

Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2020 Winners
Singers Awarded Top Honors of 32nd Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition

Houston, February 7, 2020—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) announced today the winners of the 32nd annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers Concert of Arias, which took place in the Cullen Theater of the Wortham Theater Center. This is the fourth year the Concert of Arias was streamed live on Facebook, and the third for livestreaming on YouTube. The livestream was hosted by HGO Studio alumna **Jamie Barton**. She is currently performing the title role in *La favorite* and placed third in the 2007 Concert of Arias. The winners were announced during the second portion of the program.

1st Place prize of \$10,000 was awarded to **Sun-Ly Pierce**.

2nd Place prize of \$5,000 went to **Cory McGee**.

3rd Place prize of \$3,000 was won by **Angel Romero**.

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

The **Audience Choice Award** of \$1,000 was won by **Angel Romero**.

The **Online Viewers' Choice Award** of \$500 was given to **Laureano Quant**.

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**, HGO Managing Director **Perryn Leech**, and guest judge **Tamara Wilson**, the renowned soprano now appearing in the title role of HGO's *Aida*.

Concert of Arias supporters raised more than \$600,000, with proceeds benefiting the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and 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, Concert of Arias was chaired by long time patrons **Laura** and **Brad McWilliams**. As the judges made their decisions, guests enjoyed performances by current HGO Studio members and were invited to vote for the Audience Choice Award. Following the concert, more than 500 artists, patrons, and underwriters were seated for the sold-out dinner in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center, catered by **Tony's Catering and with modern décor by The Events Company**.

Today's concert was the final event in the several month-long process. Now in its 32nd year, the competition received over 650 applications from singers around the world. Auditions were conducted in in November and December. After careful consideration, 17 semifinalists were chosen to come to Houston for further rounds of the prestigious competition. The field of semifinalists was narrowed to eight finalists. The selected finalists had the opportunity to learn more about HGO and work

with HGO music staff leading up to the Concert of Arias, where they performed two arias each, accompanied by **Kirill Kuzmin**, HGO assistant conductor.

Since its inception 43 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown to be one of the most respected young artist programs in the world. 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.

Concert of Arias Winners

1st Place \$10,000

SUN-LY PIERCE

MEZZO- SOPRANO

Originally from Clinton, New York, Chinese American mezzo-soprano Sun-Ly Pierce recently completed the Graduate Vocal Arts Program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance from the Eastman School of Music. As a winner of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition, Pierce will perform on an international recital tour with pianist Chien-Lin Lu. The tour includes appearances in Santa Barbara, Chicago, New York City, and London and will feature the premiere of a new song cycle written by two-time Grammy Award winning composer, Jennifer Higdon. This past fall, Pierce joined the Broad Street Orchestra as Dorinda in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. She returns to the Music Academy of the West this summer as a 2020 Vocal Fellow, performing the role of L'enfant in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and covering Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*.

2nd Place \$5,000

CORY MCGEE

BASS

Hailing from Stafford, Virginia, Cory McGee is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. This past summer, he joined Santa Fe Opera as an apprentice artist, portraying the role of the Gardener in Ruder's *The Thirteenth Child*. He recently performed the role of Sodbuster in The Shepherd School of Music's production of Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*. Previous roles include Elder Ott in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, La Voce in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and Ranger Nat in Wolf Trap's commissioned children's opera, David Hanlon's *Listen, Wilhelmina!*. McGee was also a soloist in *Bernstein at 100 - A Celebration*, at Wolf Trap's Filene Center. Recent engagements include Sylvano in Cavalli's *La Calisto* (Rice University), the title role of *Le nozze di Figaro* and Pandolfe in Massenet's *Cendrillon* (Oberlin Opera Theater), and Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (Oberlin in Italy).

3rd Place \$3,000

ANGEL ROMERO

TENOR

Houston native Angel Romero holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Houston Baptist University and recently completed his master's degree at Yale University under the tutelage of Richard and Doris Cross. His recent opera performances include Tamino in *The Magic Flute* (Yale University), Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*, and Ruiz in *Il Trovatore* (Central City Opera). On the concert stage, he was the tenor soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Yale Philharmonic under the baton of Marin Alsop. In the summer of 2019, Romero joined the Santa Fe Opera as a young artist. This season he will cover the role of Arcadio in *Florenzia en el Amazonas* and perform the roles of Oronte in *Alcina*, Remendado in *Carmen*, and Flavio in *Norma* as a resident artist with Pittsburgh Opera.

Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award \$2,000

TATIANA CARLOS

SOPRANO

Brazilian native Tatiana Carlos received her master's degree from Brigham Young University and a bachelor's degree from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She made her professional debut at Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro in 2016 as Barena in *Jenůfa*. This season she debuted as Elisabetta in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* at Amazonas Opera Festival and was a guest artist in Vittorio Grigolo's *Grandes Vozes Concert* at Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro. She was recently named a District Winner of the Utah District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Ms. Carlos was a Resident Artist at Bidu Sayão Opera Academy of Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro. She was part of Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices and was one of the singers selected to take part in the masterclasses given by the Royal Opera House's Jette Parker Young Artist Program in Brazil.

Audience Choice Award \$1,000

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Online Viewers' Choice Award

LAUREANO QUANT

BASS-BARITONE

Colombian native Laureano Quant is a second-year master's degree candidate at Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of James Morris. Previous credits include Figaro in Mercadante's *I due Figaro*, Maguire in Picker's *Emmeline*, Zurga in Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Vittorio/Pensionante in Rota's *I due timidi*, Demetrius in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Captain and Prince Ragotsky in Bernstein's *Candide*. He was the first prize winner in Premio de Canto Ciudad de Bogotá in 2018 and second prize winner in the National Voice Competition in 2016, hosted by Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra. Quant has performed as a soloist in the major theaters in Colombia. He has participated in several masterclasses, including the Royal Opera House Jette Parker YAP Latin American Tour, SongFest, and masterclasses hosted by Teatro Colon de Bogotá. Last summer, he joined Merola Opera Program in the Schwabacher Summer Concert. Quant is a recipient of the Mae Zenke Orvis Opera Scholarship.

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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 (67 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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