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Houston Grand Opera extends its “unconventional opera” residency in the George R. Brown Convention Center into February

*Elektra and The Barber of Seville will be performed
in HGO Resilience Theater*

Announces venues for Concert of Arias Feb. 1 competition and dinner

Houston, November 2, 2017— **Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) will present its winter productions of **R. Strauss’s *Elektra* (January 19–February 2, 2018)** and **Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* (January 26–February 10, 2018)** in the HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center. HGO had previously announced that its fall productions and world premiere holiday opera ***The House without a Christmas Tree* (November 30–December 17)** would take place in the convention center. The extended schedule is possible because Houston First, the corporation that manages the facility, was able to relocate events previously scheduled for that period into other spaces within the building. Tickets for the new venue are available at HGO.org. 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 is clear signage directing patrons to the theater. More information about parking can be found [here](#).

HGO has transformed Exhibit Hall A3 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 is less

than 100 feet from the stage and the productions give audiences insight into and connection to the theatrical process, in what HGO is calling “unconventional opera.”

Critics have been impressed with the results. Of the opening performance of *La traviata*, the *New York Times* noted, “Albina Shagimuratova, as Violetta, sounded very fine indeed, with alluring tone and admirable clarity and accuracy.” The *Houston Press* wrote, about *Julius Caesar*, “HGO knocked it out of the park.”

“Our audiences have been incredibly enthusiastic about experiencing opera in this unusual venue, so we are thrilled that Houston First has been able to extend our stay at the George R. Brown,” said HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech. Added HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, “I think it will be an unforgettably dramatic experience to see and hear *Elektra*, in particular, in this space.” The venues for HGO’s spring productions of Bernstein’s *West Side Story* and Bellini’s *Norma* are still being finalized.

HGO also announced that its 30th annual **Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers Concert of Arias** will take place on February 1, 2018, as previously announced, but in new locations. The vocal competition and performance by HGO Studio artists will be held in Rice University’s Stude Concert Hall, at 7 p.m. The post-performance celebration dinner, chaired by **Rini and Edward Ziegler** and honoring **Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton G. Rosenau, Jr.**, will take place at Hotel ZaZa. The Concert of Arias brings the world’s best young opera singers to Houston for this annual competition. For more information, go to HGO.org/SpecialEvents or email Specialevents@hgo.org.

***Elektra*: A gripping drama from the ancient world (January 19–February 2, 2018)**

In just one 100-minute act, *Elektra* leaves audiences breathless, even after the final blood-soaked curtain falls. The title character lusts for revenge for her father’s death just before she descends into utter madness. This masterpiece, which follows one of drama’s most dysfunctional families, is one of the most thrilling and chilling works in all of opera.

Soprano **Christine Goerke**’s portrayal of Elektra in concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall was a highlight of the 2015 season, her “effortless power, gleaming sound, and dramatic intensity” adding up to an “unforgettable” performance, according to the *New York Times*. Now, after her triumphant appearances as Brünnhilde in HGO’s first *Ring* cycle (2014–17), the company brings this virtuosic artist back to Houston for the return, after a 25-year absence, of Strauss’s startling one-act masterwork based on the ancient tragedy by Sophocles.

The stellar cast also includes 2016 Richard Tucker Award–winning soprano **Tamara Wilson** in her role debut as Elektra’s sister, Chrysothemis. An HGO Studio alumna, Ms. Wilson last appeared here as Leonora in *Il trovatore* in 2013. In 2015 she portrayed Aida at the Metropolitan Opera, where the *New York Times* noted that her “passion surpasses stereotype.” The sisters’ murderous mother, Klytaemnestra, will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Michaela Martens**, making her house and role debuts. In the Metropolitan Opera’s 2014 mounting of John Adams’s *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Martens, as Marilyn Klinghoffer, was “the singer who most tore at the heart” (*New Yorker*). Baritone and HGO Studio alumnus **Greer Grimsley** will sing Orest, Elektra’s brother. Last heard at HGO in 2002 as the High Priest in *Samson and Delilah*, Grimsley portrayed the title role in Seattle Opera’s *The Flying Dutchman* (2016), where the *Seattle Times* noted his “commanding stage presence and resonant voice.” Klytaemnestra’s lover,

Aegisth, will be taken by HGO Studio alumnus **Chad Shelton**, who sang Mao Tse-tung in last season's *Nixon in China*.

Patrick Summers conducts and **Nick Sandys** directs this revival of **David McVicar**'s haunting 2012 production.

***The Barber of Seville: Figaro, Figaro, Figaro!* (January 26–February 10, 2018)**

Opera's famous barber is back in Rossini's madcap comedy. Generations have been enchanted as this scheming barber helps playboy Count Almaviva win the hand of the vivacious young Rosina, who is kept a virtual prisoner in the home of her crotchety guardian, Dr. Bartolo. Rossini's score is punctuated with infectious melodies, including some of opera's most familiar arias, while the stage is set for laugh-out-loud comedy.

An all-star cast performs in the colorful **Els Comediants** production that the *Houston Chronicle* termed "inventive, playful,[and] unpredictable" when it debuted here in 2011. San Antonio native **David Portillo**, one of *Opera News*'s 2015 Rising Stars, returns to HGO to play Count Almaviva after bringing his "clean, pure tenor" (*Houston Chronicle*) to the role of Tamino in *The Magic Flute* in 2015. Baritone **Lucas Meachem** will make his HGO debut as Figaro, the role in which he gave a "charismatic" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) performance at San Francisco Opera in 2015. Rosina will be sung by HGO Studio alumna **Sofia Selowsky**, who gave memorable HGO performances during the 2015–16 season as The Fox in *The Little Prince* and Eliza in the world premiere of David Hanlon's *After the Storm*. **Peixin Chen**, the HGO Studio alumnus who "stole the show" with his "deep-dish voice" (*Houston Press*) as Dr. Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro*, will portray that character in Rossini's opera. Acclaimed bass **Eric Owens**, an HGO Studio alumnus who was named *Musical America*'s 2017 Vocalist of the Year, will make a long-anticipated return to HGO as the wily Don Basilio. He last appeared here as Ramfis in *Aida* in 1999.

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Houston Grand Opera: 2017–18 Season

* *Company debut*

** *HGO Studio artist*

Former HGO Studio artist

† *Alternate cast*

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 Conductor Director Set Designer Costume Designer Lighting Designer Sound Designer Juvenile Chorus Director	Patricia Schuman Bradley Moore James Robinson Allen Moyer James Schuette Christopher Akerlind Andrew Harper Karen Reeves
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Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Juvenile Chorus

*Commissioned and produced by Houston Grand Opera
Production funding from The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation,
The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, and The Cullen Foundation*

R. Strauss: Elektra

Sung in German with projected English translation

January 19, 21m, 27, 31, Feb. 2, 2018

Elektra Chrysothemis Klytaemnestra Orest Aegisth Conductor Production Revival Director Set and Costume Designer Lighting Designer Chorus Master Houston Grand Orchestra Orchestra and Chorus	Christine Goerke Tamara Wilson # Michaela Martens * Greer Grimsley # Chad Shelton # Patrick Summers David McVicar Nick Sandys* John Macfarlane Jennifer Tipton Richard Bado #
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*A Lyric Opera of Chicago production
Production funding from Mr. John G. Turner and Mr. Jerry G. Fischer,
Chevron*

Rossini: The Barber of Seville

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

January 26, 28m, Feb. 3, 8, 10, 2018

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

*A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia
Production funding from Houston Methodist and the Edward and Frances Bing Fund*

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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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