On Tuesday, December 2, Go “All In for HGO!”

You can help make history once again.

This has been an unforgettable year for the HGO family. Together, we launched the company’s first-ever Ring cycle, made history by the continuing success of the largest fundraising campaign in the history of Houston’s performing arts, Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera, and celebrated the opening of our milestone 60th Anniversary Season. On Tuesday, December 2, 2014, we are launching another exciting first: HGO’s inaugural #GivingTuesday campaign: All In For HGO. We want you to be a part of this special project!

December 2 is recognized as #GivingTuesday, a nationwide movement encouraging philanthropy and giving back to the organizations that have enriched our lives—organizations like HGO. We’re asking everyone in Houston, and beyond, to join together

(continued)
on #GivingTuesday to go “All In for HGO” by making an online gift to support the company, your community, and the art form you treasure.

HGO is proud to be one of the first major performing arts companies to organize a Giving Tuesday campaign. Until now, giving days have been most popular with health, social service, and higher education nonprofits—organizations that already have large bases of annual donors. Arts organizations tend to have relatively smaller numbers of donors, which is why HGO hopes All In For HGO will help us attract new donors, helping us grow our footprint.

#GivingTuesday campaigns inspire gifts of all sizes. Upon learning of this exciting project, HGO Board member John Turner and Jerry Fischer committed a lead gift of $100,000 that will be used to match contributions one-to-one up to that amount on December 2.

We understand that many of our loyal annual donors traditionally make their gifts at a certain time of year. We hope to attract many first-time donors and are asking our regular donors for a special contribution in addition to your annual gift. Whether it is $50 or $5,000, your extra holiday generosity will go a long way to help HGO make history once again.

All In For HGO has special significance for the company as it marks the final push for Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera, which ends on December 31. For 60 years, HGO has inspired and transformed people’s lives, serving as the crown jewel of Houston’s performing arts community. Great cities deserve great institutions, and HGO has helped make Houston a place where people want to live and work. On December 2, you can raise your voice in support of HGO.

Visit allinforhgo.com for more updates as we near this exciting day. We hope you will participate and encourage others to join us on December 2 as we go #AllInForHGO!

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**2015 Concert of Arias**

**Thursday, February 5, 2015**

**Honoring: Mariquita Masterson**
**Chairmen: Jana and John Scott Arnoldy**

**6 p.m.—Champagne Reception**
**7 p.m.—Vocal Competition**

Post-performance Celebration Dinner in the Grand Foyer

Wortham Theater Center

**Attire: Black Tie**

For tickets or information visit HGO.org/COA or call Clare Greene at 713-546-0277
Happy Holidays from HGO

HGO is thrilled to present the Holiday Opera Series, a brand new series of commissions and beloved classics that we hope will spark a family holiday opera-going tradition in Houston.

Beginning with Iain Bell and Simon Callow’s *A Christmas Carol* in December 2014, HGO plans to present a holiday-themed opera suitable for family audiences in the Wortham’s Cullen Theater each December. Upcoming titles include *The Little Prince* (December 2015), *It’s a Wonderful Life* (December 2016) and *The House Without a Christmas Tree* (December 2017).

We hope to attract new audiences, especially families and children, with familiar stories set to words and music. We also hope that our current opera lovers will enjoy these exciting world premieres and revivals created by some of our industry’s most talented composers, including Iain Bell, Rachel Portman, Jake Heggie, and Ricky Ian Gordon.

This exciting new addition to HGO’s season simply would not have been possible without the leadership and vision of the Robert and Janice McNair Foundation, which provided a generous $1 million grant for seed funding for the first four years of the Holiday Opera Series.

As well, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has provided lead support for both *A Christmas Carol* and the upcoming *It’s a Wonderful Life* (December 2016) by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer. The Mellon Foundation’s longstanding commitment to new operatic commissions helps companies like HGO keep our art form thriving through exciting new initiatives like the Holiday Opera Series.

Additional leadership funders for *A Christmas Carol* and *It’s a Wonderful Life* include lead HGO supporters Cynthia and Tony Petrello, Sara and Bill Morgan, longtime corporate partner PwC, and the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.

Please bring your family and friends to HGO this holiday season and join us in creating a new Houston tradition!

**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.

For information regarding charitable estate gift planning and how it might positively impact you, your loved ones, and Houston Grand Opera, please contact Richard Buffett, director of major gifts and legacy giving, at 713-546-0216 or visit HGO.org/LaureateSociety.
Can You Guess?

If you have been attending opera at HGO for a while, you’ll no doubt recognize some or all of these famous singers who’ve performed here. But…can you identify not only the singer but the opera? Extra credit if you can name the role! Enjoy. Answers are upside down at the bottom.

Brandon Dismukes started out in theater like many (if not most) high schoolers—he wanted to act. But when he went to the University of Houston to pursue his dream, he says, “I saw actors better than I who weren’t working. I went to the technical side and everything started to click.” He has been working in theater since 1990 and has been a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local #51 for two decades.

So, what does a master carpenter do? “I’m in charge of the entire stage—all of the scenery, electrics, sound, and props,” Brandon explains. His base crew includes seven carpenters and five to 25 extra carpenters. A head electrician, head propman, and head soundman also report to him. All spring into action as the sets for an opera are being unloaded: electricians begin hanging lights, effects units, and so forth. Then the team builds whatever else may be necessary: flying walls, chandeliers, giant ships, scrims, rolling street facades—the list goes on.

“One of the things I love about the job is that it’s always different,” Brandon says. And sometimes he gets a change of, er, scenery. He traveled to Seoul, South Korea, last spring to help recreate the staging for HGO’s co-production of *The Little Prince*, which made its world premiere at HGO in 2003.

Challenges include communicating with international designers and directors, some of whom speak little or no English—but Brandon calls that a “fun” part of the challenge and they manage somehow with drawings, gestures, and sometimes a translator. A more serious dilemma arose with HGO’s recent staging of *Otello*, with its massive set. Little information was available on how it was supposed to go together, and Brandon compares the experience to “putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box to go by. We did a lot of putting things together and taking them apart again.”

Brandon and his team sometimes work from 8 a.m. until midnight when they are in the midst of setting up a show, but he still finds time for his family—mostly because of his “amazing” wife, Drieux, who has homeschooled all of their four children, two of whom have already left the nest. Homeschooling gives them the freedom to take trips together when Brandon has a week off, and he is able to pursue the hobby of blacksmithing with his 14-year-old son.

Follow Brandon on Instagram (@Enormousopera) to see some of his behind-the-scenes photos.
Q: Hey, Rudy, what was the performance you saw that hooked you on opera?

Rudy: May of 1971…Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne in Bellini’s *Norma* on the Met tour in Dallas. I was so green—I knew nothing about opera except that something told me I had to go see this famous singer, Joan Sutherland. I asked the person next to me at intermission why the short lady (Horne) didn’t take the high notes like the other one (Sutherland), and he said, “Because she’s a mezzo, stupid!” What did I know? Nothing, except that I drove back to Houston and on Monday bought the recording! I remember the thunderous ovations and foot stomping—I thought I was at a football game. I knew then that I wanted opera to be a big part of my life. When Sutherland came to Houston in 1975 for *Lucrezia Borgia*, I told her my story and we became corresponding friends. My dear friend and HGO Board member Terrylin Neale told me years later that she had been at that same performance in Dallas. Let me know if YOU were there!

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In the Media

**Verdi’s *Otello***

“Houston Grand Opera brings out [the] visceral power of Verdi’s *Otello*…commanding voices, dynamic staging and a vivid orchestra.”

—Houston Chronicle

“Maestro Patrick Summers [is] in love with this music, and we hear it…Under Chorus Master Richard Bado and Children’s Chorus Director Karen Reeves, the groups resounded with tremendous excitement and conviction.”

—Houston Press

**Mozart’s *Così fan tutte***

“Besides the humor, vitality, and humanity that all [Mozart’s] comedies contain, the work has a mellifluousness that lies at the heart of the composer’s storytelling. Houston Grand Opera delivered them all Friday.”

—Houston Chronicle

HGO’s *Otello*, 2014. Photo by Lynn Lane.