



HOUSTON GRAND OPERA PRESENTS

Richard Strauss  
*Ariadne auf Naxos*



Christine Goerke



Susan Graham



Laura Claycomb



Patrick Summers

**Whatever happens, the show must go on!**

Marvel at some of the most spectacular coloratura arias in the repertoire when Houston Grand Opera presents Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, April 29 – May 10, 2011, featuring three glamorous and acclaimed sopranos; **Christine Goerke** (Prima Donna / Ariadne) **Susan Graham** (Composer) and **Laura Claycomb** (Zerbinetta) .

All of the major principal roles demand singers of the highest caliber and HGO has assembled a cast which is second to none. Susan Graham, one of the world's leading mezzo sopranos, returns to HGO to perform the role of the Composer. This role has become a signature calling card for Graham with many invitations from opera houses around the world. American soprano, Christine Goerke, who performed Ortrud in *Lohengrin* last season, performs the role of Ariadne, while soprano Laura Claycomb, recently seen as Tytania in HGO's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performs Zerbinetta. Tenor Alexey Dolgov returns to HGO as Bacchus, after singing Cavaradossi in last season's production of Puccini's *Tosca*.

The ravishing score will be conducted by HGO Music Director, **Patrick Summers** and this sparkling production is designed and directed by legendary opera director, **John Cox**.

This seldom-produced gem of the repertoire offers much for lovers of both music and theatre. Premiered in 1916, *Ariadne auf Naxos* is an opera about an opera and takes place at the home of the richest man in Vienna. To entertain his guests, he has invited a commedia dell'arte group and an opera company- who will perform a serious opera, *Ariadne on Naxos*. However, he decrees the fireworks for his party should begin at 9 o'clock, which means the companies must perform simultaneously.

At first, everyone complains and bickers. The comedians' relaxed 'the show must go on' approach in the face of the 'prima-donna' behavior of the opera company is, though, matched by their humanity when they hear of Ariadne's heartbreak over Theseus. Through Strauss' soaring music and Hofmannsthal's witty and intelligent libretto, the message becomes clear; love is the great common denominator.

*Ariadne auf Naxos* is the second opera in HGO's planned multi-year exploration of the German repertory, following Wagner's *Lohengrin* in 2009/10 season. German masterworks by Wagner, Beethoven and Strauss represent some of the greatest challenges an opera company can undertake. Under HGO Music Director, Patrick Summers, the musical forces of Houston Grand Opera have the skill and virtuosity to do justice to these demanding operas. Maestro Summers said, "*Ariadne auf Naxos* is a wonderfully paradoxical work: it is of immense difficulty on every level, vocal, orchestral, linguistic, philosophical, dramatic, and narratively - yet it is also such an enjoyable delight, easy on the ear and eye, thoroughly entertaining and, to me, deeply touching. I'm so happy that Houston Grand Opera is facing its challenges with such a divine cast and an orchestra now up to the task."

"Director John Cox ... has knit the entire *Ariadne* production together seamlessly, bringing out the dichotomous nature of the theme with subtlety and finesse." -**Culture Vulture**

## BIOGRAPHIES:

**CHRISTINE GOERKE**, recipient of the 2001 Richard Tucker Award, has established an outstanding reputation with many of the world's leading opera houses and orchestras, not only for her beautiful soprano voice, but her outstanding dramatic and comedic abilities. Ms Goerke created a sensation with critics and the public alike as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* for her San Francisco Opera debut. Noting the agile richness and size of her soprano, one critic simply wrote, "Ecco la Brunnhilde." A busy opera season for Christine Goerke in the 09-2010 season included Wagner's *Lohengrin*, performing the role of Ortrud under Patrick Summers at Houston Grand Opera, and covering the roles of Chrysothemis and Ariadne in Strauss' *Elektra* and *Adriadne auf Naxos*, respectively, at The Metropolitan Opera. Symphony appearances included a return to Japan's Saito-Kinen festival under Seiji Ozawa performing Britten's War Requiem and the St. Louis Symphony under Robert Spano, singing Vaughan-Williams' *A Sea Symphony*. Ms. Goerke's recording of Vaughan Williams *Sea Symphony* with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra won the 2003 Grammy Award for Best Classical Recording and Best Choral Performance.. Other recordings include the title role of Iphigenie in *Iphigenie en Tauride* for Telarc and the Britten *War Requiem*, which won the 1999 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance.

"Christine Goerke...steals the show. Her stage presence and vocal charisma are so strong...breathtaking and memorable."

*Concerto.net*

**SUSAN GRAHAM**, one of the world's foremost stars of opera and recital, is a compelling and versatile singing actress. At home and abroad, mezzo-soprano Graham has sung leading roles from the 17th to 20th centuries in the great opera houses of the world, including Milan's La Scala, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Dresden's Semperoper, and the Salzburg Festival, and she has appeared with most of the world's leading conductors and orchestras. Dubbed "America's favorite mezzo" by Gramophone magazine, Grammy Award-winning Graham captivates audiences with her expressive voice, tall and graceful stature, and engaging acting ability in both comedy and tragedy. Graham, a leading participant in the international Christoph Willibald Gluck opera revival, has sung the title role of *Iphigénie en Tauride* in a new production staged for her by the Metropolitan Opera, and at Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. The Chicago Tribune wrote: "Graham put her own stamp on the part, bringing both nobility and vibrant vocal beauty to her affecting performance." Born in New Mexico and raised in Texas, Graham studied at Texas Tech University and the Manhattan School of Music, which also awarded her an honorary Doctor of Music in 2008. She won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Schwabacher Award from San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, as well as a Career Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation. Graham was Musical America's 2004 Vocalist of the Year and, in 2006, her hometown of Midland, Texas, declared September 5 "Susan Graham Day" in perpetuity.

"Graham's mezzo-soprano is a voice without regrets, healthy, rounded, ineffably musical, and eager for a challenge."

*New Yorker*

**LAURA CLAYCOMB**, a native Texan, Ms. Claycomb garnered critical acclaim last season as Romilda in the HGO production of Handel's *Xerxes*. She has also appeared as Tytania in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2009), Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* (2001), Cleopatra in Handel's *Julius Caesar* (2003) and in the Donizetti roles of Marie in *The Daughter of the Regiment* (2007) and the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2003). A native of Corpus Christi, Texas, she has appeared as Ginevra in Handel's *Ariodante* in Paris and Munich, Cunegonde in Bernstein's *Candide* with Opera Pacific, Konstanze in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at both Berlin State Opera and Flemish Opera and Olympia in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* and the title role of Handel's *Semele* at Flemish Opera. She recently sang Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Teatro Municipale Giuseppe Verdi in Salerno, Italy and the Dallas Opera) and in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Pittsburgh Opera). Her upcoming engagements include Dircé in Cherubini's *Medée* at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Belgium, Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at Geneva Opera, and the soprano solo in Mahler's Second and Fourth Symphonies on European Tour with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony (Smetana Hall, Prague; the Vienna Concert House; Salle Pleyel, Paris; and the Coliseu in Lisbon).

Laura Claycomb's high notes were her glory ..... and the vivacious soprano floated many ethereal pianissimo phrases in her first-ever Romilda." -*William Albright, Opera, September 2010*

**ALEXEY DOLGOV**, Tenor Alexey Dolgov sang Mario Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca* in HGO's 2009-2010 season. He made his HGO debut in Puccini's *La bohème* in 2008, singing Rodolfo. A principal at the Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theatre (SND), he appears there regularly in leading Russian roles, as well as in heroic lead tenor roles from the Italian *bel canto* and *verismo* repertoire. United States credits include the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* at Washington National Opera, Aldredo Germont in Verdi's *La traviata* at Los Angeles Opera. He has also sung Alfredo Germont in Salerno, Italy, and has appeared at the Teatro alla Scala as Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Credits at SND include Sergey in Shostokovich's *Moskva Cheryomushki*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoore*, Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*. An alumnus of the New Siberia State Conservatory, he completed his studies at the Tchaikovsky State Conservatory in Moscow.



**Albert and Anne Chao / Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation**

**Mr. John G. Turner and Mr. Jerry G. Fischer**

Underwriters



**Dr. Will McLendon**