

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2021 Winners
Singers awarded top honors of 33rd Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition

HOUSTON – February 5, 2021 – Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is proud to announce the winners of this year’s Concert of Arias, the 33rd Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. For the first time in company history, there was no audience present as finalists performed live from the Wortham Theater Center. Instead, the competition was livestreamed on HGO’s social platforms and [MarqueeTV](#). The evening’s host, world-renowned soprano **Tamara Wilson**, kept viewers apprised of all the action happening behind-the-scenes as finalists performed.

1st Place prize of \$10,000 was awarded to **Key’mon W. Murrah**

2nd Place prize of \$5,000 went to **Eric Taylor**

3rd Place prize of \$3,000 was won by **Emily Treigle**

The **Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award** of \$2,000 went to **Ángel Vargas**

During the program, the organization had a technical glitch with the text-to-vote **Audience Choice Award**. All votes were discarded, and voting will reopen at 10:00 p.m. CST on Friday, February 5, 2021 and remain open through 11:59 p.m. CST on Sunday, February 7, 2021. Details on text-to-vote can be found at [HGO.org/COA](#).

Winners of the Concert of Arias were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges including **HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers**, **HGO Artistic Advisor Ana María Martínez**, and guest judge **OPERA San Antonio General Director E. Loren Meeker**.

For the sixth year, Martínez, renowned soprano and HGO Studio alumna, selected a finalist to receive her Encouragement Award. She established this award in 2015 to identify a young singer of exceptional promise who would benefit from additional support of their continued training. Martínez won first prize in the competition in 1994.

“The past year has been completely devastating for the artistic community. Because of that, it was so important to us to keep our commitment to these young artists. Each year, I am in awe of the talent they display. While the 2021 competition took on a very different form, it is an honor to continue the treasured tradition that is Concert of Arias,” states HGO Studio Director Brian Speck. “So much work has gone into preparing this year’s unique virtual event, from safety procedures for the competition to back-up plans for when arrangements inevitably fell through. I am proud of the way the HGO community came together to make this event happen.”

This year’s Concert of Arias is graciously chaired by HGO Board Member Sid Moorhead. Event supporters raised more than \$750,000, with proceeds from the evening benefiting the organization and the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

The concert was the final event in a months-long audition process, which took on a new form for the competition's 33rd year. HGO partnered with companies nationwide to coordinate virtual auditions for their young artist programs and competitions. After careful consideration, HGO narrowed hundreds of applicants to nine talented finalists, who were invited to Houston for the final round of the competition. Following all safety protocols, the selected finalists who could be here 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 principal coach. Seven young artists were able to perform from The Cullen Stage, while the two remaining artists shared their performances remotely because of last-minute travel complications.

"The tenacity of each of these singers in a year of such unpredictable perils has been inspiring and joyful," says HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers. "They are all winners in my book."

Since its inception 43 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown into 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

Key'mon W. Murrah

Countertenor—Louisville, KY

Key'mon W. Murrah holds a Bachelor of Arts in Arts Administration with a minor in Music from the University of Kentucky. Last year Murray toured with the American Spiritual Ensemble and was a young artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. In 2019, he was selected to participate in a Masterclass with Joyce DiDonato at Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, and sang Vivaldi's *Montezuma* with the America Baroque Opera Co. In 2018, he sang in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with the Red River Lyric Opera. His honors include being named first place winner in the Camille Coloratura Competition, a semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and the Grand Prize winner of the Premiere Opera Foundation + NYIOP International Vocal Competition, all in 2020. In 2018, he won the Encouragement Award at the Metropolitan Opera Council Central District Auditions, and won second place in the Emerging Soloists Competition. In 2021, Murrah will join the Studio Artist Program at the Florida Grand Opera and sing Bertarido from Handel's *Rodelinda* as a Fleming Artist at Aspen Music Festival.

2nd Place \$5,000

Eric Taylor

Tenor—Saint George, UT

Eric Taylor is currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at Rice University, where he has performed the roles of Sam Polk in *Susannah* and Tito in *La clemenza di Tito*. While pursuing his undergraduate degree in music at Westminster College, he performed several leading roles, including Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* and Rodolfo in *La bohème*, in addition to appearing in *Carmina Burana* with Salt Lake City's Ballet West. Taylor has participated in Apprentice Artist programs with Santa Fe Opera, Central City Opera, and Utah Lyric Opera. He had been set to perform in Santa Fe Opera's *Tristan und Isolde* and HGO's *Werther* and *Parsifal* this season, but those

engagements were canceled due to COVID-19. He was named a semi-finalist at the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions in 2017.

3rd Place \$3,000

Emily Treigle

Mezzo-soprano—New Orleans, LA

Emily Treigle is currently pursuing her Master of Music degree at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, where she received her Bachelor of Music degree last year. This spring, she will cover the title role of L'enfant in *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* at Rice. In November, Treigle was named a District Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and she will continue on to the Gulf Coast region competition this spring. In summer 2021, she plans to return to Wolf Trap Opera as a Studio Artist for a second summer. In 2019, Treigle trained with HGO's Young Artist Vocal Academy and participated in the Aspen Music Festival, where she portrayed Madame Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music*. Previous roles include Bradamante in *Alcina* and Mrs. Ott in *Susannah*, an opera made famous by her grandfather, world-renowned bass-baritone Norman Treigle. She is a student of Dr. Stephen King.

Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award \$2,000

Ángel Vargas

Tenor—San Juan, Puerto Rico

Ángel Vargas is currently a Studio Artist at The Mascarade Opera Studio in Florence, Italy. He was a Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis's summer festivals in 2018 and 2019, singing in the world premiere of Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier* in 2018. As a fellow with the Aspen Music Festival, Vargas sang Spalazani in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. He also has interpreted the roles of Gherardo (*Gianni Schicchi*), Vašek (*The Bartered Bride*), Elder Gleaton (*Susannah*), and the Commissaire (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and has covered the roles of the Duke (*Rigoletto*) and Hoffmann (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*). In the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Vargas was a winner in the Puerto Rico District and advanced to be a finalist in the Gulf Coast region. In 2019, he graduated with a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. Vargas will make his company debut of Rinuccio in The New Generation Festival's production of *Gianni Schicchi* in September 2021.

To learn more about the evening, visit HGO.org/COA.

* * * * *

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 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 (69 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 multiyear 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.

Media Contact: Abby Linney, Elmore PR, 713-524-0661; abby@elmorepr.com

Media Contact: Natalie Barron, Houston Grand Opera, 713-546-0240; nbarron@hgo.org

Director of Marketing and Communications: Dale Edwards, 713-546-0249

HGO.org
facebook.com/houstrongrandopera
twitter.com/hougrandopera

#

HOUSTON
Methodist[™]
LEADING MEDICINE

Official Health Care Provider
for Houston Grand Opera

**UNITED
AIRLINES** 

Official Airline of Houston Grand Opera

TENENBAUM
CLASSIC JEWELERS

Preferred Jeweler of Houston Grand Opera