At long last, HGO’s *Ring* journey has begun! We could not have achieved this without you. In April, the company embarked on the most ambitious artistic project in its fifty-nine-year history with *Das Rheingold*, the prelude to Richard Wagner’s epic *Ring of the Nibelung*.

HGO’s *Das Rheingold* is a stunning, cutting-edge production directed by Carlus Padrissa from the Catalan theater collective La Fura dels Baus. The performances at HGO marked the first time La Fura’s production, at once timeless and futuristic, had been presented outside Europe.

As HGO’s friend and supporter, you’ve probably heard all about the production by now. And you know what the *Ring* means to us as a cultural institution—HGO can now count itself among the handful of companies around the world with the resources to stage opera’s most monumental work.

HGO will stage the remaining *Ring* operas sequentially over the next three years, continuing with *Die Walküre* in 2014–15, *Siegfried* in 2015–16, and *Götterdämmerung* in 2016–17. Now that the cranes, video projectors, and acrobats have left the Wortham stage until next spring, let’s take a moment to reflect on *Das Rheingold*—in the words of HGO donors, audience members, and critics who experienced this truly spectacular production …
Ring Leaders

Without the support from our generous donors, this astounding project would not have been possible!

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Reviews

“Mr. Padrissa saves his most spectacular image for the finale, when thirty acrobats, suspended from the flies, form a cylindrical web that closes around the gods … Stefan Margita, who has also sung Loge in San Francisco and New York, made one spring to attention with his bright, flexible tenor, lyricism, and excellent diction … Andrea Carroll, Catherine Martin, and Renée Tatum deserve special credit for brightly singing the Rhinemaidens’ music while gamely performing underwater somersaults.”

Heidi Waleson, Wall Street Journal

“The cast sang with vividness and meaning … an arresting mix of realism and fantasy … Conductor Patrick Summers and the orchestra supplied a wealth of characterization … from the mellifluousness of the prelude to the nobility of Wotan’s greeting to Valhalla…”

Steven Brown, Houston Chronicle

“This is, without doubt, the epitome of early twenty-first-century opera production. It’s where we are going, and it’s thrilling … Conductor Patrick Summers creates a milestone in his impressive career, the singers advance artistically, and the city further establishes itself as a sophisticated, international center for opera.”

Theodore Bale, CultureMap Houston

“Stunning … astonishing … fantastic! A must-see. We convinced six friends to come from Dallas just to see it!”

Andrea and Alex Di Bagno, HGO subscribers

“Epic … mechanical … captivating. Not your typical opera. It blends classical music with a modern feel and technology. An incredibly interesting take on this epic classic.”

Nicholas Shea, HGO subscriber
We’ve come a long way since March 5, 1960, when HGO pulled off its first Opera Ball after a performance of *Die Fledermaus*.

A lot has changed since then. It’s bigger now. For example, this year’s *Fleurs de l’Opéra*, chaired by Margaret Alkek Williams, was attended by some 600 guests. You helped raise an incredible $2 million to develop our art form. Some nifty features have been added, including the Encore Party—hosted by HGO’s young professional group, O.N.—which has been wildly successful. Over the years, the ball has seen a variety of venues and special guests.

But the common denominator for all of them is elegance—exquisite food, décor, and apparel—plus a lot of fun. Do these scenes look familiar?

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*HGO’s founding general director, Walter Herbert, at the 1972 ball*

*The 1985 ball—Rudolf Nureyev was a special guest*

*Dancers from *Carmen* entertain at this year’s ball*

*This year’s *Fleurs de l’Opéra**

*At Jones Hall, 1968*
On April 21, over 250 HGO Patrons, trustees, and members of the board of directors took part in one of HGO’s favorite spring traditions, the annual Patrons Circle Recital. This spring’s recital featured mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton, a Houston favorite and distinguished HGO Studio alumna. In addition to winning the prestigious 2013 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition—both the main prize and the song prize—Jamie is enjoying success in performances all over the world. She appeared in the private recital while in Houston to sing the role of Fricka in HGO’s Das Rheingold.

HGO’s Patrons Circle provides invaluable support for the company’s work and includes over 600 individual supporters at the $4,000 level and above. The Patrons Circle Recital is just one of the exclusive events designed to connect opera lovers with one another and bring them closer to the art form they love and support. Benefits of Patrons Circle membership include valet parking to all operas, access to HGO’s Green Room, and invitations to rehearsals, lectures, tours, and intimate, one-of-a-kind performances like the Patrons Circle Recital.

These wonderful opportunities enrich the opera-going experience, and the support of HGO’s Patrons Circle helps make all of HGO’s work possible. To learn more about becoming a member of HGO’s Patrons Circle, please contact Angie Lane at 713-546-0704 or alane@hgo.org.

Jamie Barton Wows Patrons

HGO Studio Alumna Comes Home

HGO Grand Opera

Opera Camps

Opera Experience June 9 – 13
For students entering grades 4 – 9 in the fall of 2014
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Monday – Thursday)
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Friday)
Campers will perform Broadway-style repertoire while they develop healthy singing technique and improve their music theory skills. Camp registration fee is $200.

Create an Opera June 16 – 20
For students entering grades 3 – 6 in the fall of 2014
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Monday – Thursday)
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Friday)
Campers write words, compose music, design and build set, props, and costumes, and perform their own opera based on the award-winning book The Quiltmaker’s Gift by Jeff Brumbeau and Gail de Marcken. Camp registration fee is $200.

Art of Opera June 16 – 27
For students entering grades 7 – 12 in the fall of 2014
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (June 16 – 20, June 23 – 26)
9 a.m. – 7 p.m. (June 27)
Campers will enhance vocal and dramatic skills by performing Gilbert and Sullivan’s Pirates of Penzance. A recommendation letter from a choir director or voice teacher is required. Camp registration fee is $350.

For more information, email HGOcoCamp@hgo.org or call 713-546-0230. To register, please visit HGO.org/operacamp.

Jamie Barton with Patrick Harvey at The Corinthian
Sometimes I feel like the luckiest person in Houston. I spend my days raising money for an art form I love and my nights rehearsing and performing with one of the greatest opera choruses in the country. “Do what you love and love what you do” may seem clichéd, but in my case, it’s absolutely true.

I would never have guessed during my studies as a vocal performance major that I would work in the Development Department of an opera company, but the path to a successful singing career is challenging and rarely straightforward. I didn’t want to stop singing, but I also wanted a “normal” job. Little did I know that I could have the best of both worlds at Houston Grand Opera. With a great stroke of luck, I found a job that enabled me to use my skills and experience to raise money for an art form that I love while still performing onstage. I have the privilege and great joy of working with donors who make the art possible and being a part of the art itself.

My first experience as a member of the Houston Grand Opera Chorus was in Peter Grimes. What an experience! Every minute of the rehearsal process was special. To work with this new group of friends and musicians would have been wonderful just by itself, but we shared the stage with principal artists like Katie Van Kooten and Anthony Dean Griffey … and we looked down into the pit at Patrick Summers! It was one of the most unforgettable experiences in my life. And no matter how many times I step onto the stage, the experience never gets old and I never forget how fortunate I am.

Every person I work with at HGO—artist, administrator, or technician—is fully committed to excellence. I’m so fortunate to work with HGO Chorus Master Richard Bado, a consummate musician and frequent collaborator with Renée Fleming and many other singers. I’m humbled to make music with my wildly talented fellow choristers and members of the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra. I’m honored to work with the amazing men and women of our music staff, costume shop, and wig and makeup department and am privileged to work alongside our tireless crew—from our stage management team to our technicians to our dressers. And I’m inspired and motivated by my colleagues in Development, whose passion for opera and the stewardship of HGO’s resources is second to none.

It’s an honor to know all of you, too—our generous donors who make world-class opera possible in Houston. As both a Development staffer and chorister, I know firsthand that we owe our success to you. Thank you for your passion, enthusiasm, and support … and thank you for making it possible for me to have both a day job and a night job with such a great opera company!
Q: Hey Rudy, What’s your favorite: Butterfly, Bohème, Tosca, or Traviata?

Rudy: That’s really tough. They are all beautiful Italian operas. Gorgeous music with strong leading ladies … though like in most operas, they die in the end. So much for male chivalry! Butterfly breaks your heart. Bohème is youthful and naïve. Tosca is defiant. Traviata is bittersweet. What a choice. If pressed, I would have to say—Tosca! She sings one of opera’s most beautiful arias, “Vissi d’arte.” It tears at your heart as she sings about the love of art, which we all embrace! Puccini at his best.

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