

### **Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2021 Finalists**

*After a worldwide search and all-virtual application process, the organization selects nine artists to compete in the annual event*

*The competition will be livestreamed for at-home audiences, complete with interactive voting*

HOUSTON – January 18, 2020 – Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is proud to announce the nine finalists for this year’s Concert of Arias, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, to be presented live from the Wortham Theater Center on February 5, 2020, at 7 p.m.

For the first time in company history, there will be no audience present. Instead, the competition will be livestreamed on HGO’s social platforms, with the additional option of streaming the exciting event on [MarqueeTV](#). The evening’s host, world-renowned soprano **Tamara Wilson**, will keep viewers apprised of all the action happening behind-the-scenes. Wilson opened the HGO Digital season with a Live from The Cullen recital performance.

The 2021 Concert of Arias finalist include:

- **Sopranos:** Alaysha Fox, Brittany Logan
- **Mezzo-sopranos:** Hannah Shea, Emily Treigle
- **Countertenor:** Key’mon W. Murrah
- **Tenors:** Aaron Crouch, Eric Taylor, Ángel Vargas
- **Baritone:** Luke Sutliff

In order to safely present the competition from the Cullen Theater, HGO has followed strict protocols put in place by the company’s Health Advisory Committee. The committee, whose members include professionals from Houston Methodist, has worked to develop procedures to protect the safety of artists, staff, and technicians.

The application process for the HGO Studio took on a new form in 2020. HGO partnered with companies nationwide to coordinate auditions for their young artist programs and competitions. This collaboration helped to streamline a virtual audition process for their respective programs.

“It was an honor to witness the commitment and passion of singers around the globe through an extensive virtual audition process this season, and the gifted artists selected for this year’s Concert of Arias are among the finest talents in the opera world,” says Director of HGO Studio **Brian Speck**. “In a year that has challenged artists in a multitude of ways, I know their performances will lift the spirits of our audience and bring hope for a bright future.”

After careful consideration of hundreds of candidates, HGO narrowed the applicants to the nine talented finalists who will come to Houston for the final round of the competition. Following all safety protocols, the selected finalists will have the opportunity to learn more about HGO and work with company music staff leading up to the Concert of Arias, during which they will perform two arias each,



competing for up to \$10,000 in cash prizes. Finalists will be accompanied by **Kirill Kuzmin**, HGO principal coach.

The judging panel will be led by **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers** and **HGO Artistic Advisor Ana María Martínez**, with guest judge **OPERA San Antonio General Director E. Loren Meeker**. For the sixth year, Martínez will select a finalist to receive her encouragement award. Audience members will have the opportunity to participate in the evening's events by texting to vote for the Audience Choice Award. All winners will be announced during the second portion of the program.

This year's Concert of Arias is graciously chaired by Sid Moorhead. Proceeds from the evening benefit the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

Since its inception 43 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown into one of the most respected young artist programs in the world. Each of the young artists in the HGO Studio has access to a learning environment that emphasizes practical experience within the professional opera world. This includes regular coaching sessions with industry professionals, roles in HGO mainstage productions, recital performances, and a variety of other concert engagements.

#### **Finalist Biographies:**

##### **Aaron Crouch**

##### **Tenor—Bowie, MD**

Aaron Crouch is a recent graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his roles included Prunier in Puccini's *La rondine*, Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Crouch was a Gold Medalist at the National YoungArts Foundation in 2017, a first place winner in the 2017 Sue Goetz Ross Memorial Competition, and a first place winner in the 2017 Classical Singer Music Vocal Competition. He received an encouragement award from the Premiere Opera Foundation's International Vocal Competition in 2018, and an Emerging Artist Award from Opera Index in 2019. In past summers, Crouch has attended the Chautauqua Institute, where he performed the role of Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. In 2019, Crouch was a Young Artist at The Glimmerglass Festival, where he debuted the role of The Son in the world premiere of Jeanine Tesori's opera, *Blue*. He is a 2017 and 2019 alumnus of HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy.

##### **Alaysha Fox**

##### **Soprano—New York, NY**

Alaysha Fox is currently in her second year as a member of LA Opera's Domingo Colburn Stein Young Artist Program, where she recently performed the role of Dorothee in Joseph Bologne's *The Anonymous Lover*. She was scheduled to join Santa Fe Opera's Apprentice program last summer, but that was canceled due to COVID-19. Last season, Fox performed the role of Erstes Mädchen in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* with the LA Philharmonic. She has sung in the Camelot benefit concert with the Lincoln Center Theater and Kathleen Battle's Underground Railroad recital; performed as First Lady (*The Magic Flute*), Lady Macbeth (Bloch's *Macbeth*), Female Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), and Penelope (*Penelope*); and appeared as a featured artist in Lee Mingwei's exhibit *Sonic Blossom* with the Metropolitan Museum's MetLiveArts. Fox's honors include being named a Grand Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a first place winner of the Joan Taub Ades Vocal Competition, a semi-finalist in the Elizabeth Connell Prize for Dramatic Sopranos, and a recipient of the Lotte Lenya Competition Emerging Artist award. An alumna of the Chautauqua Opera and Opera



Saratoga young artist programs, Fox holds a Master of Music degree in Opera Studies from the Manhattan School of Music.

### **Brittany Logan**

#### **Soprano—Garden Grove, CA**

Brittany Logan received her Bachelor of Music degree from the California State University, Long Beach and her Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). She is a former Young Artist at Cincinnati Opera, where her credits included productions of *Porgy and Bess*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Le nozze di Figaro*, among others. She maintains a busy schedule in concert and recital, including several recent engagements as guest soloist with the CCM Philharmonia. Logan is proponent of new and contemporary music whose past projects include Matt Aucoin's *Eurydice*, Gregory Spears's *Castor and Patience* (Cincinnati Opera), and Philip Glass's *The Perfect American* (Long Beach Opera). A former Studio Artist with Wolf Trap Opera, she is a Metropolitan Opera National Council Connecticut District Winner and a recipient of CCM's Seybold-Russell Award and Corbett Opera Scholarship. She currently studies with Dr. Gwendolyn Coleman.

### **Key'mon W. Murrah**

#### **Countertenor—Louisville, Kentucky**

Key'mon W. Murrah holds a bachelor's degree in arts administration with a minor in music from the University of Kentucky. Last year Murray toured with the American Spiritual Ensemble and was a young artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. In 2019, he was selected to participate in a Masterclass with Joyce DiDonato at Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, and sang Vivaldi's *Montezuma* with the America Baroque Opera Co. In 2018, he sang in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with the Red River Lyric Opera. His honors include being named first place winner in the Camille Coloratura Competition, a semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and the Grand Prize winner of the Premiere Opera Foundation + NYIOP International Vocal Competition, all in 2020. In 2018, he won the Encouragement Award at the Metropolitan Opera Council Central District Auditions, and won second place in the Emerging Soloists Competition. In 2021, Murrah will join the Studio Artist Program at the Florida Grand Opera and sing Bertarido in Handel's *Rodelinda* as a Fleming Artist at Aspen Music Festival.

### **Hannah Shea**

#### **Mezzo-soprano, Harrisburg—PA**

Hannah Shea is currently pursuing her Master of Music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. In 2020, she was a finalist in the Pittsburgh Opera Festival's Mildred Miller International Voice Competition, the Houston Saengerbund Awards, and the Grand Concours Vocal Competition in Austin. Shea recently sang the role of Nelda in the Shepherd School's production of *Taking Up Serpents* by Kamala Sankaram and performed as a Street Singer Soloist in Bernstein's *Mass* at the Brevard Music Center. Other roles include Fidalma in Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, the Third Lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Prince Orlofsky in J. Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, all at Carnegie Mellon University, where she received her bachelor's degree in vocal performance. She is a 2019 alumnus of HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy.

### **Luke Sutliff**

#### **Baritone—Littleton, CO**

Luke Sutliff is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, studying under the tutelage of Dr. Stephen King. Sutliff will be joining Santa Fe Opera as an Apprentice Artist in summer 2021. Last summer, he had been set to make his debut in the role of Elder McLean in *Susannah* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, but that was canceled due to COVID-19. At the



Shepherd School, he has appeared as Kaiser Overall in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and Johannes Zegner in *Proving Up*. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Juilliard School, where he studied with the late Sanford Sylvan and made his Alice Tully Hall debut performing Fauré's *L'horizon chimérique*. In past summers, Sutliff performed the roles of Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Chautauqua Institute.

### **Eric Taylor**

#### **Tenor—Saint George, Utah**

Eric Taylor is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at Rice University, where he has performed the roles of Sam Polk in *Susannah* and Tito in *La clemenza di Tito*. While pursuing his undergraduate degree in music at Westminster College, he performed several leading roles, including Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* and Rodolfo in *La bohème*, in addition to appearing in *Carmina Burana* with Salt Lake City's Ballet West. Taylor has participated in Apprentice Artist programs with Santa Fe Opera, Central City Opera, and Utah Lyric Opera. He had been set to perform in Santa Fe Opera's *Tristan und Isolde* and HGO's *Werther* and *Parsifal* this season, but those engagements were canceled due to COVID-19. He was named a semi-finalist at the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions in 2017.

### **Emily Treigle**

#### **Mezzo-soprano—New Orleans, LA**

Emily Treigle is currently pursuing her Master of Music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, where she received her Bachelor of Music degree last year. This spring, she will cover the title role of L'enfant in *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* at Rice. In November, Treigle was named a District Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and she will continue on to the Gulf Coast region competition this spring. In summer 2021, she plans to return to Wolf Trap Opera as a Studio Artist for a second summer. In 2019, Treigle trained with HGO's Young Artist Vocal Academy and participated in the Aspen Music Festival, where she portrayed Madame Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music*. Previous roles include Bradamante in *Alcina* and Mrs. Ott in *Susannah*, an opera made famous by her grandfather, world-renowned bass-baritone Norman Treigle. She is a student of Dr. Stephen King.

### **Ángel Vargas**

#### **Tenor—San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Ángel Vargas is currently a Studio Artist at The Mascarade Opera Studio in Florence, Italy. He was a Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis's summer festivals in 2018 and 2019, singing in the world premiere of Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier* in 2018. As a fellow with the Aspen Music Festival, Vargas sang Spalazani in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. He also has interpreted the roles of Gherardo (*Gianni Schicchi*), Vašek (*The Bartered Bride*), Elder Gleaton (*Susannah*), and the Commissaire (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and has covered the roles of the Duke (*Rigoletto*) and Hoffmann (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*). In the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Vargas was a winner in the Puerto Rico District and advanced to be a finalist in the Gulf Coast region. In 2019, he graduated with a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. Vargas will make his company debut of Rinuccio in The New Generation Festival's production of *Gianni Schicchi* in September 2021.

To learn more about the evening, visit [HGO.org/COA](https://www.hgo.org/COA).

### **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 (69 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.

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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 to win all three honors.

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