Houston Grand Opera, The Rothko Chapel, and The Menil Collection present six HGO-commissioned world-premiere vocal chamber pieces:

**Music & Meditations**

The final presentation of HGO’s *Seeking the Human Spirit*

**Rothko Chapel and The Menil Collection**

May 18, 2023 | 6 p.m.

Poetry and labyrinth to follow concert, 8 p.m. at Menil Park!
In my book, The Spirit of this Place, I begin my short exploration of spirituality in music—and art in unexpected places—in The Rothko Chapel. It was The Rothko and The Menil Collection, secular spaces that invite reflective reverence, that gave inspiration to a bold and untried idea.

Seeking the Human Spirit was an attempt to expand opera’s borders, to change the way we talk about it, to help unlock it for those who had sequestered it.

The initiative was many years in planning and six years in execution. Multi-year initiatives in performing arts companies have always been centered around particular composers. At Houston Grand Opera, it was the operas of Janáček over the turn of the century, a series of operas by Benjamin Britten a decade later, and more recently the four epic operas of Wagner’s Ring, the largest single work of art for our medium.

Seeking the Human Spirit was an effort to take the conversation out of the earthbound places where it so often gets mired: divas, tantrums, expense, “what do I wear?”, elitism, etc.—all very real topics that face the arts. But could we, we wondered, lean for a time into why we seek art in the first place, why we make it, and most certainly why we compose and create at all?

During the past nearly eight years since we first began planning the various operas and events that would comprise Seeking the Human Spirit, a few decidedly non-spiritual realities intervened—uh, rained down on us, you might say. Before the global pandemic brought destructive silence to the arts, Houston also endured Hurricane Harvey, which flooded our home at the Wortham and forced us into a purpose-built theater for an entire season. What the Houston public has showed us during these difficult and galvanizing years has been moving beyond measure: we sought the human spirit in art and found it all around us, right where it had always been.

It is fitting that Music and Meditations, the final presentation of our yearslong exploration, will take place at The Rothko and The Menil as HGO closes its 2022-23 season. These six new chamber works were inspired by six seasons of Seeking the Human Spirit themes: sacrifice, identity, spirit, faith, character, and transformation. I hope you enjoy them.

Patrick Summers
Houston Grand Opera Artistic and Music Director
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chair
Start at your designated location, The Rothko Chapel or The Menil Collection, then switch sites for the rest of the evening’s performances. Join us afterward for a gathering at Menil Park.

**THE MENIL COLLECTION**

The following 3 works will be presented at both 6 and 7 p.m. All will be conducted by Maestro Jerry Hou.

_When will we do what must be done_
Music by Zach Redler | Libretto by Jerre Dye | Theme: Sacrifice | Length: 10 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aarianna Longino, Soprano</th>
<th>Natalie Gaynor, Violin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Dyer, Alto</td>
<td>Wendy Smith-Butler, Cello</td>
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<td>Heath Martin, Bass</td>
<td>Madeline Slettedahl, Piano</td>
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_Take Your Eyes Off My Joy_
Music by Jocelyn C. Chambers | Libretto by Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton | Theme: Identity | Length: 8 minutes

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<tr>
<th>Rehanna Thelwell, Mezzo-soprano</th>
<th>Lorento Golofeev, Viola</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Chi, Clarinet</td>
<td>Wendy Smith-Butler, Cello</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie Gaynor, Violin</td>
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_Indigenous / Undigenous I_
Music by Brent Michael Davids | Libretto by the composer, Comanche translation by Dustin Tahmahkera | Theme: Spirit | Length: 10 minutes

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<tr>
<th>Sarah Dyer, Contralto</th>
<th>Micah Doherty, Contrabassoon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Chi, Clarinet</td>
<td>Christina Carroll, Hand Drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Williford, Bass Flute</td>
<td>Lorento Golofeev, Viola</td>
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Scan QR code for a word of welcome from our partners at The Menil Collection and The Rothko Chapel and to learn more about the creators behind these new works!
Program, Cont.

Start at your designated location, The Rothko Chapel or The Menil Collection, then switch sites for the rest of the evening’s performances. Join us afterward for a gathering at Menil Park.

THE ROTHKO CHAPEL

The following 3 works will be presented at both 6 and 7 p.m. All will be conducted by Maestro Eiki Isomura.

*A Stillness that Moves*
Music by Shih-Hui Chen | Libretto based on text inspired by Houston’s Rothko Chapel | Theme: Faith | Length: 9 minutes

**Cadie J. Bryan,** Soprano  
**Mark Diamond,** Baritone  
**Justin Best,** Clarinet  
**Eliseo Rene Salazar,** Viola  
**Richard Brown,** Percussion  
**Craig Hauschildt,** Percussion

*Drives*
Music by Mark Buller | Libretto by Euan Tait | Theme: Character | Length: 9 minutes

**Cadie J. Bryan,** Soprano  
**Mark Diamond,** Baritone  
**Justin Best,** Clarinet  
**Eliseo Rene Salazar,** Viola  
**Barrett Sills,** Cello  
**Erika Johnson,** Cello  
**Richard Brown,** Percussion  
**Craig Hauschildt,** Percussion

*helah*
Music by J.E. Hernández | Libretto by the composer after Nahuatl poetry by Tlaltecatzin | Theme: Transformation | Length: 9 minutes

**Alma Priscella Uvalle Perez,** Cuicatl  
**Cecilia Duarte,** Mezzo-soprano  
**Barrett Sills,** Cello  
**Erika Johnson,** Cello  
**Richard Brown,** Percussion  
**Craig Hauschildt,** Percussion

MENIL PARK, 8 p.m.

Join us to reflect on the six-year journey of *Seeking the Human Spirit*. Head to Menil Park for a temporary labyrinth installation designed by local artist Reginald Adams, a performance by Houston 2022 poet laureate Outspoken Bean, and meditation beads crafted by artist Eepi Chaad.
NOW PRESENTING 2023/24

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VERDI

FALSTAFF
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PUCCINI

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MOZART

DON GIOVANNI
APR 19 - MAY 3

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Houston Grand Opera gratefully acknowledges those who made six years of Seeking the Human Spirit possible:

**LEAD FUNDERS**

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**FUNDERS**

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Anonymous (2)
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