

UNLEASHED

FALL 2010 | HOUSTONGRANDOPERA.ORG | (713) 546-0200 | 510 PRESTON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77002

Mariachi Madness at HGO

■ Thanks to the generosity of our loyal supporters, HGO is breaking new artistic ground and forging new connections to Houston.

It was Mariachi madness at the Wortham Theater Center on the evening of November 13...and you made it possible!

The Brown Theater was packed by an audience of cheering, singing Mariachi fans, HGO regulars, and many people who had never been to an opera performance before. They came to see HGO's 41st world premiere, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna / To Cross the Face of the Moon*.

Created as part of the "Mexico 2010" project, celebrating the anniversaries of Mexican independence and revolution, *Cruzar* unites two art forms – mariachi and opera. HGO was proud to welcome the world's most renowned mariachi ensemble, Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, for an electrifying performance of this new work, which was composed by Mariachi Vargas's music director, José "Pepe" Martínez. The audience was enchanted and deeply touched by Leonard Foglia's story of a family divided between the United States and Mexico, and their struggles to define what home means for them.

The cast included HGO Studio alumnus Octavio Moreno, as well as Cecilia Duarte and Brian Shircliffe – both veteran

Opera to Go! singers – and Brittany Wheeler, currently a Studio member. David Guzmán, Vanessa Cerda-Alonzo and Juan Mejia made their HGO debuts. Four more fully-staged performances of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna / To Cross the Face of the Moon* will take place at Talento Bilingüe de Houston on December 3-5, 2010, directed by Leonard Foglia and with costumes by Cesar Galindo.



Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán were featured in HGO's 41st world premiere.

of the Moon will take place at Talento Bilingüe de Houston on December 3-5, 2010, directed by Leonard Foglia and with costumes by Cesar Galindo.

CultureMap, reviewing the premiere, called it "a stunning, emotional work" and noted that its creation was an important mile-

stone in HGO's relationship with Houston.

Was it a risk to combine these two art forms? To do something that had never been done before? Yes...But HGO is committed to taking opera in new directions, and to building dynamic new connections with people in our community for whom opera has had little relevance until now. We can take a risk like this – and succeed spectacularly – because of the solid foundation provided by our faithful donors.

This was a magical evening at the Wortham, and **you** helped to bring it about. **Thank you!**



▶ *Madame Butterfly*
OCTOBER 22–NOVEMBER 5

▶ *Peter Grimes*
OCTOBER 29–NOVEMBER 12

▶ *Dead Man Walking*
JANUARY 22–FEBRUARY 6

▶ *Lucia Di Lammermoor*
JANUARY 28–FEBRUARY 11

▶ *The Marriage Of Figaro*
APRIL 15–30

▶ *Ariadne Auf Naxos*
APRIL 29–MAY 10

■ WAGNER'S "RING" IN HGO'S FUTURE

Friends of the *Ring* start the journey to Valhalla

"I want to see that again!" This is what HGO General Director and CEO Anthony Freud hopes you will say after HGO's very first production of Wagner's *Ring* operas, scheduled as a four-year series beginning with *Das Rheingold* in 2014.

These epic music dramas, collectively entitled *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, are among the greatest achievements in Western art, as iconic as the works of Shakespeare and Michelangelo. The *Ring* is a true rite of passage for an opera company; the artistic, financial, and administrative demands these operas place on producers, interpreters, and performers are greater than anything else in the operatic repertoire.

One of the distinct elements of HGO's *Ring*, in addition to a new production team and several scheduled role debuts, is its presentation timeline: one opera per year for four consecutive years. This approach allows HGO time to raise the funds required for this massive undertaking, and to insure that the quality of the production and cast for each opera meet the high standards for which HGO is known.

The announcement of an HGO *Ring* instantly fired the imagination of our donors, and several have already made significant contributions to this next step in the company's development. Thanks to the committed support of the **Friends of the *Ring***, HGO can achieve the musical and technical resources required to produce this monumental work. We have a long way to go before we raise the curtain on our first *Ring*, but we know that our supporters will ensure that HGO is able to meet this company-defining challenge.

We hope you'll join HGO and the **Friends of the *Ring*** on the journey to Valhalla! For more information, contact Deborah Hirsch at 713-546-0259 (dhirsch@hgo.org).

■ A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP — HOUSTON GRAND OPERA FELLOWS

Opera Unwrapped

We invite you to explore

Dead Man Walking & Lucia di Lammermoor

with HGO Dramaturg Colin Ure

Three opportunities to attend:

Thursday, January 13 • 12-1:30 PM (lunch provided)

Thursday, January 13 • 6-7:30 PM (light supper provided)

Saturday, January 15 • 11 AM-12:30 PM (lunch provided)

Wortham Center

Please RSVP by January 11 to Michelle Hays

mhays@hgo.org or (713) 546-0252



Opera is for everyone!

Generous donors underwrite HGO's NEXUS performance of *Madame Butterfly* allowing hundreds of people to experience opera for the first time.

Smiling faces filled the Wortham on Sunday, November 7, 2010 for the NEXUS matinee performance of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. The theater was packed with over 2,000 families, students, couples, and groups of friends eager to experience opera, many for the very first time.

The NEXUS Initiative allows Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to experience HGO's mainstage opera through discounted subscriptions and special performances, like the November 7 *Madame Butterfly*, for which every seat in the house was priced \$12.25. NEXUS also sponsors HGO's student matinees, free performances at Houston's Miller Outdoor Theatre, and opera on the airwaves through WFMT Radio Network's American Opera Companies Series.

Thanks to our generous sponsors, the NEXUS performance engaged a diverse group of new opera fans, who we hope will count *Madame Butterfly* as the first of many unforgettable HGO experiences.

If your company or organization is interested in the NEXUS Initiative, please contact Customer Care at (713)228-6737.



Amy Parsons

A brand-new opera-lover is eager to show his appreciation to all the NEXUS sponsors.

HOW WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED?

Would you like to help make sure that future generations of Houstonians can experience the same magic at HGO that you do today? When you make a bequest to the HGO Endowment, that's just what you're doing.

How do you know making a bequest is effective? Look at the extraordinary quality of HGO today: it would not be possible without the bequests made by visionary opera lovers for three decades. The HGO Endowment has provided the company with a vital regular source of income since 1982.

Including a bequest in your estate plans is very simple. A bequest can be for something specific, either a dollar amount or a particular piece of property: "I give to **Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc. the sum of \$50,000 . . .**"

For more information about making a bequest, please contact Bobby Dean, Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving, at (713) 546-0216 or bdean@hgo.org.



A New Trustee Speaks

Mike Lemanski became one of HGO's newest Trustees earlier this year. We asked him to reflect on what being a Trustee means to him.

In the mid-1970's, I was impressed by a touring performance of HGO's *Porgy and Bess* in my beloved hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Of course, when my career brought me to Houston 15 years ago, I started attending HGO performances, later becoming a season subscriber and Patron, and, earlier this year, a Trustee.

What sold me on Trusteeship was the strong sense of camaraderie I felt at my first Trustee engagement event, coupled with a desire to become more familiar with the inside workings of a world-scale opera company. I accepted the invitation to become a Trustee before I left the theater that evening.

I have not been disappointed! I'm acquiring a wealth of fascinating behind-the-scenes insight. Furthermore the social opportunities have been especially gratifying, providing many chances to meet and mix with the HGO family, including artists, staff, fellow Trustees and Board members.

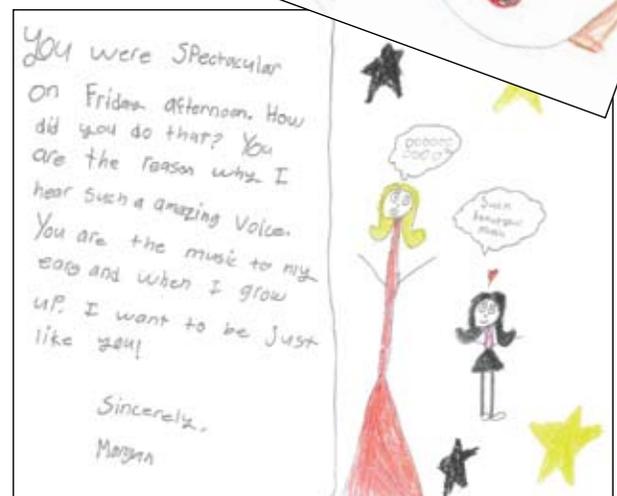
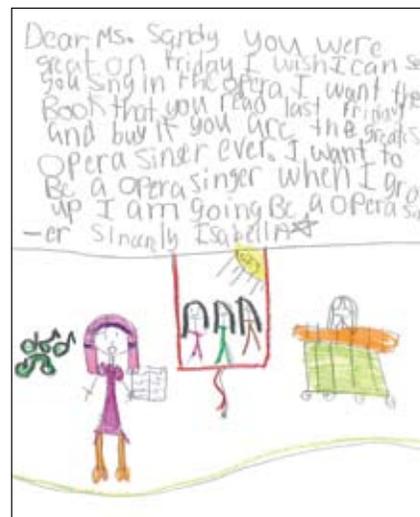
But perhaps my greatest satisfaction is in knowing that my participation is helping an institution that I both admire and respect.

For information on becoming an HGO Trustee, contact Deborah Hirsch at (713) 546-0259 (dhirsch@hgo.org).

Thank you HGOco!

Rhodes Elementary School students sent in these thank-you cards and drawings following a Storybook Opera performance at their school, where teaching artist Sandy Campbell introduced opera through storytelling.

Thanks to supporters of HGOco, these students had a great, fun learning experience. For more information about Storybook Opera and other education programs, contact Marcie Lou, HGOco Administrator, at (713) 546-0230.



Behind the curtain

Ever wonder where all the stuff on stage comes from? We sat down with HGO's props department to find out.

"Basically, a prop is anything you see on stage that isn't scenery or a costume," Andrew Cloud explains. "We're responsible for having these ready for the first rehearsal of each production."

Research is one of Megan's favorite parts of the job ("we try to make everything as realistic as possible"), and Andrew brings a knowledge of graphics to the team. The gambling money in *The Queen of Spades* ("I specialize in counterfeit," smiles Andrew), the court documents in *Peter Grimes*, and pesos, yen, newspapers, letters, and signs on stage are researched by Megan and created by Andrew.

And where does everything else come from? "We find it, make it, or buy it. It's like a scavenger hunt for grownups!"

HGO's 24-bay warehouse is the first stop. "Designers look through it and we try to use whatever we already have." They also shop at Houston resale shops. "Designers really enjoy seeing these uniquely Houston places and we try to spend money locally wherever we can."



Megan, properties design diretor, with Andrew Cloud, properties associate.



The swords used in the fight scene of Lohengrin are one example of the props Megan and Andrew procure.



Megan and Andrew have also established a large network of Texas antique dealers. "Once we do the research and know exactly what we're looking for, we get the word out on the street really fast so dealers will start to bargain and we can get the right prop for the best price."

"We visit estate sales, take donated goods, and keep an eye out for anything we might be able to use." For example, some stacks of wood Megan found in a building site as she was driving to work one morning became the prison in Act 3 of *Tosca*.

Some productions require hundreds of props. For *Brief Encounter*, Andrew "got in touch with a curator from the Tolkien Museum in London to get a scanned copy of an actual 1937 London newspaper."

So what's their favorite part of the job? Getting to work with great artists. "HGO brings in such talented, creative designers and directors," says Megan. "It makes coming to work exciting, fun and enjoyable."

Acclaim for HGO

New Productions Hit the Mark



Due to popular demand for tickets to Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, HGO added a performance on November 11.

MADAME BUTTERFLY

🎧 An inspired performance 🎧

— *Associated Press*

🎧 A triumphant start to the 2010-11 season 🎧

— *ConcertoNet*

🎧 Breathtaking to see and hear 🎧

— *The Houston Chronicle*

PETER GRIMES

🎧 One has come to expect excellence when the music of Britten hits the Brown Theater stage, and in this production, excellence is exceeded, with exceptional singing and a unique, compelling visual production...HGO has every aspect of this production right 🎧

— *ConcertoNet*

🎧 I can't remember an evening in the theater more gripping...red-hot singing, characters vividly realized, electrifying choral singing and orchestral playing 🎧

— *Dallas Morning News*

OPERA FOR THE HOLIDAYS

New this year, HGO Gift Certificates are great stocking stuffers and the perfect present for any opera lover on your list. They're available for any amount, minimum \$25. Just call our Customer Care Center at (713) 228-6737.

Share the passion and excitement of great opera for the holidays!