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Houston Grand Opera presents *Glory Denied*, November 6 and November 9, at 1940 Air Terminal Museum Hangar

*Opera by Tom Cipullo about Vietnam War will cap multi-year
HGOco
Veterans project*

Houston, October 27, 2017— Houston Grand Opera (HGO) will present *Glory Denied*, the story of an American family during the turbulent Vietnam War era, on Monday, November 6 and Thursday, November 9, at 7:30 p.m. at the 1940 Air Terminal Museum Hangar at Hobby Airport. This intimate chamber opera by Tom Cipullo, based on the book by Tom Philpott, tells the true story of America’s longest-held prisoner of war returning home to a country he no longer recognizes. The opera chronicles Colonel Jim Thompson’s suffering in the jungles of Southeast Asia as well as the personal struggles that followed his liberation and repatriation. *Glory Denied* is presented by HGOco, which connects HGO’s creative resources with the diverse and vibrant Houston community. The production will be conducted by HGO Studio artist Geoffrey Loff and directed for the stage by Carleen Graham, the director of HGOco. Clair Hummel is costume designer and Tony Giovannetti is lighting designer.

***Glory Denied* patrons have the opportunity to donate a ticket to a veteran. Purchase a ticket at ½ price to allow a Houston veteran to attend *Glory Denied* for free by selecting the “Donate a ticket” option when purchasing their [tickets](#) online. You can also honor a veteran by name with your ticket donation. Completing the form does not confirm one’s donation. In order to complete the donation, the ticket buyer still must select the “donate a ticket” button. Veterans**

can call HGO's box office at 713-228-6737 (OPERA) for a special promo code for 50% off the ticket price. Valid veteran identification is required at the time of ticket pick-up.

Composed in 2006, *Glory Denied* has received numerous productions; the Fort Worth Opera recording on the Albany Records label was cited by *Opera News* as among the best of 2014. Reviewers have hailed the work as "terrifically powerful...superbly written" (*Fanfare*), praised its "luminous score" (*Washington Post*), and noted that "the dramatic tension was relentless" (*Opera News*).

A note on *Glory Denied* by Tom Cipullo, August 2001: "*Glory Denied* may be the first opera adapted from an oral history. As such, it presents no linear narrative. Rather, it jumps from moment to moment, as a man's mind might leap when subjected to horrific stress. Virtually all of the dialogue in the opera is taken literally from actual statements by the real people involved. On those few occasions where, for dramatic purposes, words have been changed or statements conflated, the composer has taken care not to alter the intent of the speaker."

In its review of Mr. Philpott's book, *Glory Denied: The Saga of Jim Thompson, America's Longest-Held POW*, the *New York Times* stated: "Indeed it is not too much to say that *Glory Denied* and Colonel Thompson's mixed feelings about it encapsulate something of the moral essence of the Vietnam War and the imperishable bitterness of its legacy."

Glory Denied is part of the capstone of HGOco's four-year Veterans Songbook project. The Veterans Songbook project gives voice to the stories of Houston-based men and women who have served our country and to the stories of their loved ones, sparking a community-wide conversation about conflict and courage, strength and sacrifice. The project is part of HGOco's Song of Houston initiative. Song of Houston projects are supported by Bank of America; the C. Howard Pieper Foundation; Glen Rosenbaum; National Endowment for the Arts; ConocoPhillips; The Brown Foundation; Marathon Oil Corp.; and the Houston Endowment.

BIOGRAPHIES

Tom Cipullo

Composer

Tom Cipullo is the winner of the 2016 Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize from SUNY/Potsdam, a 2012 Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2013 Sylvia Goldstein Award from Copland House, and the 2013 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy. He has received commissions from dozens of performing ensembles and singers, and he has received fellowships and awards from Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, the Liguria Study Center (Italy), the Fundacion Valparaiso (Spain), and the Oberpfaelzer Kuenstlerhaus (Bavaria). Cipullo's music is published by Oxford University Press and Classical Vocal Reprints and recorded on the Naxos, Albany, CRI, PGM, MSR, GPR, Centaur, and Capstone labels. Cipullo's first opera,

Glory Denied, is based on the true story of America's longest-held prisoner of war. It has enjoyed numerous productions, and the Fort Worth Opera recording on Albany Records was cited by Opera News as among the best of 2014. Cipullo's second opera, *After Life* (libretto by David Mason) was recorded on the Naxos label and is currently a finalist for the Domenick Argento Chamber Opera Composition prize from the National Opera Association.

Geoffrey Loff

Conductor

Recent HGO Studio alumnus Geoffrey Loff (2015–17) is an assistant conductor on the HGO music staff. He made his concert debut at age 13 and has performed as a soloist for The Chopin Foundation and the International Miami Piano Festival. As a collaborative pianist, he has been a frequent performer for The Mainly Mozart Festival and the Chopin Foundation. He was pianist and music director for Atlanta Opera's outreach program, young artist and assistant conductor for Opera North, and resident artist for Minnesota Opera. In summer opera programs, he has been a staff pianist and assistant conductor with Skylark Opera and Mill City Opera, a fellow in the Conductors Institute of South Carolina, and, most recently, a pianist/coach for *Billy Budd* at Des Moines Metro Opera.

Carleen Graham

Director

Carleen Graham joined the HGO family in August 2016 as director of HGOco. Her productions of *A Letter to East 11th Street* (Hennessy/Campbell), *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *On the Town*, *L'Egisto*, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and *The Mikado* have received awards from the National Opera Association, The American Prize, and the American College Theater Festival. Guest stage directing credits include Hawaii Performing Arts Festival; Tri-Cities Opera; Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Curso Internacional de Música Vocal in Aveiro, Portugal; Baltimore Summer Opera Workshop; Tanglewood Music Center; Boston Symphony Orchestra; Berkshire Opera Company; Eastman School of Music; and Central City Opera. For 25 years, Dr. Graham was a Distinguished Teaching Professor at the State University of New York Potsdam, where she was instrumental in the development of the Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize and the founding executive director of the Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar. She is an active participant of Opera America's New Works Forum and Civic Impact working group.

Ben Edquist

Baritone—Older Thompson

HGO Studio alumnus Ben Edquist (2015–17) was named one of *Opera Now's* 10 Young Opera Singers to Watch in 2016. He sang the Marchese d'Obigny in HGO's season-opening production of *La traviata*; other HGO roles include performances of Belcore in *The Elixir of Love*, Wagner in *Faust*, Jigger Craigin in *Carousel*, the leading role of Edward Kynaston in the world premiere of *Prince of Players*, performances of the Pilot in *The Little Prince*, the Captain in *Eugene Onegin*,

Sciarrone in *Tosca*, and Sir Walter Raleigh/Astronaut in HGOco's world premiere of *O Columbia*. Last summer, Edquist returned to Wolf Trap Opera to sing William in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and the Father in *The Juniper Tree*. Other recent roles include Jigger Craigin in *Carousel* and Papageno in *The Magic Flute* for Glimmerglass Festival Opera. Later this season, he performs at Atlanta Opera as Manfred in Jake Heggie's *Out of Darkness: Two Remain* and at Garsington Opera as Remo in David Sawer's *The Skating Rink*.

Kerriann Otaño

Soprano—Older Alyce

Kerriann Otaño, a 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions semifinalist, is making her HGO debut. An alumna of Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, she returned to WNO last season to sing Kitty Hart in *Dead Man Walking* and made her Fort Worth Opera debut as Micaëla in *Carmen*. This season, she returns to WNO for *Candide*, covers the role of Mary Johnson in *Fellow Travelers* with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited, and sings her first Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* with Opera San Jose. In spring 2016, she participated in WNO's *Ring* cycle, covering Third Norn in *Götterdämmerung* and Ortlinde, Helmwige, and Gerhilde in *Die Walküre*. Other highlights include creating the role of Katherine in Douglas Pew's one-act opera *Penny*, covering Madame Lidoine in WNO's production of *Dialogues of the Carmelites* under the baton of Antony Walker, and singing the role of Mary Custis Lee in Phillip Glass's revision of *Appomattox* at WNO.

Alexandra Smither

Soprano—Younger Alyce

Canadian soprano Alexandra Smither is making her HGO debut. In May of 2017, she won both first prize and the prize for best performance in a commissioned work in the 2017 Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition; as part of her prize she is touring a program of contemporary works across Canada this fall. This year, she participated in Songfest's Winter Intensive, the Banff Center's Concert in the 21st Century, and a master class with Marilyn Horne at Carnegie Hall as part of *The Song Continues*. This past summer, Smither and violinist Timothy Steeves toured as the duo North/South and she made her principal debut with Toronto's Opera5. She was a 2017 Tanglewood Music Festival Fellow and made her Seiji Ozawa Hall debut alongside Emanuel Ax for a performance of Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*. She is a 2017 laureate for the Jeune Ambassadeurs Lyriques. This month, she makes her debut with Houston's Ars Lyrica in its program *Italian Sirens*. She earned her master of music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

Mark Thomas

Tenor—Younger Thompson

Mark Thomas is a native Texan. In recent seasons he made his HGO debut as Isaiah in the HGOco world premiere of David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann's *After the Storm*, sang HGO's workshop of Carlisle Floyd's *The Prince of Players*, won the Houston District Competition of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, received a master of music

degree in vocal performance from the University of Houston, and sang the roles of Des Grieux in Massenet's *Manon*, Ruggero in Puccini's *La rondine*, Konstantin Levin in David Carlson's *Anna Karenina*, and Roméo in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with the Moores Opera Center. He has also performed with Des Moines Metro Opera as an apprentice artist and HGOco's touring program, Opera to Go!

Glory Denied

A chamber opera by Tom Cipullo

Based on the oral history by Tom Philpott

WHEN: Monday, November 6, and Thursday, November 9, at 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: 1940 Air Terminal Museum Hangar at Hobby Airport, 8325 Travelair Road (off Telephone Road and Airport Boulevard)

TICKETS: \$40 Purchase [online](#) or at 713-228-6737. Veterans can call for a special promo code for 50% off the ticket price. Valid veteran identification is required at the time of ticket pick-up.

CAST:

Older Thompson, Ben Edquist ‡
Older Alyce, Kerriann Otaño
Younger Alyce, Alexandra Smither
Younger Thompson, Mark Thomas

‡ Former HGO Studio artist

CREATIVE TEAM:

Conductor, Geoffrey Loff ‡
Director, Carleen Graham
Properties Design, Megan
Costume Design, Clair Hummel
Lighting Design, Tony Giovannetti
Sound Design, Tracy Marcantel
Technical Supervisor, Michael Mullins