



HOUSTON GRAND OPERA

**2011-12 Season
Media Kit**

“An opera begins long before the curtain goes up and ends long after it has come down. It starts in my imagination, it becomes my life, and it stays part of my life long after I’ve left the opera house.”

— Maria Callas

A Note from Patrick Summers



An opera season should be like a great map. As it unfolds, your journey should be illuminated, new things should be revealed, familiarities revisited, adventures sought, routes established. As is well known, opera seasons are planned years in advance owing to the availability of sought-after artists and the long-range planning necessary to fund it all. So this season, Houston Grand Opera’s 57th, was planned by former General Director Anthony Freud and me in minute detail over the past five years, and was solidified some three years ago. It represents the collective visions and dreams of many people — staff, artists, board; it reflects the art form at its best and with its most established stars, while simultaneously being on the cutting edge of presenting major artists on the cusp of their careers, an HGO hallmark. It has been my goal to make each offering a treasured experience, a journey mapped for you with great care.

This season is guided by the spirits of five seminal figures of Western Music: Gioacchino Rossini, Ludwig van Beethoven, Benjamin Britten, Giuseppe Verdi, and Gaetano Donizetti. If only fate would allow a meeting with all five! Beethoven, so thrillingly ubiquitous on the concert platform, is a rarity in the opera house, and the appearance of his only opera in this season is one of the major events of our year.

Fidelio stars the great Finnish soprano Karita Mattila as Beethoven’s heroic title character, with Simon O’Neill, our incomparable Lohengrin of two years ago as Florestan. But Beethoven’s influence extends through the year to our spring repertoire, to Donizetti’s *Mary Stuart* and Verdi’s *Don Carlos*, an absolute dream-pairing of operas. These two epics are based on plays by Friedrich Schiller, whose famous “Ode to Joy” became the text of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, and Schiller’s great paeans to freedom inspired the creators of both works. *Mary Stuart* is being undertaken as a vehicle for HGO’s own Joyce DiDonato, this year’s Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, essaying the title role for the first time in her historic career. Verdi’s *Don Carlos*, his grandest and, to many (myself included), his greatest opera, stands as a testament to the very best of our art. *Don Carlos* will be heard as Verdi conceived it, in French.

The two works, *Mary Stuart* and *Don Carlos*, are closely related, most obviously by the actual historic relationship of their various characters: they tell the stories of the Spanish and English monarchs of the 15th century — the world of Elizabeth I of England and Mary (Stuart), Queen of Scots, and their mythical meeting which forms the entire plot of Donizetti’s opera. Elizabeth I’s brother-in-law, Philippe II of Spain, is the protagonist of Verdi’s broad story, a blending of private passions at war with the public duties of a royal house, with the Spanish Inquisition at its apogee. The casts for this mini-“Schiller Festival” could not be topped anywhere in the world, and this is repertoire not to be missed.

Beethoven’s extraordinary *Fidelio* — in a production from New York’s Metropolitan Opera — is paired with a composer who revered him, the mysterious figure of Rossini, who once opined that, despite being known mostly for tragic and epic operas in his lifetime, he would probably be remembered, if at all, “as the composer of the third act of *Otello* and *The Barber of Seville*.” He was partially right, as his ebullient comic barber remains his most famous work, but the Rossini renaissance of the past 30 years has shed tremendous new light on this fascinating figure. *The Barber of Seville*, one of the classic comedies, receives a new production from Spain’s Comediants, the group who gave us our charming production of the same composer’s *La Cenerentola* a few seasons ago. Nathan Gunn, Ana María Martínez, and Lawrence Brownlee will star in this season-opener.

For all of the excitement of the beginning and end of the season, the part of the season closest to my heart is our winter repertoire. Verdi’s sublime *La Traviata* — one of the most beloved of operas — was the work David Gockley and I chose together as my own debut with the company in 1998, a debut I shared with Patricia Racette, who sang Violetta that night. I conducted the work a second time in Houston when Renée Fleming chose HGO for her first foray into the opera. Now, I conduct the work again, and I usher yet another breathtaking soprano through the rigors of this profound role, Albina Shagimuratova, our superb Lucia from last season. Throughout my career, I have conducted the work all over the world; indeed, I cannot recall a time in my adult life that I didn’t know it. Still, as I write and think about it in the coming months, the anticipation builds — as though it were a new work to me — for it is new with each new generation of sopranos/musicians/actresses who take on the great “Camille.”

For the past five seasons, HGO has been engaged in a series of operas by the quixotic and brilliant 20th century British composer Benjamin Britten. I can say with no hesitation that the most thrilling, challenging, and rewarding works I have conducted recently have been Britten’s operas, and I am deeply proud of the statement made by HGO in presenting them and the level of performances we have delivered of these troubling, enigmatic, and relevant operas. We conclude our Britten series this year with his immediate post-WWII chamber opera, *The Rape of Lucretia*; a brilliant and strangely beautiful opera, uncompromising in its use of an ancient tale (one of the oldest in Western history) to illuminate contemporary political realities — a work which will thrill the adventurous, challenge assumptions, surprise the senses, and leave you thinking. It receives a new production by a vanguard of the young theater culture in New York City, Arin Arbus, whose recent Shakespeare *Macbeth* on Broadway provided one of the most thrilling nights I’ve had in a lifetime of theater-going. This production also sees exciting young Scottish conductor Rory Macdonald in his HGO debut.

So, there is the map of our next opera season. Allow it to unfold; allow yourself to be surprised, challenged, moved, annoyed, vexed, rewarded. And most importantly, remember that the map is not the destination.

Patrick Summers
Artistic & Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

[Click here to read Maestro Summers’ article.](#)

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THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

NEW PRODUCTION!

Gioacchino Rossini

October 21 - November 6, 2011

Special NEXUS performance November 12, 2011

Houston Grand Opera will open its 2011/12 season on October 21, 2011 with a new production of Rossini's witty and comic masterpiece, *The Barber of Seville*. Subscription performances continue through November 6, 2011 with a special NEXUS matinée on Saturday, November 12.

American baritone **Nathan Gunn** is the mischievous and charismatic Barber, whose performance was enthusiastically reviewed by *The New York Times*, "[Gunn's] comic timing had the audience in stitches." HGO favorite **Ana María Martínez** sings the role of the saucy Rosina, and **Patrick Carfizzi** the scheming Dr. Bartolo. **Lawrence Brownlee** returns to HGO as Count Almaviva, and **Kyle Ketelsen** makes his HGO debut as Don Basilio.

"The dazzler is the Rosina of Ana María Martínez. She's every inch the feisty, hot-blooded Spanish girl."
- *The Dallas Morning News*

The dynamic Italian conductor, **Leonardo Vordoni**, making his HGO debut will lead the performances of this musically elegant comedy. Recently, *Chicago Tribune* praised Vordoni's performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* "Mindful of the singers' needs, he infused the orchestral playing with crisp vitality and shapely phrasing." *Opera News* wrote, "Maestro Leonardo Vordoni led a splendidly nuanced reading of verve and melting grace."

NEXUS Performances

The Barber of Seville performance on November 12 is HGO's 2011/12 season NEXUS matinée. The NEXUS Initiative is a special program that encourages a larger and more diverse audience to attend the opera. All tickets are priced low at just \$12.25 and are available to people who may not normally attend the opera due to barriers of price or unfamiliarity – students, young families, senior citizens, and underserved communities. HGO will also present two matinées of *The Barber of Seville* as part of the annual Student Performance Series, also sponsored by NEXUS, which brings more than 6,200 students to the Wortham Theater Center each year for only \$10 per ticket.

Sung in Italian with projected English translation.

A co-production with Canadian Opera Company, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Opera Australia

In *The Barber of Seville*, the resourceful barber Figaro comes to the aid of his former master, Count Almaviva. The handsome Count is deliriously in love with the ravishing young Rosina, a ward of old Doctor Bartolo, who is determined to marry her himself.

This new production marks the highly anticipated return of **Joan Font**, the artistic director of the Barcelona-based theater company Els Comediants, whose production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* in 2007 was a runaway success. Set and costume designer **Joan Guillén** has designed a fascinating and magical set using a host of multimedia techniques.

Director Font cites his HGO 2007 premiere production of *La Cenerentola* as a particular pleasure. "People laughed so hard and applauded so much that the conductor was flabbergasted," the director recalls.

Growing up in a musical family, Font organized many street performances which led to forming his company Els Comediants. Having performed their first show at the University of Madrid in 1972, Els Comediants now perform all over the world, and Font was responsible for the closing ceremonies of the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. He has worked in television, film, and has helped create children's books. He has also adapted two opera productions, including *La Cenerentola*, for children. "I've tried to bring as much of this energy as I possibly can to opera," Font says. "For many people, the experience is like a door opening into a magical new world."

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Rosina
Ana María Martínez

Conductor
Leonardo Vordoni

Figaro
Nathan Gunn

Director
Joan Font

Count Almaviva
Lawrence Brownlee

Set and Costume Designer
Joan Guillén

Dr. Bartolo
Patrick Carfizzi

Lighting Designer
Albert Faura

Don Basilio
Kyle Ketelsen

Choreographer
Xevi Dorca

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus – Richard Bado, Chorus Master

CAST - NEXUS PERFORMANCES AND HIGH SCHOOL NIGHT

Rosina
Lauren Snouffer

Conductor
Craig Kier

Figaro
Mark Diamond

Count Almaviva
Brendan Tuohy

Dr. Bartolo
Steven Condy

Don Basilio
Nicholas Masters

DID YOU KNOW?

- *The Barber of Seville* was completed in thirteen days.
- Music from *The Barber of Seville* has been featured in movies such as, "Babe: The Pig in the City", "Deep Impact", "Jumanji", "Space Jam", "Under the Tuscan Sun", and in an award-winning Nike commercial starring Charles Barkley.
- *The Barber of Seville* is based on part one of the Figaro trilogy written by French playwright Pierre Beaumarchais which features the stock characters of Italian commedia dell'arte – Harlequin, the rascal, Columbine, the innocent heroine, and Pantalone, the wealthy and libidinous old merchant. All three plays, *The Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *The Guilty Mother* satirize the hypocrisy and power of the aristocracy.
- Nathan Gunn, who is playing the role of Figaro, has a workout which incorporates his daughter's gymnastic routines including handstands and headstands that he does in his hotel room.
- Ana María Martínez contemplated becoming an astronaut before she chose to study music. November 19 is not just the date of her Met debut but also the anniversary of the discovery of Puerto Rico, her birthplace – her mother is Puerto Rican, her father is Cuban.



Guillén

Set and costume designs by Joan Guillén

FIDELIO

Ludwig van Beethoven

October 28 - November 13, 2011

Houston Grand Opera's Fall season continues with Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*. In an exciting artistic partnership, Finnish dramatic soprano **Karita Mattila** stars in the title role, New Zealand tenor **Simon O'Neill** will sing Florestan, and performances will be led by German conductor **Michael Hofstetter**.

Fidelio tells of the heroic deeds of a devoted wife Leonore, who—disguised as a prison worker—struggles to free her husband Florestan from the chains of a wrongful imprisonment and an oppressive regime. Ms. Mattila is considered one of today's greatest exponents of the role. *The New York Times* said of her Metropolitan Opera performances, "Ms. Mattila's gleaming voice, with its cool Nordic colorings and carrying power, sent Beethoven's vocal lines soaring... her voice shimmers with defiance and intensity." Mattila was last heard at HGO in the title role of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.

Tenor Simon O'Neill has established himself as the foremost heldentenor on the international stage. A native of New Zealand, he is a principal with the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, La Scala, and Bayreuth, and has appeared with all the finest conductors in many notable debuts. His performances of Florestan at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden were widely praised. *The Spectator* said, "Simon O'Neill is the finest Florestan to appear for many years, and gave us a taste of the work's centre of pain." Colin Anderson from *The Opera Critic* wrote, "Simon O'Neill's assumption of Florestan is monumental." *The Telegraph* said, "the best heroic tenor to emerge over the last decade."

Audiences will remember O'Neill's extraordinary role debut at HGO in 2009 in the title role in Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Reviewing for *Houston Chronicle*, Everett Evans said, "O'Neill's golden tenor, with its easeful command and sweetness of tone, projects Lohengrin's superhuman nobility."

Sung in German with projected English translation.

A production of The Metropolitan Opera.

Tómas Tómasson, last heard at HGO in 2010 as Tomsy in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, performs the role of the tyrannical and corrupt Don Pizarro; fellow Icelander **Kristinn Sigmundsson** sings the role of the jailer Rocco. HGO is delighted to welcome back the German conductor, Michael Hofstetter, who conducted HGO's production of Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict* in 2008.

Fidelio premiered nearly 200 years ago, in 1814, yet the drama and universal theme of wrongful imprisonment and the triumph of true love remain as relevant as ever. HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers said, "This is a work of extraordinary musical dramatic power. Beethoven had a real struggle in himself as an artist in how to live in the world. You can hear in the music an incredible longing for a certain kind of humanity. It is a story about a woman who will go to any extreme to save the life of her husband, and Karita Mattila has the sort of bravery and heroic nature as an artist that Leonore has as a character." He added, "*Fidelio* has had a distinguished performance history here with Hildegard Behrens and into another era, John Vickers and Leonie Rysanek. It is not an opera that you can do more than once a generation. We are extremely fortunate and excited to have Simon O'Neill, one of the world's great heldentenors, and Ms. Mattila perform together."

With its thrilling choral finale that rivals famed "Ode to Joy" of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Director **Jürgen Flimm**'s searing and insightful production, updated to a contemporary totalitarian state, mirrors Beethoven's original concept.

"Beethoven's great hymn of praise to freedom and justice is here given an absorbing staging and performance...Director Jürgen Flimm keeps the action on the move and has introduced some revealing asides; even in the dungeon scene there is an evident sense of both danger and (literally) release."

- *The New York Times*

Photo by Ken Howard

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Leonore
Karita Mattila

Florestan
Simon O'Neill

Don Pizarro
Tómas Tómasson

Rocco
Kristinn Sigmundsson

Conductor
Michael Hofstetter

Director
Jürgen Flimm

Set Designer
Robert Israel

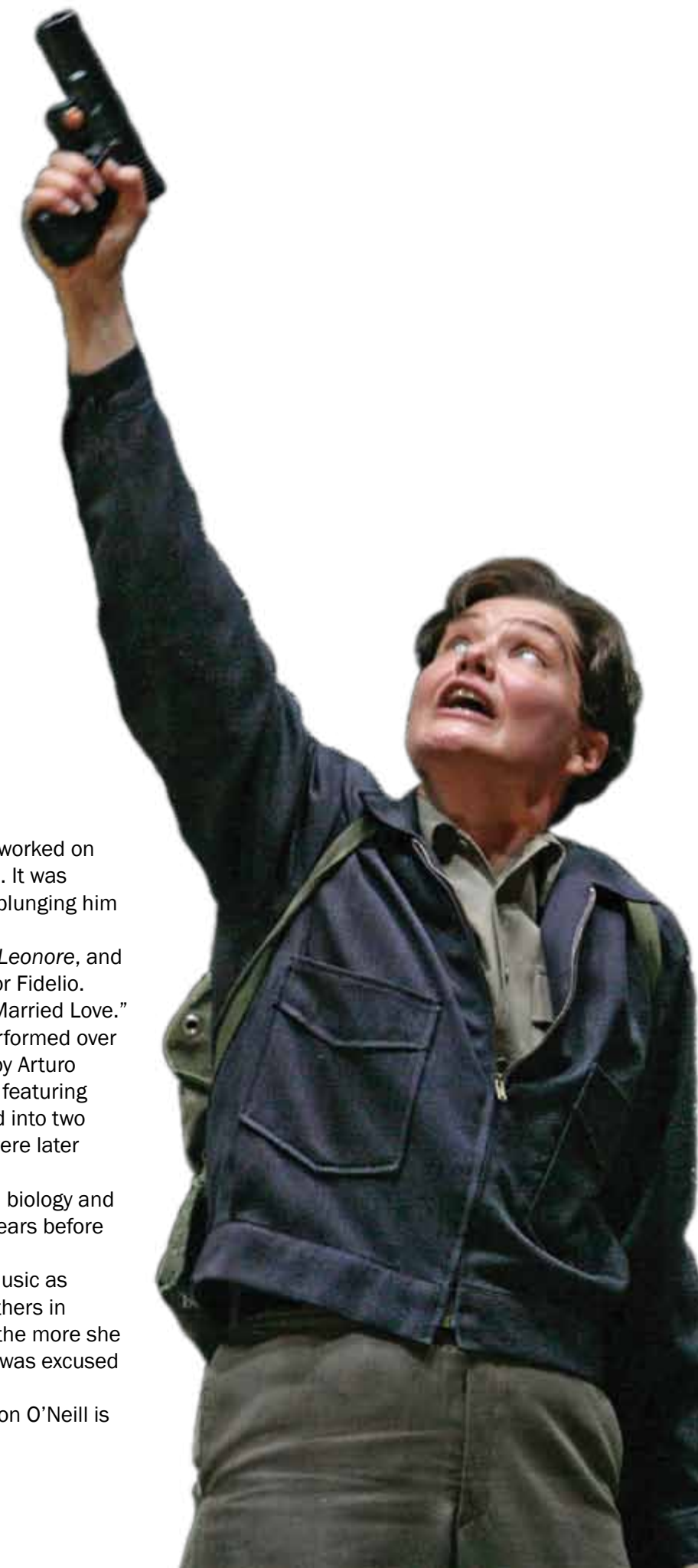
Costume Designer
Florence von Gerkan

Lighting Designer
Duane Schuler

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Richard Bado, Chorus Master

DID YOU KNOW?

- Beethoven wrote only one opera, *Fidelio*. He worked on it for 11 years, revising it over and over again. It was produced in 1805, just as his deafness was plunging him into depression.
- Beethoven originally called his opera *Fidelio Leonore*, and there are three Leonore overtures and one for *Fidelio*. *Fidelio*'s subtitle is "Die eheliche Liebe" or "Married Love."
- *Fidelio* was the first complete opera to be performed over the NBC radio network, in December 1944, by Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, featuring soloists from the Metropolitan Opera. Divided into two consecutive broadcasts, the performances were later issued by RCA Victor on LPs and CDs.
- Kristinn Sigmundsson earned a BS degree in biology and worked as a biologist and teacher for a few years before becoming a singer.
- Karita Mattila only listened to folk and pop music as a young girl. Raised on a farm with three brothers in southwest Finland, she quickly realized that the more she excelled at her school studies, the more she was excused from farm chores.
- In addition to his tenorial achievements, Simon O'Neill is also a pianist and tuba player.



LA TRAVIATA

Giuseppe Verdi

January 27 - February 12, 2012

Verdi's devastatingly romantic tragedy *La Traviata* makes a welcome return to Houston Grand Opera. Two of the operatic world's rising young stars will sing the roles of Violetta and Alfredo. HGO Studio alumna **Albina Shagimuratova** as Violetta Valéry will be joined by Mexican tenor **David Lomelí** in his HGO debut. HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers**, who in 1998 made his own HGO debut with *La Traviata*, will conduct the six performances.

Shagimuratova was last heard at HGO in the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, for which she received unanimous praise by national critics. "Shagimuratova is a phenomenon that must be heard to be believed." — *Opera News*. *The New York Times* said, "Baby faced and clarion voiced, Ms. Shagimuratova was a riveting Lucia, her flighty mad scene the stuff of nightmares." Previously at HGO, she sang the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto*, the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, and Musetta in *La bohème*.

David Lomelí recently sang the role of Alfredo for the Deutsche Oper, Berlin and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* for the San Francisco Opera. He also debuted with New York City Opera as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, with *The Wall Street Journal* saying, "Mr. Lomelí's way with physical comedy and his sweet, effortlessly lyrical yet penetrating tenor make him a mesmerizing presence." *The New York Times* described his performance as "[capturing] the opera's potent combination of hilarity and pathos. He was, in a word, delightful."

Mr. Summers comments: "I met David Lomelí at San Francisco Opera. This is a great star voice in the making and we are catching him in Houston at the beginning of a meteoric career in opera."

Sung in Italian with projected English translation.

This Production is owned by The Lyric Opera of Chicago and is a generous and deeply appreciated gift of The Gramma Fisher Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa.

Original production staged by Frank Galati.

Photo by Mark Matson

La Traviata tells the tragic story of a beautiful courtesan who falls in love with one of her clients, Alfredo Germont, the son of a nobleman. Forced by Alfredo's father Giorgio Germont, performed by **Giovanni Meoni**, to abandon him in order to protect their family name and honor, the impoverished Violetta dies of tuberculosis.

This production reunites British director **Daniel Slater** and HGO Music Director Patrick Summers, who previously collaborated on Wagner's *Lohengrin* in 2009.

"What made this a uniquely compelling *Traviata*...[was] the conducting of HGO music director Patrick Summers and the playing of the HGO Orchestra... as did Desmond Heeley's sumptuous Victorian decors and costumes."
- *Dallas Morning News*

Based on the play, *The Lady of the Camelias* by Alexander Dumas, *La Traviata* is one of the world's most popular operas. Along with *Rigoletto* and *Il trovatore*, *La Traviata* is considered one of Verdi's "Big Three".

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Violetta Valéry
Albina Shagimuratova

Alfredo Germont
David Lomelí

Giorgio Germont
Giovanni Meoni

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director
Daniel Slater

Set and Costume Designer
Desmond Heeley

Lighting Designer
Michael James Clark

Choreographer
Tim Claydon

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus — Richard Bado, Chorus Master

DID YOU KNOW?

- *La Traviata*, which mirrored Verdi's private life at the time of its composition, contains some of his most beautiful and inspired music, including show-stopping arias such as "*Sempre libera*", which vies with "*Nessun dorma*" for highest rankings in the classical top ten opera arias.
- Each of the gowns worn by the women are made from 10–12 meters of fabric and take up to 75 hours to complete, not including the time it takes to lace each performer into the fully-boned corset.
- The first performance of *La Traviata*, on March 6, 1853 in Venice's La Fenice theatre, was a disaster. Verdi famously remarked, "My fault or the singers'? Time will tell." Time suggests it was probably the singers.



THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA

Benjamin Britten
February 3 - 11, 2012

Houston Grand Opera presents a new production of Benjamin Britten's intimate chamber opera, *The Rape of Lucretia*. In her operatic debut, **Arin Arbus**, whom *The New York Times* described as a "star in the making," will direct; Scottish conductor **Rory Macdonald** also makes his HGO debut.

The title role will be sung by mezzo-soprano **Michelle DeYoung**, last heard at HGO as Venus in *Tannhäuser*. Earlier this year, DeYoung's performance as Judith in *Bluebeard's Castle* was described by *The London Financial Times* as "one of sophisticated physicality combined with consummate mastery. The sound is burnished and sensual, the technique flawless, the whole fantastically gripping."

American bass-baritone and HGO Studio alumnus **Ryan McKinny** will perform the role of her husband, Collatinus. Opera News wrote, "his lyrical bass-baritone voice drips with gold in the middle and upper registers." South African baritone **Jacques Imbrailo**, making his HGO debut as the reckless Tarquinius whose envy and greed do irreparable damage, was recently hailed by London's *Financial Times* as "lustful, virile, sensitive and moving." Tenor **Anthony Dean Griffey** and soprano **Leah Crocetto** perform the Male and Female Choruses who guide us on a harrowing journey. Mr. Griffey was last heard at HGO in the title role of Britten's *Peter Grimes* which garnered excellent reviews from across the nation. Ms. Crocetto is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Auditions and recently represented the US at the Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

Britten's haunting score is married with an ancient Roman tale that inspired Shakespeare. The men of the Roman Army have discovered during their absence that their wives have been unfaithful, except one, the innocent Lucretia. She has remained true to her husband, Collatinus, but falls prey to his arrogant friend, Tarquinius. He plots to test her fidelity and not only takes her chastity but brings about her complete ruin.

NEW PRODUCTION!

The story unfolds under the gaze of a Male and Female Chorus who provide a commentary between the protagonists and the audience. The opera, scored for a chamber orchestra of twelve instruments and piano, contains some of Britten's most lyrical and beautiful music.

HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers comments: "*Lucretia* is an incredibly searing piece, hard to watch, cathartic and very beautiful. The opera is about unmotivated acts of violence and the power play of men over women. It was written in the 1940s, when the world had witnessed the most extraordinary violent event in history in WWII, so it is very much a product of those years." He added, "**Arin Arbus is emerging from a very young, new generation of American directors who work with real rigor and seriousness on Broadway. She has had extraordinary success directing Shakespeare, exploring the relationships of people, finding the ambiguity of the characters who behave in a certain way.**"

Director Arin Arbus said, "*Lucretia* was first performed in 1946—after WWII, after the Blitz, after over 300,000 Britons had died. As his homeland was reeling from this devastation, Britten was working on *Lucretia* – which attempts to harness song to human tragedy. Undoubtedly, as he wrote this opera about personal sacrifice and grief which gives way to political development, Britten was thinking of England's own attempts to grapple with those very issues."

Arbus continued, "on one level, the opera is deeply political. Lucretia's rape and subsequent death are widely known as the events which provoked the Romans to revolt against the occupying Etruscan forces, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Roman Republic. The story is both mythic and intimate. I hope to preserve these inherent ambiguities. We will set the action in Rome in the historical period, but we won't be literal or historical in the design."

Sung in English with projected text.

*Original Artwork: Tarquinius and Lucretia by Tizian (1570-1576) © Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenen Künste Wien
Design by Pattima Singhalaka*



CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Lucretia
Michelle DeYoung

Tarquinius
Jacques Imbrailo

Conductor
Rory Macdonald

Costume Designer
Anita Yavich

Male Chorus
Anthony Dean Griffey

Collatinus
Ryan McKinny

Director
Arin Arbus

Lighting Designer
Michael James Clark

Female Chorus
Leah Crocetto

Junius
Joshua Hopkins

Set Designer
Jean-Guy Lecat

Houston Grand Opera
Orchestra

DID YOU KNOW?

- Director Arin Arbus led a theater company of inmates at Woodbourne Correctional Facility – a medium security prison in upstate New York. Working without props, lighting, or sets, the experience re-ignited her passion for directing and story-telling.
- The opera was first performed in the United States on Broadway at the Ziegfeld Theatre in a production staged by Agnes de Mille which opened on December 29, 1948 and closed on January 15, 1949 after 23 performances.
- For Jacques Imbrailo, singing wasn't always in the picture. As a boy growing up on a farm, wrestling was his passion. He was disqualified for his first bout – aged 6 – for biting his opponent's finger, but went on to win two South African championship medals.



DON CARLOS

Giuseppe Verdi
April 13 - 28, 2012

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Don Carlos
Brandon Jovanovich

Elisabeth de Valois
Tamara Wilson

Princess Eboli
Christine Goerke

Rodrigue
Scott Hendricks

Philippe II
Andrea Silvestrelli

The Grand Inquisitor
Samuel Ramey

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director
John Caird

Set Designer
Johan Engels

Costume Designer
Carl Friedrich Oberle

Lighting Designer
Nigel Levings

Choreographer
Denni Sayers

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Richard Bado, Chorus Master

DID YOU KNOW?

- Verdi composed *Don Carlos* for the Paris opera in 1867 but continued to work on it for 20 years.
- The Princess of Eboli is seen in all her portraits wearing an eye patch; she only had one eye. According to some histories, she lost the other while play-fighting as a child.
- During his fledgling days with the New York City Opera in the 1970s, Samuel Ramey was a dependable slugger on the company's softball team.
- Brandon Jovanovich did not want to be an opera singer in college; he wanted to be a football player.
- John Caird, the director of *Don Carlos*, has directed in various theatrical genres and won Tony Awards for *Les Miserables* and *Nickolas Nickleby*. His show, *Siegfried and Roy* at the Mirage, Las Vegas ran for 13 years and more than 5000 performances.

Sung in French with projected English translation.

A co-production of Welsh National Opera and Canadian Opera Company.

Photo by Michael Cooper

Houston Grand Opera presents one of Verdi's grandest operas, *Don Carlos*. Performed in French in five acts, this production from Welsh National Opera and Canadian Opera Company stars a sterling cast of international singers.

Acclaimed American tenor **Brandon Jovanovich** sings the title role, Don Carlos, the son of King Philippe II. One of the most sought-after basses in the world, **Andrea Silvestrelli** will perform King Philippe II. Both Don Carlos and King Philippe II love the French princess Elisabeth de Valois performed by HGO Studio alumna **Tamara Wilson**. **Christine Goerke** performs Princess Eboli, **Scott Hendricks** will sing Rodrigue, and legendary American bass **Samuel Ramey** returns to HGO in the role of the sinister Grand Inquisitor. Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers** conducts this rarely heard version of one of Verdi's masterpieces.

Brandon Jovanovich is recognized for his passionate stage portrayals of principal roles in French, Italian, German, and Slavic opera. *Chicago Classical Review* praised his recent Lyric Opera debut as Boris in *Katya Kabanova*, "The American tenor has the looks, charisma and big febrile voice, which can make one understand Katya's fatal attraction." Earlier this year, Jovanovich also debuted as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with San Francisco Opera. *Opera News* said, "Looking every inch the matinee idol, he sang with radiant fluency and clarion high notes. His is a flexible, mid-sized tenor that should prove gratifyingly versatile, and he possesses more credible stage presence than many another rising tenor."

Italian bass Andrea Silvestrelli's debut with Lyric Opera of Chicago in *Rigoletto* brought critical acclaim, with the *Chicago Sun-Times* reporting, "there were wild cheers for Andrea Silvestrelli, who brought a terrifying, sepulchral tone to the assassin Sparafucile."

An alumna of Houston Grand Opera Studio, Tamara Wilson—previously heard at HGO in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and Verdi's *A Masked Ball*—sings Elisabeth de Valois. *Houston Chronicle* wrote, "[she displayed] a voice of steely beauty and great power." Recently, Ms. Wilson made her debut as Ada in *Die Feen* at Oper Frankfurt. *Der Neue Merker* said, "She possesses a flawless timbre and a tremendous high voice."

Soprano Christine Goerke will perform the scheming and scorned Princess Eboli. Her recent performances at HGO in the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos* garnered excellent reviews. "Her soprano is a plush instrument, its substantial heft and dark colorations well-matched to Ariadne's ocean of soulful passion." — *Houston Chronicle*

Playing Rodrigue—the ideological foil to King Philippe II—will be Texas native and HGO Studio alumnus, Scott Hendricks. A versatile baritone, Hendricks has sung a diverse operatic range from Mozart to Debussy and Puccini. He is now establishing himself as an important artist in the Verdi and Wagner repertoire. Performing Iago with Canadian Opera in 2010, *The National Post* exclaimed, "The truly complete performance came from Scott Hendricks, a brutally intelligent Iago who sounded big when he had towhat a villain!"

Samuel Ramey was last heard at HGO five years ago in *Faust*, in 2005 in *Boris Godunov*, and in 2001 as King Philippe II in *Don Carlos*. Now, audiences will have a chance to hear and see regal maturity and presence when Ramey returns as the death-dealing Inquisitor. A renowned veteran of the operatic stage, and the world's most-recorded bass-baritone, Ramey celebrated the 25th anniversary of his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2009.

Directed by **John Caird**—whose work for HGO includes the world premiere of André Previn's *Brief Encounter* and Puccini's *Tosca*—*Don Carlos* was originally conceived for Welsh National Opera.

"Stage director John Caird proves a shrewd choice to realise the opera's intense theatricality, sing many a crucifix to convey its sinister religious background and a variety of period costumes to render this monumental piece potently timeless." — *The Observer, London*

Verdi's meditation on theocracy, based on Schiller's poem, *Don Carlos*, premiered in Paris in 1867. Schiller wrote grand historic stories telling of private lives wrapped in struggles with their political duties. The opera takes place in 16th century Spain, against the backdrop of the Spanish Inquisition; it focuses on the father-son relationship between King Philippe II of Spain and Don Carlos, who is betrothed to Elisabeth of Valois. As part of the peace treaty ending the Italian War of 1551 – 1559, King Philippe decides to marry Elisabeth himself, pitting son against family and state.

MARY STUART

Gaetano Donizetti

April 21 - May 4, 2012

Houston Grand Opera's spring season finishes with a production of Gaetano Donizetti's historic and tragic opera *Mary Stuart*, starring a powerhouse trio of North American singers **Joyce DiDonato**, **Katie Van Kooten** and **Eric Cutler**. The performances will be conducted by HGO Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers**.

At the heart of the opera is the toxic relationship between the two queens, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I, Queen of England. HGO Studio alumna, mezzo-soprano superstar Joyce DiDonato will make her role debut as Mary Stuart. Emerging in the last decade as the leading mezzo-soprano of her generation and widely acknowledged for her superb technique and theatrical nuance, DiDonato has received dazzling reviews from across the globe. *Opera Today* wrote, "There was nothing her voice could not do...perfectly realized coloratura one moment, melting legato the next, heady leaps to the heights and spot-on plunges to the depths, fizzy fioritura, and plangent despair." Mr. Summers said, "For Joyce to take on a major new role like this here is a very proud moment for HGO." DiDonato is the 2011-12 Season Lynn Wyatt Great Artist at HGO.

Katie Van Kooten, returning to HGO following her sensational performances as Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes*, sings the role of Elizabeth I, Queen of England. *The Independent* wrote of her recital of *Four Last Songs* by Strauss, "Her full, glowing tone soared remarkably easily over the orchestra and her innate feeling for a long phrase allowed the ecstasy and longing of the first two songs to unfold seamlessly..."

American tenor Eric Cutler will sing the Earl of Leicester. Cutler, whose previous engagements with HGO include the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* and Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, recently sang the Earl of Leicester for Canadian Opera, noted by *TheatreEye.com*, "Eric Cutler's tenor is agile and gleaming."

The rivalry of the two Queens over love for the Earl of Leicester, over the throne, and over life itself threatens the English monarchy. Juxtaposing scenes of dramatic intensity and touching intimacy with beautiful and poignant music by Donizetti at the height of his compositional power, the fictitious meeting of the two rival Queens is one of the most powerful and dramatic scenes in 19th century bel canto opera.

Based on a play by Friedrich Schiller, the opera relates a story in which Mary Stuart was forced to abdicate the Scottish throne in favor of her son, James VI, because of her unsavory past. She fled to England seeking help from her cousin Elizabeth. Instead, she was incarcerated for seventeen years before being beheaded for treason over alleged involvement in assassination plots against Elizabeth.

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Mary Stuart

Joyce DiDonato

Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2011-12

Elizabeth I

Katie Van Kooten

Leicester

Eric Cutler

Talbot

Robert Gleadow

Conductor

Patrick Summers

Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director

Kevin Newbury

Set Designer

Neil Patel

Costume Designer

Jessica Jahn

Original Lighting Designer

D.M. Wood

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus — Richard Bado, Chorus Master

Sung in Italian with projected English translation.

Scenery, properties and costumes for this production are owned by The Minnesota Opera, and were constructed by The Minnesota Opera Shops.

Credits for Mary Stuart artwork:

Queen Elizabeth I attributed to George Gower, oil on panel, circa 1588, © National Portrait Gallery, London

Mary, Queen of Scots after François Clouet, oil on canvas (1560), © National Portrait Gallery, London



DID YOU KNOW?

- Mary's and Elizabeth's tombs are, ironically, situated side by side in Westminster Abbey, but separated by a wall of the chapel, out of each other's sight.
- Joyce DiDonato broke her leg on opening night of *The Barber of Seville* performance at Covent Garden in 2009. She finished the performance on crutches, and did the remaining shows in a wheelchair.
- Eric Cutler originally wanted to be a conservationist and work in a National Park.

SEASON CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 The Barber of Seville 7:00*	22
23 The Barber of Seville 2:00	24	25	26	27	28 Fidelio 7:30	29 The Barber of Seville 7:30
30	31					

* Opening Night Dinner: post-performance

JANUARY 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 La Traviata 7:30	28
29 La Traviata 2:00	30	31				

APRIL 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 Don Carlos 6:30	14 Opera Ball 7:00*
15 Don Carlos 2:00	16	17	18	19 Don Carlos 6:30	20	21 Mary Stuart 7:30
22 Don Carlos 2:00	23	24	25	26	27 Mary Stuart 7:30	28 Don Carlos 6:30
29 Mary Stuart 2:00	30					

* Encore Party: The Opera Ball After Party - April 14 at 10:00 p.m.

NOVEMBER 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 Fidelio 7:30	2	3 High School Night 7:00	4 The Barber of Seville 7:30	5 Fidelio 7:30
6 The Barber of Seville 2:00	7	8 Student Matinee 10:00*	9 Student Matinee 10:00	10 Fidelio 7:30	11	12 NEXUS 2:00
13 Fidelio 2:00	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

* Singing with Houston Idols: November 8 at 7:00 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1 La Traviata 7:30	2 Concert of Arias 7:00*	3 The Rape of Lucretia 7:30	4 La Traviata 7:30
5 The Rape of Lucretia 2:00	6	7 The Rape of Lucretia 7:30	8	9 The Rape of Lucretia 7:30	10 La Traviata 7:30	11 The Rape of Lucretia 7:30
12 La Traviata 2:00	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

* Concert of Arias: Champagne Reception - 6:00 p.m. Dinner Celebration - post-performance

MAY 2012

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2 Mary Stuart 7:30	3	4 Mary Stuart 7:30	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

SPECIAL EVENTS HoustonGrandOpera.org/SpecialEvents

Opening Night Dinner - Friday, October 21, 2011

Post-performance at Wortham Theater Center – Ray C. Fish Plaza

Following the performance the celebration begins on Ray C. Fish Plaza outside the Wortham Theater Center where guests will mix and mingle with the award winning cast. The evening honors HGO Senior Board Chairman, Glen Rosenbaum and is chaired by John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer.

Singing with the Houston Idols - Tuesday, November 8, 2011

7:00 p.m. at The Home of Becca and John Thrash

Singing with the Houston Idols will showcase Houston philanthropists performing with singers from HGO's very own company. The event, sponsored by FENDI, begins with cocktails followed by a seated dinner at the home of Becca and John Thrash.

Concert of Arias - Thursday, February 2, 2012

6:00 p.m. Champagne Reception, 7:00 p.m. Vocal Competition, Post-performance Celebration Dinner

In the heart of winter, Concert of Arias – the 24th Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers takes the Cullen Theater stage at the Wortham Theater Center. Watch and be entertained as some of the best emerging operatic talent compete head to head for top honors at this prestigious competition. Following the competition, the evening reaches its pinnacle with the Celebration Dinner in the Grand Foyer.

Opera Ball - Saturday, April 14, 2012

7:00 p.m. at Wortham Theater Center

The do-not-miss event on Houston's social calendar, Houston Grand Opera's annual Opera Ball serves up first-class dining, auctions and entertainment. Chairs Cynthia and Anthony Petrello offer magnificent touches of Italy inspired by the theme Viva Italia.

Encore Party - Saturday, April 14, 2012

10:00 p.m. at Wortham Theater Center

Young professionals join the Opera Ball festivities already in progress for the Encore Party – the Opera Ball after-party. The Encore Party is all about food, fun, and friends...Guests will enjoy a wine bar in the alcove spaces of the Grand Foyer with dancing, Ball festivities, and a midnight breakfast that will keep everyone fueled up for dancing until 2:00 a.m. The Encore Party honors recipients of the 2012 Ovation Awards, chosen from among Houston's emerging leaders in philanthropic, charitable and civic endeavors.

TICKET DETAILS

Single tickets are on sale Sept. 26 and start at \$25. Call 713-228-6737 or 1-800-626-7372.

For tickets and general information, go to HoustonGrandOpera.org/1112Season

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Claire Vince, Senior Publicist
 cvince@houstongrandopera.org
 W: 713-546-0278 / C: 832-738-2611

High-resolution production photos and headshots can be found at HoustonGrandOpera.org/Press
 Username and Password: hgopress

HGOco

In 2007, HGO established HGOco, a far-reaching initiative that breaks down barriers to the arts by creating opportunities for observation, participation, and creation. The “co” in HGOco represents a focus on company, community, and collaboration. Maximizing the resources of the entire company (staff, chorus, orchestra, designers, technicians, guest artists, etc. and collaborating with kindred organizations, HGOco seeks to change the way people involve art in their lives. These efforts include new works, residencies, and unique education and community collaborations. In its first three years, HGOco reached more than 600,000 people and collaborated with over 70 organizations throughout the Houston area. Among HGOco’s programs are a wide range of performances outside the Wortham—361 in the 2009-10 season.

SONG OF HOUSTON

Houston’s colorful past, present and future set the stage for HGOco’s *Song of Houston* – an ongoing initiative that commissions works based on stories that define the unique character of our city. *Song of Houston* makes opera relevant through stories that engage hearts and minds. These stories are told through local, national and international collaborative community and educational projects.

TEACHER WORKSHOPS

Each Teacher Workshop is an hour-long presentation and discussion on an HGO mainstage opera dress rehearsal, encouraging teachers to incorporate opera and the arts into their curriculum.

OPERA TO GO! AND STORYBOOK OPERA

Opera to Go! presents fully-staged, portable 45-minute operas at schools and public venues around Houston, reaching over 50,000 students each year. Through Storybook Opera, a singing artist presents an opera-based storybook to children grades Pre-K through 2.

STUDENT MATINÉE AND HIGH SCHOOL NIGHT PERFORMANCES

Students in grades 4 – 8 experience the magic of opera at the Wortham Theater Center in our Student Matinée, a two-hour version of a selected main-stage opera. At High School Night, students enjoy a full-length weeknight performance of a selected main-stage opera.



HIGH SCHOOL VOICE STUDIO

The year-long scholarship program prepares eight high school seniors for their transition into a university or conservatory music program.

SUMMER CAMPS

Each summer, HGOco hosts over 100 students in grades 3-12 for three different opera camps.

COMMISSIONS:

The Refuge - 2007

Music by Christopher Theofanidis

Libretto by Leah Lax

Musical Portraits - A contemporary song cycle - 2008

Music by John Cornelius

Lyrics by Brandon White

A Way Home - 2009

Music by Ethan Frederick Greene

Libretto by Irene Keliher

Cruzar la Cara de la Luna - 2010

Music and Lyrics by José “Pepe” Martínez

Lyrics and Book by Leonard Foglia

Courtside - 2011

Music by Jack Perla

Libretto by Eugenie Chan

Your Name Means the Sea - 2011

Music and Libretto by Franghiz Alizadeh

Pieces of 9/11 - Memories from Houston - 2011

Music by Jake Heggie

Lyrics by Gene Scheer

The Clever Wife - A Chinese Folktale - 2012

Music by Mary Carol Warwick

Libretto by Hugh Behm-Steinberg

The Brick Layer - 2012

Music by Gregory Spears

Libretto by Farnoosh Moshiri

Cambodian Opera (new, untitled) - 2012

Music by John Glover

Libretto by Catherine Filloux

HGO STUDIO

The Houston Grand Opera Studio is one of the most respected young artist programs in the USA. For more than thirty years it has served young singers and pianist/coaches, providing a bridge between full-time training and full-fledged operatic careers.

Each year after an exhaustive nationwide search, a hand-selected group of talented individuals is brought here to Houston to work alongside the best in the business at Houston Grand Opera. These artists hone their craft as singing actors during a residency of up to three years; each performer receives customized training from an expert team while gaining invaluable performance experience at the highest level.

Alumni of the Studio perform at the best opera houses all around the world—and internationally renowned artists such as Joyce DiDonato, Scott Hendricks and Ana María Martínez still regularly return to their home stage at the Wortham Center, back to the audiences who watched them bloom in the springtime of their careers.



Kiri Deonarine in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, 2011. photos by Felix Sanchez



Michael Sumuel with Studio alumna Joyce DiDonato in Heggie/McNally’s *Dead Man Walking*, 2011.



Boris Dyakov and Nathaniel Peake with Laura Claycomb in R. Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*, 2011.



Studio Artists in Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, 2011.



Studio Artists in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, 2011.

ABOUT HGO

Houston Grand Opera (HGO) was founded in 1955 through the joint efforts of Maestro Walter Herbert and cultural leaders Mrs. Louis G. Lobit, Edward Bing and Charles Cockrell. From its modest beginnings – HGO’s inaugural season featured a mere two performances of two operas, *Salome* and *Madame Butterfly* – HGO has grown into a company of international stature that presents six to eight productions per season.

HGO’s mission is to contribute to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation by producing and performing world-class opera, and by creating a diverse, innovative, and balanced program of performances, events, and community and education projects that reach the widest possible public. Its core values are excellence, relevance and affordability.

With an operating budget of \$20 million in fiscal year 2011 (the 2010-11 season), HGO is a true cultural service provider to the greater Houston area and the Gulf Coast region, serving over 5 million people annually.

One of the country’s principal commissioners and producers of new works, HGO has introduced 44 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. HGO has received a Tony Award, two Grammy Awards, and two Emmy Awards—the only opera company in the world to have won all three honors.

COMPANY FOUNDATION

The HGO Association has 166 members: a 34-member Board of Directors, chaired by Beth Madison (as of August 1, 2011), one honorary director, and 131 Trustees. The Board of Directors meets four times, and the Trustees meet three times each year. The opera employs over 1,000 people annually, 120 of whom are full-time staff. On May 25, 2011, the Board of Directors appointed Patrick Summers as Artistic and Music Director, occupying the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair; at the same time, Perryn Leech was named Managing Director. They succeed Anthony Freud, OBE, the company’s General Director and CEO from 2005 to 2011, who resigned at the end of the 2010-11 season to assume leadership of Lyric Opera of Chicago.

The permanent artistic foundation of HGO rests on three pillars: the HGO Orchestra, HGO Chorus and HGO Studio. During Patrick Summers’ thirteen years with the company, the HGO Orchestra has reached a new level of virtuosity, adding many great masterworks to its repertoire. The HGO Chorus, which was created at the same time as HGO itself in 1955, has become one of the world’s most acclaimed opera choruses under the direction of Chorus Master Richard Bado.



Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* at Miller Outdoor Theatre, 2011.
photos by Felix Sanchez

RADIO BROADCASTS

Tune In! Houston Grand Opera is On the Air *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca* highlights of 2011 broadcast series

Add a little more opera to your weekends with Houston Grand Opera’s nationally-acclaimed opera performances broadcast on six Saturday afternoons starting October 22. Experience the elegance of Strauss’ *Ariadne auf Naxos* as a comedienne rivals a prima donna at a high-society Viennese dinner party; revel in the brilliance of Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* as a Japanese geisha makes a disastrous marriage. Experience the suffering of a convicted murderer and the families of his victims in Jake Heggie’s remarkable *Dead Man Walking*; weep with Donizetti’s tragic Scottish bride, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Explore the injustice lurking in the human heart with Britten’s *Peter Grimes*; and thrill to the passion of Puccini’s *Tosca*. All operas were recorded live at Houston Grand Opera; broadcasts are hosted by Peter Van Graaff.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA Broadcast Schedule – Fall 2011

Tune in Saturdays at Noon starting October 22, 2011, for six full-length HGO broadcasts on Classical 91.7 FM, Houston’s 24-hour classical music station!

- October 22, 2011
R. Strauss: ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
- October 29, 2011
Puccini: MADAME BUTTERFLY
- November 4, 2011
Heggie: DEAD MAN WALKING
- November 11, 2011
Donizetti: LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR
- November 18, 2011
Britten: PETER GRIMES
- November 25, 2011
Puccini: TOSCA

Outside of Houston: check your local listings or visit <http://www.wfmt.com/main.taf?p=12,10,5,2,1> to find a station near you.



Scan for more information on Radio Broadcasts. Get the free mobile app at <http://gettag.mobi>

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HGO ON THE WORLD STAGE

Internationally, HGO has performed in Edinburgh, Paris, Milan, Berlin, Cairo, Zurich, Genoa and Palermo.

In September 2011, Houston Grand Opera will open the 2011-12 season at the prestigious Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris with its highly acclaimed Mariachi opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* by José “Pepe” Martínez and Leonard Foglia—a specially commissioned work that chronicles three generations of a family, divided by countries and culture.

AWARDS

One of the country’s principal commissioners and producers of new works, HGO has introduced 44 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. HGO has received a Tony Award, two Grammy Awards, and two Emmy Awards—the only opera company in the world to have won all three honors—as well as a Leading Lights Diversity Award in Arts and Culture from the National Multicultural InSTITUTE.



photo by Felix Sanchez
 back cover photo by Brett Coomer



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57 Seasons
44 World premieres
9 Countries
6 American premieres
5 Continents
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1 Opera Company



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