HOU STON GRAND OPERA

concert of ARIAS

ELEANOR MCCOLLUM COMPETITION FOR YOUNG SINGERS

Rita Leader and Glen Rosenbaum, Chairs
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA AND
RITA LEADER AND GLEN ROSENBAUM, CHAIRS

Welcome you to the 35th annual

H O U S T O N   G R A N D   O P E R A

concert of ARIAS

E L E A N O R   M C C O L L U M   C O M P E T I T I O N
F O R   Y O U N G   S I N G E R S

Friday, February 3, 2023

7 p.m.

Wortham Theater Center

and live online via HGO Digital and HGO social channels
“The events in one star can influence a world halfway across the galaxy and a billion years in the future.” —Carl Sagan

It may surprise you to know that you are a walking galaxy of fossil stardust. We all are. My father, a NASA biochemist for more than 40 years, used to love to remind me of this as often as he could during the early days of my performance career. And though I will never understand the laws of our universe as he does, I suppose I inherited his lifelong fascination with star births. My guess would be that you share one too.

Nothing is more thrilling than the opportunity to bear witness to the beginning of something.

Joyce DiDonato, Ryan McKinny, Tamara Wilson, Ana María Martínez: they can all trace their rise to stardom back to Houston Grand Opera’s annual Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias.

“Before the competition, I genuinely thought I would be a professor of voice,” remembers the singularly sensational Tammy Wilson, who took top honors in 2005. “If it weren’t for the Concert of Arias, my life would be different.”

The HGO Studio has been birthing stars since the moment David Gockley and Carlisle Floyd launched it back in 1977. HGO has been training, inspiring, and mentoring brilliant emerging artists for careers in opera for 45 years—careers that have altered the trajectory of opera itself.

Tonight also marks the rebirth of the HGO Studio program, as we launch an ambitious dream for the stars of tomorrow. As you will hear tonight, a new era is beginning.

We are so thrilled you’re here.

Khori Dastoor
General Director and CEO
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US THIS SPRING!

PUCCINI

TOSCA

APR 21 | APR 23 | APR 29
MAY 02 | MAY 05

STRAUSS

SALOME

APR 28 | APR 30 | MAY 06
MAY 10 | MAY 12

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713-228-6737 / HGO.org
PROGRAM

Ani Kushyan MEZZO-SOPRANO “Va! laisse couler mes larmes” from Werther — Jules Massenet

Gosh Sargsyan BASS “Come dal ciel precipita” from Macbeth — Giuseppe Verdi

Gabrielle Turgeon SOPRANO “Padre, germani, addio!” from Idomeneo — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Samuel Kidd BARITONE “Kogda bi zhizn domashnim krugom” from Eugene Onegin — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Natalie Lewis MEZZO-SOPRANO “Give him this orchid” from The Rape of Lucretia — Benjamin Britten

Michael McDermott TENOR “Se il tuo duol” from Idomeneo — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Emma Marhefka SOPRANO “I never thought a boy would love me” from Mayo — Tom Cipullo

Demetrius Sampson, Jr. TENOR “Addio, fiorito asil” from Madame Butterfly — Giacomo Puccini

Natalie Lewis MEZZO-SOPRANO “Fia dunque vero...O mio Fernando” from La favorita — Gaetano Donizetti

Gosh Sargsyan BASS “Le veau d’or” from Faust — Charles Gounod

Gabrielle Turgeon SOPRANO “Piangerò la sorte mia” from Julius Caesar — George Frideric Handel

Michael McDermott TENOR “Kuda, kuda, vi udalilis” from Eugene Onegin — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Emma Marhefka SOPRANO “Deh vieni, non tardar” from The Marriage of Figaro — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Demetrius Sampson, Jr. TENOR “It’s about the way people is made” from Susannah — Carlisle Floyd

Ani Kushyan MEZZO-SOPRANO “Acerba voluttà” from Adriana Lecouvreur — Francesco Cilea

Samuel Kidd BARITONE “If ever I would leave you” from Camelot — Frederick Loewe & Alan Jay Lerner

INTERMISSION
Text to vote for the Audience Choice Award! See page 13 for details.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA STUDIO PERFORMANCE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS
Followed by a special announcement from Khori Dastoor

CELEBRATION DINNER
2023 Concert of Arias chairs Rita Leader and Glen Rosenbaum share both a professional history as attorneys with Vinson & Elkins LLP (V&E) and a mutual love for opera. Rita’s introduction to HGO was the groundbreaking 1976 revival of Gershwin’s *Porgy & Bess*. Rita was first drawn to the history of the piece, a milestone production that opened the world of opera to her. She first subscribed to HGO in 1983. Rita attends the Aspen Music Festival and School for eight weeks each summer, where she enjoys hearing rising, young singers—many of whom go on to compete in the *Concert of Arias*, join the HGO Studio, and appear frequently on our Houston stages. Rita is a past President and current volunteer speaker and mentor for SCORE Houston, a nonprofit organization providing business counseling to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Her volunteer service extends from HGO to St. John’s School, First Presbyterian Church, and the Boy Scouts of America. Rita is currently a sponsor in the Uniting for Ukraine pathway program and enjoys time with her two sons, daughter-in-law and two granddaughters, all of whom live in Houston.

Glen is a Senior Partner at V&E, specializing in tax controversy and planning work for almost 50 years. He also handles tax and corporate work for non-profit organizations, most on a pro bono basis. An HGO subscriber since 1980, Glen joined the Board as General Counsel in 1982—a position that V&E lawyers have now held for over 40 years. In 1983-84, Glen led the V&E team that represented HGO in negotiating and drafting the Wortham Theater Center’s development and operating agreements, which continue to govern the Center. Among Glen’s other major HGO projects was the 1986-87 *Porgy and Bess* production, a first of its kind partnership between more than a dozen opera companies to mount a national tour. The V&E team also handled myriad ancillary issues including the contract with a theatrical animal agency to engage Pedie, the goat that pulled Porgy’s cart. Glen’s position, which he maintains over 35 years later, is that the excellence of the contract enabled Pedie to appear in over 350 performances with only one accident on stage—and that was during a rehearsal!

Glen has played a role in shaping countless HGO policies and initiatives including chairing the strategic planning committee whose community outreach focus ultimately led to the formation of HGOco, now Community & Learning. Glen’s firm leadership of the finance committee during the 2007 subprime financial crisis and subsequent economic downturn secured HGO’s stability during turbulent times, and his 2009-11 term as HGO Board chair saw unprecedented company growth including major project planning and fundraising toward HGO’s first *Ring* cycle, the U.S. premiere of *The Passenger*—the Holocaust opera performed at HGO followed by New York’s Lincoln Center Festival—and HGO’s first mariachi opera.

As well, Glen has devoted substantial pro bono time to other community organizations, including Holocaust Museum Houston; the Houston Museum of Natural Science, with which Glen worked to secure two Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits and the annual holiday season model train layout, *Trains Over Texas*; New Hope Housing; the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation; and the University of Texas Law School Foundation. In recognition of his civic efforts, on March 7 the Houston Bar Association Auxiliary will present Glen with its prestigious Leon Jaworski Award.
EVENT UNDERWRITERS
RITA LEADER AND GLEN ROSENBAUM, CHAIRS

PRESENTER
Estate of Eleanor Searle McCollum
Glen Rosenbaum and Rita Leader

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Scott Stevens and Darren Gibson
Kathleen and Richard Stout
Nancy Carter Strohmer
Beth Wolff
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Cheryl and Mike Clancy
Mary and Jimmy Davenport
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Jennifer and Benjamin Fink
Heidi and David Gerger
Michaela and Nicholas Greenan
Patricia Holmes
Carol and R.O. Hunton
Connie Kwan-Wong
Stephanie and Rich Langenstein
Renee Margolin
Kristen and Matthew Loden
Dr. Eric McLaughlin and Elliot Castillo
Shell
Astrid Van Dyke

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL
Emily Bivona and Ryan Manser
Alina and Richard Dovere
Nadia and Damian Gill
Roya Gordon
Matthew Healey
Andrew Pappas
Brianna and Daniel Ritter
Michael Steeves
Drs. Ishwaria and Vivek Subbiah

ADDITIONAL UNDERWRITING
Robin Angly and Miles Smith
Janice and Lawrence Finder
Sherry and Ken Levy
Mary Theofanidis

SPECIAL EVENTS PARTNERS
The Events Company
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HGO also thanks those who pledged their support after press time.
Join us to celebrate Black artists in opera, and Black History Month, at the fourth annual

GIVING VOICE

Lawrence Brownlee ✧ George Shirley ✧ Nicole Heaston
Renée Richardson ✧ Cory McGee

Giving Voice Mass Choir featuring
Texas Southern University ✧ Prairie View A&M University
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church
Houston Ebony Opera Guild ✧ Houston Grand Opera Chorus

Feb. 24 ✧ 7:30 p.m.
WHEELER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
3826 Wheeler Ave.

Tickets are free and space is limited. Secure yours today at
HGO.org/GivingVoice

Presented by Houston Grand Opera and Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church
In partnership with Texas Southern University, Houston Ebony Opera Guild,
and Prairie View A&M University.
MEET THE JUDGES

**Khori Dastoor**  
HGO GENERAL DIRECTOR  
AND CEO, JUDGE  
*Margaret Alkek Williams Chair*

**Patrick Summers**  
HGO ARTISTIC AND MUSIC DIRECTOR, JUDGE  
*Sarah and Ernest Butler Chair*

**Isabel Leonard**  
MEZZO-SOPRANO, GUEST JUDGE

Multiple Grammy Award-winning artist Isabel Leonard is making her HGO debut as Charlotte in Massenet’s *Werther*, running through February 10, 2023 at the Wortham.

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**PIANIST**

**Maureen Zoltek**  
STUDIO MUSIC DIRECTOR  
*Mr. & Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair*

Maureen Zoltek, an active proponent of new works who has supported emerging artists throughout her career, joined HGO Studio leadership from San Francisco Opera in September.

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**TONIGHT’S LIVESTREAM HOST**

**Nicole Heaston**  
SOPRANO

Nicole Heaston is an HGO favorite who recently performed the role of the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. See her on February 24 as a featured soloist in *Giving Voice*.

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**SCOTT F. HEUMANN**

The first prize in the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers *Concert of Arias* is the Scott F. Heumann Memorial Award, named in loving memory of HGO’s former artistic administrator, dramaturg, and career advisor to the Houston Grand Opera Studio.
Greetings from 2053

A LETTER TO THE ARTISTS OF CONCERT OF ARIAS 2023

By Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director, Houston Grand Opera

Do you remember 30 years ago when you participated in Concert of Arias? That was fast, wasn’t it? You are in your fifties!

What a night that was. Back then, we were tip-toeing out of the awful COVID-19 pandemic that happened while you were in college. Now, of course, the upsilon, omega, and zeta variants have each spent unwelcome years scything through the world, not to mention that terrible COVID-35 that nearly finished us all off. Still, opera and live performance has survived it all, and you know why? It was you, the contestants of COA 2023. It was your talent, resourcefulness, and resilience.

Okay, it wasn’t only you. But it was your generation whose artistic gifts made it all work, and since your generation is now running the country and all of the arts companies, you are now keenly aware of what you’ve accomplished. What were your gifts? What did it take to land in Concert of Arias at all? If you could see the world from 2053, what would you notice about your artistic life?

Writing from 2053, I can tell you that I just saw Harry Styles play King Lear, and he seems awfully young for it at age 59—but those kinds of careers sure can age a person. I can also share that in just a few years we will be celebrating the 300th anniversary of Mozart’s birth in 1756, so there are a lot of exciting plans afoot to recognize that huge milestone. When you were in COA in 2023, many of us remembered back more than a trentade to 1991, when we celebrated the bicentennial of Mozart’s death. Now we are looking at a
Mozart tricentennial production of *The Marriage of Figaro* live from the Carl Sagan Memorial Center for the Arts in the colonized exoplanets of Alpha Centauri. The other day I experienced a beautiful *Lucia di Lammermoor* in our local hologram theater, where they’ve managed to recreate so many wonderful things. They not only have Maria Callas and Enrico Caruso, but they’ve managed to bring back Malibran and Patti—singers from before the recording age! Don’t ask me how; it is too complicated for this short letter—let’s just say the science of *Jurassic Park* wasn’t so much fun fiction as it was a primer. Back in 2023 we thought the internet gave us access to so much, but wait until you meet the stellarnet!

Did you also notice that new word, *trentade*? Just like a decade is 10 years and a pentad 50, a *trentade* is our new word for 30 years. The word comes in handy, because musical history has tended to happen in cycles of about 30 years, and it still does. Look at the extraordinary *trentade* from Wagner’s 1882 *Parsifal* to 1912, one of the very best in musical history. In those three decades we had Verdi’s final masterpieces *Otello* and *Falstaff*, as well as *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Joplin’s Treemonisha*, all of Gilbert and Sullivan, all of Massenet, most of John Philip Sousa’s music, *The Nutcracker*, the greatest symphonies of Mahler, Bruckner, Dvořák, and Tchaikovsky, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Puccini’s La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madame Butterfly*, and also *The Merry Widow*, *Jenůfa*, *Salome*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, plus the most popular opera of that time by far, Charpentier’s *Louise*. Amazing, huh? It was opera at its most vibrant. A sure measure of health in art is how much of it is simultaneously new, understood, and loved. Many works may be one or two of those, but only the greatest are all three. How exciting that you have made the last 30 years so like that time—just look at what you’ve done!

Yes, here in 2053, thanks to you, COA contestants, we are back in a golden time like that. Okay, it isn’t just like that; it is different, but still golden. You see, it really is like Mark Twain said: “history doesn’t repeat, it *rhymes*.” You’ve made new operas so relevant that they make up the bulk of our repertoire now in the 2050s, and you’ve done that without losing the greatest of the legacy operas—we still have Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Handel, and so many others, but now they are the events they should be. Can you believe that back in the first quarter of this century we performed *Carmen*, *Boheme*, and *Traviata* every five to seven years? Here in the 2050s we now plan them once every 20 years or so. When Houston Grand Opera started almost a century ago, the first season opened with two operas written well within the lifetime of the founders, *Salome* and *Madame Butterfly*, and now it is that way again. You did that. And oh my, the centennial celebrations of Houston Grand Opera, what a Texan-sized party that will be in a couple of years. After the resignation of President Kardashian, a time too chaotic to recount here, there has been an upside: we have a renewed National Endowment for the Arts that finally *finally* recognizes that the arts are a vital part of life. This has allowed so many organizations who have done the hard work of inclusivity and equality for a long time, and not just the ones who talked about it, to have sustainable futures. You’ve done that, too. So many donors across the country made this possible that it would be impossible to thank them all, but all of you who sang in Concert of Arias in 2023 played an integral role in it. Back then, we constantly raised money—now, we raise money for the special things we want to do; we don’t just raise money to stay open. You did this, too: every note of gratitude that you wrote by hand to donors and fellow artists, each time you shared content on your personal cyberspace that lifted up rather than tore down, all of that contributed to a world that valorizes integrity and has ethics—you’ve created this new modern world that values art. You didn’t do this because you were told; you did it because it was right, and doing what is right still changes the world, even in faraway 2053.

As you’ve noticed, the price of an artistic life is that not everyone likes you. That’s okay. Being an artist means making yourself vulnerable to a lot of opinion, so remember that opinion and criticism are very different: criticism exacts a price from the person giving it and opinion doesn’t. Assign each their proper value. You’ve made it 30 years in your career, so as you start passing on what you’ve learned to the next generation, be constructive and positive with them. That is a very important part of artistry.
The changes between 2053 and 2023 are easy to spot, just like the changes between 2053 and 60 years ago, in 1993. What is perhaps more fascinating is what has not changed. Opera is still about the voice. This is for a deeply human reason: the voice is a life force. Every great singer has a sonic imprint as personal as fingerprints or eyes, and the greater the singer the more unique the sound. This may be the single most extraordinary thing about opera: the pure humanity of singing. Yes, opera is famously many things, but the enlarging art of opera has at its heart the giving of voice.

For opera singers, what was true centuries ago is still true: sing what you love, because love fuels the joy you take in singing. Being gifted for singing is like being gifted for anything: your gift can personally inspire or harm. If you’ve been in the career for 30 years, you’ve probably seen plenty of both. It takes a great deal of diligent work and discipline to be an artist because artistry brings you face-to-face with yourself every single day. Artistry means getting all of the craft and technique secure and then out of the way so that you can go deeper.

We often get confused about this: artistry isn’t one thing, it is a thousand things, a thousand instances of deeply noticing, emulating, recreating, creating, and making something yours. A composer creates a symbolic pond. Craft and technique throws a pebble into the middle of it that makes a wave experienced by an audience, who are the third and most important part of artistry’s trinity; it is they who ultimately decide what does and doesn’t last. But artistry is all of it: pebble, pond, and wave. I beg you, dear artists: let the pebble in the pond be enough, or don’t go into this life. Your inner voice will tell you if you really want this or not, but want it because you have no choice, and please don’t seek for it to fill a void in some other part of your life, because it wasn’t built to do that. A happy person makes a happy artist, not the other way around.

So, COA 2023, when you look back from 2053: what will you see? I hope you enjoyed yourselves as much as we did. Concert of Arias was then, and is still, one of the great nights of our year. You lifted us up. Enjoy your gifts, because we sure did. Thank your parents and teachers. Take it all in. 2053 will be here before you know it.

Patrick Summers
Houston, Texas
February 3, 2053
(with stellarnet acknowledgements to the year 2023)
TEXT TO VOTE!

SUPPORT ONE OF TONIGHT’S COMPETITORS WITH YOUR VOTE FOR THE AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD!

Text AUDIENCE to +1 (833) 562-2742 (ARIA), then send another message with your favorite singer’s number (above), and your vote will be recorded. One vote per mobile device will be accepted. Those attending at the Wortham may ask an HGO staff member or usher for assistance.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT
Support the HGO Studio and these young artists with a gift at HGO.org/DONATE. Designate the purpose of your gift (COA) using the Additional Comments box.
Samuel Kidd  
**BARITONE**

Baritone Samuel Kidd is a 2017 alumnus of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. A gifted recital and art song performer, he recently appeared with the Cincinnati Song Initiative performing Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder*. Recent operatic highlights include Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* with Yale Opera and the title role in *Eugene Onegin* at Music Academy of the West. This season at Yale, he will perform Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. In April 2021, he participated in the Caramoor Rising Star program, directed and curated by Steven Blier. He was also featured in the New York Festival of Song’s online season in September 2020. As an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, he gave two performances of Schubert’s *Winterreise*, as well as Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder* with the University Symphony Orchestra. A graduate of University of Michigan and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Kidd is a second-year Master of Musical Arts student in opera performance at Yale University under the tutelage of Gerald Martin Moore.

Ani Kushyan  
**MEZZO-SOPRANO**

Georgian mezzo-soprano Ani Kushyan has been a member of the Young Artists Program at Armenian National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet since August 2021. She made her debut with the company in 2021-22 season as Third Girl in *Anoush* by Armenian composer Armen Tigranyan. Other roles include Marta in *Iolanta*, Lyubasha in *The Tsar’s Bride*, and *Anoush’s* mother in *Anoush*. As an active concert performer, she has appeared in Germany, Latvia, Sweden, Estonia, Georgia, and Armenia. She was named first prize winner in the 2022 Premiere Opera Foundation Vocal Competition, a bronze medalist in the 2021 CIS Delphic Games, the audience prize winner at the SOI Fiorenza Cedolins competition in Italy, and the first prize winner in the 2021 Armenian Romanciade. Kushyan received her bachelor’s degree from the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory and her master’s degree from the Tbilisi State Conservatory in Georgia. She continued her studies at the Riga Jāzepa Vitola Latvian Music Academy and the Lübeck Academy of Music in Germany.

Natalie Lewis  
**MEZZO-SOPRANO**

Mezzo-soprano Natalie Lewis is a 2021 alumnus of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. Hailed for her “velvet mezzo-soprano sonic cushion” (San Diego Story) and her “sly lyricism” (Opera News), she was a 2022 Renée Fleming Fellow at the Aspen Music Festival, where she performed Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* alongside Sir Bryn Terfel in the title role. Other roles include Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* and Marzellina in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Recently, Lewis won the New York District round of The Metropolitan Opera’s Laffont Competition. Upcoming appearances include the roles of Zita (Gianni Schicchi) and La Zia Principessa (Suor Angelica) in Juilliard Opera Theater’s Puccini double bill, as well as her Carnegie Hall debut in April 2023, singing the alto solos in Marrianna Martines’s *Dixit Dominus* and Bela Bartok’s *Three Village Scenes*. This summer she will attend the Merola Opera Program to perform the title role in Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia*.
Emma Marhefka  **SOPRANO**

Soprano Emma Marhefka made her professional debut last season singing Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* with Opera Tampa. She appeared as a Studio Artist with Wolf Trap Opera and sang the role of Younger Alyce in *Glory Denied* with Knoxville Opera, a role she will reprise with Opera Roanoke in February 2023. She is a two-time Encouragement Award winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. A winner of the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music’s Corbett Competition, Marhefka sang Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* at CCM, garnering praise for her “lyrical and expressive” singing. This spring she will perform the role of Mary Johnson in Gregory Spears’s *Fellow Travelers*. During her undergraduate studies, Marhefka created the role of Valeria in the world premiere of Tom Cipullo’s *Mayo* and performed with the Janiec Opera Company at Brevard. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Crane School of Music at SUNY-Potsdam, and will complete her Master of Music at CCM this spring.

Michael McDermott  **TENOR**

Tenor Michael McDermott is a 2021 alumnus of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. He recently returned to the Aspen Music Festival for a second summer, covering the role of Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. At The Juilliard School in New York, he performed the roles of Spärlich in *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* and Filippo in Haydn’s *L’infedeltà delusa*, as well as appearing in liederabends and recitals coached by Brian Zeger and Pierre Vallet. His recent competition wins include first prize in the 2021 Schmidt Vocal Competition and first prize in the Scholarship Division of the National Opera Association’s Carolyn Bailey Argento Competition. McDermott received his Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School, and is currently pursuing his master’s degree at Rice University studying with Robin Rice.

Demetrious Sampson, Jr.  **TENOR**

Demetrious Sampson, Jr. is a rising tenor from Georgia. A 2022 alumnus of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy, he made his professional debut with Atlanta Opera at the age of 20 as Crab Man in *Porgy and Bess*, a role he reprised at Des Moines Metro Opera in summer 2022 as an apprentice artist. At Georgia State University, he has performed the roles of Vanderdendur in *Candide* and the title role in John Musto’s *Bastianello*. A previous Encouragement Award winner, he recently won the Georgia District in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and will compete in the Southeast Region Finals later this month. This spring Sampson will receive his bachelor’s degree from Georgia State University, where he studies with Kathryn Hartgrove.
**Gosh Sargsyan**  **BASS**

Bass Gosh Sargsyan is an active concert and opera performer in his native Armenia, and a member of the Young Artists Program of the Armenian National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet. He made his company debut in 2021 as Qyoxva in Anush by Armenian composer Armen Tigranyan. Additional roles include Dulcamara in The Elixir of Love and Il Commendatore in Don Giovanni. He is a first prize winner in the International “Renaissance” vocal competition in Gyumri, Armenia, and was a semifinalist in the 2022 International Lyric Competition in Rome, Italy. Sargsyan received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music from the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan, where he studied with world-famous baritone Gevorg Hakobyan.

**Gabrielle Turgeon**  **SOPRANO**

American/Canadian soprano Gabrielle Turgeon is an alumnus of both the Aspen Music Festival and School and the 2022 HGO Young Artists’ Vocal Academy. Turgeon was a 2020 YoungArts National Finalist and a 2022 finalist in the Schmidt Vocal Arts Undergraduate Awards. Performance highlights this year include Brahms’s Ein Deutsches Requiem (Orpheus Choir of Toronto) and Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana (Chorus Niagara). Recent operatic and musical theater roles have included Sister Sophia in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s The Sound of Music (Aspen Music Festival and School) and Iris in Handel’s Semele (Toronto Lyric Opera Centre). This season, Turgeon performed the role of Blanche de la Force in Poulenc’s Dialogues of the Carmelites at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), where she is currently pursuing her master’s degree. She received her Bachelor of Music degree with honors from the University of Toronto in 2022.
The MOMENT

Everything Changed

FOUR DISTINGUISHED HGO STUDIO ALUMNI SHARE ABOUT THEIR CONCERT OF ARIAS EXPERIENCE AND THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED.

By Brian Speck, Director of the HGO Studio

Throughout the world, the HGO Studio is synonymous with excellence. Alumni of the program perform across the globe, representing the extraordinary level of talent that is a hallmark of the HGO brand. Tonight marks the beginning for a new generation of young artists. I recently visited with four distinguished alumni of the program about how the Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias gave them their start.
Ana María Martínez, Soprano
First Place Winner, 1994
HGO Studio 1994-95

Perhaps no artist is more closely identified with HGO today than Ana María Martínez, the company’s Artistic Advisor. Ana María has appeared at HGO many times, most recently in the title role of Florencia en el Amazonas and in the digital series Suite Española, which she also curated. Looking back on her nearly 30-year operatic career, she can still remember the impact of Concert of Arias.

“I remember feeling shocked, heart racing, when I heard my name announced as the first-place winner! There are so many emotions and so much adrenaline in that moment for a young singer, hoping beyond hope for validation that they are on the right track. I felt overwhelmed, grateful, and by the end of that amazing evening, I realized one important factor: Tonight it was me. Last year it was someone else and next year it will be someone else. This awareness was instantly humbling and is a perspective that has kept me ever vigilant of my craft, working on my skills as a singing artist, and keen on co-creating most openly with my fellow artists.”

Following her winning moment, Ana María joined the HGO Studio, honing her craft and learning professional skills through her residency with the company. She remembers that the opportunity to work together with operatic stars played a key role in her development.

“Imagine being young, driven, wet-behind-the-ears when it comes to your craft, and able to sit in on rehearsals with major international opera singers and conductors—or, better yet, cast in one of the mainstage productions and soak in all the knowledge, in real time! That level of excellence around a young artist—a sort of living master class—as well as knowing that excellence is always expected of us, was a tremendous experience to breathe in daily. Knowing that I could fulfill my professional obligations and deliver what was expected of me with success was paramount. The long-standing relationship with HGO that followed, and which I still enjoy today, has been the cornerstone of my career.”

Tamara Wilson, Soprano
First Place Winner, 2005
HGO Studio 2005-07

Among the most noted singers in the world today, Tamara Wilson has made her home in the Houston area and continues to appear with HGO regularly—this spring, in her role debut as Tosca. Many firsts have come for Tamara in Houston, including her first Verdi role: Amelia in Un ballo in maschera, just one year after she completed her time with the HGO Studio. Tamara says Concert of Arias changed her entire outlook on her career.

“It was the first time I thought, ‘Hey, I might be good enough to become a professional singer.’ Winning the Eleanor McCollum Competition significantly boosted my confidence that performing was the right path for me. If it weren’t for the Concert of Arias, my life would be different.”

Tamara’s time in the Studio helped her to develop professionalism and artistry—both strengths she is well-known for today. When asked about the most important thing she learned in the Studio, she said that it was to “trust my instincts. We are taught so much from so many points of view, be it from coaches, conductors, directors, and guest artists. Ultimately, it’s about taking all that information in and finding what works and what doesn’t work for you, then applying it to your craft. HGO gave me the resources and the opportunities. I had to step up and take advantage of them. Professionalism is one of the top qualities you find in anyone who is in the program at HGO. We are well-trained and well-prepared.”
Now at the height of an international career, Ryan McKinny has returned to HGO many times, including in the title roles of Don Giovanni and Rigoletto. Although he performs all over the world, he still thinks of the company as his artistic home after developing deep bonds with the city and people of HGO during his time in the Studio.

“I wouldn’t be the artist I am today without the Houston Grand Opera Studio. It has been a huge gift to be an alum of this fantastic program. I was able to learn here, make mistakes, create amazing contacts, study hard, make debut roles, work with world class artists, directors, and conductors, and make lifelong friends. It’s so gratifying to be part of the HGO family. Our children were born in Houston, and our eldest’s first three birthday parties took place at the Wortham. Our whole family feels like this is our house. We hope to be back many more times in the future.”

The opportunity to perform in an HGO production is a hallmark of the Studio program and a game-changer for artistic development. Early in his time in the Studio, Ryan had the opportunity to perform alongside the extraordinary American bass Samuel Ramey. This remains one of his greatest memories of working at HGO: “My very first role was the police officer in Boris Godunov with the great Samuel Ramey as Boris. Being so close to a hero of mine, getting to work with him and learn from him, was a dream. And he was so incredibly kind.”

This season, Mané Galoyan returned to the company for the second time since graduating from the HGO Studio program, to sing the role of Avis in The Wreckers. Her extraordinary career, still in its early stages, continues to rise. Last year, she won second place in the famous Operalia competition, an experience she was well-prepared for by her Concert of Arias win six years earlier. Before being named a finalist in Concert of Arias, Mané had already dreamed of that moment, yet she was still overwhelmed by the reality of being named the winner.

“Concert of Arias was one of the most important events in my life! I was in HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy, and I just loved it. And I thought to myself, I must come back and be in the program. So when I was invited to the competition, I was very excited and very nervous! Fast-forward to the moment I was announced as the first prize winner—I have never been so shocked. I did not think even for a second that I was going to win. It was an incredible moment of joy, shock, and disbelief. I will never forget it!”

For each of these winners, the Concert of Arias experience was the first step in a long relationship with HGO and the city of Houston. Mané moved to Houston from Armenia to join the HGO Studio and, she says, now feels a sense of belonging in this company and this city, where she worked so hard to realize her dreams.

“Coming back to HGO always feels like coming home! I am always so happy to be back. It just feels so good to be here and work in my home company. It is so nice to be walking in the hallways and see so many familiar and friendly faces.”
ABOUT THE HGO STUDIO

The Eleanor McCollum competition is a crucial recruitment tool for the Houston Grand Opera Studio, one of the most highly respected and prestigious young artist programs in the world. For 45 years, the HGO Studio has served young singers and pianist/coaches who have completed their academic training and are preparing to embark on full-fledged operatic careers. Each year after an exhaustive international search, a hand-selected group of the most exceptionally talented individuals is brought here to Houston to work on the mainstage and in recital alongside the best in the business at Houston Grand Opera. During a residency of up to three years, each performer collaborates with an expert team while gaining invaluable experience at the highest professional level. Alumni of the HGO Studio perform at the best opera houses around the world—and internationally renowned artists such as Joyce DiDonato, Jamie Barton, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, and Tamara Wilson still regularly return to their home stage at HGO. For many, the HGO Studio is just the beginning of a lifelong relationship with the company.

HGO STUDIO SUPPORTERS

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Dr. Laura E. Sulak and Dr. Richard W. Brown
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Lynn Des Prez
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Lynn Gissel
Brenda Harvey-Traylor
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Gloria M. Portela
Jill and Allyn Risley
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and
Dr. Milton D. Rosenau Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan and Dian Stai
Drs. Liz Grimm and Jack Roth
Additional support for the Houston Grand Opera Studio is provided by Craig Miller and Chris Bacon, Sylvia Barnes and James M. Trimble, Mr. and Mrs. Melvyn Hetzel, Marsha L. Montemayor, Ms. Diane K. Morales, Ms. Janet Sims, Mr. and Mrs. Jay Watkins, Mr. Trey Yates, and the following funds within the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.:
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Mary C. Gayler Snook Endowment Fund
ABOUT THE HGO STUDIO

HGO STUDIO ARTISTS 2022-23

Meryl Dominguez sopranosoprano
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai Fellow

Ricardo Garcia tenor
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson / Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Mr. Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow

Navasard Hakobyan baritone
Melinda and Bill Brunger / Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson / Gloria M. Portela Fellow

Cory McGee bass
Beth Madison Fellow

Michelle Papenfuss pianist/coach
Dr. Saul and Ursula Balagura / Dr. Laura E. Sulak and Dr. Richard W. Brown Fellow

Renée Richardson soprano
Kathleen Moore and Steven Homer / Carolyn J. Levy / Jeff Stocks and Juan Lopez Fellow

Luke Sutliff baritone
Lynn Gissel / Brenda Harvey-Traylor / Nancy Haywood Fellow

Eric Taylor tenor
Drs. Rachel and Warren A. Ellsworth IV / Sharon Ley Lietzow and Robert Lietzow / Jill and Allyn Risley Fellow

Emily Treigle mezzo-soprano
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover / John Serpe and Tracy Maddox Fellow

Erin Wagner mezzo-soprano
Amy and Mark Melton / Drs. Liz Grimm and Jack Roth Fellow

Bin Yu Sanford pianist/coach
Lynn Des Prez / Stephanie Larsen / Dr. and Mrs. Miguel Miro-Quesada Fellow
### PAST WINNERS

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<th>First Place</th>
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<td>Joyce DiDonato</td>
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<td>Jordan Bisch</td>
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<td>Rachel Willis-Sørensen</td>
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<td>Catherine Martin</td>
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<td>Jung Nan Yoon</td>
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<td>Nathaniel Peake</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Anthony Roth Costanzo, Devon Guthrie, Boris Dyakov, Anthony Roth Costanzo</td>
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<td>Andrea Carroll, Natalya Romaniw, Peixin Chen, Andrea Carroll</td>
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<td>D’Ana Lombard, Amanda Woodbury, Sofia Selowsky, Amanda Woodbury</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<td>2019</td>
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<td>2020</td>
<td>Sun-Ly Pierce, Cory McGee, Angel Romero, Tatiana Carlos, Angel Romero, Laureano Quant</td>
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<td>2021</td>
<td>Key’mon W. Murrah, Eric Taylor, Emily Treigle, Ángel Vargas, Brittany Olivia Logan</td>
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<td>2022</td>
<td>Navasard Hakobyani, Amanda Batista, Jongwon Han, Olivia Smith, Jongwon Han, Olivia Smith</td>
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A.C. — Audience Choice
A.M.M.E.A. — Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award
O.V.C. — Online Viewers' Choice
CONCERT OF ARIAS 2023

2022-23 HGO STUDIO FACULTY & STAFF

Brian Speck, Director
Maureen Zoltek, Studio Music Director
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Jamie Gelfand, Studio Manager
Ana Maria Martinez, HGO Artistic Advisor
Stephen King, Director of Vocal Instruction
Sponsored by Jill and Allyn Risley, Janet Sims, and James J. Drach Endowment Fund
Patrick Summers, Conducting Instructor and Coach
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chair
Peter Pasztor, Principal Coach
Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Jr. Endowment Fund
Kirill Kuzmin, Head of Music Staff
Kevin J. Miller, Assistant Conductor
Madeline Slettedahl, Assistant Conductor
Brian Connelly, Piano Instructor
Tara Faircloth, Drama Coach, Showcase Director
Adam Noble, Movement Instructor, Showcase Fight and Intimacy Director
Christa Gaug, German Instructor
Enrica Vagliani Gray, Italian Instructor
Sponsored by Marsha Montemayor
Raymond Hounfodji, French Instructor
Sponsored by Craig Miller and Chris Bacon
Joy Jonstone, English Instructor
Hemdi Kfir, Guest Coach
Warren Jones, Guest Coach
Thomas Lausmann, Guest Coach

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