One House, Two Homes
HGO returns to the Cullen Theater—and you made it possible.

If you’ve joined the HGO family in recent years, chances are you have enjoyed many productions in the Wortham Center’s Brown Theater but may have never seen a main-stage opera in the Wortham’s more intimate Cullen Theater. This season you’ll have the opportunity. For the first time in almost a decade, HGO brings two productions to the Cullen stage this March—Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler’s A Little Night Music and the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Leonard Foglia’s A Coffin in Egypt.

These two productions represent HGO’s commitment to producing works by contemporary composers. They also signify HGO’s health as an organization—achieved through the contributions of our loyal donors. Performing in the Cullen this season requires the ability to support an increased number of both productions and performances. HGO’s budget has grown at a steady pace over the past several seasons, and our staff—artistic, technical, and administrative—has never been stronger.

HGO’s comprehensive fundraising campaign, Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera, is in full swing through the rest of this year. The campaign’s success to date is a testament to the dedication and generosity of our community. We’ve raised more than $149 million of our $165 million goal—the most ambitious fundraising goal in the history of the performing arts in Houston. The campaign’s success means continued excellence in every aspect of the company’s work, from main-stage productions to community-based initiatives.

HGO’s undertaking of Houston’s first-ever production of Richard Wagner’s monumental Ring cycle, beginning with Das Rheingold this April, is one of the surest signs HGO can be counted among the premier opera companies in the world.

(continued)
A premier opera company produces the spectacular masterpieces that spring to mind when we talk about grand opera. A truly great opera company must also make opera relevant by sharing the stories that belong to our time. HGO does both, and we are fortunate to have two venues to showcase productions of different sizes and scales.

The Cullen Theater, with 1,100 seats and a compact orchestra pit, is an ideal stage for opera’s more intimate stories. The chamber opera *A Coffin in Egypt* is one such story. An up-close-and-personal journey through one woman’s life in Egypt, Texas, this work will shine in a smaller theater. Similarly, *A Little Night Music*’s subtle wit will be well served in the Cullen Theater.

With a total of eight main-stage productions this season, HGO is operating at optimal capacity. The success of *Inspiring Performance* will allow us to present works as varied as Wagner’s *Ring*, one of the largest-scale works in the repertoire with 136 onstage performers, and *A Coffin in Egypt*, with just eighteen performers.

The 2013–14 season includes forty-seven performances on the Brown and Cullen stages—up from thirty-three just two seasons ago.

This season, HGO shows the full range of what opera can be. And, you made it happen.

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**A Little Night Music**

Music by Stephen Sondheim  
Book by Hugh Wheeler  
March 7–23

**A Coffin in Egypt**

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon  
Libretto by Leonard Foglia  
March 14–21

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2013–14 Cullen Production Funders

**A Little Night Music**

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP  
Boulware & Valoir/Meg Boulware and Hartley Hampton

**A Coffin in Egypt**

Houston Endowment, Inc.  
The Powell Foundation  
Ted and Mary Jo Shen Charitable Gift Fund  
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai  
Beirne, Maynard and Parsons LLP  
Beth Madison
We first met him when he made his HGO debut as the dastardly Paolo Albiani, the lowlife who poisons the doge in *Simon Boccanegra*. Then we saw his comic side in roles like Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* and the buffoonish Mustafà of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. Also, for some time now, we’ve known him as a faithful donor.

Bass-baritone Patrick Carfizzi is a big favorite here at HGO, and he says the feeling is mutual. It’s a “special affinity” for HGO that led him to become a supporter. He is a member of the Patrons Society and also supports HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy, a training program for undergraduate vocal music students now in its fifth year.

Although Seattle is his official home (“I fell in love with it fourteen years ago when I came here for a friend’s wedding”), Carfizzi says HGO also feels like home. “With some companies, you go in, do your job, and get out,” he says. At HGO, he likes the breathing room and exploration allowed. “There are gaps between the times you perform a particular role, and sometimes it’s good for performers to explore roles as if for the first time.” He attributes that nurturing atmosphere to the entire company and our leadership, who create an atmosphere in which the creative process can develop. “It makes for open communication and support,” he says.

He also applauds HGO for its efforts and success in becoming an integral part of the community through HGOco. “I like the fact that HGO has actively worked for community involvement and made it a priority. It’s important to keep the doors open so people feel they can engage with the company. And we have to be willing to take art out into the community.”

It’s one thing to feel at home at an opera company and another to believe in it so strongly that it leads to financial support. Patrick simply says, “I’m lucky enough to be able to help financially. If we don’t help ourselves, how can we expect anyone else to do it?”

Watch for Patrick Carfizzi as the Speaker in The Magic Flute at HGO next season. This February–April he is singing Frank in *Die Fledermaus* and Schaunard in *La bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera.
East + West: The Grand Finale

Join us in March for the exciting world premiere of *River of Light*—the final commission in HGOco’s vibrant East + West series of chamber operas.

A four-year series that began during HGO’s 2010–11 season, East + West has been a unique and powerful way to celebrate Houston’s diversity and to explore experiences and stories from Houston’s immigrant communities. The eight East + West operas, each under 45 minutes long and scored for no more than ten musicians, have highlighted Houston’s Chinese, Azerbaijani, Iranian, Cambodian, Korean and Japanese communities, while works with a Vietnamese and Indian focus are premiering this season.

The eighth and final opera in the East + West series highlights Houston’s largest Asian population, the Indian community. *River of Light* explores a young Indian woman’s journey to celebrate her daughter’s first Diwali in Houston as she meshes her new American culture with the traditions of her Indian heritage. *River of Light* will have its world premiere on March 23, 2014, following Houston’s celebration of the Hindu festival of Holi on March 17.

The seventh opera of the series, *Bound*, premiered February 11, 2014, at the Moores Opera House at the University of Houston. Subsequent performances took place at Ripley House Neighborhood Center and Asia Society Texas Center. *Bound* follows the true story of Diane Tran, a Vietnamese high school student who was arrested and jailed for truancy as she struggled to care for her siblings while holding down multiple jobs in her parents’ absence. Diane’s imprisonment made local headlines, especially in Houston’s Vietnamese community. *Bound*’s premiere coincided with Vietnamese Lunar New Year celebrations in Houston.

Huang Ruo composed the music for *Bound*, scoring it to highlight the *dan bau*, an instrument unique to Vietnam. Houston-based Vietnamese writer Bao-Long Chu wrote the libretto. *Bound*’s creative team brought together director Christina Keefe, music director Craig Kier, and costume designer Chloe Dao, a local Vietnamese fashion designer and winner of *Project Runway*’s second season.

Asia Society Texas Center has been an ideal community partner for the East + West series. Not only have many of the operas been performed there, but Asia Society has collaborated on a multitude of musical, educational, and literary events surrounding each of the operas. It is only fitting that HGO closes the East + West series at Asia Society, and we hope you will join us.

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**River of Light**

Sunday, March 23, 3:00 p.m. | FREE Admission
Sri Meenakshi Temple, 17130 McLean Road, Pearland, TX 77584

Tuesday, March 25, 11:00 a.m. | FREE Admission
Ripley House Neighborhood Center, 4410 Navigation Blvd., Houston, TX 77011

Saturday, March 29, 7:30 p.m. | Tickets $15/$13 for ASM
Sunday, March 30, 2:00 p.m. | Tickets $15/$13 for ASM
Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore Blvd., Houston, TX 77004

For tickets to the March 29 & 30 performances, call 713-228 OPERA (6737) or visit HGO.org/RiverOfLight
Captivated by Opera

Trustee Steve Brenner has been a Houston resident for forty-seven years and, along with his late wife, Carolyn, has been an HGO subscriber and volunteer since the pre-Wortham days. Originally from Miami, Steve grew up listening to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts at his grandparents’ house. When he attended his first live opera at age twelve, *The Elixir of Love* starring Ferruccio Tagliavini, he was hooked.

An active HGO Guild volunteer since 2004, Steve is currently the Guild’s vice president to the HGO Studio and co-manages the Guild Boutique. He is a past president of the Guild and has received its Volunteer of Distinction Award twice. Through the Guild, Steve also hosts guest artists and is an HGO Studio Artist Buddy. After leaving his post as Guild president, Steve wanted to find another way of becoming more involved with the company and exploring ways to volunteer at a different level; he decided to become an HGO trustee. As such, he serves as a member of the HGO Studio Committee.

Steve enjoys traveling and has participated in several opera-oriented trips to Central and Eastern Europe, and saw Wagner’s *Ring* cycle at Seattle Opera last summer. His most memorable opera experience, however, was appearing onstage for the first time as a supernumerary in HGO’s 2007 production of Gounod’s *Faust* with Samuel Ramey.

Houston Grand Opera
Lincoln Center Festival
New York Trip
July 9–13, 2014

Travel to New York this summer with Houston Grand Opera as we present *The Passenger* at the Lincoln Center Festival.

Enjoy luxury accommodations at the Plaza Athénée, exclusive dinners and receptions, the opening performance of *The Passenger* at the Park Avenue Armory, a cast party following the performance, and more.

For information, contact Scott Ipsen at sipsen@hgo.org or call 713-546-0242.
Q: Hey Rudy, how can I meet a cute man (or woman) at the Opera?

Rudy: It’s easy to meet people at the Opera. There are so many performances and events. However, being a part of a special group such as the Patrons Circle makes it even easier. As a Patron you are invited to the Green Room for wine and refreshments at each performance. There are also many programs throughout the season where you can be with fun and interesting people ... Patrons Circle Recital, backstage tours, Opera Unwrapped, travel opportunities, and more. Come join us!

For information on joining the Patrons Circle please contact Angela Lane at alane@hgo.org or 713-546-0704.

Got a question for Rudy? Contact him at ravelar@hgo.org or 713-546-0271.

Kudos from the Media

**The Passenger**

“The Passenger resounds with an authentic voice. It is a deeply humane and believable opera, told directly, without bombast or sentimentality. Melody Moore, a rich-voiced soprano, gave Marta’s anguish lyricism and strength; Michelle Breedt, a strong mezzo with a big range, brought complexity to Liese, a woman who relishes the power she acquires with a uniform yet breaks under the strain of exposure.... Conductor Patrick Summers shaped the evening with enormous care, building dramatic tension but also allowing the long, meditative scenes in the women's barracks to unfold naturally.”

—Heidi Waleson, *Wall Street Journal*

“The Passenger is handsome to look at and harrowing to behold. ... The Houston production served the opera strongly.”

—John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

**Rigoletto**

“Ryan McKinny’s deep, resonant tones and bursts of power made *Rigoletto’s* inner darkness hit home without theatrical gimmicks.... Soprano Uliana Alexyuk captured Gilda’s sweetness, ardor and vulnerability with her voice’s changing shades, from silky to vibrant to hushed.”

—Steven Brown, *Houston Chronicle*

“The pivotal role of the Duke is sung by Stephen Costello, a lyric tenor whose career trajectory is straight up. ... Right now, he is one of the best lyric tenors in the business.”

—Gregory Sullivan Isaacs, *Theater Jones*