It was a monumental evening. We hope you were there.

On Monday, September 17, HGO supporters gathered at the Wortham Theater Center for A Celebration of HGO’s Future. The full performing forces of HGO were on hand, as well as special guests such as legendary mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade and rising star soprano (and HGO Studio alumna) Albina Shagimuratova. The audience was also treated to the unveiling of the company’s future plans by Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers and Managing Director Perryn Leech.

The occasion for the celebration was the exciting public announcement of Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera.

What is Inspiring Performance? It’s the single largest fundraising campaign in the history of the performing arts in Houston.

Together, We Can

HGO launches $165 million campaign—largest fundraising campaign in the history of the performing arts in Houston.

Frederica von Stade performs “Je cherche un millionnaire” with HGO Chorus Master Richard Bado at the piano.
Its purpose is to supply the resources HGO needs to grow and establish itself as a permanent inspiring force in the life of Houston.

The goal of Inspiring Performance is to raise **at least $165 million** by December 31, 2014. The campaign began five years ago and has raised over $108 million so far.

The goal of $165 million is ambitious, but HGO has never shied away from ambition. Leech and Summers have a bold vision for our company, and Inspiring Performance is how you can make it happen!

The $165 million goal breaks down as follows:

- **$115 million** to ensure excellence in the company’s activities on the main stage and in the community.
- **$22 million** to support the HGO Endowment directly. We must grow our Endowment to ensure that we will always be here to inspire.
- **$28 million** in legacy gifts to the HGO Endowment. These gifts, made through estate plans, create a legacy for future generations of the HGO family.

### Excellence

For HGO to thrive, the central goal is to get the art right. Fortunately, we have.

We must continue to invest in our core artistic strengths: the HGO Orchestra, HGO Chorus, and HGO Studio—all of which shone brilliantly at *A Celebration of HGO’s Future*.

HGO must grow. Over the past five years, we have deliberately invested in the quality of our art. Now, we must grow the number of performances and productions. We aim to stage eight productions each year: six in the Brown Theater and two in the Cullen.

The artistic plans outlined by Summers included:

- Houston’s first-ever performance of Wagner’s entire Ring cycle.
- New productions of beloved classics.
- World premieres.
- Great American musicals, beginning with this season’s *Show Boat*.
- A new series of holiday operas that will establish an HGO presence in the Wortham during the holiday season.

### Relevance

If you’re reading this, HGO is probably already relevant to you, but we exist to serve the entire city. We must also matter to people who never buy tickets for our performances in the Wortham.

That is why HGOco was established in 2007. This innovative community engagement initiative of the company establishes creative collaborations with over 100 community partners, from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to Writers in the Schools, from The Methodist Hospital to the U.S. Forest Service.

![Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conducts the HGO Orchestra and Chorus.](image)
HGOco has reached more than 900,000 people in its first five years, through programs including Song of Houston, Opera to Go!, and the High School Voice Studio. And HGOco has more innovative plans at the ready.

**Affordability**

We know that the single biggest barrier to experiencing our art is its cost.

Our answer is the NEXUS Initiative, which has underwritten more than 113,000 free and discounted tickets to HGO performances in the Wortham and at Miller Outdoor Theatre. In that time, we’ve gone from being one of America’s most expensive opera companies to one of the most affordable.

NEXUS has been a huge success, and we want to continue and expand it.

Another reason we can keep ticket prices low, even in uncertain economic times, is the HGO Endowment. By providing a regular source of income, the Endowment relieves the pressure of having to pass on the costs of our operations to our audience in the form of higher ticket prices.

The HGO Endowment must grow to ensure that we will always be here to inspire our city and do our part to make Houston a desirable place to live and work.

After all, the only thing we leave for the future is what we create today.

**How Can You Help?**

A highlight of A Celebration of HGO’s Future was Frederica von Stade singing Nacio Herb Brown’s “Je cherche un millionnaire” (“I’m looking for a millionaire”).

Naturally, we’re still searching for more millionaires. But new and increased gifts to the campaign—in any amount—are what we need to reach our goal.

And that’s where you come in. We’d like every member of the HGO family to consider supporting at least two of the three segments of our goal: operational support, the HGO Endowment, and legacy gifts.

Your contribution to Inspiring Performance will build the foundation HGO needs in order to grow into the institution Houston deserves: America’s finest opera company.

Through Inspiring Performance, you have the opportunity now to invest in a company with a great product, a great plan, and the leadership in place to carry out that plan.

Whether or not you were able to get to the Wortham for A Celebration of HGO’s Future, there’s much more information about the campaign online at HoustonGrandOpera.org/InspiringPerformance.

And we’ll be keeping you up to date on the progress of the campaign and opportunities for you to be involved, both on our website and here in the pages of Unleashed.

*Photos from A Celebration of HGO’s Future by Felix Sanchez.*

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**Lead Campaign Donors**

The following donors have all given gifts of $1 million or more, and we are deeply grateful for their generosity.

- Anadarko Petroleum Corporation
- The Brown Foundation, Inc.
- City of Houston
- Franci and Jim Crane
- The Cullen Foundation
- Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts
- Houston Endowment
- Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.
- Beth Madison
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- The Methodist Hospital Center for Performing Arts Medicine
- Bill and Sara Morgan
- Barbara M. Osborne Charitable Trust
- Schlumberger
- Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai
- John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer
- Margaret Alkek Williams
- The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
- Lynn and Oscar Wyatt
- Anonymous

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Photos from A Celebration of HGO’s Future by Felix Sanchez.
Allen McReynolds: Will Power

Gifts to the HGO Endowment are vital in making HGO a permanent part of the life of Houston. Allen McReynolds—CEO of Mitigation Strategies, LLC, and a trustee of the HGO Association—tells why.

Why did you decide to include HGO in your will?

Allen McReynolds: It’s a prudent tool for anyone who’s planning their estate. Working with HGO’s development department to create a planned gift allowed me to direct where my assets will go, and allowed HGO to know that these funds will be available in the future.

There are many worthy organizations in town, so why HGO?

HGO provides the best value for my corporate contributions of all of Houston’s arts organizations. The consistent quality of performances, the range of operas selected, the uniqueness and creativity of productions, and the professionalism of its staff is consistent from year to year. HGO is innovative, provocative, entertaining, and stimulating. And I can bring my clients to performances and know they will have an evening of enjoyment.

How did you become interested in opera?

A number of years ago, while living in Washington, D.C., I was invited by a close friend to attend Pagliacci at Washington National Opera. Plácido Domingo was performing and had just taken the reins as WNO’s artistic director. I was transfixed with the pageantry, excitement, and beauty of the production. I became an avid fan of opera and sought to learn more, and to enjoy the serenity and beauty that this art form provides.

How do you want your legacy gift to represent you?

HGO has impressed me for several years with quality performances that entertain and inspire me. If my legacy gift can assist HGO to continue to inspire others, then I’ve helped the Houston community in more ways than one.

A Permanent Legacy

Friends of HGO can help ensure the company’s future by including HGO in their wills. 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., (EIN 76-0038314) 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 (or specific 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 trustees overseeing the fund.

Ultimately, including HGO in your will means that you have become a partner with HGO in perpetuating the art form we love, ensuring its vibrant good health for future generations.
A Bridge to Somewhere

HGO’s Young Artists’ Vocal Academy bridges the gap between young singers’ undergraduate work and the all-important next step. Your gifts make it possible.

For many young singers, the road to a successful career is a difficult one, and, unfortunately, opportunities to train at a major American opera company like HGO are very limited. This is especially true for singers who are still working on their undergraduate degrees.

HGO found an answer to that dilemma with its Young Artists’ Vocal Academy (YAVA). Now approaching its third season, YAVA takes the most talented undergraduate singers and sets them on the path to artistry by introducing them to the skills required for an operatic career. This past summer, roughly 160 young singers from across the country submitted resumes, recommendation letters, and YouTube audition clips, but only eight were selected and invited to spend a week studying in Houston, with all fees, room, board, and expenses paid.

The week-long intensive offers group classes in such subjects as characterization, preparing a score, diction, and movement. Participants also receive daily private voice lessons with the HGO Studio’s director of vocal instruction, Dr. Stephen King, daily vocal coachings with members of the HGO music staff, and dramatic coachings.

YAVA makes it possible for HGO to form ties with the most talented young singers early on and to take part in their development.

And for the young singers, it’s the chance of a lifetime. Said one 2012 participant, “I learned more than I ever thought I could in one week. I’m so grateful.”

HGO is thankful for the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Wakefield, whose underwriting supports this program, and the Lancaster Hotel, which provides in-kind support.

Get the Most Out of Opera

Get more out of every HGO opera performance through Opera Insights. Held 45 minutes before each performance on the orchestra level of the theater, these short presentations by HGO Dramaturg Mena Mark Hanna and opera lecturer Ann Thompson will prepare you for what you are about to see—and hear. Get background information on the opera, the performers, and more, all in 20 minutes! Free to all ticket holders.
As other opera companies face budget shortfalls and pared-down season due to financial concerns, HGO finished the 2011–12 season with an operating surplus of $24,610. This year, the company has once again ended in the black, an astounding feat given the economic climate of the past few years and the most serious economic downturn since the Great Depression.

“While our annual audit will not be completed until later this fall, we are confident that, once again, HGO will post a surplus,” noted Chief Financial Officer Rauli Garcia.

Chief Advancement Officer Greg Robertson added, “We owe our success to the generosity of our board, trustees, and donors who are committed to providing our city with the very best. They know that a great city deserves great art. We are humbled by, and grateful for, their spirit of philanthropy and trust in HGO.”

The Houston Press named HGOco the Best Arts Community Outreach for 2012 in its annual Best of Houston Awards: “The risk is enormous—opera for the masses, opera blended with other forms of music—but somehow with great goodwill and carefully crafted programs, HGOco has soared along with its arias while persuading hundreds to drop the notion that opera is stodgy and something only consumed by the tuxedo and ballroom set.”

Writing for Culturemap, Bernadette Verzosa named HGOco’s Hansel & Gretel one of five “don’t miss” family-friendly performances in Houston this fall. The short work was performed by Opera to Go!, HGO’s touring company, at Miller Outdoor Theatre in September and will tour to schools throughout the fall.