

UNLEASHED

FALL 2011 | HOUSTONGRANDOPERA.ORG | 713-546-0200 | 510 PRESTON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77002

New Audiences Thrill to Opera

NEXUS Lets Everyone Come to HGO

The annual NEXUS matinee is always a special occasion at Houston Grand Opera. Thanks to our generous NEXUS donors, every seat in the house for this November 12 performance of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* was just \$12.25.

The NEXUS Initiative also made possible two Student Matinees of *The Barber of Seville*, as well as a number of seats at the High School Night performance.

NEXUS is helping HGO bring new audiences to opera through ticket underwriting, free performances, radio broadcasts, student performances, and more. NEXUS supporters include **Houston Endowment, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, The Brown Foundation, Schlumberger, The Wortham Foundation, Nabors Industries, The Honorable Peter and Anne S. Brown, BBVA Compass, KPMG, and Shell Oil Company.**



Students from Neff Elementary at a Student Matinee performance of *The Barber of Seville*.

The NEXUS audience is comprised of first-time or infrequent opera-goers who have been encouraged and enabled to come to the opera thanks to specially-priced NEXUS tickets. They are scouts and soldiers, health professionals and city workers, college students and senior citizens, members of employee associations, church groups, civic organizations, teachers, and more. They are diverse and demographically complex, as is our city.

We do things just a bit differently at a NEXUS matinee. Audience members were treated to an onstage chat at intermission with members of the cast led by local Fox News anchor José Griñan.

Almost 1,800 people attended the NEXUS matinee, and over 6,000 more attended the Student Matinees and High School Night. HGO is especially proud to be able to welcome these new audiences with an experience of opera that represents, as this beautiful production of *The Barber of Seville* surely does, the artistic excellence that is at the very core of our company's mission and values.

You can help!

Connect new audiences to opera through the NEXUS Initiative. To learn how, contact Martin Schleuse at **713-546-0237** or mschleuse@hgo.org.



▶ *The Barber of Seville*
OCTOBER 21–NOVEMBER 6



▶ *Fidelio*
OCTOBER 28–NOVEMBER 13



▶ *La traviata*
JANUARY 27–FEBRUARY 12



▶ *The Rape of Lucretia*
FEBRUARY 3–11



▶ *Don Carlos*
APRIL 13–28



▶ *Mary Stuart*
APRIL 21–MAY 4

My Other Job Is Singing in the Chorus

You've enjoyed the power and beauty of their music in many operas — but did you know that the HGO Chorus is made up of your neighbors?

The commitment HGO choristers make is huge: long hours and demanding rehearsals, which most of them have to balance with full-time jobs! They're teachers and doctors, financial analysts and college students, from all over the Houston area.

They're a professional, part-time ensemble, but they have the spirit and enthusiasm of a volunteer group. They are one of the main pillars of the Company's artistic excellence.

The diverse group of men and women in the Chorus ranges in age from those in their twenties to those in their sixties. Some have been choristers for over 20 years, while others have just joined... but all members have to re-audition at least every three seasons. More than 120 singers audition for fewer than a dozen open places each year.

They've been led by Chorus Master Richard Bado since 1988. Bado — an HGO Studio alumnus — has worked at La Scala in Milan, Paris Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera. He is director of the Opera Studies Program at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.



The HGO Chorus sings with Karita Mattila and Kristinn Sigmundsson in *Fidelio*.

The Chorus performs in five of the six operas in the 2011–12 season. *Fidelio* featured 80 choristers, the most in an HGO production since *Lohengrin* two years ago.

When you see the HGO Chorus onstage, you're seeing not just one of the world's great opera ensembles, but a group of your fellow Houstonians — and your support makes their great work possible!



Chorus Master Richard Bado rehearses the Chorus.

Hard Work, Amazing Rewards for Chorus Members

Members of the HGO Chorus sometimes face extreme challenges in their work – singing in eight different languages in one show, for example, as they did in *Chorus!* (2008). But for them, the rewards are special. Longtime HGO Chorus member Keenen Manceaux tells us, “My first show with HGO was *Nabucco* (2000). I was about a foot away from Sam Ramey; I'll never forget the power of that amazing voice.” Newcomer Jeff Monette, who joined the chorus for *Fidelio*, says that the musicianship of his fellow Chorus members inspires him. For Les Biffle, the dramatic 2007 production of *Billy Budd* was a personal favorite: “It really felt as though we were standing on the edge of the deck, ready to fight.”



The HGO Chorus in *Billy Budd*.

Visit hgo.org/auditions to learn more about auditioning for the HGO Chorus.

Cruzar Continues to Inspire

They Loved It in Paris...

Members of HGO's Patrons Circle get exclusive advance notice on unique opera vacation plans.

In September, many patrons made a special trip to Paris to see HGO's Mariachi Opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, for opening night at the Châtelet. Patrons enjoyed the sights and sounds of Paris, as well as a trip to the legendary Pommery cellars.

To learn more about HGO's Patron Trip to Santa Fe in July 2012, join the Patrons Circle now! For details, contact Angie Lane at 713-546-0704 or alane@hgo.org.



Bettie Miller and the Prince of Patron Services, Rudy Avelar

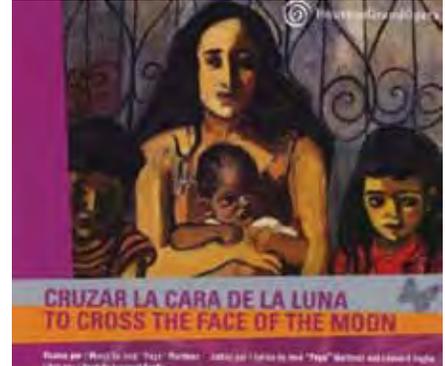


Regina and Kevin Jones with Brenda Harvey-Traylor at the Châtelet



Cruzar composer José "Pepe" Martínez with HGO Board Chair Beth Madison

...And Your Copy is Available Now!



... at amazon.com, iTunes, and your favorite music retailer!

HGO's recording of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* was released on Oct. 1, 2011 on Albany Records. This wonderful live recording was made possible through generous contributions by Bank of America in association with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Consulate General of Mexico, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Bruni, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald A. Cooney in honor of Rudy Avelar, Franci and Jim Crane, Mr. and Mrs. David B. Duthu, Brian Hency and Charles Ross Jr., Bill and Sara Morgan, Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson, and Glen Rosenbaum.



Meet HGO's New Dramaturg

...And what is a dramaturg?

He's an in-house scholar for a theater or opera company. He may do anything from giving lectures, to writing surtitles, to researching operas and productions.

Mena Mark Hanna, HGO's new dramaturg, saw his first opera in London at the age of six. "It was *The Barber of Seville*. There was a live horse in the production. I was hugely impressed." He was also hooked by the music, and spent the rest of his childhood in an increasingly intense exploration of all things musical. He joined a boys choir, and when his voice changed, began to focus on conducting and piano lessons.

"I learned in my first semester at college that I had to compose. I had to make music. It wasn't optional," he

says. He went on to Oxford University for a master's degree in musicology and a Ph.D. in music composition. He pursued a career as a composer with great success with premieres at important music festivals throughout Europe.

The role of dramaturg suits Mena to a tee. "There are so many variables in the equation of opera," he says, "but they are all important and intrinsic to a perfect opera experience. For me, helping people overcome obstacles to their understanding and enjoyment of the art form — whether it's language, musical or production style, the inherent politics of a libretto, or styles of singing — is something I'm excited about." He adds, "I'm especially thrilled to be at a company that takes its investment in the future of the art form seriously, through the Studio as well as commissioning and performing new works."

HGO patrons can look forward to meeting Mena at Opera Insights, Opera Unwrapped, and at many other events throughout the year.

A Passion for HGO's Legacy

Meet HGO's New Director of Planned Giving and Major Gifts

When you make a bequest to HGO, you help to ensure that great opera will be enjoyed by generations of Houstonians to come.

Now meet the man who can help you do it.

Last month, Richard Buffett joined HGO as the new director of planned giving and major gifts. Buffett comes to HGO from Cleveland, and brings an ideal combination of financial expertise and passion for opera.

He has a background in gift and legacy planning, and has substantial experience in banking and trust financial services.

Just as important, he's absolutely dedicated to opera. He has worked extensively as a professional musician — first as an oboist, then as a singer (he's a baritone). He has also served on the boards of several arts organizations.

Buffett is passionate about ensuring that our art form survives and thrives in the 21st century by growing the HGO Endowment. But he and HGO need your help. When you make your bequest, you will join the generous donors who make up HGO's Laureate Society, an exclusive group of opera patrons.

You can contact Richard for more information about your planned gift at **713-546-0216** or **rbuffett@hgo.org**. He'd love to hear from you.



Richard Buffett

Adding HGO to your will is easy! All you have to include is language like this: "I give and bequeath to the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc., the sum of (amount or percentage of estate) to be used for its unrestricted purposes."

Free Fun – HGO Guild Opera Night Live

Houston Grand Opera Guild's Opera Night Live brings opera-goers together with acclaimed conductors and directors for a casual, enjoyable preview of HGO productions. Hosted by **St. John Flynn** of Houston Classical 91.7, these free one-hour events feature performances by HGO Studio artists, audience questions, and light refreshments. It's a great way to get to know the opera before you come to see it!

Upcoming Opera Night Live events:

January 19, 2012 – Verdi's *La traviata*
7 p.m., Wortham Theater Center

April 3, 2012 – Donizetti's *Mary Stuart*
7 p.m., Wortham Theater Center



For more information and to reserve a spot, please call 713-546-0269 or email guild@hgo.org.

Meg & Hartley — A Decade of Support: For Them, It's All about the New

We spoke with HGO Trustee Meg Boulware about her and her husband Hartley Hampton's ten years of contributing to the company.



Meg Boulware

How did you become opera fans?

I've been attending opera for most of my life; Hartley started going to the opera when we got married. It was *The Refuge* in 2007, as well as the operas of Carlisle Floyd, that really got him interested in HGO. We're very interested in continuing HGO's legacy of supporting American opera composers...for instance, Hartley loved the song cycle that HGO just commissioned from Jake Heggie, *Pieces of 9/11—Memories from Houston*.

Why support HGO?

There are two primary reasons: One is to help support the artistic excellence that HGO has developed over the years; HGO's high quality is a huge contribution to Houston's artistic environment. The other reason is its very well-developed Studio program which is training young artists; the Studio's work is extremely important to us.

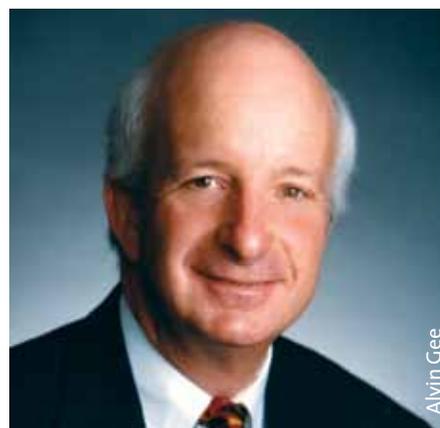
What are your most memorable HGO moments?

I'll always remember seeing *Don Pasquale* the night Heidi Stober, then an HGO Studio artist, covered the role of Norina at the last minute because the lead was ill. She absolutely nailed it, and I know that night was a big step toward the terrific career she has now.

I was in Paris for the final performance of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna (To Cross the Face of the Moon)* at the Théâtre du Châtelet. It was so unusual — a real telenovela story — and it was great to see Parisians going crazy for it that night.

Does opera still matter in the 21st century?

Absolutely. There are so many great American composers creating new works, and that's what we're really passionate about. And American composers just don't have the national funding opportunities that exist in Europe, so it's on the shoulders of opera lovers to support them.



Hartley Hampton

The Next Generation of Opera Greats Performs for You...

Get Ready for Concert of Arias 2012!

As you read this, hundreds of young singers all over the world are working, practicing, and dreaming of joining the handful of finalists who will sing for you at the 2012 Concert of Arias/Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers.

It's one of the most popular and entertaining evenings of HGO's year—**February 2, 2012**—and you're invited.

The finest young operatic talent competes in this prestigious event each year. A team of three judges select the winners, and you have a chance to give a young singer's career a major boost by voting for the Audience Choice Award winner!

The evening begins at 6 p.m. with a champagne reception, followed by the vocal competition at 7 p.m. in the Cullen Theater of the Wortham Theater Center. Afterwards, a lavish celebration dinner is held in the Grand Foyer.

The 2012 Concert of Arias is chaired by Jackson Hicks, and honors Gerald and Bobbie-Vee Cooney, longtime members of the HGO family. Don't miss it!

Reserve your place now!
Contact Guyla Pircher at
713-546-0277 or
gpircher@hgo.org to make
your reservation.

Telling Stories through Words and Music

HGOco's Home and Place Serves Three Houston Communities

HGOco's **Home and Place** project is engaging Houstonians in three parts of the city: Gulfton/Sharpstown, Northside/Second Ward, and Sunnyside.

A wide range of programs in partnership with Houston Independent School District and Neighborhood Centers Inc. will strengthen these communities through art.

How? It's about the stories.



Sandy Campbell reads to students at Kashmere Gardens Elementary School.

At its core, **Home and Place** is about creating art which emerges from the stories and experiences of community members through words, music, and art. HGO teaching artists guide them in the creation process.

Just a few examples of the many artworks being created through **Home and Place**:

- At Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center, neighborhood moms are developing language skills through a storytelling project promoting cultural literacy and community.
- In each community, a composer will create a song cycle based on the stories of community members of all ages.
- "Open Door" festivals will be held in spring 2012 to exhibit artworks created at each site. But the process of forging community through shared stories has already started.

The Only One in Texas!

Home and Place is made possible by a \$250,000 grant from ArtPlace, an innovative public/private initiative announced in September 2011, dedicated to programs which build vibrant communities through art. Of the 34 programs ArtPlace supports this year, HGO's **Home and Place** is the only one in the state of Texas.

ArtPlace is a collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts and major national foundations like The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Ford Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and others.

The Reviews Are In...

The Barber of Seville

"Brownlee proves an exceptional Almaviva...Gunn's robust baritone, charisma and sly humor make him an ideal Figaro...Martínez is winsome and warmly appealing...Carfizzi is scene-stealingly funny."

— *Houston Chronicle*

"There are many ways to play it... Houston Grand Opera settled on hilarious with a Cubist twist, making for a smash success to open its 57th season."

— *Culture Map*

Fidelio

"Houston Grand Opera's production, anchored by radiant performances from international superstar soprano Karita Mattila and majestic tenor Simon O'Neill, bursts forth with thrilling theater and approaches... true grandeur."

— *Houston Press*

"Well worth the wait...Mattila brings her glorious voice and imposing presence to Flimm's starkly powerful staging...matched by O'Neill's mighty Florestan and the artful conducting by Michael Hofstetter."

— *Houston Chronicle*