

Houston Grand Opera's 2019–20 Season Features a Lineup of Seven Productions Never Before Seen by Houston Audiences

*The upcoming season presents Javier Martínez and Leonard Foglia's world premiere of **El Milagro del Recuerdo**, the North American premiere of **Saul**, new productions of **Rigoletto** and **Aida**, a dazzling production of **The Magic Flute**, the rarely performed **La favorite**, and the much-anticipated return of **Salome**.*

Houston—January 18, 2019—**Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) will present its 2019–20 season with a broad repertoire of operas in productions that have never been seen by Houston audiences. The 65th season will open October 18, 2019, with Verdi's classic *Rigoletto*. **Tomer Zvulun** returns to direct the season opener after successfully opening the 2018–19 season with his production of *The Flying Dutchman*. American baritone **Brian Mulligan** sings his first *Rigoletto* leading an outstanding cast filled with renowned HGO Studio alumni, including Mexican tenor **Arturo Chacón-Cruz** as the Duke of Mantua and Armenian soprano **Mané Galoyan** as Gilda. Paired with *Rigoletto* is the North American premiere of the dramatic oratorio *Saul* in a much-lauded and imaginative production by **Barrie Kosky**. **Christopher Purves** returns to the title role after his celebrated performance at the Glyndebourne Festival and is joined by countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** and Korean soprano **Pureum Jo**, both HGO Studio alumni.

The tradition of holiday-themed opera returns in the 2019–20 season with the company's 67th world premiere: **Javier Martínez** and **Leonard Foglia's** *El Milagro del Recuerdo / The Miracle of Remembering*. The opera is a prequel to *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*. Keeping with the theme of family found in both operas, Mexican composer Javier Martínez continues the legacy of mariachi opera established by his late father, **José "Pepe" Martínez**, in a collaboration with Foglia. Set during the Christmas season in Mexico, the opera lovingly explores the themes of holiday traditions, familial bonds, and the dream of something more while contemplating life-changing decisions. Several characters from *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* return to the stage including Renata, Lupita, and Chucho, sung by **Cecilia Duarte**, **Vanessa Alonzo**, and **Miguel de Aranda**.

The winter features beloved HGO Studio alumnae and opera powerhouses **Jamie Barton** and **Tamara Wilson**. The repertoire begins with Donizetti's rarely performed *La favorite* with superstar

Jamie Barton and the HGO audience favorite tenor **Lawrence Brownlee** for this rarely performed bel canto jewel. *La favorite* shares the stage with Verdi's timeless *Aida* in a new production directed by **Phelim McDermott**. The stunning new design is enhanced by the incorporation of visionary artist **Basil Twist's** silk choreography. International star and HGO alumna **Tamara Wilson** sings the title role and rising star **Russell Thomas** makes a role debut as Radames. HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** conducts.

In the spring of 2020, **Lise Lindstrom** makes her HGO debut in the title role of *Salome* alongside HGO Studio alumnus **Ryan McKinny**. In a production directed by **Francisco Negrin**, *Salome* returns to the Wortham stage for the first time in 20 years. **Eun Sun Kim** takes the podium conducting in her first outing in Houston since being named HGO's principal guest conductor in 2018. The season closes with **Barrie Kosky** and **Suzanne Andrade's** wildly inventive production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with an exceptional international cast. This visual spectacle evokes a silent-film style by incorporating an animated world created by artist and illustrator **Paul Barritt**. **Jane Glover** conducts this Mozart masterpiece.

HGO is excited to announce **Eun Sun Kim** as this season's Lynn Wyatt Great Artist recipient. The Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Fund is an endowed fund dedicated to bringing the world's best artists to HGO and was established in 2010 by Oscar Wyatt in honor of Lynn Wyatt's many years of philanthropy and service to the company. Past recipients include Ana María Martínez, John Caird, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Jane Glover, and Joyce DiDonato.

"As we do every season, we have combined repertoire favorites like *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, and *The Magic Flute* with opera gems that deserve to be programmed more often but aren't—often because they are difficult to perform and we have to wait for just the right casting," says HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, "*Saul*, *La favorite*, and *Salome* fall into the latter category. All that, plus the world premiere of Javier Martínez and Leonard Foglia's *El Milagro del Recuerdo*, adds up to a season that truly has it all: an entire season of productions our audience has never seen by some of the most innovative directors in opera, the greatest singers in the world, a brilliant new principal guest conductor, and a diverse set of operas that stretch the heart and mind. Make the journey with all of them if you can, but if you can experience only one, *Saul* will live in the heart forever and is not to be missed."

HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech says, "We are so proud to announce a full season as we recover from the ongoing impacts of Hurricane Harvey. The positive response from our board, supporters, and local community is unparalleled and we are once again able to produce seven exceptional mainstage opera productions. As we progress towards full recovery, we are excited to deepen our collaborative partnerships within the city as we continue to tell the stories of the communities that call Houston home."

Additionally, Houston Grand Opera welcomes **Joyce DiDonato** for [*In War & Peace*](#), a one-night concert event on Wednesday, November 6, 2019. The world-renowned HGO Studio alumna returns

to the Wortham stage for the first time since 2015 to present a concert designed to open conversation about art that unifies, transcends borders, connects the disconnected, and gloriously exalts the spirit. Tickets for this special evening will be available in late spring.

Four mainstage operas—*Saul*, *El Milagro de Recuerdo*, *La favorite*, and *The Magic Flute*—are part of *Seeking the Human Spirit*, HGO’s six-year multidisciplinary initiative designed to highlight the universal spiritual themes raised in opera and to enable a wider segment of the Houston community to experience opera’s beauty, emotional power, and potential to heal. The initiative, which began in the fall of 2017, includes at least three mainstage operas each season—one of which is a new work—united by a single theme. The theme of the 2019–20 season will be “**identity.**”

To date, ten partner organizations have joined HGO’s *Seeking the Human Spirit* initiative, with a commitment to create projects that complement the operas, enhancing and enriching our community’s experience of the themes. These organizations include Buffalo Bayou Partnership; Center for Spirituality & Health, Texas Medical Center; Discovery Green; Harris County Juvenile Detention Services; Italian Cultural & Community Center; The Jung Center, Houston; Houston Methodist Center for Performing Arts Medicine; Methodist Research Institute; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Texan-French Alliance for the Arts; and The Women’s Home. Information about their 2019–20 collaborations will be announced later in 2019. More information can be found at HGO.org/spirit.

HGOco is the company’s groundbreaking initiative that connects its creative resources to partner and collaborate with the diverse and vibrant Houston community. Part of HGOco’s role is to commission new works in keeping with its mission. During the 2019–20 season, HGO’s 68th world premiere will be the HGOco commissioned, *Marian’s Song*, composed by HGOco Music Director and composer-in-residence **Damien Sneed** with a libretto by **Deborah Mouton**, Houston’s poet laureate. The opera is based on the life of **Marian Anderson**, one of the most celebrated opera singers of the 20th century who broke racial barriers throughout her storied career. This innovative fusion of opera, spoken word, and multimedia projections debuts March 5, 2020. Another program of HGOco, **Opera to Go!**, tours the much-requested *Strega Nona* with music by **Mary Carol Warwick** and libretto by **Mary Ann Pendino**. Based on the beloved Caldecott Award–winning book, *Strega Nona* is the tale of a young man learning to pay attention in an Italian village overrun with pasta. The exciting opera, created for young audiences, will tour schools, libraries, and community venues during the upcoming season.

This season, HGO continues to encourage younger audiences to experience the art form through several opportunities, including its popular Opening Nights for Young Professionals (ONYP) subscription series. Subscriptions start as low as \$162 for seven operas and include exclusive season extras. In addition to ONYP, HGO offers two affordable ticket initiatives: the Pay Your Age program and the NEXUS ticket-

underwriting program. Launched just four years ago, the Pay Your Age program gives those under the age of 25 the opportunity to pay the price of their age for a single ticket. The multiyear NEXUS initiative provides a limited number of \$15 tickets for first-time operagoers and student groups to all HGO performances. Both the ONYP subscription series and the affordable ticket initiatives have made opera more accessible to new audiences in the Greater Houston area, and beyond.

HGO's mainstage season will comprise 42 performances (including three free community performances) of seven productions. The company will also present four student performances. Subscriptions to the 2019–20 season are now available at HGO.org. Single tickets will be available later this summer. Additional details of the upcoming Houston Grand Opera productions are provided below, and more information is available at the company's website: HGO.org. All repertoire, dates, pricing, productions, and casting are subject to change without notice.

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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 multiyear 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 in the world to win all three honors.

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Media Contact: Abby Linney, Elmore PR, 713-524-0661; abby@elmorepr.com

Media Contact: Natalie Collett, Houston Grand Opera, 713-546-0240; ncollett@hgo.org

Director of Marketing and Communications: Dale Edwards, 713-546-0249; dedwards@hgo.org

HGO.org

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Houston Grand Opera: 2019–20 Season

* *Company debut*

** *HGO Studio artist*

Former HGO Studio artist

† *Alternate cast*

Verdi: *Rigoletto*

New Production

October 18, 20m, 26, 29, and November 1, 2019

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

CAST

Rigoletto: Brian Mulligan

Duke of Mantua: Arturo Chacón-Cruz #

Gilda: Mané Galoyan #

Sparafucile: David Shipley *

Maddalena: Zoie Reams #

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Jordan de Souza *

Director: Tomer Zvulun

Associate Director: Stephanie Havey *

Set Designer: Erhard Rom *

Costume Designer: Jessica Jahn

Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel

Chorus Master: Richard Bado, Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Scenic design originally created for Wolf Trap Opera

Grand Underwriters: ConocoPhillips and Margaret Alkek Williams

Handel: *Saul*

HGO Premiere

October 25, 27m, November 2, 5, and 8, 2019
Sung in English with projected English translations
A Seeking the Human Spirit Presentation

CAST

Saul: Christopher Purves
David: Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen #
Michal: Andriana Chuchman
Merab: Pureum Jo #
Jonathan: Paul Appleby *
Abner/High Priest/Amalekite/Doeg: Keith Jameson
Witch of Endor: Chad Shelton #

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Patrick Summers, Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
Original Director: Barrie Kosky *
Revival Director: Donna Stirrup
Set & Costume Designer: Katrin Lea Tag *
Original Lighting Designer: Joachim Klein *
Associate Lighting Designer: David Manion *
Original Choreographer: Otto Pichler *
Revival Choreographer: Merry Holden *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado, Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

This is a Glyndebourne production and originally performed in the Glyndebourne Festival 2015
Premier Guarantor: The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
Underwriter: Hinda Simon

Martínez | Foglia: *El Milagro del Recuerdo / The Miracle of Remembering*
World Premiere

December 5, 8m, 13, 14 †, 15m, 19, 20 †, 21, 22m †, 2019
Sung in Spanish with projected English translations
A Seeking the Human Spirit Presentation

CAST

Renata: Cecilia Duarte
Laurentino: Daniel Noyola **
Chucho: Miguel de Aranda
Lupita: Vanessa Alonzo
Father Matias: Rafael Moras *
Woman: Vanessa Becerra *

Aba: Héctor Vásquez

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: David Hanlon #

Director: Leonard Foglia

Costume Designer: Gregory Gale

Lighting Designer: Howell Binkley

Original production generously underwritten by The Cullen Foundation, The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts

Donizetti: *La favorite*

New Production

January 24, 26m, February 1, 6, and 9m, 2020

Sung in French with projected English translations

CAST

Léonor de Guzman: Jamie Barton #

Fernand: Lawrence Brownlee

Alphonse XI: Jacques Imbrailo

Balthazar: Federico De Michelis #

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Christophe Rousset *

Director: Kevin Newbury

Set Designer: Victoria Tzykun *

Costume Designer: Jessica Jahn

Chorus Master: Richard Bado, Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Verdi: *Aida*

New Production

Jan. 31, Feb. 2m, Feb. 8, Feb. 11, Feb. 14, Feb. 16m

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

CAST

Aida: Tamara Wilson #

Radames: Russell Thomas *

Amneris: Michaela Martens

Amonasro: Reginald Smith, Jr. #

Ramfis: Peixin Chen #

King: Musa Ngqungwana *

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Patrick Summers, Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director: Phelim McDermott *

Associate Director: Joe Austin *

Set Designer: Tom Pye *

Costume Designer: Kevin Pollard *

Lighting Designer: Bruno Poet

Silks Choreographer: Basil Twist

Chorus Master: Richard Bado, Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Co-Production with English National Opera

Strauss: *Salome*

April 17, April 19m, April 25, April 28, May 1, 2020

Sung in German with projected English translations

CAST

Salome: Lise Lindstrom *

Jokanaan: Ryan McKinny #

Herod: Chad Shelton #

Herodias: Susan Graham

Narraboth: Dimitri Pittas

First Nazarene: Anthony Robin Schneider #

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Eun Sun Kim

Director: Francisco Negrin *

Associate Director: Angela Kleopatra Saroglou *

Set & Costume Designer: Louis Désiré *

Lighting Designer: Bruno Poet

Projection Designer: Joan Rodón *

A Production of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía of Valencia, year 2010

Grand Underwriter: Drs. Elizabeth Grimm and Jack A. Roth

Mozart: *The Magic Flute*

April 24, 26m, May 2, 5, and 8, 2020
Sung in German with projected English translations
A Seeking the Human Spirit Presentation

CAST

Tamino: Norman Reinhardt #
Pamina: Ying Fang *
Queen of the Night: So Young Park *
Sarastro: Anthony Robin Schneider #
Papageno: Thomas Glass #

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Jane Glover
Original Co-directors: Suzanne Andrade* and Barrie Kosky
Revival Director: Tobias Ribitski *
Set & Costume Designer: Esther Bialas *
Original Lighting Designer: Diego Leetz *
Animation Designer: Paul Barritt *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado, Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Grand Underwriter: Margaret Alkek Williams

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