



## **Houston Grand Opera to Celebrate Return to Wortham Theater Center with *HGO and Plácido—Coming Home!***

### **A concert and gala evening featuring Plácido Domingo September 26**

Houston, May 14—When Houston Grand Opera (HGO) opened its first season in Houston’s new opera house at the Wortham Theater Center in 1987, world-renowned tenor **Plácido Domingo** starred in Verdi’s *Aida*. Now, just over 30 years later, Domingo will again take the Wortham stage on September 26 for ***HGO and Plácido—Coming Home!***, a gala evening celebrating the company’s return to its creative home after a year of displacement following Hurricane Harvey. Joined by beloved Houston soprano **Ana María Martínez** and the **HGO Orchestra** conducted by **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers**, Domingo will perform an evening of operatic and popular musical favorites. The concert, which begins at 7 p.m., will be followed by a celebration dinner in the Ballroom at Bayou Place. All proceeds from the evening will benefit HGO’s post-Hurricane Harvey activities. The evening’s chairman and presenting underwriter is Margaret Alkek Williams. To purchase package tickets to the gala concert and dinner, please contact HGO’s director of special events, Brooke Rogers, at [brogers@hgo.org](mailto:brogers@hgo.org) or 713-546-0271. Pre-sales to HGO subscribers will begin in late June. A limited number of tickets to the concert only will be available in July.

#### **Plácido Domingo**

Recognized as one of the finest and most influential singing actors in the history of opera, Plácido Domingo’s repertoire now encompasses 149 roles, a number unmatched by any other tenor in history, with more than 3900 career performances. His more than 100 recordings of complete operas, compilations of arias and duets, and crossover discs have earned him 12

Grammy Awards, including three Latin Grammys, and he has made more than 50 music videos and won two Emmy Awards.

Domingo first appeared at HGO as Faust in 1967 and as Don José in *Carmen* the same year. He returned in 1969 as Don Carlo. In 1981 he performed in HGO's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Concert, then in 1984 sang Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and in a concert with Pilar Lorengar. After his 1987 performances as Radames in *Aida*, he returned as Otello in 1989.

In addition to starring in three feature opera films—*Carmen*, *La Traviata* and *Otello*—Domingo voiced the roles of Monte in *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* and Skeleton Jorge in the recent animated film *The Book of Life*, and also appeared as himself on *Sesame Street* and *The Simpsons*. His telecast of *Tosca* from the authentic settings in Rome was seen by more than one billion people in 117 countries. He subsequently took the title role in a 2010 live telecast of *Rigoletto* from Mantua, Italy, the city in which the opera's story takes place. In 1990, he and his colleagues José Carreras and the late Luciano Pavarotti formed the Three Tenors, performing with enormous success all over the world and attracted millions of new fans to opera.

Plácido Domingo made his first stage appearances in a leading baritone role in 2009, performing the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* in Berlin. Since then, he has added several additional Verdi baritone roles to his repertoire, with appearances in *Don Carlo*, *Rigoletto*, *I Due Foscari*, *La Traviata*, *Nabucco*, *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Il Trovatore*, *Macbeth* and *Ernani*. In recent seasons, he has also won acclaim in the baritone roles of Athanaël in Massenet's *Thaïs* and as Puccini's Gianni Schicchi.

The multi-faceted Domingo is also a conductor and a major force as an opera administrator in his role as Eli and Edythe Broad General Director of Los Angeles Opera. He has conducted more than 500 opera performances and symphonic concerts with the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, the Bayreuth Festival, Los Angeles Opera, Chicago Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Montréal Symphony, National Symphony, London Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic.

In 1993, he founded the international voice competition *Operalia*. Within the past few years Domingo has also become one of the most decorated and honored artists before the public today. He has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and has been a Kennedy Center Honoree in the United States; he is also a Commandant of the Legion of Honor in France, an Honorary Knight of the British Empire, and both a Grande Ufficiale and a Cavaliere di Gran Croce of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. He has received honorary doctorates from Oxford University and New York University for his lifelong commitment and contribution to music and the arts. In 2009, King Carl Gustaf of Sweden presented him with the first Birgit Nilsson Prize (at one million dollars, the most generous prize in the world of classical music) for his outstanding achievements in opera; the prize was donated to help fund Operalia. Domingo has raised millions of dollars through benefit concerts to aid the victims of Mexico's devastating 1985 earthquake, the floods caused by Hurricane Paulina in Guerrero and Yucatán (also in Mexico and in El Salvador), and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, where, in 2009, the stage of the Mahalia Jackson Theatre for the Performing Arts was named for him. In 2006, he conducted Verdi's Requiem in Warsaw, to commemorate the first anniversary of Pope John Paul II's

passing. He was chosen for an award by *Opera News* magazine for the inauguration of its first annual awards.

### **Ana María Martínez**

Grammy Award–winning soprano Ana María Martínez has collaborated frequently on multi-city international concert tours with Plácido Domingo. Highlights of their work together include concerts at the Ravinia Festival, the Salzburg Festival in an all-zarzuela concert recorded live and titled *Amor, Vida de mi vida*, a Gala performance at the Teatro Real in Madrid in celebration of the tenor’s birthday, and a performance at the White House. She has also performed on numerous international concert tours with tenor Andrea Bocelli. She is a longtime favorite at HGO—after winning first prize in the 1994 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, she trained in the HGO Studio for one season (1994–95) and she continues to appear regularly at HGO: during the 2018—19 season, she will return in the title role in Catán’s *Florencia en el Amazonas*. Her most recent HGO appearances include Marguerite in *Faust* and the title roles in *Rusalka*, *Madame Butterfly*, and *Carmen*. She has performed on numerous concert tours with tenor Andrea Bocelli. Engagements during the 2017—18 season included *Carmen* with Los Angeles Opera; *Rusalka* with Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires; *Fiordiligi* in *Così fan tutte* and *Marguerite* in *Faust* with Lyric Opera of Chicago; and the title role in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Florida Grand Opera. This summer, she will sing Alice Ford in *Falstaff* with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and the title role in *Madame Butterfly* with the Santa Fe Opera; in the 2018—19 season, she performs *Elisabetta* in *Don Carlo* and *Soleá* in *El gato montés* with the L.A. Opera, and *Madame Butterfly* with the Vienna State Opera.

### **Hurricane Harvey, The Wortham Theater Center, and HGO**

The Gus S. Wortham Theater Center, designed by Eugene Aubry of Morris Architects, was built in large part to provide a home that would serve the needs of its resident companies, Houston Grand Opera and Houston Ballet. Funded in the midst of a recession out of private funds totaling over \$66 million, the facility is owned by The City of Houston and operated by the Houston First Corporation.

When Hurricane Harvey deluged the Houston region at the end of August 2017, the Wortham’s basement was filled with more than 12 feet of toxic water that caused extensive damage to the building’s mechanical systems as well as the physical plant. HGO lost its two performance spaces, rehearsal spaces, and offices, along with its costume shop and several vehicles. The company’s total losses are expected to amount to as much as \$15 million. With the assistance of Houston First, the organization that manages both the Wortham and the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) for the City of Houston, the convention center’s Exhibit Hall A3 was made available to HGO. Only weeks earlier, this space stored supplies for victims of Harvey who were housed in the city’s shelter at the GRB.

In less than two weeks, the company constructed a temporary theater, which it named HGO Resilience Theater, and opened its season on time with *La traviata*. HGO continued to present its entire 2017–18 season in Resilience Theater, with no cancellations or date changes. The administrative staff relocated to temporary offices, again with the help of Houston First. Houston’s performing arts community stepped in to provide rehearsal spaces as well as locations for HGO’s many performances and events beyond the mainstage operas. The Wortham will officially reopen on September 1, 2018. Subscriptions to HGO’s 2018–19 season, opening October 19, are now available at [HGO.org](http://HGO.org).

## 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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