



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 15, 2010  
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**TONY AWARD WINNERS CREATE NEW *MADAME BUTTERFLY*  
FOR HOUSTON GRAND OPERA**

Award-winning Creative Team make US operatic debut with season-opening production on October 22, 2010

HOUSTON, TX– Director **Michael Grandage**, designer **Christopher Oram** and lighting designer **Neil Austin** – the creative team responsible for **Houston Grand Opera**’s (HGO) new production of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* – swept the prestigious Tony Awards Sunday night in New York City with six awards for their Broadway production of John Logan’s *Red*. The new HGO production marks the London-based design team’s first opera for a U.S. company. Grandage is the Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse where the production of *Red* originated.

“It is thrilling to bring about the U.S. operatic debut of such a dynamic creative team,” said HGO General Director and CEO, **Anthony Freud**, noting that Grandage’s team had been honored with Tonys for best direction, best scenic design, best lighting design and best sound design; the awards for best play and best performance by a featured actor also went to *Red*. “Their work at Donmar Warehouse in London and on Broadway has consistently delivered extraordinary revelations for the audience. I am delighted they accepted our invitation to create HGO’s new production of *Madame Butterfly*, and look forward to sharing this vision of Puccini’s much-loved opera with our audiences in Houston.” Rehearsals in Houston for the new production begin in late September.

“As a production team we have worked almost exclusively in the theater,” noted Grandage who described his production of *Madame Butterfly* as taking its inspiration from traditional Japanese art, and set in a fascinating and interesting period of history. “I’m excited to work with Houston Grand Opera on such an important and beautiful piece of the operatic repertory.”

No strangers to the stage awards circuit, the production team has won multiple entertainment awards in the fifteen years of their working relationship. Highlights of their career include **Laurence Olivier Awards** for *Guys and Dolls* (2006) and *Grand Hotel* (2005), the 2010 **Drama Desk Awards** for Outstanding Play, Outstanding Director and Outstanding Lighting (*Red*,

2010) and the Tony Award nomination for *Frost/Nixon* (2009). The celebrated team has just made their U.K. operatic debut at the Glyndebourne Festival with a critically-acclaimed production of Britten's *Billy Budd*; and will revive their celebrated West End production of *Evita* on Broadway in spring 2012.

The new production of *Madame Butterfly* will feature soprano **Ana Maria Martínez** in her role debut as Cio-Cio San and the HGO debuts of tenor **Joseph Calleja** (Pinkerton), baritone **Levi Hernandez** (Sharpless) and mezzo-soprano **Lucy Schauer** (Suzuki). HGO Music Director **Patrick Summers** conducts. *Madame Butterfly* will open HGO's 2010-11 season on Friday, October 22, 2010 at 7:00 pm at the Wortham Theater Center in Houston Texas and runs for five performances. Additionally the company will present two student matinees, a High School Night performance and a special **Nexus Initiative** Matinee featuring acclaimed soprano **Cynthia Clayton** (Cio-Cio San), tenor **Nathaniel Peake** (Pinkerton), baritone **Michael Sumuel** (Sharpless) and mezzo-soprano **Catherine Martin** (Suzuki).

Subscriptions for HGO's 2010-11 season are currently available, starting at \$84.00. Single tickets go on sale to the public on Sunday, September 19, 2010.

**Madame Butterfly is supported in part by**

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Since its inception in 1955, Houston Grand Opera has swiftly grown from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. The company has a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 40 world premieres and six 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, innovative and balanced program of performances, events, community and education projects that reaches the widest possible public. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and it is the only opera company to have won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards. HGO's performances are broadcast nationally on the WFMT Radio Network.

