

UNLEASHED

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HGO Board Member James T. Hackett on NEXUS: A Pipeline of Opera Fans



James T. Hackett



Heitz Sanchez

Thanks to NEXUS donors, 11,000 saw a free performance of *Madame Butterfly* at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

The NEXUS Initiative, a program supported by HGO donors like you, allows a large, diverse audience to experience opera at HGO – many for the first time – with discounted tickets, free performances, and radio broadcasts.

Anadarko Petroleum Corporation kicked off the NEXUS Initiative with a \$1 million gift in 2007. Jim Hackett, Anadarko's Chairman and CEO, and a member of HGO's Board of Directors, talked with us about NEXUS.

Anadarko recently renewed its support of NEXUS with a second \$1 million gift. Why?

Experiencing the arts is vital to the intellectual and emotional enrichment of all people. They just weren't in the habit of going, partly because of ticket prices. NEXUS was created to foster the habit of going to the opera by removing the price barrier.

And NEXUS is working. Since Anadarko's first commitment, over 90,000 tickets have been sold or distributed here in Houston to first-time or infrequent attenders through the NEXUS program. That's a huge impact.

In addition to that, a nationwide audience of half a million listeners hears HGO's radio broadcasts fall. We're very proud to be part of making that happen.

One of my favorite activities of the NEXUS Initiative is the annual Nexus matinee – the entire opera house is filled with people who are there for the first time, from children to seniors, from all over the city, all of whom have paid just \$12.25 for their ticket. I'm looking forward to the Nexus matinee performance of *The Barber of Seville* on November 12.

Anadarko is one of HGO's largest supporters, with two contributions to NEXUS of over \$1 million each. What is it about HGO that justifies this level of investment?

Under Anthony Freud's leadership, HGO has been redefining what a performing arts company can mean for its city. The company is performing at a very high level, both artistically and in terms of the services it provides to Houston. The opera is an important part of a vital arts community that helps to make Houston a truly international city. Anadarko is proud to be associated with HGO.



▶ *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

Supporters Cheer HGO at Opera Ball 2011



Margaret Alkek Williams is escorted to the dance floor by HGO Board Chair Glen Rosenbaum.

On April 9, 2011, it was raining men, parasols, roses and couture at HGO's 2011 Opera Ball.

Chaired by HGO's "prince of patron services" Rudy Avelar, the event, with its "My Fair Ladies" theme, was the best-attended Ball in memory.

Margaret Alkek Williams' wonderful gift

Making the night even more wonderful was the announcement by HGO Board Chair Glen Rosenbaum of an endowment gift of \$4 million from Margaret Alkek Williams. This generous gift will provide a stable source of income to HGO for decades to come.

Margaret is one of HGO's closest and most loyal friends. She inherited her love of music and theater from her mother, Margaret Alkek, and sang in the HGO Chorus in the 1960s, in productions such as *Turandot*, *La Traviata* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

She has been a member of the HGO Board since 1980. Her family foundation, which her parents established and which she now serves as chairman, has underwritten 22 HGO productions and provided support of Concert of Arias and the Opera Ball for many years.

"This opera company, and the people who love it, have been such an important part of my life," she said. "I am so proud to be a part of this wonderful company and the thrilling and important work it does, both on and off the stage."

Donors enjoy a great evening

Throughout the evening, patrons enjoyed outbidding one another in a silent auction, including the most successful Ball wine auction to date. Fueled

by a midnight breakfast buffet, members of O.N. and other young professionals danced to the sounds of a DJ at the Encore Party.

HGO thanks Margaret, Rudy, and everyone who attended, for making the Ball one of the most memorable in the company's history. It was a night which will not be forgotten, and its impact will continue to be felt long after the last dance.



Rudy Avelar with Young Patrons Circle members Isabel and Danny David



Opera lovers celebrate HGO in the Wortham Center's Grand Foyer

Tenors, Tosca and a Teutonic goddess

Subscriber Ellen Gritz says, “Hojotoho! HGO!”



🎧 **My husband and I support a studio artist as a very specific way of giving.** 🎧

-Dr. Ellen R. Gritz, subscriber since 1997

I subscribe to HGO because:

The opera is my cultural passion. I don't want to miss a single event on the opera calendar. I subscribe because I believe in HGO and consider myself a member of the HGO family. I try to encourage others to subscribe, as well, and have brought a number of people into the fold. This wouldn't happen without HGO maintaining its consistent high quality.

If I could be any character in an opera:

I have two responses, both

characters who bear little or no resemblance to my personality.

The first is Tosca – the ultimate diva – because of her beauty, electric magnetism, great artistic ability, and capacity to have men swoon over her. That's her “positive” side. On the other side, there is her irrational jealousy and emotional immaturity, narcissism, impulsive behavior and lack of logical thinking. However, she achieves her heroism in the end, and I admire her for that – *Avanti a Dio!*

My second choice is the astounding goddess turned human, Brunnhilde. How can you not love Brunnhilde! She starts out as the thunderous, immortal horsewoman with the greatest cry in all of opera (“Hojotoho! Heiaha!”) living in a world of deceased warrior heroes and chaste maidens. She challenges and disobeys her god-king father, is transformed into a frail human who lies in a timeless coma surrounded by a ring of fire until a human super-hero discovers and frees her, and then successively lives her greatest love, loses and regains him in immortal life, after self-

immolation. Who can match that story or the voice it takes to create and endure it through three operas! Ah, to be a Brunnhilde for even one minute!

I support HGO because:

HGO opens its arms to involvement at any level. I was, and remain, amazed and delighted by the welcoming nature of the HGO leaders and staff, and the wealth of opportunities to participate, venture opinions, interact with performers, and learn ever more about the great art form of opera. My husband, Mickey Rosenau, and I support a Studio Artist as a very specific way of giving. I have always had a passion for tenors (in tribute to Jussi Björling, the greatest tenor of my lifetime, whose recordings I have listened to constantly since I was a young person). We have supported two tenors to date, Beau Gibson and Nathaniel Peake, and are anticipating the arrival of Charlie Mellor in the fall. In addition, I serve as a Trustee, as a member of the Studio, Trustees and Patrons Committees, and belong to the Laureate Society.

Volunteering with Houston Grand Opera Guild is one of the most enjoyable ways to support HGO.

Houston Grand Opera's Guild Volunteers play an active and important role in making HGO one of the premier opera companies in the world. Here are just a few of the activities you can enjoy as a volunteer:

- Assist with sales of opera CDs, DVDs, designer jewelry and more in the elegant and exciting **Guild Boutique** - all proceeds benefit the Guild's educational activities
- Meet , greet and entertain visiting artists as a **Hospitality Volunteer**
- Help a studio artist get to know Houston as a **Studio Buddy**
- **Be an usher** at a student performance or a **tour-guide** at the annual open house...
- **Introduce students to opera** as an **Education Docent**

For more information or to volunteer, call the HGO Guild Hotline at 713-546-0269.



Active Guild volunteers and supporters Gloria Portela and Dick Evans were honored for their many years of service to the Guild and the Opera at the Guild's annual spring gala.

HGO Donors Create New Operas

Five *Song of Houston* premieres so far, with more to come

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to commission an opera? Imagine seeing and hearing something brand new come to life on the stage and knowing that you helped to make it happen.

At HGO, many generous individuals as well as foundations and corporations are part of a community of support that commissions world premieres through our *Song of Houston* project.

Song of Houston commissions works based on stories that reflect the unique character of our city. Starting with *The Refuge* in 2007, *Song of Houston* has commissioned seven world premieres to date (see sidebar), telling the stories of various Houston communities - with more to come in the very near future!

The newest *Song of Houston* project, East + West, will commission a series of chamber operas that tell stories from Houston's Chinese, Azerbaijani, Iranian, Cambodian, and other communities. HGO is identifying these communities in consultation with the office of Mayor Annise Parker.



Mayor Annise Parker introduces East + West at the premiere performance of *Courtside*, February 2011.



Wesley Landry and Rodell Rosel in Jack Perla and Eugenie Chan's *Courtside*, February 2011.

East + West launched earlier this year with eight performances of an opera by Jack Perla and Eugenie Chan called *Courtside*. In May, HGO gave the premiere of *Your Name Means the Sea*, which features music and libretto by the acclaimed Azerbaijani composer, Franghiz Alizadeh.



Babek Niftaliev and Laura Botkin in Franghiz Alizadeh's *Your Name Means the Sea*, May 2011.

Writing in *Culturemap*, critic Theodore Bale praised *Your Name Means the Sea*, saying, "Alizadeh has done a stellar job integrating a western string quartet and opera singers with traditional Azerbaijani musicians and singers... (Babek) Niftaliev as Seymur and Malakkhanim Eyubova as his mother are some of the most intriguing singers to appear on HGO's stage this season."

These two premieres were just the start of East + West. It is expected to continue through 2014 with *six more* commissions that celebrate Houston as a meeting-place for eastern and western cultures.



Our stories. In words and music.

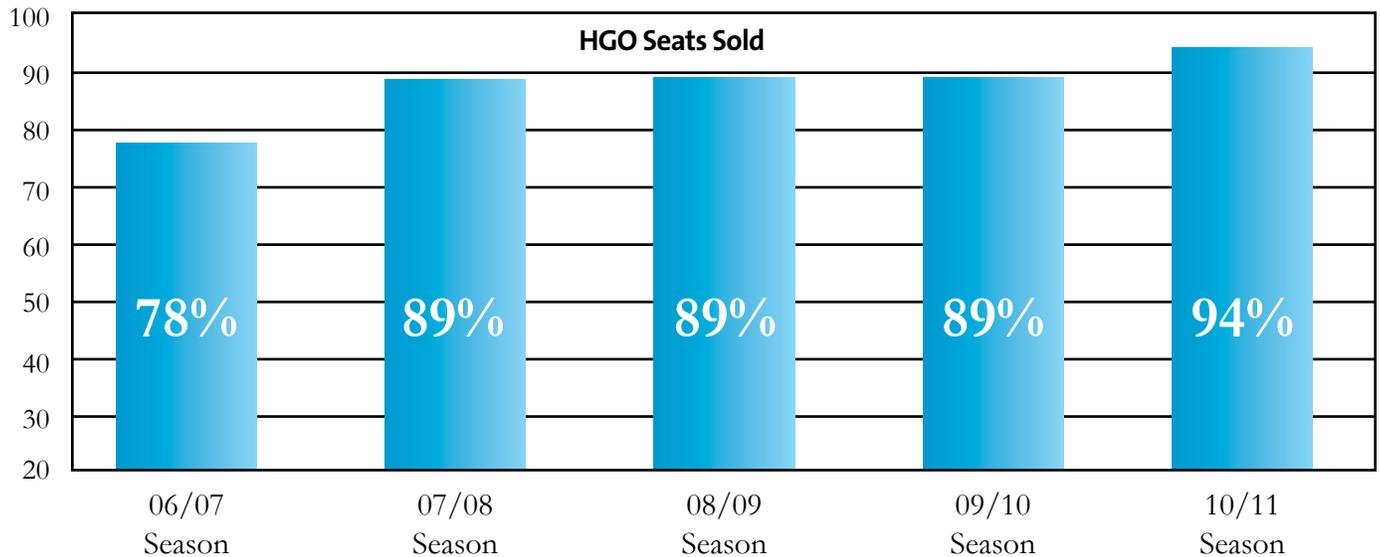
***Song of Houston* World Premieres**

The Refuge (2007)
A Way Home (2009)
Cruzar la Cara de la Luna (2010)
Courtside (2011)
Your Name Means the Sea (2011)
Pieces of 9/11: Memories from Houston (upcoming)
The Clever Wife: A Chinese Folktale (upcoming)

Would you like to be part of commissioning a world premiere?

Contact David Chambers at dchambers@hgo.org or 713-980-8673. You can also learn more about *Song of Houston* at HGOco.org/songofhouston.

Thanks for being an HGO ambassador



Supporters like you have done phenomenal work in getting the word out about Houston's world-class opera company! This season, HGO:

- Sold out eleven of its thirty-three performances.
- Added extra performances of *Madame Butterfly* and *The Marriage of Figaro* due to popular demand.
- Sold 94% of seating capacity, up from 89% the previous three seasons.

We would not have achieved such a successful season without the help of our donors and subscribers. Thank you for being an ambassador for HGO!



The future of opera? You make it happen when you make an estate gift

It's vitally important for the resources required for great opera to be in place well before the curtain goes up. Thanks to generous bequests from opera lovers, the Houston Grand Opera Endowment has been meeting this need since 1982.

This need is ongoing; it will never stop. That's why we need *your* bequest as well.

Congress made important changes to estate tax laws in December, so this is an important time to revisit your estate plans. Perhaps you're already discussing revisions with your attorney. Including the HGO Endowment in

your plans provides a foundation for great opera in Houston far into the future.

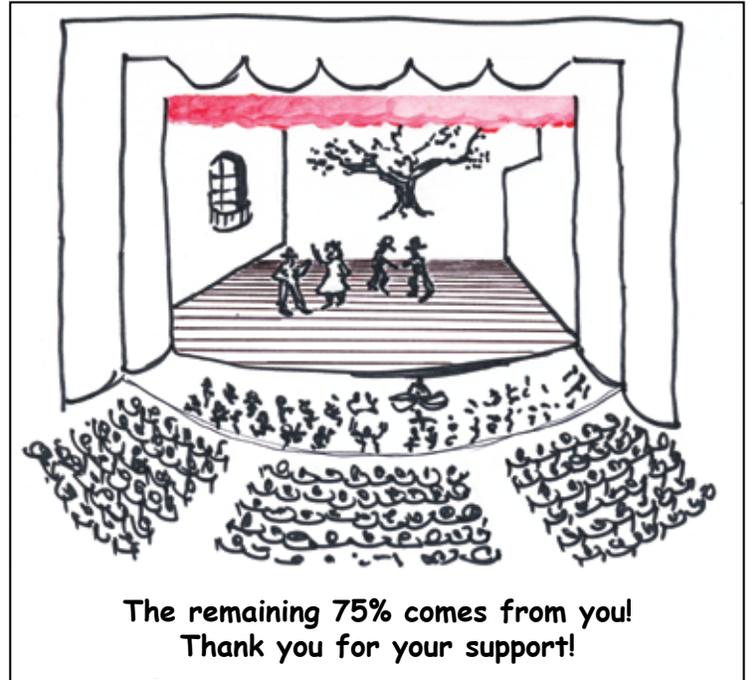
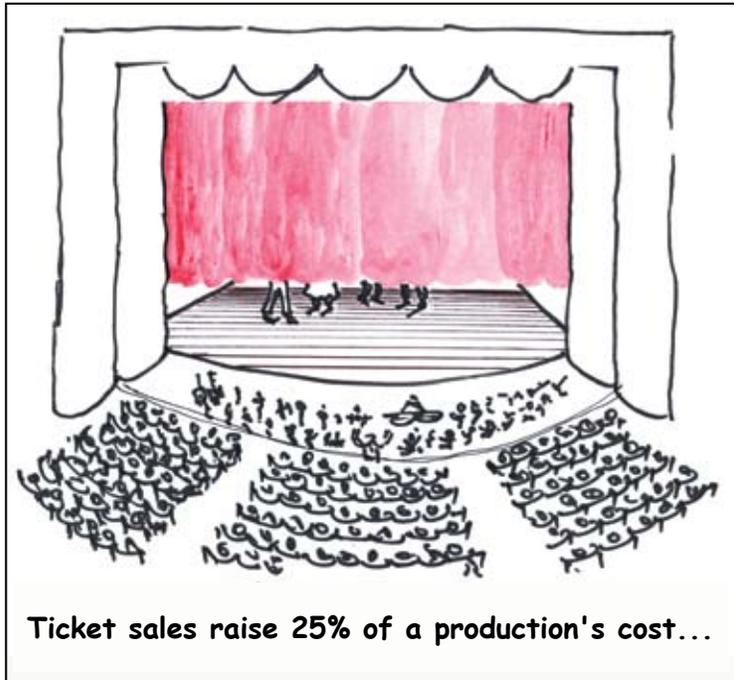
We can plan effectively so far in advance because of the foresight of previous opera-loving generations who made bequests to the HGO Endowment. By committing now to an estate gift, you help to ensure the future of HGO for generations to come.

For more information on Planned Giving, please contact **Bobby Dean** at 713-546-0216 or bdean@hgo.org.



Soprano Albina Shagimuratova speaks with Anthony Freud, Guyla Pircher and Laureate members Joanie and Terrell Sanders.

How Your Support is Raising the Curtain at HGO



Artwork by HGO Trustee Saúl Balagura

HGO Trustee Saúl Balagura, an accomplished artist, recently showed us this piece, which shows how important gifts are to the company. We couldn't resist sharing it with you!

Meet Your New Executive Leadership Team!

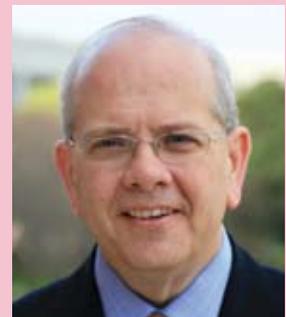
HGO's new executive leadership team - Artistic and Music Director **Patrick Summers**, Managing Director **Perryn Leech** and Chief Advancement Officer **Greg Robertson**, are ready to rumble! Watch your mailbox of a special edition of **OPERA UNLEASHED**, all about what's in store for HGO.



Patrick Summers



Perryn Leech



Greg Robertson