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Houston Grand Opera Announces Concert of Arias 2017 Finalists

*Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers Is January 27
Program will be Streamed Live on Facebook*

Houston, January 24, 2017— Houston Grand Opera (HGO) has chosen eight finalists for the 29th annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers Concert of Arias, to be presented in the Cullen Theater at the Wortham Theater Center on January 27, at 7 p.m. A limited number of general admission tickets for the performance are available [here](#). For the first time, the program will also be streamed live on Facebook.

This year's finalists are:

Soprano: **Nicolette Book**

Mezzo-sopranos: **Gretchen Krupp, Siphokazi Moltena, Anne Marie Stanley**

Countertenor: **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen**

Baritones: **Thomas Glass, Geoffrey Hahn**

Bass-baritone: **Rhys Lloyd Talbot**

The competition and its final round, the Concert of Arias, are held annually to identify candidates for HGO's internationally acclaimed Studio program, which nurtures young artists who have the potential for major careers in opera. Among past prize winners who are now artists on the international stage are Jamie Barton, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, and Tamara Wilson.

Now in its 29th year, the competition received 457 applications from singers and 23 applications from pianists around the world. Auditions were conducted in New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and Houston.

After careful consideration, 17 semifinalists were chosen to come to Houston for further rounds of the prestigious competition. The field of semifinalists was narrowed down to eight finalists earlier this week. The finalists will have the opportunity to learn more about HGO and work with HGO musical staff leading up to the Concert of Arias, in which they will perform two arias each, competing for \$25,000 in cash prizes. Finalists will be accompanied by HGO Head of Music Staff **Bradley Moore**.

Four of the eight finalists are alumni of HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA), a week-long course established in 2011 to give talented undergraduates an introduction to the information and training they will need to develop careers in opera.

The judging panel will be led by HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** and HGO Managing Director **Perryn Leech**, with guest judge **Gayletha Nichols**, former director of the HGO Studio and currently the executive director of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. For the third year, world-renowned soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Ana María Martínez** will select a finalist to receive her encouragement award. Audience members also have the opportunity to participate in the evening's events when they choose their favorite singer for the Audience Choice Award. All proceeds from Concert of Arias 2017 benefit the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers and the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

For the first time this year the Concert of Arias will be streamed live on Facebook and viewers will be able to cast their votes for an Online Viewers' Choice Award. The winner will be announced during the second portion of the program along with the other winners.

This year's Concert of Arias, chaired by **Judy and Richard Agee**, honors **Beth Madison** for her many years of generous support of HGO and Studio events. The evening begins with a champagne reception at 6 p.m. The vocal competition commences at 7 p.m. in the Wortham Theater Center's Cullen Theater and will also feature performances by current artists of the HGO Studio. Following the concert, artists, patrons, and underwriters will be seated for a dinner catered by City Kitchen Catering in the Grand Foyer.

Since its inception 40 years ago, the HGO Studio has grown to be one of the most respected young artist programs in the country. 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.

Biographies:

Nicolette Book

Soprano—United States

Nicolette Book is an artist diploma candidate and recipient of the Corbett Award at the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music. At CCM, she was seen as Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* and Mother in *Hansel and Gretel* and will perform Elettra in *Idomeneo* this spring. She has participated in Houston Grand Opera's Young Artists Vocal Academy (2013), Wolf Trap Opera's Studio Artist Program (2014, 2015), and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis's Gerdine Young Artist Program (2016). She has been seen as Gossip #2 in *The Ghosts of Versailles* and the

Cousin in *Madama Butterfly* at Wolf Trap Opera, and she will return to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis this summer. She has been a district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions for two years and has won a regional encouragement award. She earned a bachelor's degree in music from Oakland University and a master's degree from CCM.

Thomas Glass

Baritone—United States

Thomas Glass, born and raised in Edina, Minnesota, is a member of Minnesota Opera's Resident Artist Program this season, performing Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Gustave in the world premiere of William Bolcom and Mark Campbell's *Dinner at Eight*, and Schaunard in *La bohème*. He covers Mercutio in *Romeo*, Donner in *Das Rheingold*, and Dan Packard in *Dinner at Eight*. For the Wolf Trap Opera Studio, he sang Joseph in *The Ghosts of Versailles* in 2015 and returned in 2016 as Bragherona in Gassmann's *L'opera seria*, also covering the roles of Schaunard and Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. He received his master of music degree in voice performance from Rice University, where he sang Snug in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and L'Humana Fragilità in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*.

Geoffrey Hahn

Baritone—United States

A native of Santa Barbara, California, Geoffrey Hahn is in his second year of study for his master of music degree at Rice University under the tutelage of Dr. Stephen King. He graduated with a degree in sustainable development from the Columbia-Juilliard Exchange program in New York City. His most recent performances include Sam in *Trouble in Tahiti* and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Rice University, Billy in *Carousel* at Columbia University, and Dancaïre in *Carmen* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, both with the Aspen Music Festival and School. He spent last summer as a Studio artist with Wolf Trap Opera, where he covered the role of Delirio in the North American premiere of Gassmann's *L'opera seria*. He will return to Wolf Trap as a Studio artist in 2017.

Gretchen Krupp

Mezzo-soprano—United States

Gretchen Krupp is a two-time regional finalist and encouragement award recipient in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, first in the Southeast Region (2015) and most recently in the Central Region (2016). Last summer, she was an apprentice artist with Des Moines Metro Opera where she covered Mistress Quickly and performed the Innkeeper in *Falstaff*. She is also an alumna of Houston Grand Opera's Young Artists Vocal Academy, Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and the Chautauqua Music Festival. She is finishing her master's degree at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. At IU, she sang Marquise in *La fille du régiment* and Sister Lillianne in *Dead Man Walking*, and this spring she will perform Auntie in *Peter Grimes*. This summer, she will be a Studio artist with Wolf Trap Opera. She received her BM in vocal performance from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Siphokazi Moltena

Mezzo-soprano—South Africa

Siphokazi Moltena, from Queenstown, South Africa, is in the final year of graduate study in voice at the University

of Cape Town, where she studies with Kamal Khan. She has performed with Cape Town Opera as the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* and as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and last summer, she was an artist with the Crescendo Summer Institute South Africa. Previous awards include fourth prize from the 2016 Amazwi Omzansi Africa National Singing Competition, a finalist prize from the 2015 Schock Foundation Singing Competition, and a semifinalist prize from the 2016 ATKV-Muziqanto National Vocal Competition. She holds a degree in music education from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen

Countertenor—United States

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen was recently named a 2016 Eastern Region District winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In the summer of 2016, he participated in the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, and this summer, he will join Wolf Trap Opera for its production of Philip Glass and Robert Moran's *The Juniper Tree*. He made his European professional operatic debut at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna, Austria, singing the leading role of Timante in the modern premiere of Gluck's *Demofonte*; a recording of the work is forthcoming. His opera roles also include Nerone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Raphael (The Angel) in Jonathan Dove's *Tobias and the Angel*, Cefalo in Cavalli's *Gli amori d'Apollonia e di Dafne*, and Cino in Vivaldi's *Teuzzone*. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in history (2015) from Princeton University and resides in New York City.

Anne Marie Stanley

Mezzo-soprano—United States

Anne Marie Stanley, from Princeton, New Jersey, is an alumna of HGO's Young Artists Vocal Academy and a second-year master's degree candidate at Rice University, where she has performed Dinah in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and will sing the title role in *Giulio Cesare*. Last summer, she was a Studio artist for Wolf Trap Opera and covered Female Chorus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. The previous summer, she was an apprentice singer at the Santa Fe Opera, singing Giovanna in *Rigoletto* and covering Olivia in the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*. She will return to the Santa Fe Opera this summer as a second-year apprentice singer. She recently won first place in the Franco-American Grand Concours Vocal Competition in Austin, Texas, and first prize in the Albert M. Greenfield Philadelphia Orchestra Competition. She earned her undergraduate degree from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey.

Rhys Lloyd Talbot

Bass-baritone—United States

Rhys Lloyd Talbot, from Cedar Falls, Iowa, received his bachelor's degree in vocal performance from the University of Northern Iowa, where he studied voice with Dr. John Hines. His recent roles include Colline in *La bohème* at the Glimmerglass Festival, Masetto in *Don Giovanni* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and Simone in *Gianni Schicchi* at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. Talbot is an alumnus of young artist programs across the country, including the Merola Opera Program in San Francisco, the Glimmerglass Festival, Houston Grand Opera's Young Artists Vocal Academy, the Studio Program at Wolf Trap Opera, and the Central City Opera Studio. In the spring, Talbot will sing Second Guard in *Dead Man Walking* and Samuel in *The Pirates of Penzance* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, where he is an apprentice artist. He is pursuing a master's degree at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, where he studies with Vinson Cole.

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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 62 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 225,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

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