PRESS RELEASE

Houston Grand Opera Announces New Initiative to Support Diversity in Opera, in Partnership with Novum Energy

Initiative will underwrite performances and projects from Latin American artists and creatives

HOUSTON—January 23, 2025—Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is proud to announce a three-year initiative, created in partnership with Novum Energy, the Novum Foundation, and Novum Energy CEO **Alfredo Vilas**, to support and recruit exceptional Latin American opera artists to HGO while creating new operatic offerings that reflect the diversity of Houston.

As part of the new initiative, over the next three seasons Novum Energy will underwrite HGO performances by two leading Latin American artists. In winter 2025, the first two Novum Artists will make their company debuts: celebrated conductor **Roberto Kalb**, originally from Mexico, will take the podium for *West Side Story*, and Chilean soprano **Yaritza Véliz**, a rising star, will perform the role of Mimì in *La bohème*.

Additionally, the Novum Foundation will underwrite a new effort to discover and foster leading operatic talent from Latin America, bringing a select group of artists to Houston each year for individualized fellowships with HGO's prestigious Butler Studio training program. Finally, Novum Energy will support the creation of a new, Spanish-language opera with a culturally relevant story for HGO audiences to experience in a future season.

"As we seek to grow the strong ties that HGO has around the world, we are so grateful to Novum Energy, the company's foundation, and Alfredo Vilas for their visionary support of artists and artworks that will resonate with our city and support opera's future," says HGO General Director and CEO **Khori Dastoor**. "We program our seasons to serve our international audience, and this initiative underscores HGO's dedication to staging productions that speak to Houston's large and growing Latin American population."

"Novum Energy has been a proud supporter of HGO for years, and I am excited to expand our partnership through our company and the Novum Foundation," says Novum Energy CEO **Alfredo Vilas**. "Houston has become a thriving world capital, a cultural melting pot, and a true mecca for the arts. Our aim is to develop innovative opera programs that celebrate our community's unique cultural blend and to mentor rising Latin American talent in the world of opera."

This new initiative will provide key resources and support to build upon HGO's legacy of creating world-class art for Houston's Latin community. From the company commissioning beloved Spanish-language opera *Florencia en el Amazonas* in 1996, to its more recent trio of internationally acclaimed mariachi operas, HGO has led the industry in developing resonant new works, fostering the talents of diverse artists, and inviting all Houstonians to experience the art form. The company will host its first-ever Noche de Ópera performance, of *West Side Story*, on February 15, 2025. The

evening will feature both English and Spanish supertitles, Spanish-language displays and reading materials, and other activities. More information can be found at HGO.org.

Vilas founded Novum Energy in 2011. Since then, he has established the company as a reliable supplier of energy products across five continents. Vilas's passion for opera inspired him to join the HGO Board of Directors and, together with his wife **Marcia Vilas**, chair HGO's "Cielito Lindo" 2019 Opera Ball. Novum Energy has been a leading corporate sponsor of HGO for over a decade and, in addition to providing general support, underwrote HGO's 2015 mariachi opera *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*.

Photos: For photos of the January 15, 2025 launch event for this initiative, click here. Photo credit: Maritere Rice.

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. General Director and CEO Khori Dastoor assumed leadership of the organization and responsibility for its strategic vision in 2021. HGO was the only American finalist for Opera Company of the Year in the 2019 International Opera Awards, and the only American company to be nominated twice. In fulfilling its mission to advance the operatic art, to serve the Houston community, and to be a global leader in the future of opera, HGO has led the field in commissioning and producing new works (76 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 and Learning initiative has served as a model for other arts organizations. The company invites all Houstonians to experience superlative opera without the barrier of price 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.

About Novum Energy

Established in 2011, Novum Energy is a leading global energy supply and logistics group with trading activity and offices in the U.S., Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East/Africa. Novum provides energy commodity customers with tailored commercial solutions using bespoke logistics, risk management, and financing packages. For more information, visit novumenergy.com.

About the Novum Foundation

The Novum Foundation, established in 2023 as the philanthropic arm of Novum Energy, was created to reflect the company's growing global presence and deep commitment to social responsibility. With a mission to energize the communities where Novum Energy operates, the foundation builds partnerships with stakeholders dedicated to advancing holistic education, health, and well-being, all while promoting a more sustainable future. Operating independently, the Novum Foundation is funded by a dedicated portion of Novum Energy's profits, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to driving meaningful, long-lasting change. Since its inception, the

foundation has proudly supported over 31 transformative projects across Texas, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Argentina, the United Kingdom, and Tanzania. For more information, visit novumfoundation.org.

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