

UNLEASHED

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

Looking ahead to another masterpiece season

■ The creative team that won six Tony Awards in 2010 opens Houston Grand Opera's season with a new *Madame Butterfly*. Then, mark your calendars for the world's first Mariachi opera.

■ Thank you, thank you, thank you. Ticket prices cover just one-fourth of the cost of productions. *You do the rest.*

Thanks to HGO donors like you, the 2009/10 season was a success from start to finish! The HGO brand is particularly strong right now, and we will move on to new strengths this fall. Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* opens our 2010/11 season in a new production created by a creative team — director Michael Grandage, set/costume designer Christopher Oram and lighting designer Neil Austin — which won **six awards out of seven nominations** at the 2010 Tony Awards in June for their production of *Red*.

Butterfly is a perfect spectacle to kick off the season. It's also an ideal first opera for new operagoers — if there's someone you'd like to introduce to this wonderful artform, this is a perfect opportunity!



Ana Maria Martinez sings the title role of *Madame Butterfly* for the first time!

2010/11 will also feature:

- A new production of *Peter Grimes*, Benjamin Britten's most popular opera;
- A new production of Donizetti's beloved *Lucia di Lammermoor*;
- The HGO premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, with legendary mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Frederica von Stade, the latter in her farewell to the operatic stage!

And let's not forget HGO's 41st world premiere — the **first-ever Mariachi opera**, which will be performed by the legendary Mariachi Vargas at the Wortham on November 13!

This will be another spellbinding year at HGO, and it is our loyal donors who make it happen. **We couldn't do it without 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

The night passion burst its bonds

Opera and passion just seem to go together, but during my bachelor days I sometimes had trouble finding a date who wanted to attend the opera. So, when I met a woman who actually enjoyed opera — and knew quite a bit about it — I knew I was on to something. Elizabeth and I were seated next to each other at a business event to hear HGO's *Flying Dutchman* production in the late 1990s. The elaborate set malfunctioned near the end of the first act, and the production stopped. HGO's General Director announced to the audience that the opera would begin again at the overture — 'take it from the top.' More Wagner! I was happy, she was happy, and things seemed to progress from there. We were engaged after HGO's production of *Don Giovanni* in 1999, and over ten years and many operas later we're still going strong." **I RICHARD HUSSEINI**



Elizabeth and Richard Hussein enjoy a lively dance with other patrons at the 2010 Opera Ball.

My father had learned to love opera, and he was kind enough to start taking me with him when I was only 8 years old. At that time, HGO was performing in the long-gone Music Hall, but the experience even then was wonderful. I would dress up and sit very straight so I could see around the adult in front of me. The impression was indelible: only a few years of living elsewhere have separated me from a lifelong commitment to HGO performances!" **I MICHELE MALLOY**

My first experience with live opera was in the winter of 1966 at the MET, a performance of *Turandot* with Birgit Nilsson. My husband and I could only afford the most inexpensive seats, which placed us at the very top of the balcony. The stage looked so small from up there, but the singing and the music were so glorious. We have been going to opera regularly ever since in different cities and countries. We are so thankful that right here at home in Houston, at HGO, we have such an excellent outlet for our passion." **I URSULA BALAGURA**

Do you have a memorable moment at HGO that you'd be willing to share? Call Martin Schleuse at (713) 546-0237... he'd love to hear from you. Or email him with your story at mschleuse@houstongrandopera.org. For more revealing, first-person moments, go to www.houstongrandopera.org.

YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS HOUSTON GRAND OPERA AFFORDABLE...

Ticket sales make up only a small portion of HGO's income. How much? A single orchestra circle ticket for a weekend performance currently costs \$104. BUT, if we relied on ticket sales for all our income, that same ticket would have to cost \$396!

That's right — support like yours makes up nearly three quarters of HGO's budget!

\$104

\$396

A star is nurtured

Thanks to the training programs underwritten by you and other donors, this once-nervous child singer is now pursuing graduate study in voice.

A nerve-wracking audition for the HGO Children's Chorus was Elissa's introduction to HGO. And yet, she says, "I am so thankful I was exposed to that at an early age, because now I don't get nervous anymore!"

Elementary and middle school summers meant **Opera Camp** for Elissa. In 1998, she starred in *Dragon Kite* (which was revived for the 2010 summer Opera Camps). Elissa vividly remembers the rush of writing the opera, making costumes, gathering props, and playing the lead role. Years later, she's still impressed that the frenzied campers pulled off the performance. "It was a big contributing factor in my decision to pursue voice."

As a member of HGO's **High School Voice Studio (HSVS)**, Elissa trained with voice coaches and participated in master classes on musicianship, stage presence, college audition preparation, and other relevant topics for young artists. Once she entered her first semester as a voice major at Boston University, Elissa fully understood the impact and advantage of growing up in HGO. "It seemed like most of my classmates didn't know what was going on, but I felt really prepared."

Giving someone a leg up in such a competitive and demanding industry is no small contribution. Thanks to generous donors like you, HGO can invest in artists of all ages, waiting with enthusiasm for the day a student like Elissa is back on our stage once again — this time, as the one inspiring others.

You can help to make programs like Opera Camp, the High School Voice Studio and the HGO Children's Chorus possible. Visit www.hgoco.org to find out how, and to see photos of this year's camps and HSVS participants.



"What I really enjoyed about the opera camp experience is that it introduced children to a genre that can be looked upon as formal and serious and transformed it into something really fun."

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DO YOU KNOW THE NAME OF HOUSTON GRAND OPERA'S LARGEST DONOR?

It's the **Houston Grand Opera Endowment**. Since it was founded in 1982, the Endowment has distributed over **\$34 million** to the Opera! Gifts to the HGO Endowment help to support HGO's mission in perpetuity. For information on how you can contribute to the Opera's permanence through the Endowment, contact Bobby Dean at (713) 546-1216 or bdean@houstongrandopera.org.

Opera: for rent

HGO productions have for years reached rare heights of genius, thanks to your unstinting financial support. Now other opera companies are lining up to rent Houston's audience-pleasing stagings.



Recently, *The Independent*, one of the UK's leading dailies, awarded the Welsh National Opera's premier production of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* a rave review for its originality, "opulence," and brains.

And where did this fresh and audience-thrilling production originate? WNO rented it from Houston Grand Opera. HGO has 24 different productions available for opera companies around the world to rent, with more being created every year, including, most recently, our new 2010 production of *Tosca*. When you support them, you're not just helping to

create a fresh new experience of music drama, you're helping HGO build an asset which, for years to come, will generate rental income for the company.

Many of the world's great opera companies, including Washington National Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera and San Diego Opera have recently rented HGO productions. They recognize the quality, innovation and flexibility which HGO brings to its stagings. Besides earning rental income, when opera houses choose HGO productions, audiences around the world recognize our high standards. When you help us create these assets, you help to boost HGO's reputation worldwide.



The Abduction from the Seraglio (left) and Tosca (right) are just two of the HGO productions available for companies around the world to rent...and our donors made them possible!

A PUCCINI SHOPPING LIST... When you support HGO productions, you contribute to the creation of a magical new experience...but have you ever wondered about the details? Here's a partial list of items purchased by HGO's props department for this fall's new production of *Madame Butterfly*:

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|---|-----------|---|----------|
| 36 handheld fans, made in Kyoto, Japan..... | \$30 ea. | Wooden Buddha statue, 500 years old..... | \$600 |
| 36 traditional lanterns, handmade in Nagoya, Japan..... | \$250 ea. | 1850s vintage makeup mirror chest..... | \$300 |
| 36 black bamboo poles (for lanterns)..... | \$35 ea. | 312 square feet of Cherry Blossom confetti..... | \$2,250 |
| 1890s-style English dining table with 4 chairs..... | \$1,500 | 2 ancestor dolls, 300 years old..... | \$400 |
| | | Parasols, made in Kyoto, Japan..... | \$25 ea. |
| | | Custom-built toy boat..... | \$200 |

...and that's just props. Add costumes, wigs, makeup, scenery and lighting and the vast array of talented people required to create them — PLUS the necessary musical and administrative resources — and you can see how invaluable your support is.