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## Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2018 Winners

### *Four Singers Awarded Top Honors at 30<sup>th</sup> Eleanor McCollum Competition*

Houston, February 1, 2018—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) announced today the winners of the 30<sup>th</sup> annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers that took place at Stude Concert Hall at Rice University. For the second time, the Concert of Arias was streamed live on Facebook, as well as on YouTube for the first time. The livestream was hosted by award-winning soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Tamara Wilson**. The winners were announced during the second portion of the program.

**1<sup>st</sup> Place prize** of \$10,000 was awarded to contralto **Leia Lensing**.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place prize** of \$5,000 went to soprano **Dorothy Gal**.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place prize** of \$3,000 was won by mezzo-soprano **Lindsay Kate Brown**.

The **Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award** of \$2,000 went to soprano **Liv Redpath**. This award was established in 2015 by renowned soprano and HGO Studio alumna Ana María Martínez to identify a developing young singer with exceptional promise who would greatly benefit from the additional support of his or her continued training. Ms. Martinez won first prize in the competition in 1994.

Ms. Redpath also won the **Audience Choice Award** of \$1,000.

The **Online Viewers' Choice Award** of \$500 went to the first-prize winner, Leia Lensing.

Winners of the Concert of Arias, one of the most highly esteemed singing competitions in the United States, were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges that included HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** and HGO Managing Director **Perryn Leech**, with guest judge **Eric Owens**, the eminent bass-baritone and HGO Studio alumnus who is appearing in HGO's current production of *The Barber of Seville*.

“With the ongoing and enthusiastic support of the Houston community, this competition is now in its 30th year, and the post-concert dinner has grown to be a sold-out annual event,” said Perryn Leech, managing director of HGO. “Our audience shows great appreciation for such a high standard of emerging operatic talent,” added Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers.

Concert of Arias supporters raised more than \$620,000. Proceeds benefit the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and the Houston Grand Opera Studio's ongoing outreach efforts to identify, attract, and nurture young artists who have the potential for major careers in opera. Past prize-winners who are now leading international artists include Jamie Barton, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, and Tamara Wilson.

This year's Concert of Arias, chaired by **Rini and Edward Ziegler**, honored **Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr.** for their many years of generous support of HGO and the HGO Studio. The evening began with a champagne reception at 6 p.m. The vocal competition commenced at 7 p.m. in the Stude Concert Hall and also featured a performance by current artists of the HGO Studio.

Following the concert, approximately 500 artists, patrons, and underwriters were invited to a seated dinner at Hotel ZaZa in the Museum District. The ballroom décor painted a magical garden “where passion blossoms”—the evening's theme—inspired by author, illustrator, and event chair Rini Ziegler's own passion flower illustrations. Hotel ZaZa Executive Chef Larry de la Flor presented a culinary garden with a duet of châteaubriand and salmon using colorful pistachio, fine herbs, orange blossom gelée, passion fruit scallion dressing, and wildflower garnish. The grand finale was a chocolate lattice cage shaped like a music note with passion fruit and mango mousse and a stand-out white chocolate rose. The 2017 Concert of Arias first-prize winner and current HGO Studio artist Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, a countertenor, serenaded the evening's honorees with a unique rendition of Purcell's “Sweeter than Roses”—the perfect finish to an evening that celebrates budding young talent in the springtime of their careers.

Today's concert was the final event in a months-long process that began when 506 singers applied to compete. Auditions were conducted in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and Houston. After careful deliberation, 13 semifinalists were chosen to compete in the final round of the competition in Houston. One of the semifinalists, a native of Iran, was not able to participate because of the new U.S. travel restrictions. Eight finalists were selected to perform in the Concert of Arias. In the days leading up to the event, finalists were given the opportunity to learn more about HGO and work closely with HGO's music staff to refine their performances.

Since its inception 41 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown to be one of the most respected young artist programs in the country. 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.

The evening's guests included chairs Rini and Edward Ziegler, honorees Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr., Dian and Harlan Stai, Pat Breen, Judy and Dick Agee, Beth Madison, John Turner and Jerry Fischer, Marcia and Alfredo Vilas, Drs. Liz Grimm and Jack Roth, Robin Angly and Miles Smith, Janet and John Carrig, Molly and Jim Crownover, Tony Bradfield and Kevin Black, Christina Stith, Marsha Montemayor, Meredith and Travis Hedemann, Marguerite Swartz, Teresa and Jose Ivo, Peggy and Ashley Smith, Jill and Allyn Risley, Glen Rosenbaum and Rita Leader, Marianne Kah, Reinnette and Stan Marek, Richard and Elizabeth Husseini, Cathy and Randy Crath, Janet and John Carrig, Jana and Scotty Arnoldy, Gloria Portela and Dick Evans, Charlene and Chuck Nickson, Louise Chapman, Connie Dyer, Kathy Moore and Steve Homer, Susan and Ward Pennebaker, Zane Carruth and Brittany Clark, Beth Wolff, Dorothy and Bob Brockman, Rebecca Rabinow and Matt Ringel, Terrilyn Neale, Anna Dean, Anne and John Mendelsohn, Lynn and Henry Gissel, Susan and Michael Bloome, Sid Moorhead, Michele and Robert Yekovich, Sallymoon and Alan Bentz, Beverly and Staman Ogilvie, Kathee and Marty Beirne, Gabriel and Sara Loperena, Katherine Thomasson and Michael Talbot, Kendall Hanno, Cynthia Conner, Carrie and Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl, Sandra and Mark Manela, Ishwaria and Vivek Subbiah, 2017 Concert of Arias winner Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, Eric Owens, Christine Goerke, Lucas and Irina Meachem, and Ben Edquist and Chelsea Helm.

**1<sup>st</sup> Place \$10,000 and Online Viewers' Choice Award \$500**

**Leia Lensing, contralto**

Leia Lensing is a second-year master's student at the University of Northern Iowa, studying under Dr. Jean McDonald. Participating in numerous opera productions as an active chorus member throughout her undergraduate career, Lensing also performed the roles of the Second Witch in *Dido and Aeneas*, Mama and Dragonfly in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica*. This past summer, she was an apprentice artist with the Des Moines Metro Opera where she covered the role of Madame Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music*. In October, she performed the role of the strong Irish matriarch Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*. This coming summer, she will be a member of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Singer Program, covering the roles of Pasqualita in *Doctor Atomic* and the Baroness in *Candide*.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place \$5,000**

**Dorothy Gal, soprano**

Dorothy Gal, an American singer of Polish descent, participated in Marilyn Horne's *The Song Continues* workshop at Carnegie Hall and was a vocal fellow at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute. She has appeared on WQXR's Young Artists Showcase, was a New Horizons Fellow at the Aspen Summer Music Festival, and is an alumnus of Houston Grand Opera's Young Artists Vocal Academy. Operatic roles include Amy in *Little Women*, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Poussette in *Manon*, and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. She will portray Sandrina in *La finta giardiniera* at Rice University before returning to Des Moines Metro Opera to sing First Wood Sprite in the company's mainstage production of *Rusalka* this summer. Gal is a pianist and graduate of Mannes College. She is a second year master's student of Dr. Stephen King and received the Renée Fleming and Cecilia Bartoli Endowed Scholarship in voice.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place \$3,000**

**Lindsay Kate Brown, mezzo-soprano**

Lindsay Kate Brown is an artist diploma candidate in opera studies at Rice University. At Rice, she has portrayed the roles of Cecilia March in *Little Women*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* and Cornelia in *Julius Caesar*. She received her graduate degree in opera at Binghamton University and her undergraduate degrees in vocal performance and music education at Mansfield University. She made her professional debut with Tri-Cities Opera in 2014 and has also appeared as a concert soloist, performing the works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Handel. In 2015, she won an encouragement award in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. This summer, she will be a young artist at Des Moines Metro Opera, where she will reprise the role of Ma Moss in Copland's *The Tender Land* and cover the role of Ježibaba in Dvořák's *Rusalka*.

**Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award \$2,000 and Audience Choice Award \$1,000**

**Liv Redpath, soprano**

Liv Redpath is a second-year Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist with LA Opera, where her mainstage highlights include Olympia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* under Plácido Domingo, and, under James Conlon, L'Amour in John Neumeier's new production of *Orphée et Eurydice* and Frasquita in *Carmen*. This season she will make her Seattle Symphony debut in Vivaldi's *Gloria* and will return to Santa Fe Opera to sing Naiad in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Redpath is the winner of the 2017 Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition and is an alumna of HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy. She earned her bachelor of arts degree from Harvard University and her master of music degree from The Juilliard School, where she was a Kovner Fellow and was awarded the Richard F. Gold Career Grant as well as the Novick Career Advancement Grant upon graduation. Favorite roles at Juilliard include Thérèse in *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and the Angelo in *La resurrezione* (the latter under William Christie).

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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 (64 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.

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