



HoustonGrandOpera

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Update on HGO and Asian Cultural Concerns

Many of you are aware of the concerns expressed by members of Houston's Asian community around some aspects of our production of *Nixon in China*. At the time we issued a statement expressing HGO's willingness to learn more about those concerns and to discuss how they relate to the challenges of producing opera.

While we know that these complex issues—which are being raised around multiple art forms in cities across the nation—will not be resolved any time soon, we are very pleased to report on two very constructive conversations in which HGO has recently participated. The first was a meeting with representatives of the OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (Greater Houston chapter), with whom we are developing an ongoing collaboration. The second was a frank and wide-ranging public panel discussion hosted by the Asia Society Texas Center last Friday night, in which Patrick and guest artist Ryan Speedo Green represented HGO.

Below is a joint statement summarizing our engagement with the OCA-GH to date. You can view the Asia Society discussion in its entirety by [clicking here](#). It is also posted on our website.

A Joint Statement from OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (Greater Houston chapter) and Houston Grand Opera

Senior leaders from the OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates (Greater Houston chapter) and Houston Grand Opera engaged in a very positive meeting on February 16, 2017 to discuss concerns raised by HGO's January production of *Nixon in China*. Everyone in attendance agreed that the face-to-face conversation was tremendously beneficial in broadening our mutual understanding.

HGO learned from very personal perspectives about the detrimental effects of unintentional whitewashing and use of negative cultural stereotypes in the performing arts. HGO does not endorse either practice and strives to promote a respectful understanding of all cultures.

OCA-GH learned about the rigorous and highly specialized training and unique vocal abilities required for a

career in opera and that there is an artistic standard to maintain that draws from a very small pool of qualified artists.

HGO will be inviting interested members of the community to participate in a new advisory group to call upon for guidance as needed in planning future productions that may raise sensitive cultural issues.

HGO and OCA-GH are committed to working together to engage and educate the Asian American and Pacific Islander youth of Houston about the operatic art form. We look forward to introducing more children and their families to opera and the performing arts, not only as a form of entertainment, but as a means of self-expression that may also lead to a viable career path and increased diversity in the professional field.

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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 63 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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