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Houston Grand Opera opens 2017–18 season in the George R. Brown Convention Center with Verdi’s *La traviata* (Oct. 20) and Handel’s *Julius Caesar* (Oct. 27)

Houston, October 10, 2017— Houston Grand Opera will open its 63rd season with a new production of Verdi’s most romantic opera, *La traviata*, October 20–November 11 in the new HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston. Handel’s *Julius Caesar*, a Baroque opera reset in the golden age of 1930s Hollywood, opens the following week and runs October 27–November 11. HGO is transforming an exhibit hall in the convention center into an intimate theater after being displaced from its creative home at the Wortham Theater Center by Hurricane Harvey. Every seat will be less than 100 feet from the stage. The space will also give audiences insight into and connection to the theatrical process, in what the company is calling “unconventional opera.” Tickets are available at HGO.org; 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). Parking for HGO’s performances will be available at the Avenida North garage located at 1815 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](#).

VERDI’S *LA TRAVIATA* – New production

Oct. 20–Nov. 11: Sacrificing everything for the sake of love. In Verdi's most romantic opera, the dazzling heroine, Violetta Valéry, a high-class Parisian courtesan, gives up her lavish lifestyle for the first man she's ever loved, only to lose it all. This is an ideal first-timers' opera, the one that made Julia Roberts's character cry in the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*. Star coloratura soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Albina Shagimuratova** returns as Violetta, and tenor **Dimitri Pittas**, acclaimed as Nemorino in HGO's 2016 production of *The Elixir of Love*, sings Alfredo. Romanian baritone **George Petean** makes his HGO debut as Germont before performing the role later in the season at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and the Metropolitan Opera. Noted Off-Broadway director **Arin Arbus** returns to HGO to direct this new production filled with lavish sets and grand costumes, and emerging talent **Eun Sun Kim** makes her North American conducting debut, while Verdi's famous score beautifully paints a glittering Paris—a combination sure to provide an experience of truly gripping theater.

La traviata will launch HGO's new multidisciplinary initiative *Seeking the Human Spirit*. The six-year (2017–23) initiative is designed to emphasize spiritual themes in opera and expand and deepen Houstonians' connections to opera and to art. Three mainstage productions and various events and activities each season will explore a different theme: the theme for the 2017–18 season is sacrifice. *La traviata* considers what someone will sacrifice for love.

HANDEL'S *JULIUS CAESAR*

Oct. 27–Nov. 10: Handel goes to Hollywood. Togas are out and glam is in with this *Julius Caesar*. Set on a 1930s movie backlot in the enchanted golden age of Hollywood, this Baroque opera comes to life as a big movie musical complete with an art deco Egyptian pyramid, glitzy costumes, and a platinum-blond knockout Cleopatra. History buffs can enjoy the story, and music lovers will revel in the vocal pyrotechnics of Handel's most famous opera about love and conflict in this charming 2003 HGO production by **James Robinson**. The stellar cast includes countertenors **Anthony Roth Costanzo** (HGO's 2017–18 **Lynn Wyatt Great Artist**) as Caesar and **David Daniels**, widely agreed to have helped redefine the opera world's understanding of countertenors, as Ptolemy. Soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Heidi Stober** returns to HGO as Cleopatra after her 2016 performances as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe**, who appeared as Nettie Fowler in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel* at HGO in 2016, returns to the role of Cornelia, which she last performed in 2002. The role of Sextus will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Megan Mikailovna Samarin**, who sang Siébel in HGO's 2016 *Faust*, and Argentine bass and former HGO Studio artist **Federico De Michelis**, familiar to HGO audiences as Angelotti in *Tosca* (2015) and Thomas Betterton in Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players* (2016) will perform Achilles. Both will be giving their first performances as alumni of the HGO Studio. **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers** conducts.

HGO's 2017–18 season at Resilience Theater continues with the world premiere of composer Ricky Ian Gordon and librettist Royce Vavrek's holiday opera *The House without a Christmas Tree* (November 30–December 17). In January, at a location still to be announced, HGO will present its first performances in a quarter century of Richard Strauss's revenge-filled *Elektra* (January 19–February 2), with virtuoso soprano Christine Goerke in the tempestuous title role and 2016 Richard Tucker Award–winner and HGO Studio alumna Tamara Wilson in her role debut as Chrysothemis, under the baton of Patrick Summers; and Rossini's ever-popular comedy, *The Barber of Seville* (January 26–February 10), with a cast that includes the HGO debut of baritone Lucas Meachem as Figaro, the return of tenor David Portillo as Count Almaviva, HGO Studio alumna Sofia Selowsky as Rosina, and the eagerly anticipated return of HGO Studio alumnus Eric Owens, *Musical America's* 2017 Vocalist of the Year, as Don Basilio, conducted by Julian Wachner. In April, HGO will give the first presentations of Leonard Bernstein's classic musical *West Side Story* (April 20–May 6) by a major American opera house, with a new production by Francesca Zambello featuring HGO Studio alumni Andrea Carroll and Norman Reinhardt as Maria and Tony, conducted by Timothy Myers; and Bellini's grand-scale tragedy *Norma* (April 27–May 11), showcasing the role debut of stellar dramatic soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska in the notoriously difficult title role, with HGO Studio alumni Jamie Barton (the 2015 Tucker Award winner) as Adalgisa and HGO Studio alumnus Chad Shelton as Pollione, in a production by acclaimed director Kevin Newbury and conducted by Patrick Summers.

For updates on the company's season and other developments, please visit www.hgo.org/resiliencetheater.

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Houston Grand Opera: 2017–18 Season

* *Company debut*
 ** *HGO Studio artist*
 # *Former HGO Studio artist*
 † *Alternate cast*

Verdi: *La traviata*

Sung in Italian with projected English translation
 October 20, 22m, 28, Nov. 1, 3, 5m†, 11†, 2017

Violetta Valéry	Albina Shagimuratova #
Alfredo Germont	Mane Galoyan ** †
Giorgio Germont	Dimitri Pittas
	Yongzhao Yu ** †
	George Petean *
	Sol Jin ** †

Conductor	Eun Sun Kim * Bradley Moore †
Director	Arin Arbus
Set Designer	Riccardo Hernandez
Costume Designer	Cait O'Connor *
Lighting Designer	Marcus Doshi *
Choreographer	Austin McCormick *
Chorus Master	Richard Bado #

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Canadian Opera Company

Handel: Julius Caesar

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

October 27, 29m, Nov. 4, 8, 10, 2017

Julius Caesar	Anthony Roth Costanzo *
Cleopatra	Heidi Stober #
Cornelia	Stephanie Blythe
Sextus	Megan Mikailovna Samarin #
Ptolemy	David Daniels
Achillas	Federico De Michelis #
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Director	James Robinson
Set Designer	Christine Jones
Costume Designer	James Schuette
Lighting Designer	Marcus Doshi
Associate Director	Michael Shell *
Fight Director	Adam Noble

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

A Houston Grand Opera production

World Premiere

The House without a Christmas Tree

A Chamber Opera in One Act

Based on *The House without a Christmas Tree*, a book by Gail Rock

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon; Libretto by Royce Vavrek

Sung in English with projected English text

November 30, Dec. 2, 3m, 6, 8, 10m, 14, 16m, 17m, 2017

Addie Mills	Lauren Snouffer #
James Addison Mills III (“Dad”)	Daniel Belcher #
Miss Thompson/ Helen Mills/ Adelaide Mills	Heidi Stober #
Grandma Mills	Patricia Schuman
Conductor	Bradley Moore
Director	James Robinson
Set Designer	Allen Moyer
Costume Designer	James Schuette

Lighting Designer Christopher Akerlind
Juvenile Chorus Director Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Juvenile Chorus

Commissioned and produced by Houston Grand Opera

R. Strauss: Elektra

Sung in German with projected English translation
January 19, 21m, 27, 31, Feb. 2, 2018

Elektra Christine Goerke
Chrysothemis Tamara Wilson #
Klytaemnestra Michaela Martens *
Orest Greer Grimsley #
Aegisth Chad Shelton #
Conductor Patrick Summers
Production David McVicar
Revival Director Nick Sandys*
Set and Costume Designer John Macfarlane
Lighting Designer Jennifer Tipton
Chorus Master Richard Bado #
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A Lyric Opera of Chicago production

Rossini: The Barber of Seville

Sung in Italian with projected English translation
January 26, 28m, Feb. 3, 8, 10, 2018

Figaro Lucas Meachem *
Count Almaviva David Portillo
Rosina Sofia Selowsky #
Don Basilio Eric Owens #
Doctor Bartolo Peixin Chen #
Berta Yelena Dyachek **
Conductor Julian Wachner *
Director Joan Font
Set and Costume Designer Joan Guillén
Lighting Designer Albert Faura
Choreographer/Associate
Director Xevi Dorca
Chorus Master Richard Bado #
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia

West Side Story

Based on a Conception of JEROME ROBBINS

Book by ARTHUR LAURENTS, Music by LEONARD BERNSTEIN, Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Entire Original Production Directed and Choreographed by JEROME ROBBINS

Sung in English with projected text

April 20, 22m, 28m, 28, May 1, 3, 4, 6m, 2018

Maria	Andrea Carroll #
Tony	Norman Reinhardt #
Anita	Alicia Gianni #
Riff	Brian Vu *
Conductor	Timothy Myers
Director	Francesca Zambello
Choreographer	Julio Monge *
Set Designer	Peter J. Davison
Costume Designer	Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer	Mark McCullough
Associate Director	Eric Sean Fogel
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra	

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago

Bellini: Norma

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

April 27, 29m, May 5, 8, 11, 2018

Norma	Liudmyla Monastyrska
Adalgisa	Jamie Barton #
Pollione	Chad Shelton #
Oroveso	Peixin Chen #
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Director	Kevin Newbury
Set Designer	David Korins *
Costume Designer	Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer	Duane Schuler
Chorus Master	Richard Bado #
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus	

A co-production of San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Gran Teatre del Liceu

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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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HOUSTON
Methodist
LEADING MEDICINE

Official Health Care Provider
for Houston Grand Opera

UNITED 

Official Airline of Houston Grand Opera

TENENBAUM
CLASSIC JEWELERS

Preferred Jeweler of Houston Grand Opera