



Mariachi Opera About Divided Immigrant Family Returns to Houston Grand Opera May 17, 19, 20

***Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* features Grammy Award–winning Mariachi Los Camperos**

Houston, April 16, 2018—At a time when our nation is wrestling with tough questions about immigration, Houston Grand Opera is bringing back its bilingual production of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna / To Cross the Face of the Moon*, a moving story that chronicles the joys and struggles of three generations of a family divided between countries and cultures through the rich melodies of mariachi. HGO presents three special performances on **May 17, 19, and 20** in the **HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center**. Composed by **José “Pepe” Martínez** with libretto by **Leonard Foglia** and known as the world’s first mariachi opera, *Cruzar* has been performed to audiences around the world, including in New York City in January 2018. HGO’s production will feature the Grammy Award–winning **Mariachi Los Camperos**. Tickets for these productions at the HGO Resilience Theater in the George R. Brown Convention Center are available at HGO.org. Parking is available at the Avenida North Garage located at 1815 Rusk Street, across from Resilience Theater. A sky bridge connects the parking garage to the GRB, and clear signage directs patrons to the theater. More information about parking can be found [here](#).

“This could be a wrenching personal story ripped from today’s news to illustrate the struggles of undocumented immigrants who feel strong bonds to their homeland but want to get ahead in America.” *The New York Times*

“It is a portrait of the history of migrant families, an ode to the bravery of all those who have crossed the face of the moon and that line is now more marked than ever.”

“The music, pretty irresistible from start to finish, ranges from swirling, foot-stomping celebration to romantic waltz to soaring aria.”

Dallas Morning News

In *Cruzar*, a Mexican-American man questions his own place in the world as he straddles two cultures: his immigrant father’s and his own as a first-generation American. As he faces his father’s imminent death and long-buried secrets are revealed, he finds himself dramatically re-evaluating his own understanding of what makes a family. Set against a vibrant mariachi score, the story of three generations shifts between the past and the present, Mexico and Texas, Spanish and English. Premiered by HGO in 2010 and remounted in 2013, the opera was the world’s first composed for mariachi. Released on CD by HGO in 2011, *Cruzar* has since toured to cities in the United States as well as to Paris, France.

HGO’s May performances will feature three artists who created their roles in the 2010 premiere: baritone and HGO Studio alumnus **Octavio Moreno** as Laurentino, mezzo-soprano **Cecilia Duarte** as Renata, and mariachi singer **Vanessa Alonzo** as Lupita. Baritone **Efraín Solís** will portray Mark and soprano **Alexandra Smither** will play his daughter, Diana. Tenor **Daniel Montenegro** will sing Rafael, and singer **Miguel de Aranda** sings Chucho. Actor **Miguel Nuñez** will play Victor. The musicians of Los Angeles–based Mariachi Los Camperos and will be conducted by **David Hanlon**. Leonard Foglia will direct and choreography will be by **Keturah Stickann**.

The revival of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* has been made possible due to the generous underwriting of Bank of America; Novum Energy; Isabel and Ignacio Torras; and Claudia and Roberto Contreras. Telemundo is the Spanish language TV sponsor. HGO appreciates the assistance of the Consulado General de México en Houston.

The late **José “Pepe” Martínez** (1941–2016) was born in Tecalitlán, Jalisco, Mexico, and joined his first mariachi band as a violinist at the age of 12. He began writing music when he was 19 years old, and in 1966 formed his own mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlán. In 1975, he joined Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, and his work with that ensemble established him as a composer and arranger. “Somos Novios” and “El Cascabel” are two of the first songs Martínez arranged for his new group; original works such as “Violín Huapango,” “Lluvia de cuerdas,” “Mexicanísimo,” and “Viva Veracruz” with its rapid violin ricochets—a Martínez signature—followed. He was the music director of Mariachi Vargas from 1975 until he stepped down after the 2013–14 season. *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera and premiered in 2010, was his first opera. He later composed *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina* with librettist Leonard Foglia, which premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and was staged at HGO in 2015.

Leonard Foglia has directed the world premieres and subsequent stagings of *Moby-Dick* (Dallas Opera), *Everest* (Dallas Opera), *Cold Mountain* (Santa Fe Opera), *A Coffin in Egypt* (HGO), *The End of the Affair* (HGO), *Three Decembers* (HGO), and *It's a Wonderful Life* (HGO). His production of *Dead Man Walking* has been seen across the United States and at Teatro Real in Madrid. For Broadway, he directed *Master Class*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Thurgood* (filmed for HBO), and *The People in the Picture*, *On Golden Pond*, and *The Gin Game*. Off-Broadway credits include Anna Deavere Smith's *Notes from the Field* (filmed for HBO) and *Let Me Down Easy* (filmed for PBS), *One Touch of Venus* at Encores!, *The Stendhal Syndrome*, and *If Memory Serves*. As a librettist, he wrote (and directed) *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past Is Never Finished*, with composer José "Pepe" Martínez, which premiered at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *A Coffin in Egypt* with composer Ricky Ian Gordon, which premiered at HGO; and *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna/To Cross the Face of the Moon* with composer Martínez, which premiered at HGO and has played across the country as well as Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

Mariachi Los Camperos was founded in 1960 by mariachi giant Natividad "Nati" Cano. His passing in October 2014 was mourned nationwide by performers, students, and lovers of mariachi. A traditionalist and a visionary, Cano played an integral role in the development of mariachi music in North America by training and mentoring new generations of mariachi musicians, by expanding the repertoire, and by bringing mariachi performance out of the traditional venue, the cantinas, and into the concert hall. Cano's seminal contribution to mariachi was marked by institutions as diverse as UCLA, where he taught for many years and revitalized the Music of Mexico program, and the Smithsonian Museum, whose recording label Smithsonian Folkways released a number of albums recorded by Los Camperos, including the Grammy winner, *Amor, Dolor y Lágrima*, and later *Tradición, Arte y Pasión*, released in 2015 and nominated for a Grammy in 2016.

In 2015, Jesús "Chuy" Guzmán succeeded Nati Cano as music director of Los Camperos. Guzmán was a protégé of Nati Cano and is widely recognized as an arranger, director, instructor, and musician in the genre of Mexican mariachi music. He is master of numerous traditional mariachi instruments including trumpet, vihuela, guitarrón, guitar, and violin. For the past 20 years, Guzmán has served as head instructor for numerous international mariachi festivals in the United States and Mexico. He has collaborated on orchestration and musical arrangements for the Symphony Orchestra of Jalisco and has recorded as guest artist with Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. Guzmán has been a faculty member in the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology since 2000.

Mariachi Los Camperos was one of four mariachi bands that collaborated on Linda Ronstadt's album, *Canciones de Mi Padre (Songs of my Father)*. The group participated

in promoting the album and made national television appearances on programs such as *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and the Grammy Awards show. Los Camperos also are featured on Linda Ronstadt's *Más Canciones (More Songs)*.

HGO Studio alumnus

* HGO debut

Cruzar la Cara de la Luna/

To Cross the Face of the Moon

Música por / Music by José “Pepe” Martínez

Letra por / Lyrics by José “Pepe” Martínez and Leonard Foglia

Libreto por / Book by Leonard Foglia

Sung in English and Spanish with projected text/translation

May 17, 19, 20

Laurentino	Octavio Moreno #
Renata	Cecilia Duarte
Mark	Efraín Solis *
Diana	Alexandra Smither
Rafael	Daniel Montenegro
Lupita	Vanessa Alonzo
Chucho	Miguel de Aranda *
Victor	Miguel Nuñez
Music Director/Conductor	David Hanlon #
Director	Leonard Foglia
Associate Director/ Choreographer	Keturah Stickann
Lighting Realizer/ Technical Supervisor	Gary Echelmeyer
Sound Designer	Andrew Harper
Mariachi Los Camperos Director, Mariachi Los Camperos	Jesus Guzman *

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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 (65 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 three Emmy awards. It is the only opera company to win all three honors.

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