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Houston Grand Opera Presents World Premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players*

March 5, 11, and 13

Houston, February 8, 2016—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) will present the world premiere of *Prince of Players* by distinguished American composer **Carlisle Floyd** on March 5, 11, and 13, 2016. A chamber opera in two acts, *Prince of Players* is a high-spirited period piece that examines the fluidity of sexuality and gender roles.

[Edward Kynaston](#) (c. 1640–1712) was one of the last Restoration actors to perform women's roles on the English stage. *Prince of Players* deals with the crisis that this idolized star experienced when his career came to a halt with an edict from Charles II: "No He shall ere again upon an English stage play She." The opera follows Kynaston's fall from stardom, his descent into the theatrical lowlife, and his struggle to restore his stage identity set against the panorama of 17th-century London. The opera is based on the play *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher, which was inspired by references to Kynaston made in the detailed private diary kept by [Samuel Pepys](#). The story was also the subject of the 2004 British-American-German film [Stage Beauty](#), starring Billy Crudup and Claire Danes.

Most of the principal roles in *Prince of Players* will be performed by artists and alumni of the HGO Studio, which Carlisle Floyd co-founded and co-directed with HGO General Director David Gockley in 1977. The role of Kynaston will be sung by American baritone **Ben Edquist**, an HGO Studio artist. Armenian soprano **Mane Galoyan**, also an HGO Studio artist, will sing Margaret Hughes, his dresser. King Charles II will be sung by tenor **Chad Shelton**, an HGO Studio alumnus who most recently appeared as Cavaradossi in HGO's 2015 performances of *Tosca*. Tenor **Joseph Evans**, who sang the role of Curley in HGO's production of Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, will sing Sir Charles Sedley. Tenor and HGO Studio alumnus **Scott Quinn**, who HGO audiences will remember as Pirelli in *Sweeney Todd* last season, will sing Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.

Three members of the creative team will be making their HGO debuts: English director **Michael Gieleta** has worked extensively in theater as well as at companies such as Santa Fe Opera and Chicago Opera Theater; set designer **Shoko Kambara**'s work has been seen at Opera Philadelphia and The Juilliard School; and costume

designer **Gregory Gale** was recently nominated for Tony Awards for his Broadway work on *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Rock of Ages*. HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** will conduct.

HGO's ties with composer Carlisle Floyd, the company's Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2015–16, are among the longest of any opera company and composer in history, spanning nearly 40 years. In 1976, HGO premiered Floyd's *Bilby's Doll*, the first of four Floyd world premieres by HGO, including *Willie Stark* (1981), *The Passion of Jonathan Wade* (new version, 1991), and *Cold Sassy Tree* (2000). In addition, HGO has staged his *Susannah* and *Of Mice and Men*.

Carlisle Floyd is one of the foremost composers and librettists of opera in the United States today. Born in 1926 (he will turn 90 in June), Floyd earned B.M. and M.M. degrees in piano and composition at Syracuse University. He began his teaching career in 1947 at Florida State University, remaining there until 1976, when he accepted the M. D. Anderson Professorship at the University of Houston.

Floyd first achieved national prominence with the New York premiere of *Susannah* by the New York City Opera in 1956 after its world premiere at Florida State University in 1955. In 1957 it won the New York Music Critics' Circle Award and subsequently was chosen to be America's official operatic entry at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. *Of Mice and Men* (1969) is another of Floyd's most frequently performed works. Based on the Steinbeck novel of the same name, it was commissioned by the Ford Foundation and was premiered by the Seattle Opera in 1970.

Floyd's work outside of opera includes the song cycle *Citizen of Paradise* (1984) and a large-scale work for chorus, bass-baritone soloist, and orchestra titled *A Time to Dance* (1993), commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association.

Among his numerous honors and awards, Floyd was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2001 and in 2004 was awarded the National Medal of Arts in a ceremony at the White House. In 2008, Floyd was one of four honorees—and the only composer—to be included in the inaugural National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors. In 2011, he was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame, an honor reserved for the state's most accomplished native sons, and, in 2015, he was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame. For the 2015–16 season, Floyd has partnered with Opera America to produce "Masters at Work," an interactive, live webcast exploring the development of an opera.

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About Houston Grand Opera

Since its inception in 1955, Houston Grand Opera has grown from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. HGO enjoys a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 58 world premieres and seven American premieres since 1973. In addition to producing and performing world-class opera, HGO 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 has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and has won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards—the only opera company to have won all three honors.

Through HGOco, Houston Grand Opera creates opportunities for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to observe, participate in, and create art. The NEXUS Initiative is HGO's multi-year ticket underwriting program that allows Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy world-class opera without the barrier of price. Since 2007 NEXUS has enabled more than 200,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

Houston Grand Opera: 2015–16 Season

* *Company debut*
** *HGO Studio artist*
Former HGO Studio artist

World Premiere

Carlisle Floyd: *Prince of Players*

Sung in English with projected text

March 5, 11, 13m, 2016

Edward Kynaston	Ben Edquist **
Margaret Hughes	Mane Galoyan **
Charles II	Chad Shelton #
Sir Charles Sedley	Joseph Evans
Villiers, Duke of Buckingham	Scott Quinn #
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Director	Michael Gieleta *
Set Designer	Shoko Kambara *
Costume Designer	Gregory Gale *
Lighting Designer	Renée Brode
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus	

Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera

Based on *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* *by Jeffrey Hatcher*

By Special Arrangement with Lionsgate

Wagner: *Siegfried*

Sung in German with projected English translation

April 16, 20, 23, 28; May 1m, 2016

Siegfried	Jay Hunter Morris
Wanderer (Wotan)	Iain Paterson
Brünnhilde	Christine Goerke
Mime	Rodell Rosel
Alberich	Christopher Purves
Erda	Meredith Arwady
Fafner	Andrea Silvestrelli
Conductor	Patrick Summers
Production	La Fura dels Baus
Director	Carlus Padrissa
Set Designer	Roland Olbeter
Costume Designer	Chu Uroz
Lighting Designer	Peter van Praet
Projection Designer	Franc Aleu

Movement/Associate Director Esteban Muñoz
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

A co-production of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia, and Maggio Musicale, Florence

Rodgers & Hammerstein: Carousel

April 22, 24m, 27, 29, 30; May 6, 7, 2016

Billy Bigelow	Duncan Rock *
Julie Jordan	Andrea Carroll #
Carrie Piperidge	Lauren Snouffer #
Nettie Fowler	Stephanie Blythe *
Mrs. Mullen	Helen Anker*
Enoch Snow	Alexander Lewis *
Jigger Craigin	Ben Edquist **
Conductor/Chorus Master	Richard Bado #
Director/Choreographer	Rob Ashford
Set Designer	Paolo Ventura *
Costume Designer	Catherine Zuber
Original Lighting Designer	Neil Austin
Sound Designer	Andrew Harper
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus	

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago

World Premiere

David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann: The Root of the Wind Is Water

May 2016

Eliza Goodman	Sofia Selowsky **
Lucy Goodman	Mane Galoyan **
Additional casting TBA	

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