

For Immediate Release

HGO to Present World-Premiere Opera *Another City*

Company to stage the immersive, site-specific production, which shares stories of unhoused Houstonians, at Ecclesia Houston from March 9 through 11, 2023

HOUSTON—September 20, 2022—**Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) announces the company-commissioned world premiere opera *Another City*, created by composer **Jeremy Howard Beck** and librettist **Stephanie Fleischmann**. *Another City* will be presented on March 9, 10, and 11, 2023, with performances at the downtown campus of Ecclesia Houston. Bearing witness to the unheard and misunderstood experiences of unhoused Houstonians, the opera presents the collective voices of a city in search of the meaning of home.

To create this powerful new opera, Fleischmann, Beck, and members of HGO conducted in-depth listening sessions, yielding over 60 hours of recorded interviews with clients (members of the unhoused community) and service providers at organizations including SEARCH, The Beacon, Star of Hope, Coalition for the Homeless, and New Hope Housing, as well as the Houston Mayor’s Office. They joined case managers for ride-alongs to meet with clients, volunteered in kitchens and at clothing drives, and helped with client intake, listening closely to community members generous enough to speak with them.

Born of these listening sessions, *Another City* shares the intersecting stories of Houstonians experiencing homelessness and those working to help them, sung by a cast of 12 and unfolding over the course of a single day and night. As housing is lost, gained, and carried as memory, the opera asks the question: How do we bridge the chasm between the city we can see and the one we cannot—a city which is all around us but invisible, hiding in plain sight?

“When we set out to speak with folks experiencing homelessness in Houston and those working to help the unhoused, we were overwhelmed by the generosity with which people opened up their spaces of refuge, and their hearts, to us,” says Fleischmann. “We were deeply moved by the eloquence, the music of their voices. Their stories—rich and varied, running the gamut of failures and triumphs, pain and joy—form the fabric of this opera.”

“Charged with the responsibility of musically honoring a vast spectrum of experiences,” says Beck, “I set out to sonically portray the beauty of these lives we continually look past by creating art out of similarly overlooked, unexpected materials: danceable grooves and tuneful songs share equal footing with symphonic development. Field recordings I made of Houston are layered and interwoven with swinging street band sounds, ambient soundscapes, propulsive rhythms, and truly operatic heights of emotion.”

Another City will be presented at Ecclesia Houston, which engages issues related to poverty and social justice and assists unhoused Houstonians through services including haircuts, showers, hot meals, and employment. The site-specific performance will utilize Ecclesia’s immersive space, which allows artists to move in and around a central platform. Conducted by HGO’s resident conductor **Alex Amsel**, the production will be directed by **Emily N. Wells**, with lighting design by **Michael James Clark**, costumes by **Clair Hummel**, and sound design by **Andrew Harper**.

“I am impressed by *Another City* as a work of art, but I’m even more impressed by the process the team went through to create it,” says **Jennifer Bowman**, HGO’s Director of Community and Learning. “We are not going to solve the epidemic of homelessness through this opera, but we can bear witness to the experiences of this community. And thanks to the time spent and trust built, we’ve been invited into new spaces to perform and conduct workshops on an ongoing basis. That kind of collaboration is at the heart of our mission.”

Another City is part of HGO’s award-winning *Song of Houston* series, which develops new works based on stories that define the unique character of Houston. The world-premiere work’s acclaimed librettist, Stephanie Fleischmann, is the recipient of Opera America’s 2022 Campbell Librettist Prize. Its celebrated composer, Jeremy Howard Beck, has seen his music performed at concert halls and opera houses throughout the country.

For more information on the performances, workshops, and other collaborative activities HGO’s Community and Learning team conducts throughout Houston, with *Another City* partner organizations and other groups, visit HGO.org/community-and-learning.

Performances of world-premiere opera *Another City* run March 9, 10, and 11, 2023, at Ecclesia Houston, 1100 Elder Street. Tickets are \$25. For more information and to buy tickets, visit HGO.org or call the box office at 713-228-6737.

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. General Director and CEO Khorri Dastoor assumed leadership of the organization and responsibility for its strategic vision in 2021. HGO was the only American finalist for Opera Company of the Year in the 2019 International Opera Awards, and the only American company to be nominated twice. In fulfilling its mission to advance the operatic art, to serve the Houston community, and to be a global leader in the future of opera, HGO has led the field in commissioning and producing new works (73 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 and Learning initiative 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 to win all three honors.

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