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## Houston Grand Opera's Banner Year

Balanced budget expected for 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year  
3 world premieres, added performances highlight accomplishments  
New Executive Leaders Discuss Plans

Houston, TX – June 3, 2011 – At the company’s annual meeting on June 2, 2011, **Houston Grand Opera** Board Chairman **Glen Rosenbaum** reported that the company expects to end the fiscal year on July 31, 2011 on balance. “Despite the continued instability of the economy, 2011 has been one of the most successful years in the company’s history,” stated Mr. Rosenbaum. “Thanks to the generosity of our many loyal subscribers and donors and the company’s strong management of its resources, and a great year at the box office, Houston Grand Opera is thriving.”

More than fifteen million dollars have been raised for the year, bringing the company’s comprehensive campaign, launched in 2007, to just over seventy-six million dollars. Transformational campaign gifts from **Margaret Alkek Williams** (\$4 million) the **Wortham Foundation** (\$2 million), **The Brown Foundation** (\$1 million), and **Anadarko Petroleum Corporation** (\$1 million) were highlighted in the report. Chief Advancement Officer **Greg Robertson** said, “The generosity of our patrons and donors, and the extraordinary support of Houston’s philanthropic community are truly a vote of confidence in HGO’s future.”

At the box office, HGO achieved over \$4 million in tickets sales, with 94% of capacity sold for the season. Performances of both *Madame Butterfly* and *The Marriage of Figaro* were added to the schedule as demand for tickets soared. “We are surely one of the few opera companies that had the opportunity to add performances,” noted Mr. Rosenbaum, observing that the company had sold out 11 of its 33 performances in the Wortham Center’s Brown Theater.

In addition to its scheduled season of six productions, HGO mounted three world premieres: *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (Martinez / Foglia, November 2010), *Courtside* (Perla / Chen, January 2011) and *Your Name Means the Sea* (Franghiz Alizadeh, May 2011), all commissioned and presented through HGO’s Song of Houston project. “Commissions like these are an expression of our relevance to the city we serve, and an investment in the future of the art form,” noted the company’s General Director Anthony Freud. In September, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* will be performed six times at the prestigious Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris with its Houston cast and the internationally-renowned Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, marking HGO’s first international tour since 1998.

### New Leadership

The company’s newly-appointed executive leadership team, consisting of Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** and Managing Director **Perryn Leech** were presented to the assembled Trustees and Board by Mr. Rosenbaum. Introducing Mr. Summers, he shared a testimonial from tenor **Plácido Domingo**: “Houston Grand Opera is fortunate indeed to have Patrick take on the new dual position of artistic and music director. In his long history with the company, Patrick has distinguished himself as a dynamic leader, and opera houses around the world have also benefited from his expertise as conductor. He has formidable musical talents and an inspiring eagerness to do innovative, creative work. It’s both significant and exciting to have an artist and performer take on this new artistic leadership role – something that I have truly come to appreciate myself over the years – and Patrick is more than ready for the challenge.” -cont’d next page -

Mr. Summers stated the aim of increasing the company's annual subscription productions from six to eight. "In the last several years, we have rightfully focused our resources on our six mainstage operas," he said, "but we must find a way to increase our productivity and to allow more people to experience the art that we make." Among artistic priorities are American premiere of Miécyslaw Weinberg's *The Passenger* in 2013 and the company's co-production of Wagner's Ring operas, slated for presentation starting in 2014. Mr. Summers also plans to incorporate new productions of the Mozart operas, and programming by American composers, celebrating the key contributions of such composers as Leonard Bernstein and John Adams, along with a small number of classic American musicals.

It is vitally important, noted Mr. Summers, to expand and accelerate the company's educational activities through HGOco. "In addition to producing great opera and delivering affordable access to its transformative power, I hope the over-arching theme of my tenure at HGO will be arts education," he said. "As the public school systems of the United States continue to be forced to decimate arts programs, the burden of arts education increasingly falls to professional artists. If we don't do it, who will?" Both HGOco and the NEXUS Initiative – programs devoted to education and making opera affordable – will continue to be top priorities for the company.

Mr. Summers announced the expansion of the Houston Grand Opera Studio's activities to include an annual Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA), a program intended to offer training and education to promising college-aged singers. A pilot of the program took place from May 22-27, 2011, with eight singers engaging in voice lessons, and repertoire coaching as well as movement, acting and diction studies with HGO Studio faculty and staff. "The aim of YAVA is to give young singers an exposure to the most important parts of our operatic tradition, especially a solid grounding in technical singing," said Mr. Summers.

"The preservation and inspiration of the company itself, of all of the serious artisans who people it – the orchestra, the chorus, the diverse and expert technical teams, the development staff, the creative forces of marketing and communications, the vital embryo that is HGOco, and our board and trustees – is of the utmost importance to me," said Mr. Summers. "The only way for HGO to have full impact is for us to invest in excellence in every area of our art."

"Patrick's artistic plans for the for the future will require expert management and stewardship of the company's resources, both fiscal and human," said Mr. Leech, "and we are extremely fortunate that we have in Greg Robertson and a very strong senior staff the advantages of many years of experience and a shared desire to improve our ability to anticipate and respond to future challenges. HGO has always been an exciting company to watch and to work for and we look forward to shaping the next chapter in its illustrious history."

Mr. Leech reported the successful conclusion of negotiations with the company's three principal collective bargaining units (IATSE stage labor, AGMA for singers, directors and designers, and AFofM for orchestra personnel). "It is a huge credit to all concerned that the negotiations were conducted with honesty, clarity and in a spirit of flexibility and cooperation," said Mr. Leech. "Each union has their own issues to bring to the table and we were able to look at all those things and reach agreement or compromise. The commitment and desire for a successful and busier HGO was obvious from all sides and I thank the representatives for their time and good will during the negotiations. We look forward to working with all our IATSE, AGMA and AFofM colleagues in continuing to produce excellence onstage at the Wortham Theater Center and throughout our community."

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## **Celebrating Anthony Freud**

Mr. Summers and Mr. Rosenbaum shared an appreciation of the leadership of General Director **Anthony Freud**, OBE, who is leaving the company after six seasons at its helm to lead the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Highlights of Mr. Freud's tenure at HGO include the development and implementation of the company's multi-year strategic plan, the substantial growth in subscribers and donors, 14 new productions including 6 world premieres, and the establishment of key access programs such as the NEXUS Initiative and HGOco. "When he arrived in early 2006, Anthony wasted no time," said Mr. Rosenbaum, "immediately turning his attention simultaneously to the fiscal, artistic and social imperatives of excellence, relevance and affordability. He achieved net growth in our audience, took an entirely new approach to the company's relationship with the city it serves, and made the conception, production and presentation of world-class, inspirational and ambitious art the center of gravity for this company." Mr. Rosenbaum added, "It has been a wild, wonderful and very inspiring ride."

"For many people, opera is a foreign country: intimidating, unintelligible, tiring and a long trip," Mr. Summers observed. "In his six seasons at HGO, Anthony Freud has served as a most delightful tour guide. He shares his vast store of knowledge with calm and engaging enthusiasm, demystifying our marvelous art form and making it accessible to many who might otherwise never have experienced it. He is a leader of impeccable personal and professional integrity, which is an observation one can make about frustratingly few. He accomplishes all of this while being the most personable, witty, urbane and erudite colleague one can imagine. Anthony, I salute you. I will miss you. And I wish you continued success in the Windy City."

Mr. Freud, whose tenure at Lyric Opera of Chicago begins in October of this year, said, "It has been a great pleasure and honor to lead this remarkable and unique company for the past six seasons. I am tremendously proud of the work that we have done together. I look forward to watching HGO's continued success and expansion in the seasons to come. To all my colleagues in the company, its board and trustees, its generous donors and steadfast supporters, I offer my sincerest thanks."

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Founded in 1955, Houston Grand Opera is an internationally-renowned opera company with a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 43 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. 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, and internationally via the European Broadcast Union.