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## **Houston Grand Opera Presents** **Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades***

HOUSTON— A haunting tale of obsession, the internationally acclaimed Richard Jones production of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* opens Houston Grand Opera's (HGO) 2010 spring repertory. Performances run April 16 – May 1, 2010 in the Brown Theater of the Wortham Theater Center.

*Opera News* calls Richard Jones's production of *The Queen of Spades*, originally created for Welsh National Opera "telling theatricality." London's *Observer* wrote "Once every few seasons, a production gets pretty much everything right. This is one ... dramatically spine-chilling, visually spare and coherent; it was the kind of theatrical experience which changes the way you look at life."

Russian tenor **Vladimir Galouzine** (Canio in HGO's production of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* 2008), considered to be one of the world's leading tenors and the finest interpreter of the role of Hermann, returns to HGO to sing the role of the tormented gambler. Russian soprano **Tatiana Monogarova** whom the London *Financial Times* calls "definitely a young singer to watch," makes her HGO debut as Lisa. Legendary Canadian mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst**, recently seen as Mrs. Grose in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, sings the role of the Countess, who possesses the gambling secret for which Hermann risks everything to discover. Also making his HGO debut, Icelandic baritone **Tómas Tómasson** sings the role of Count Tomsy. Soprano and HGO Studio alumna **Maria Markina**, who was last seen at HGO in the role of Maddalena in Verdi's *Rigoletto* (2009), returns to sing Pauline/Daphnis and Russian baritone **Vasily Ladyuk** makes his HGO debut as Prince Yeletsky. **Carlo Rizzi**, former Music Director of Welsh National Opera and frequent guest conductor at the Theatre alla Scala, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin and The Metropolitan Opera, will conduct the HGO Orchestra and Chorus. Director Roy Rallo revives Richard Jones's original direction. The production also incorporates puppets by the **Green Ginger** puppeteers, who make their HGO debut with this production. Set and costume design by **John Macfarlane**.

*The Queen of Spades* opens on Friday, April 16, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the Brown Theater at the Wortham Theater Center. Additional performances continue through May 1, 2010 with curtain time at 7:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. for Sunday matinees. *The Queen of Spades* will be performed in Russian with English supertitles.

### **About the opera:**

*The Queen of Spades*, Op. 68 (*Pikovaya dama*) is an opera in 3 acts (7 scenes) by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to a libretto by the composer's brother Modest Tchaikovsky based on a short story of the same name by Alexander Pushkin. The world premiere took place in 1890 in St. Petersburg, Russia at the Mariinsky Theater. Its New York premiere took place 20 years later on March 5, 1910, conducted by Gustav Mahler

*The Queen of Spades* tells the story of one man's obsession with gambling which propels him, and those around him to heartbreaking tragedy. The original tale by Pushkin is cruel and cynical with elements of the grotesque. However Tchaikovsky made fundamental changes to the story for his opera, the most significant being the transformation of its central character, Hermann, from cold-blooded opportunist to that of highly disturbed hero. Tchaikovsky also elevated the basic relationship between Hermann and Lisa into a true romance, paving the way for the opera's tragic outcome.

### **The Production**

This award-winning production, originally directed by Richard Jones for Welsh National Opera, has been seen in Bologna, Oslo, Brussels, and San Francisco. Set in an unspecific time period, the production's sets are designed by the Scottish artist and designer, John Macfarlane. Jones and Macfarlane have created an empty, heartless world for the characters to inhabit, the opera's supernatural element depicted by the imaginative use of puppetry. The driving force in this searing production is the relationship between the five main characters. Both principals and chorus are specifically choreographed to underline, enforce, and create a counterpoint, focusing on relationships, and the unfolding drama.

### **About the Artists:**

**Carlo Rizzi** (Conductor) made his Houston Grand Opera debut conducting Verdi's *Aida* in 2007, and returns this spring to conduct Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Former music director of Welsh National Opera, he has conducted an extensive repertoire there, including Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Britten's *Peter Grimes* and *The Turn of the Screw*, Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, R. Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Salome* and Janacek's *Katya Kabanová*. Maestro Rizzi's international opera credits include Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot* at Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Verdi's *La traviata* at the Teatro Regio in Parma and *Un ballo in maschera* in Turin, among others. He has conducted numerous productions at the Metropolitan Opera, including Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Verdi's *Aida*, *La traviata*, *Nabucco* and *Il trovatore*; Bellini's *Norma*; Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, *La bohème* and *Turandot*; Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Engagements this season include Verdi's *Don Carlos* at Paris Opera, Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* and Halévy's *La Juive* at Netherlands Opera, Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* and Puccini's *La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* in Zurich. Last summer, he conducted the critically-acclaimed production of *Aida* at the Bregenz Festival. Rizzi's complete performances of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and Verdi's *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Faust* and *Un ballo in maschera*, as well as Respighi's *Tone Poems* and Bizet's *L'Arlésienne*, are available on CD from Teldec. His 2006 recording of *La traviata* for Deutsche Grammophon was nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of "Best Opera Recording."

**Roy Rallo** (Revival Director) makes his Houston Grand Opera debut this season directing Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*—he directed a revival of the same production at San Francisco Opera in 2004. He began his career in opera as artistic administrator at Southern California's innovative Long Beach Opera, where he produced over twenty new productions between 1988 and 1994. He made his directorial debut there in 1991 with Mozart's *Lucio Silla*, followed by Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and Strauss's *Elektra*. Rallo's directorial credits include *Don Pasquale* in Weimar; *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Seven Deadly Sins* for The Crucible School

for Fire Arts in Oakland, CA; and co-directing Busoni's *Doktor Faust* with Nicholas Brieger at Munich's Bavarian State Opera. He has also directed Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at San Francisco Opera. Rallo has collaborated with director Christopher Alden on Gluck's *L'Île de Merlin* for the Spoleto Festival USA, Verdi's *Aida* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Gounod's *Faust* for Welsh National Opera, Verdi's *Il Trovatore* for Antwerp's Flemish Opera, and *Carmen* for the national theater in Mannheim, Germany. He has also directed revivals of Mozart's *Idomeneo* in Barcelona and Hamburg, Handel's *Alcina* in Lyon, and Puccini's *Turandot* in New Zealand. His Danish National Opera production of *Der Rosenkavalier* was nominated for the Reumert Prize, Denmark's most prestigious theater award.

**Richard Jones** (Original Director) is the original director for this spring's production of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Since its premiere at Welsh National Opera, it has been seen at San Francisco Opera, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Canadian Opera Company, and at the opera houses of Ferrara, Modena and Bologna. The London native has directed award-winning productions for opera and theater, including the Broadway production of *Titanic*, which garnered five Tony Awards. His opera credits include Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and an Evening Standard Award-winning production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle for Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Schubert's *Der Zwerg*, and Martinů's *Juliette* at Paris Opera; Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* and Puccini's *La bohème* at the Bregenz Festival; and Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and Janáček's *Jenůfa* for Netherlands Opera. He also designed Welsh National Opera productions of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Berg's *Wozzeck*; English National Opera productions of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, J. Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Sawyer's *From Morning to Midnight*, Berg's *Lulu*, and Berlioz's *The Trojans*; and Jonathan Dove's *Flight* and Tchaikovsky's *Euryanthe* at Glyndebourne. His Munich production of Handel's *Julius Caesar* was named "Production of the Year" by Germany's *Opernwelt* magazine. His work on *The Trojans* and *Hansel and Gretel* won him Laurence Olivier Awards and his *Wozzeck* received both a TMA Award and a Royal Philharmonic Society Opera Award.

Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* marks designer **John MacFarlane's** (Set and Costume Design) Houston Grand Opera debut. He is the original set and costume designer for this production. The Scotland native worked for fifteen years designing dance productions before turning his attention to opera. In addition to Richard Jones, he collaborates frequently with directors Willy Decker, Francesca Zambello, and David McVicar. Before *The Queen of Spades*, which won a Royal Philharmonic Award, MacFarlane worked with Jones on Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* at Welsh National Opera—that production earned them a Laurence Olivier Award and was recently revived at the Metropolitan Opera. Among his other notable opera credits are Berlioz's *The Trojans* at English National Opera; Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Ravel's *L'heure Espagnol* for Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden and Teatro alla Scala; and Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. This season will also see the premiere of his designs for Britten's *Peter Grimes*, produced in collaboration with director Willy Decker at the Teatro Regio in Turin.

**Jennifer Tipton** (Lighting Designer) returns to Houston Grand Opera to light Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* this spring—she is the original lighting designer for this production. She made her HGO debut in 1986, designing lighting for Glass and Moran's *Juniper Tree*, and returned for *Four Saints in Three Acts* by Virgil Thomson (1996), and Wagner's *Lohengrin* (1991) and *Parsifal* (1992). She has lit productions both on and off Broadway, and for major theater, dance and opera companies throughout the US and Europe. Ms. Tipton's opera credits include Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra* at Seattle Opera and New York City Opera, Janáček's *Osud* at Bard College's Fisher Performing Arts Center, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. She has designed lighting for R. Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Verdi's *Falstaff* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Prokofiev's *War and Peace* at English National Opera; *Hansel and Gretel* at Welsh National Opera; and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and Weber's *Euryanthe* at Glyndebourne. Among her many awards and honors are the 2003 Jerome Robbins Prize; the 2001 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize; an Obie Award for Lifetime Achievement and a Drama Desk Award. Her lighting for *In the Upper Room* earned her two Tony Awards and a Laurence Olivier Award. Born in Ohio, she studied English at Cornell University and dance in New York City. She teaches lighting at the Yale School of Drama.

**Priscilla Nathan Murphy** has choreographed and danced in numerous productions at Houston Grand Opera since 1994, and has led movement classes for the artists of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. This spring she

serves as Choreographer for Handel's *Xerxes* and Movement Advisor for Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* at HGO this spring. Director of the Creative Dance program at the Ben Stevenson Academy of the Houston Ballet, she has taught creative movement, ballet, and modern dance in the school's pre-professional and professional divisions since 1985. She has choreographed more than thirty pieces for companies and festivals including the Houston Ballet II, Houston Metropolitan Dance Company, Sandra Organ Dance Company, Chrysalis Repertory Dance Company, New Dance Group, Pink Ribbons, DiverseWorks, Houston Dance Coalition, Houston International Festival, Contemporary Dance/Fort Worth and the International Quilters Festival with Houston Community College. A native of Singapore, Ms. Nathan Murphy has enjoyed an active career as a dancer, appearing on the stages of major dance and opera companies in the U.S. and Singapore. Her dance credits include performing with Ann Carlson/White, Bill Evans Dance Company at the Bill Evans Summer Institute, Corpus Christi Opera, Dance Umbrella Series, and the Houston International Festival.

The puppeteers of **Green Ginger** make their Houston Grand Opera debut with this production—their original puppetry for *The Queen of Spades* has been seen at Welsh National Opera, the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, and at the Norwegian Opera. An award-winning theater company with bases in the UK and France, the company has embraced puppetry in the widest sense since 1978. Drawing inspiration from street theater, Green Ginger collaborates regularly with Aardman Animations, National Assembly for Wales and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

**Richard Bado** has been Houston Grand Opera's chorus master since 1988. He made his professional conducting debut in 1989 leading Houston Grand Opera's acclaimed production of *Show Boat* at the newly restored Cairo Opera House in Egypt. Since then, Mr. Bado has conducted at Teatro alla Scala, Opéra National de Paris, Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, the Tulsa Opera, the Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, Wolf Trap Opera, Houston Ballet, and the Edinburgh Festival. Mr. Bado performs recitals with Renée Fleming and has also accompanied Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Denyce Graves, Susan Graham, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey and Nathan Gunn. Mr. Bado, holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award and West Virginia University, and has studied advanced choral conducting with Robert Shaw. This season marks Mr. Bado's fifth year as Director of the Opera Studies Program at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He has been on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School for sixteen summers and has served on the music staff of the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Australia, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Chautauqua Opera and Wolf Trap Opera. Mr. Bado regularly judges for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and served as Houston Grand Opera's Head of Music Staff for fourteen seasons.

Tenor **Vladimir Galouzine** (Hermann) was last seen at HGO singing the role of Canio in *Pagliacci*. He also appeared as Chevalier de Grioux in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (2006) after making his company debut as Calaf in *Turandot* (2004). He has appeared as Canio in *Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Galouzine joined the Mariinsky Theatre upon personal invitation from Valery Gergiev where he has appeared in core tenor roles of the Russian repertoire such as Hermann in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and Dimitri in Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and in such Italian repertoire as the title roles of Verdi's *Otello* and *Don Carlo*. Other notable credits include Sergey in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and Calaf in Puccini's *Turandot* at the Metropolitan Opera; Rodolfo in Verdi's *Luisa Miller* at Netherlands Opera; Hermann in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Netherlands Opera and in Florence; Alexey in Prokofiev's *The Gambler* at Teatro alla Scala; Radames in Verdi's *Aida* at the Arena di Verona; Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca* and Calaf in *Turandot* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and the title role of Verdi's *Otello* at Metropolitan Opera, Teatro San Carlo, and Royal Opera.

Soprano **Tatiana Monogarova** (Lisa) makes her North American debut as Lisa in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* at HGO this spring as role she has performed in Brussels, Belgium, and in Italy in Ferrara, Bologna and Modena, as well as Graz, Austria and in Munich, Germany. The Moscow native's most recent engagements include Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at La Scala in Milan and the Bavarian State Opera in Munich; Fevronia in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Invisible City of Kitezh*; Mariya in Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* at Welsh National Opera and Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello* at Glyndebourne. She has also sung Countess Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Vienna, Pamina in *The Magic Flute* in Nantes, Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* in Bern

and the title role of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Seville. Ms. Monogarova is an alumna of the Russian Academy of Arts and a former member of the Stanislavsky Theatre, where she served as principal soprano.

Mezzo-soprano **Judith Forst** (The Countess) appeared at Houston Grand Opera this season as Mrs. Grose in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. Other recent appearances include Kabanicha in *Katya Kabanova* at Chicago Opera, Herodias in *Salome* at Vancouver Opera, Madame Akhrosimova in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* with Canadian Opera Company, and Mrs. Grose at Portland Opera. Her Metropolitan Opera credits include Kostelnička in Janáček's *Jenůfa*, a role she also performed at the National Theatre Prague, Dallas Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Santiago Opera, Montreal Opera and Vancouver Opera; Kabanicha, and the Witch in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*.

**Tómas Tómasson** makes his Houston Grand Opera debut as Count Tomsky in *The Queen of Spades*, a role he has performed at Welsh National Opera, San Francisco Opera, the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, and at Flemish Opera. Recent engagements include Kurwenal in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the title role of Reimann's *Lear* at the Komische Oper Berlin, and the title role of *Rigoletto* with Lorraine Opera and Nancy Opera France. The Iceland Native has also performed leading roles with the national opera in Reykjavik, such as Tonio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Alfio in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Giorgio Germont in Verdi's *La traviata*. He has also appeared as Fasolt in *Das Rheingold* at Vienna State Opera; Raimondo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Rodolfo in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* at Lausanne Opera and at the Teatro Royal in Madrid; Colline in *La bohème* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and the title role of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the Grand Teatre del Liceu.

Houston Grand Opera Studio alumna **Maria Markina** sings Pauline and Daphnis in *The Queen of Spades* this spring. She appeared last season at HGO as Maddalena in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Lola in Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*. The mezzo-soprano is a member of the ensemble at Hamburg State Opera in Germany, where she appears frequently in leading roles. The Moscow native won first prize in the 2006 Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. Other HGO roles have included Hansel in performances of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, The Second Lady in *The Magic Flute* and Lápak / Woodpecker in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. A former member of Moscow's Novaya Opera Theatre, she appeared there in a wide variety of roles including Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, the Third Lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Lel in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*. She has also sung Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* at Wolf Trap Opera and the title role of *La Cenerentola* at Connecticut Opera. She was a featured soloist in the Houston Ballet production of Stravinsky's *Les noces* and in Da Camera's production of Brahms's *Die Liebeslieder Walzer*.

Baritone **Vasily Ladyuk** makes his Houston Grand Opera debut as Prince Yeletsky in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Recent credits include Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* at the Mikhailovsky Theater in St. Petersburg and the title role of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the Marinsky Theater. Mr. Ladyuk appeared with the Opera Company of the Marinsky Theater on tour at the Metropolitan Opera House as Andrei Bolkonsky in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. Other credits include Prince Yamadori in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Robert in Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* in Marseilles and Shchelkalov in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at the Théâtre de La Monnaie in Brussels. Mr. Ladyuk is a past first-prize and audience choice award-winner at the Francisco Viñas International Singing Competition. He has also received honors from the Operalia Competition in addition to placing first in the Shizuoka International Opera Competition in Japan. He can be heard on two discs available from Boheme Records: a compilation of Russian folk songs arranged by Lyadov and Shostakovich, and a complete recording of Georgy Dmitriev's *The Testament of Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol*.

## Performance Summary:

All performances of Houston Grand Opera's production of Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* are held in the Wortham Center's Brown Theater, Texas Avenue at Smith Street, Houston, TX.

Sung in Russian with English supertitles.

### Performance Dates

Friday, April 16, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, April 18, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, April 24, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 28, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, May 1, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

## Ticket Information:

- Individual tickets range from \$23 - \$276. Tickets may be obtained online at [www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org) or by phone at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 1-800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372)
- Tickets are also available at the HGO Box Office (in the lobby of the Wortham Theater Center) from 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday and 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Saturday. The Box Office operates on Sundays when there is a performance, and opens at 12:00 p.m. and closes after the first intermission (hours are subject to change).
- The Wortham Theater Center features wheelchair access to both theaters, with a choice of seating locations and ticket prices. An infrared listening system, underwritten by Shell Lubricants, is available and free of charge at all performances. Disabled access and TDD: 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 1-800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372); Descriptive Services: 713-546-0230.
- Opera Insights Lectures take place forty-five minutes before each performance. Guest speakers present a twenty-minute informal lecture. For performances of *The Queen of Spades*, lectures will be held in the Masterson Green Room, elevator level #2, Wortham Theater Center. These lectures, free and open to all ticket holders, are intended to enhance the audience's enjoyment by preparing them for the production they are about to attend.

Since its inception in 1955, Houston Grand Opera has swiftly moved from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. The company has a reputation for commissioning and producing new works (39 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973) as well as a reputation for reaching out to new audiences. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and it is the only opera company to have won a Tony, two Grammy, and two Emmy awards. Houston Grand Opera's productions are broadcast nationally over the WFMT network, and internationally over the European Broadcasting Union, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

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