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Texas Opera Companies Rally Together to Create Texas Opera Alliance

In midst of the global pandemic, five opera companies develop Texas Opera Alliance to ensure the future and accessibility of opera in the Lone Star State

HOUSTON – October 1, 2020 – **Houston Grand Opera (HGO), Austin Opera (AO), The Dallas Opera (TDO), Fort Worth Opera (FWO), and OPERA San Antonio (OSA)** are pleased to announce the creation of the Texas Opera Alliance (TOA), a new partnership of the five companies, designed to advance and protect the future of the art form in Texas. Facing the same challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for performing arts organizations across the globe, the five companies have identified this opportunity to give Texans more access to opera through a strategic alliance. The mission of the Texas Opera Alliance is to advance and diversify the operatic art form through innovative production partnerships, audience-building initiatives, and collaborative investments in new works, ensuring that opera continues to thrive in the Lone Star State.

In its first year, in addition to each organization implementing its own unique promotional initiatives, TOA will cross promote digital content and programming while creating unique touchpoints with audience members from all five organizations. In addition to streaming video content, TOA will provide member companies access to an array of publications and online resources, webinars, and supplementary programming. Through this cross promotion, the organizations' digital content will have a larger reach.

"The Texas Opera Alliance supports a diverse and innovative group of organizations across the state. Our goal is simple: to make opera accessible. Through this alliance, we will be able to bring new and unique content to audiences all over Texas," says **HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech**. "While it is not the season we had planned, it is exciting to see our organizations pushing the boundaries of the art form and bringing incredible opera to the screen. We are grateful that Sarah and Ernest Butler, longtime opera supporters, have made the extraordinarily generous pledge of \$1 million to help underwrite HGO's and Austin Opera's digital programming, to be shared with opera lovers across Texas."

"Texas is famous for being big with grand ideas, and that's what I love most about this idea," says **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers**. "I'm proud of our collaborative projects already in development, such as a digital production of David T. Little and Royce Vavrek's *Vinkensport, or The Finch Opera*, an HGO, Austin Opera, and OSA co-production, to be co-directed by OSA General Director E. Loren Meeker (together with Ryan McKinny) and conducted by Austin Opera's Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Timothy Myers. I'm so looking forward to continuing this work with our Texan colleagues."

"I'm heartened and inspired by the unprecedented level of collaboration between our five companies in recent months. I believe these cost-effective strategies to expand our mutual offerings will serve as a new model for the growth and sustainability of our art form," says **Annie Burrridge, General Director & CEO of Austin Opera and Vice-Chair of OPERA America**. "Nearly every project we are currently working on at Austin Opera intersects with a member of the Texas Opera Alliance, from co-productions to the engagements of Texas-based artists. For example, HGO Studio Artist Elena Villalón has now appeared on the digital stages of Houston, Dallas, and Austin. And thanks to Austin-based philanthropists Sarah and



Ernest Butler, a fleet of innovative co-productions between HGO and Austin Opera will now be made available to an audience with no geographical limitations.”

“This statewide alliance seems a natural and necessary next step towards championing artistic collaboration and cross-promotional opportunities,” says **Ian Derrer, The Dallas Opera’s General Director and CEO**. “We look forward to sharing content from our popular TDO Network—viewed by more than 34 million in 50 countries—as well as upcoming digital programs including reprised and original content as we work with our sister companies to elevate this astonishing art form.”

“We are thrilled to be a founding member of the Texas Opera Alliance, a unique partnership that allows all of us to maximize our resources and forge new experiences for our patrons,” says **OSA General & Artistic Director E. Loren Meeker**. “Our unprecedented collaboration will help set a new standard for creativity and lengthen our reach, both on and off stage. In the last few months OSA has embraced this opportunity by presenting two virtual masterclasses with Fort Worth Opera, and we are honored to unite with HGO and Austin Opera on *Vinkensport, or The Finch Opera* and *The Impresario* for the HGO Digital season. These films push operatic boundaries and provide our patrons with exciting new content. The future is bright with endless possibilities!”

"As the newly appointed **General Director of FWO**, I am elated to join Maestro Illick and my colleagues as a founding member of TOA," says **Afton Battle**. "During this time in which our patrons are thirsting for quality engagement and access to the cultural stimulation that live theater and the arts provide, the collaborative efforts of TOA will allow us to expand our reach and deepen our connection to the community by leveraging the resources of our fellow sister companies. We are moving into a new creative realm of what it means to experience opera. There is no ceiling to hold us back, only infinite possibilities."

Each organization will be creating new digital offerings for Texas audiences. More information about the Texas Opera Alliance, its member companies, and their seasons and digital offerings can be found at www.texasoperaalliance.org.

About Austin Opera

Serving Central Texas since 1986, Austin Opera inspires audiences with its trademark blend of innovation and artistic excellence. With the leadership of General Director & CEO Annie Burridge and the Sarah and Ernest Butler Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor Timothy Myers, Austin Opera presents a curated season of grand opera productions at the Long Center, the crown jewel of Austin performing arts venues. Combining the finest American and international stars with the outstanding local talent of our Orchestra and Chorus, Austin Opera’s productions include accessible takes on classic operas as well as challenging new works that reinforce the continuing relevance of opera.

Opera ATX, powered by Austin Opera, brings groundbreaking new works, emerging artists, exciting composers, and dynamic directors to Austin. By tapping into our city’s live music DNA, Opera ATX reflects the spirit of the city and the pioneering image it’s known for. We create the conditions for operatic experiences completely new to Austin, and perhaps completely new to the art form, by exploring alternative venues and unique local partnerships. Driven by Austin Opera’s love of opera, love of audiences, and love of Austin, Opera ATX shows how Austin is shaping its opera company and inspiring innovative experiences.

Austin Opera is also a force in hundreds of classrooms across Central Texas, nurturing the next generation of opera audiences through its award-winning education programs. We work directly with educators,



community leaders, students, and parents to make opera relevant, educational, and entertaining for students of all ages.

About Dallas Opera

One of the leading opera companies in the country, The Dallas Opera has an extraordinary legacy of world-class productions and thrilling premieres featuring the greatest operatic artists of our time. Inaugurated in 1957 with a concert featuring the incomparable Maria Callas, TDO is known for the notable U.S. debuts of a host of legendary artists. The company has long been an industry leader and innovator through groundbreaking initiatives including the Hart Institute for Women Conductors, TDO Network, free public simulcasts, acclaimed art song recitals, the national vocal competition, special concerts, and outstanding family and award-winning education programs. TDO's home is the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, a jewel in the Dallas Arts District. As one of the largest performing arts employers in North Texas, TDO is proudly committed to diversity, onstage and off, and is a major contributor to the economic vitality and international cultural reputation of this region.

About Fort Worth Opera

Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is poised to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2021. For the last fifteen years, FWO has become one of the leading American companies dedicated to nurturing and performing new opera, in addition to producing performances of traditional repertoire with rising American stars. Our acclaimed *Frontiers* program is going online this fall with our first digital Libretto Workshop. Our Children's Opera Theatre typically reaches about 60,000 students across North Texas each season with live, interactive performances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, FWO has created online educational curriculum for local music students to supplement their in-school studies, and COT can also now serve entire families and communities beyond the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Fort Worth Opera is committed to celebrating all North Texans, and through our ongoing *Nóches de Opera* program, the company offers exciting community-driven events and powerful operas that represent the diverse cultures of all of the Americas.

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 in the 2019 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 (68 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.

About OPERA San Antonio

OPERA San Antonio's mission is to produce opera of uncompromising artistic quality and to enrich our community through educational outreach and social engagement. The company is committed to preserving and sharing opera as an art form that is relevant, inspirational, and accessible to residents and visitors of all



ages and backgrounds. The civic premise of OPERA San Antonio is that the community needs, and the citizens deserve, access to the major performing arts.

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