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Hawai'i Opera Theatre to postpone 20-21 Mainstage Season; announces HOT Digital initiative

Honolulu, Hawai'i - Hawai'i Opera Theatre has made the decision to postpone the previously announced 2020-21 Season due to ongoing concerns over the coronavirus pandemic. In conjunction with this announcement, the company is launching HOT Digital, an extension of the brand that will allow people to experience HOT at homes and take opera out in the community in new and unique ways throughout the year.

When the 2020-21 Season was unveiled in early March, COVID-19 had just begun to make international headlines. Within two weeks, the World Health Organization had classified it as a pandemic, forcing the cancellation of the company's April production of *Salome*. There was initial optimism that *Madame Butterfly*, *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *If I Were You* could still be presented as planned, but the pandemic is progressing in ways that make it unrealistic to continue as scheduled.

The unique ability of opera singers to project their voices throughout enclosed spaces is also what makes them super-spreaders, both in rehearsal and performance. With that in mind, and amid growing concerns over increased cases both here and across the globe, HOT cannot move forward until there are effective treatments, and hopefully a vaccine, widely available.

The company will be rescheduling all three operas to our 2021-22 Season – including as many of the same stellar singers, conductors and directors as possible – and will release more information on that as details are finalized.

HOT is grateful to its community of subscribers and donors, many of whom came out in full support of the 2020-21 Season. In light of this postponement, anyone who has already renewed a subscription for 2020/21 will be offered the options of:

- Receive a full refund for your purchase
- Apply your order to the 2021/22 Season, which will feature the same three operas
- Make a tax-refundable donation on all or part of your subscription

Anyone who has subscribed has been contacted by HOT. Should there be any questions relating to this, please call the HOT Box Office at 808-596-7858 for further assistance.

Despite these challenges, the company has embraced change and is excited to announce the creation of HOT Digital, and its very first digital season, *Streaming HOT – Back to 'Live'*. What began with the cancellation of *Salome* as an interim way to continue sharing opera with the HOT 'Ohana through curated content will evolve and be expanded to include a mix of free and low-cost digital video and audio experiences.

Through the digital medium, HOT will be highlighting arias and one-acts from Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*, Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Laura Kaminsky's newest opera, *Hometown to the World*, and more.

Kicking off this Fall and carrying through the Spring of 2021, *Streaming HOT – Back to 'Live'* will allow the company to continue bringing world-class opera to the Hawaiian Islands and beyond, just this time on TVs, at home, or on the go via an app created just for HOT! In tandem with the digital content, and in keeping with the *Back to 'Live'* theme, the company will be exploring ways to connect with the community in-person through special events – including screening parties – as safety protocols allow.

In addition to more traditional presentations on video, HOT will be exploring new content that reflects the uniqueness of our island home through the Hapa Opera project, which will bring opera singers (including a very special guest to be announced soon!) together with local artists. This Opera Kanikapila is just one of many ideas planned, which take a brand-new approach to creating a musical fusion of opera and local culture.

As exciting as this new direction is, the company's primary goal is and will always be to create and share the joy of live, mainstage opera productions with as many people as possible.

The long-term goal for HOT Digital is not to replace the mainstage but to serve as an additional way for HOT to stay connected with its supporters while also reaching new audiences, truly making HOT a year-round company.

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MEDIA INQUIRIES: Jason Walter / 808.596.7858 / j_walter@hawaiiopera.org