With your help, *Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera* can meet its goal by December 31, 2014.

*Inspiring Performance*, with its goal of raising at least $165 million by December 31, 2014, is the single largest fundraising campaign in the history of the performing arts in Houston. To date, through your help, we have just over $4 million left to raise to achieve our ambitious goal. More than 6,400 donors have helped bring us within reach of this unprecedented milestone for the company.

In his introduction to HGO’s 2012–17 strategic plan, *A Voice for Houston*, HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers described his vision for the company: “To unlock our extraordinary art form for as wide a public as possible, to make it accessible to all who seek it, and to celebrate and broaden the borders of an art form that is too often too narrowly defined ... We seek to be the beautiful voice of this city, a company that defines our place and time, and which helps to define Houston around the nation and world by the excellence and relevance of its work.”

(continued)
In the past thirty years, the population of the Greater Houston area has doubled from three to six million people, presenting never-before-seen opportunities and challenges for the city’s cultural service providers. HGO’s ability to harness its strengths and seize this moment of opportunity hinges on the success of Inspiring Performance. The campaign will have a profound impact not just on HGO, but on the entire cultural infrastructure of Houston.

Some of the greatest artistic talent in the world is here in Houston. As we build wider recognition of that talent and strengthen the arts more generally, Houston Grand Opera will play a vital role in determining this city’s success in the twenty-first century.

— Dr. Stephen Klineberg
Co-director of Rice University’s Kinder Institute for Urban Research

The campaign’s comprehensive nature means that every dollar you have contributed since the launch of Inspiring Performance in 2007 has counted toward the overall goal, which is subdivided into three categories: operational support, HGO Endowment gifts, and legacy pledges by members of HGO’s Laureate Society.

Operational support comprises the largest portion of Inspiring Performance. The campaign goal for operational support is $115 million—helping to ensure that HGO can continue to strive for excellence on the main stage, in the HGO Studio, and in the community through HGOo. With your help, we have raised nearly $117 million to support HGO’s operations, so we have surpassed our original goal by more than $2 million! The growth in HGO’s budget over the course of the campaign has enabled us to embark on a series of company firsts, from our production of Wagner’s Ring to our launch of a new holiday opera series that will expand the repertoire and attract new audiences to our art form.

While operational support helps to cover HGO’s activities in the present and near future, contributions to the HGO Endowment and through legacy giving are critical to building a strong foundation for HGO’s future in the longer term. In the two years since the public launch of Inspiring Performance, thirty new Laureate Society members have declared the value of their future gifts. With more than $28 million already raised in legacy giving, we have met our goal in this category. We are thrilled by the passion, generosity, and loyalty of those who have responded to the campaign through legacy gifts.

Direct giving to the HGO Endowment has also been strong, with total contributions during Inspiring Performance at $16 million of the $22 million goal in this category. Endowment growth remains a key priority as the campaign nears its conclusion; a stronger endowment will help to guarantee that world-class opera will be available to Houstonians for generations to come.

HGO has spent the past six decades growing into a leading ambassador for Houston. With your help through Inspiring Performance, your opera company will have the resources to become the cultural service provider Houston deserves. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you and applaud you.

To support Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera, visit <HGO.org>InspiringPerformance</HGO.org> or contact Greg Robertson at 713-546-0274.

Make a Gift That Lasts

Friends of HGO can help ensure the company’s future: include HGO in your will! Contributions made through a will, trust, or life-income arrangement are all forms of legacy giving—and anyone can make a legacy gift at any time.

It can be as easy as naming HGO on the beneficiary form of an IRA, pension account, or charitable trust, but making a bequest in a will is the easiest way to create your legacy. The following is an example of how you might word an outright bequest.

“...I give, devise, and bequeath to the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc., with offices located at 510 Preston Street, Houston, TX, 77002-1504, the sum of ___ (state amount or use percentage of) to be used for general endowment purposes.”

Your generous gift will be well cared for. The Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc., manages all legacy gifts with professional investment managers and an independent board of directors overseeing the fund.
The Passenger Conquers New York

A host of supporters cheered the company on as HGO took Weinberg’s *The Passenger* to New York as part of the Lincoln Center Festival in July. The staging, conducted by our own Patrick Summers, featured the same cast that performed the work at HGO in January. The three performances were sold out and elicited numerous accolades from the press (see p. 6).

Morris Gelb with Zofia Posmysz, the Auschwitz survivor who authored the source material for *The Passenger*.

From top: The production crew sets up in the Park Avenue Armory, the venue for *The Passenger*; the climactic scene of *The Passenger*.

Houston Grand Opera Studio Showcase 2014–15

September 16, 2014 • 8 p.m.
Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center

This is a subscriber-only event. Complimentary tickets available, but reservations are required. Seating is limited, so call 713-228-OPERA (6737) to reserve now!
HGO proves once again that an opera company can be both artistically bold and fiscally responsible.

At HGO’s annual meeting on June 3, it was announced that the company surpassed previous records for both attendance and fundraising for the 2013–14 season, which also marked HGO’s fourth consecutive year of expanding its season. The number of main-stage productions grew to eight from seven the previous season and the number of performances grew from 46 to 49.

Attendance rose again—a cumulative gain of 28 percent since the 2009–10 season—and revenue from ticket sales continued to increase: for example, all of the ticket revenue from 2009–10 (subscriptions and single ticket sales combined) was less than the 2013–14 revenue from subscriptions alone. The ambitious Inspiring Performance capital campaign had raised more than $157 million at the time of the meeting (now $161 million), on track to meet or surpass the $165 million goal by December 2014.

Artistically speaking, it was “my Field of Dreams season,” said HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers—“a diverse array of extraordinary presentations that our audience found consistently compelling.” He cited as highlights the American premiere of Weinberg’s recently rediscovered Holocaust opera The Passenger; the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Leonard Foglia’s A Coffin in Egypt, starring Frederica von Stade; Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler’s A Little Night Music; and the launch of HGO’s first-ever Ring cycle in the riveting production by La Fura dels Baus.

Our good news caught the attention of those who keep a close watch on the classical arts scene, and HGO has recently been pointed out by the media as an opera company that is getting it right. HGO’s variety of repertoire and innovative approach were favorably noted by Jason Farago, writing about the Metropolitan Opera’s recent challenges for the U.K. publication The Guardian: “Houston’s ambitious company mixes core productions of Otello and Così fan tutte with new works (one recent new opera featured a mariachi band), chamber opera, and even a musical or two—and posted record attendance this year.”

Farago also quoted HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech, who said, “We believe we can best serve our audience by broadening our scope of activity to engage as many communities and demographics as possible. It is about accessibility and relevance.”

And it’s also about support. At the annual meeting, HGO Board Chairman Dr. John Mendelsohn aptly pointed out, “At a time when many companies have been forced to scale back, we are grateful that Houstonians have stepped up to make our vision a reality. And we need to maintain this high level of support in order to keep giving Houston the amount of quality opera it deserves.”

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The Fun of Getting Involved

Beth and John Harper find fun and connection with HGO through the Young Patrons Circle.

While vacationing in Santa Fe in 2007, Beth and John Harper connected with longtime family friend and HGO Board member Gloria Portela. Gloria invited them to an event for the HGOco _Song of Houston_ program. John was delighted to learn about this project that creates new works based on the communities that define the unique character of our city. Beth and John volunteered to host an event in their home to help spread awareness of _Song of Houston_. They became more involved with HGO by becoming members of the Young Patrons Circle and ultimately, John became a trustee.

The first opera John and Beth experienced together was Donizetti’s _The Daughter of the Regiment_. Their passion for opera has since grown, and they appreciate both traditional and modern pieces. Their favorite opera is Wagner’s _Lohengrin_ because of its powerful orchestration and grand scale. One of their favorite HGO activities has been the Young Patrons Circle. John values the way it brings together people from different backgrounds and provides incredible experiences that bring them closer to the company, such as the annual dinner with HGO Studio artists. In his role as trustee, John is dedicated to creating new and exciting opportunities to attract and retain new members.

John is a native Houstonian and Beth was born and raised in Austin. They met in Dallas while both were working in labor and employment law. Beth currently consults and assists attorneys in various litigation matters, and John is a shareholder at Littler Mendelson. They settled in Houston after marrying in 2005, and they love the city’s strong, vibrant, and welcoming arts scene. In addition to their involvement with HGO, John serves on the Printing Museum Board of Directors and Beth is the treasurer of _Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts_. They have a six-year-old son, Jack, who attends Second Baptist School.
Ask Rudy!
The wit and wisdom of Rudy Avelar,
HGO Director of Patron Services

Q: Hey, Rudy, what do I do if I arrive at a performance early?

Rudy: There’s so much to do! (1) Hang out with me at the valet stand and help me greet everyone. It’s so much fun you may want to give up your day job. (2) Attend the pre-curtain lecture in the Brown Theater that starts 45 minutes before the performance. (3) Go to the Grand Foyer and purchase some great opera merchandise at the Boutique that is run by the HGO Guild, or get some refreshments at the Encore Café. (4) If you’re a Patron, you can go to the Green Room where you can relax, have a glass of wine, and read Opéra Cues and get “smart” before the show starts.

Critics Applaud HGO’s The Passenger at Lincoln Center Festival

“In Marta [Weinberg] has created a formidable operatic heroine, here performed with dignity, fleeting moments of defiance and courageous honesty by the bright-voiced soprano Melody Moore…The conductor, Patrick Summers, drew a surging, textured, richly detailed performance of this challenging score…from the inspired musicians of the Houston Grand Opera.”

—Anthony Tommasini, New York Times

“The Passenger stands as proof of the need to perform important works like this to wider audiences.”

—George Grella, New York Classical Review

“The production, imported from Houston, was imposing on every level. Patrick Summers, the savvy conductor, reinforced expressive sympathy nonstop.”

—Martin Bernheimer, Financial Times

“The composer didn’t live to hear his score performed, but this performance at Lincoln Center Festival would surely have made him proud.”

—Richard Sasanow, Broadway World