

Houston Grand Opera Studio Collaborates with Opera Companies Nationwide in Search of Opera's Next Stars

Partnership creates streamlined virtual auditions process for young artist programs

HOUSTON – August 4, 2020 – Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is proud to announce its partnership with companies nationwide to offer coordinated auditions for the Houston Grand Opera Studio's 2021-22 season. Due to the pandemic, opera companies across the country are having to forego in-person auditions and, for the first-time, are collaborating to streamline a virtual audition process for their respective young artist programs.

Through this collaborative effort, aspiring singers and pianists can track applications to all participating young artist programs through YAPTracker website. This streamlined process allows opera companies to efficiently review remote auditions and provides consistency to artists as they move through the audition process.

"We are proud to be a part of this consortium and hope this new audition process will ease the burden for artists applying to multiple young artist programs across the country," said HGO Studio Director Brian Speck. "The search for new young talent is rigorous, but incredibly rewarding. We are eager to begin the search for the 2021-22 season and look forward to providing enrichment to selected artists through the HGO Studio program."

Each year, the HGO Studio conducts an exhaustive search for rising opera singers and pianists through the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. In-person auditions take place over a two-month period in cities across the United States. In 2019, the HGO Studio received over 650 applications for the 2020-2021 season. After careful consideration, 17 semifinalists were selected to come to Houston for further rounds of the prestigious competition. The field of semifinalists was narrowed to eight finalists for the final round of competition, the Concert of Arias.

Beginning August 15, artists can submit applications to individual young artist programs through the YAP Tracker. Each company will retain its own application and will require video submissions for the first round. In early November, artists will receive notification if they have been asked back for round two of auditions. Repertoire requests will be coordinated so that a single video can be produced for all programs requesting a second video audition. In some cases, companies may invite a select group of finalists to audition in-person in early 2021.

"We understand that a recorded audition cannot replicate a live experience. However, the safety of all artists remains our number one priority. This new virtual audition process offers us the ability to continue building our young artist program amidst the current health pandemic in a format that is safe and fair," added Speck.

The HGO Studio is one of the most respected young artist programs in the world. For more than 40 years, it has served promising singers and pianist/coaches, providing a bridge between full-time training and full-fledged operatic careers. During a residency of up to three years, each performer receives customized training from an expert team while gaining invaluable performance experience at the highest level. This includes regular coaching sessions with industry professionals, roles in HGO mainstage



productions, recital performances, and a variety of other concert engagements. HGO Studio alumni include Jamie Barton, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, and Tamara Wilson.

For more information on HGO Studio's 2021-2022 audition process, visit [HGO.org/Studio](https://www.hgo.org/studio). Applicants can monitor YAP Tracker and each company's website and social media channels for further updates and information.

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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 is 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 (68 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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