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Houston Grand Opera to create “unconventional” new theater in the George R. Brown Convention Center for first three productions of the 2017–18 season

Houston, September 25, 2017— **Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) will transform an exhibit hall in Houston’s downtown convention center into an intimate theater for “unconventional opera.” The first three operas of the company’s 2017–18 season will now take place at the **George R. Brown Convention Center** in downtown Houston, due to the closing of the Wortham Theater Center for repairs. The three operas to be presented in Exhibit Hall A3 of the convention center, to be called the **HGO Resilience Theater**, include the season opener, **Verdi’s *La traviata* (Oct. 20–Nov. 11)**; **Handel’s *Julius Caesar* (Oct. 27– Nov. 10)**; and the world premiere of **Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s *The House without a Christmas Tree* (Nov. 30–Dec. 17)**. The HGO Resilience Theater will hold approximately 1,700 seats with a combination of stadium and floor seating, including excellent wheelchair accessibility. Every seat will be less than 100 feet from the stage. The space will also give audiences more insight into and connection to the theatrical process.

Tickets for all productions are available at HGO.org; however, seating at the HGO Resilience Theater will be assigned in early October. All HGO ticket buyers to *La traviata* and/or *Julius Caesar* will receive a code for a \$30 credit per ticket from Lyft to use for rides to and from the GRB (\$15 per ride).

“HGO is extremely grateful to our partners at Houston First for their hard work in quickly enabling us to use the George R. Brown Convention Center. We will use the space to defy normal operatic convention to present what I call ‘unconventional opera,’ says Perryn Leech, HGO’s managing director. “This will be a jewel of a performance space, with tremendous versatility. Having worked extensively with temporary and site-specific venues, I think our audiences will be amazed at the kind of direct and immersive theatrical experience we can create for them. People should arrive and be prepared to expect the unexpected.”

“Opera companies around the world are performing in new and unusual venues,” said HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers. “While we are disappointed that we temporarily cannot perform in our creative home at the Wortham Theater Center, our artists and creative teams are excited to take advantage of the extraordinary possibilities at the George R. Brown. We are fortunate to have the freedom in this new venue to customize the space to fit our unique needs and to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions. The quality that audiences have come to expect from HGO will not change. We are thrilled to be able to provide inspiration and healing through great opera in the heart of downtown Houston.”

“Houston First is delighted to be able to transform part of the GRB into a venue that will ensure Houstonians can continue to enjoy the beautiful work done by Houston Grand Opera this year as they have for many seasons,” said David Minberg, board chair, Houston First Corporation. “We are committed to bringing the Wortham Theater Center back to life, so the Opera can return to its home stage as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we invite everyone to come and support the Opera at the GRB.”

Houston First, which operates the city’s convention and arts facilities including the Wortham Theater Center, last week announced the Wortham’s closing until May 15 as a result of Hurricane Harvey. The Wortham took on 12 feet of water in the basement and sustained damage in the front of house areas and the Brown Theater stage, as well as to mechanical and electrical systems. Additionally, water filled the tunnel connecting the Wortham to the Theater District Parking Garage. Repairs will be ongoing for several months.

Parking for HGO’s performances will be available at the GRB garage located on Rusk Street, across from HGO’s new venue. A sky bridge connects the parking garage to the GRB, and there will be clear signage to direct patrons to the theater. More information about parking can be found [here](#).

Patrons who have tickets to *La traviata*, *Julius Caesar*, or *The House without a Christmas Tree* do not need to take any action at this time. In early October, all ticket holders will be notified by email of their new seat locations. Anyone who has questions after receiving new seat information can contact the Customer Care team at 713-228-6737. The location for HGO’s remaining 2017–18 mainstage productions will be announced at a later date. For updates on the company’s season and other developments, please visit www.hgo.org/resiliencetheater.

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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 (63 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 two Emmy awards. It is the only opera company to win all three honors.

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