

UNLEASHED

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

Anatomy of a New Production From Page to Stage, Thanks to Your Gifts!



HGO's new *Barber of Seville* features unique and surprising touches, such as a pink piano that becomes a table, a platform and even a rowboat - skippered here by HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech.

Co-Productions: Spreading Costs and the Name of HGO

The Barber of Seville is a co-production with HGO and the opera companies of Australia, Canada, and Bordeaux, France. "Co-productions allow us to create the world-class theatrical experience our audiences expect, while sharing the expense with other companies," notes Leech.

Almost all new HGO productions in recent years have been co-produced with prestigious opera companies around the world. *Barber* will be our tenth new co-production since the 2006-07 season.

So when you come to see *The Barber of Seville*, while you're appreciating the beautiful new production seen here first, know that your gifts are being made to work very hard.



Perryn Leech and Joan Font try out prop guitars in the prop shop at Bordeaux Opera.

One of the rewards of being a Houston Grand Opera donor is seeing the results of your contribution on stage at the Wortham.

HGO's new production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* will show you how your money's being spent – in vivid, vibrant color!

La Cenerentola Team Returns

Barber kicks off our 2011-12 season in a new production by Els Comediants, the Barcelona-based theater company that created HGO's

production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* in 2007. Their *Barber* promises to be every bit as colorful, whimsical and surprising as *La Cenerentola*.

In fact, Els Comediants are becoming HGO's preferred Rossini partners, according to HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech. "Their comic style and understanding of Rossini are ideally suited," he said recently, adding, "We are already committed to the third Rossini comedy, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, with Joan Font and his team."



▶ *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

Remembering 9/11: HGO's Unique Commemoration

Join Us for World Premiere September 9

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11, HGO has commissioned *Pieces of 9/11—Memories from Houston*, a new song cycle by composer Jake Heggie (*Dead Man Walking, Three Decembers, Moby-Dick*) and his frequent collaborator, librettist Gene Scheer.



Composer Jake Heggie, an HGO favorite, created the affecting score for *Pieces of 9/11*.



Librettist Gene Scheer adapts the stories of Houston-area first responders and community members.

An Innovative Song Cycle for New Venues

- Heggie's score, for violin, cello, flute, guitar, and three singers, includes a prelude influenced by Bach's G Major cello suite. The cycle is of a scope that will allow it to be performed in a variety of venues large and small, from theaters and recital halls to fire stations, places of worship, and outdoor venues.

- On the decision to commission the piece, HGO Artistic & Music Director Patrick Summers said, "How does one respond with meaning to an event so momentous and young as the 9/11 terrorist attacks – a day of such universal heartbreak? We have chosen to focus on the responders and stories of our own community."



HGO Studio alumnus Liam Bonner performs in *Pieces of 9/11*.

HGO Remembers

Community Events Calendar

Thursday, September 8, 7 p.m.

Rothko Chapel

Community Conversations:

Remembrance and Honor

Rothko Chapel/ HGOco

Friday September 9, 12 p.m.

Houston City Hall Reflection Pond

World Premiere of

Pieces of 9/11 — Memories from Houston

Friday September 9, 7 p.m.

Discovery Green

Pieces of 9/11 — Memories from Houston; premiere of the film, *Rebirth*, and candlelight vigil.

Saturday September 10, 7:30 p.m.

Arab American Cultural Center

10555 Stancliff, Houston, TX 77099

Performances of

Pieces of 9/11 — Memories from Houston

Sunday September 11, 2 & 4 p.m.,

Rothko Chapel

Performances of

Pieces of 9/11 — Memories from Houston

Tuesday, September 13, 7 p.m.

Rothko Chapel

Community Conversations

Journey to Hope: How do we heal?

Rothko Chapel/ HGOco

Generous Houstonians

- Made possible through the very generous support of Bill and Sara Morgan as part of HGOco's *Song of Houston* project, the piece honors those who lost their lives, and pays tribute to first responders and community members who were affected by the events of September 11, 2001.

- The unprecedented rescue and recovery effort that began immediately and continued for over nine months included 88 members of the Houston Fire Department and Texas Task Force One, the elite search and rescue team.

Don't Miss Out

Annual Fund Donors Enjoy Unique Experiences at HGO!

Your annual fund donation makes great things happen onstage at HGO. Did you know that as an Annual Fund donor you can experience unique behind-the-scenes events at HGO? Depending on your level of support, these may include

- Attendance at dress rehearsals...
- Advance ticket sales – get additional seats for your favorite operas before they go on sale to the general public...
- Attendance at one of our special Opera Unwrapped previews, where you'll enjoy a tasty lunch or a light supper with an insightful, in-depth preview of upcoming operas.

And, of course, there's the benefit of knowing that your contribution is helping to create world-class opera at HGO, as well as groundbreaking activities throughout the Houston community.

For information on the benefits of supporting HGO's Annual Fund, contact Angela Lane at 713-546-0704 or alane@hgo.org.



Annual Fund Donors enjoy an opera preview.



Lynn Wyatt and Colin Ure at Opera Unwrapped.



Enjoy lunch or supper during Opera Unwrapped.

Tasty fare and fantastic previews—exclusively for Annual Fund Donors—are available at these levels of membership:

\$250...attend one Opera Unwrapped

\$500 or more...attend all three Opera Unwrapped previews

To make a reservation, contact Bethany Steel at 713-546-0270 or bsteel@hgo.org.

Opera Unwrapped 2011-12

The Barber of Seville / Fidelio

Thursday, October 13, 2011
12 Noon (Lunch) or 6 PM (Supper)

Saturday, October 15, 2011
11 AM (Brunch)

La Traviata / The Rape of Lucretia

Wednesday, January 11, 2012
12 Noon (Lunch), 6 PM (Supper)

Saturday, January 14, 2012
11 AM (Brunch)

Don Carlos / Mary Stuart

Thursday, April 12, 2012
12 Noon (Lunch), 6 PM (Supper)

Saturday, April 14, 2012
11 AM (Brunch)

All events at Houston Grand Opera

Don't get left out in the lobby when your favorite opera sells out...

Exclusive Pre-sale for Donors only

September 6 – 25, 2011

Annual Fund donors who contribute \$250 or more per year can purchase extra tickets to their favorite HGO operas before they go on sale to the general public on September 26, 2011.

For more information, contact Angela Lane at 713-546-0704 or alane@hgo.org



Tune In! Houston Grand Opera is On the Air

Madame Butterfly and *Tosca* highlights of 2011 broadcast series



HOUSTON GRAND OPERA Broadcast Schedule — Fall 2011

Tune in Saturdays at Noon starting October 22, 2011, for six full-length HGO broadcasts on **Classical 91.7**, Houston's 24-hour classical music station!

October 22, 2010 - 12 Noon
R. Strauss: **ARIADNE AUF NAXOS**

October 29, 2011 - 12 Noon
Puccini: **MADAME BUTTERFLY**

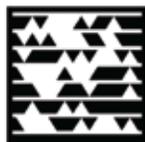
November 4, 2011 - 12 Noon
J. Heggie: **DEAD MAN WALKING**

November 11, 2011 - 12 Noon
Donizetti: **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR**

November 18, 2011 - 12 Noon
Britten: **PETER GRIMES**

November 25, 2011 - 12 Noon
Puccini: **TOSCA**

Add more opera to your life with Houston Grand Opera's opera broadcasts starting October 22, 2011. Our national broadcasts are made possible by major grants from The Wortham Foundation and from the Ford Foundation Endowment Fund for Electronic Media through the Houston Grand Opera Endowment. They are also supported in part through the NEXUS Initiative, whose lead supporters include Houston Endowment, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, The Brown Foundation, Inc., Schlumberger Oilfield Services, The Wortham Foundation, Inc., Nabors Industries, The Honorable Peter and Anne S. Brown, BBVA Compass, KPMG LLP, and Shell Oil Company.



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A Charitable Gift in Your Will...

Ensures the HGO Stage Will Never Go Dark

The HGO Endowment is supported by visionary donors who make bequests, memorial gifts, and other donations. These donors who support the company in their estate plans receive various tax benefits.

Annual distributions from the Endowment are a crucial part of HGO's budget; in fact, the Endowment is HGO's single largest donor. When you support the Endowment, you are a part of the most important piece in HGO's revenue puzzle.

For information on making a bequest, contact Senior Director of Development Deborah Hirsch at 713-546-0259 or dhirsch@hgo.org.

HGO Studio – Where Great Talents Become Great Performers

Your Support Launches Artists on the Road to Stardom

HGO Studio alumna Rachel Willis-Sørensen won the prestigious Belvedere Competition in Vienna on July 8. Rachel won first prize for both opera and operetta among nearly 3,000 young singers from around the world.

Rachel's HGO Studio fellowship (2009-2011) was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Harlan Stai in honor of Terrell Tone Owen through the Abilene Community Foundation. During her time at HGO she appeared in the Studio's production of *Così fan tutte*, as well as in the company's productions of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

A Busy Season Lies Ahead

In the 2011 – 2012 season, Rachel will make her Royal Opera House-Covent Garden debut as Countess Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, a role which she will also perform at Michigan Opera Theatre.

Additionally, she will appear at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and Gotham Chamber Opera as Licenza in Mozart's rarely-heard *Il sogno di Scipione*. Beginning in the 2012 – 2013 season, Ms. Willis-Sørensen will be a member of the ensemble at Semperoper Dresden.

Rachel joins many other HGO studio alumni whose careers are taking off on the stages of the world's great opera houses.



Rachel Willis-Sørensen

"I am deeply gratified to have completed the HGO Studio which brought me to a level I had not imagined possible. Exposure to the extraordinary level of excellence at HGO helped prepare me to take on the Belvedere competition and thrive! It overwhelms me that people like Dian and Harlan Stai are generous enough to make such opportunities possible. I owe them and the Houston Grand Opera a tremendous debt of gratitude," she said.

Former Studio artists who return to HGO in the 2011-12 season include Ana María Martínez, Albina Shagimuratova, Tamara Wilson, Scott Hendricks, and the 2012 Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, Joyce DiDonato.

What's going O.N. at the Opera?

Opening Nights for Young Professionals (O.N.), which started in 2005, is one of the largest arts organizations for young professionals in Houston, with more than 400 members ranging in age from 25-40. We asked one of our charter members, Valerie Palmquist, to tell us why she chose O.N. and HGO.



O.N. member Valerie Palmquist on the red carpet at Opera Ball.

"When I joined O.N. I was a fan of classical music, but had only seen one opera. One of the greatest aspects of O.N. is that it is a **subscription-based program**; A subscription of six operas gives a person the opportunity to learn about and fall in love with opera. But beyond that, O.N. has done a great job of **creating an experience** at the opera. Most O.N. subscribers are seated together so you can see your friends before the opera starts, and then at intermission, all the O.N. members head to the bridge in the Grand Foyer for wine and light hors d'oeuvres. This really creates a sense of community and fun, so that each opening night is truly an event in its own right..."

"One of the most fun things we do is host the After Party following the Opera Ball. It's exciting to work on one of the key events at HGO. I have found that the members of O.N. and HGO's patrons are some of the most active and friendliest people in the city, and I know that we'll work together to create a welcoming environment for new members."

For more information on Opening Nights for Young Professionals, or to subscribe, contact Steve Kelley, Director of Marketing, at 713-546-0226 or skelley@hgo.org.

One Lucky Winner Will Conduct HGO Orchestra ...on Opening Night, 2012!



Donna Bruni conducts the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra on Opening Night, 2010.

It's HGO's opening night – and you've got an important part to play.

You make your way backstage, greeting the 80 musicians of the HGO Orchestra; you mount the podium, baton poised and ready... you signal the timpanist for a thunderous drum-roll, and give the upbeat that starts the very first notes of the 2012-13 season at Houston Grand Opera: our national anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The orchestra plays, two thousand voices are raised in song – what a thrill!

Each year at our Opening Night Celebration, we auction the opportunity to conduct at the next season's opening night. Be sure to join us on Fish Plaza immediately following the opening night performance on October 21. That's where you can make your bid on a chance to lead us into the 2012-13 season! This year's glamorous celebration is chaired by John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer in honor of our Senior Board Chairman Glen Rosenbaum.

Make Your HGO Debut...

It's an unforgettable experience – just ask longtime supporter Donna Bruni, who took on this role in 2010. This year, Sara Morgan's star turn comes on October 21. Previous conductors include Bob Cavnar, Harry Pinson, and Harlan Stai.

For more information about Opening Night Celebration and the Conductor's Auction, contact Guyla Pircher at 713-546-0277 or gpircher@hgo.org.