke
Chrysothemis Tamara Wilson #
Klytaemnestra Michaela Martens *
Orest Greer Grimsley #
Aegisth Chad Shelton #
Conductor Patrick Summers
Production David McVicar
Revival Director Nick Sandys*
Set and Costume Designer John Macfarlane
Lighting Designer Jennifer Tipton
Chorus Master Richard Bado #
Houston Grand Orchestra Orchestra and Chorus

A Lyric Opera of Chicago production

Rossini: The Barber of Seville
Sung in Italian with projected English translation
January 26, 28m, Feb. 3, 8, 10, 2018

Figaro Lucas Meachem *
Count Almaviva David Portillo
Rosina Sofia Selowsky #
Don Basilio Eric Owens #
Doctor Bartolo Peixin Chen #
Berta Yelena Dyachek **
Conductor Julian Wachner *
Director Joan Font
Set and Costume Designer Joan Guillén
Lighting Designer Albert Faura
Choreographer/Associate Xevi Dorca
Director Richard Bado #
Chorus Master Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia

West Side Story
Based on a Conception of JEROME ROBBINS
Book by ARTHUR LAURENTS, Music by LEONARD BERNSTEIN, Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM
Entire Original Production Directed and Choreographed by JEROME ROBBINS
Sung in English with projected text
April 20, 22m, 28m, 28, May 1, 3, 4, 6m, 2018

Maria Andrea Carroll #
Tony Norman Reinhardt #
Anita Alicia Gianni #
Riff Brian Vu *
Conductor Timothy Myers
Director Francesca Zambello
Choreographer Julio Monge *
Set Designer Peter J. Davison
Costume Designer Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer Mark McCullough
Associate Director Eric Sean Fogel
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago

Bellini: Norma
Sung in Italian with projected English translation
April 27, 29m, May 5, 8, 11, 2018

Norma Liudmyla Monastyrska
Adalgisa Jamie Barton #
Pollione Chad Shelton #
Oroveso Peixin Chen #
Conductor Patrick Summers
Director Kevin Newbury
Set Designer David Korins *
Costume Designer Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer Duane Schuler
Chorus Master Richard Bado #
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Gran Teatre del Liceu

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About Houston Grand Opera

Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is one of the largest, most innovative, and most highly acclaimed opera companies in the United States. HGO was the only American finalist for Opera Company of the Year at the 2017 International Opera Awards. In fulfilling its mission to advance the operatic art to serve an ever-evolving audience, HGO has led the field in commissioning new works (63 world premieres to date) and in training and nurturing promising young artists and administrators. The company 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’s pioneering community engagement initiative, HGOco, has served as a model for other arts organizations.

The NEXUS Initiative is HGO’s multi-year ticket underwriting program that allows Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy opera without the barrier of price. Since 2007, NEXUS has enabled more than 250,000 Houstonians to experience superlative opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

HGO has toured extensively and has won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards. It is the only opera company to win all three honors.

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