YOU STEERED US HOME.

HOMETCOMINGS. NEW BEGINNINGS. PLÁCIDO!

HGO opened its 2018–19 season with Wagner’s The Flying Dutchman, our first opera back in the Wortham. Photo by Lynn Lane.
YOU BROUGHT HGO BACK HOME!

In the 14 months since the floods of Hurricane Harvey struck, you fought like a hero to protect and preserve your opera company. Through your generous support over the past season, you:

- Built the HGO Resilience Theater in less than two weeks
- Presented the 2017–18 season without canceling or postponing a single performance
- Astounded critics and audiences with two world premieres, a radiant new production of *West Side Story*, and the return of José “Pepe” Martínez and Leonard Foglia’s *Cruzar la cara de la luna*, one of HGO’s most beloved commissions
- Inspired **62,000 young Houstonians** with world-class arts education programs through HGOco
- Returned the HGO family to our beloved artistic home at the Wortham Theater Center
- Made possible a once-in-a-lifetime homecoming concert on September 26 starring the legendary Plácido Domingo and the incomparable Ana María Martínez, raising over **$1.5 million** toward the losses the company suffered during Harvey
- Gave our Costume Shop and Wig & Makeup Departments a beautiful new space on dry land
- Launched new community initiatives to connect more Houstonians with great art than ever before through *Seeking the Human Spirit*
- Opened an amazing **2018–19 homecoming season** in incredible style
- Gave the HGO family the hope to keep going during the greatest challenge in the company’s history

As Plácido Domingo sang us home to thunderous applause, Mayor Sylvester Turner proclaimed September 26 as Wortham Theater Center Day.

“A cultural event of this magnitude is a celebration of our unity in the face of adversity, our optimism and entrepreneurship, and our commitment to great art in Houston.”
—Mayor Sylvester Turner

City Council member Dave Martin, City Controller Chris Brown, Mayor Sylvester Turner, City Council member Robert Gallegos, HGO’s Perryn Leech, and City Council member David Robinson celebrate the Wortham’s reopening with an official proclamation. Photo by Lynn Lane.
HGO comes full circle as Plácido Domingo helps re-open the Wortham on September 26.

HGO RETURNED to the Wortham in true Houston style with a concert featuring opera icon Plácido Domingo—who helped to open the Wortham in 1987 with his performance as Radames in Aida—and our own Ana María Martínez along with Patrick Summers and the HGO Orchestra. Margaret Alkek Williams was the chairman and presenting underwriter of the event, titled HGO & Plácido: Coming Home!

On the night of the concert, the Wortham was filled to overflowing with an excited throng that leapt to their feet for standing ovations numerous times as Domingo and Martínez presented solos and duets from opera, musical theater, and zarzuela.

After the concert, the party moved to The Post Oak Hotel ballroom for dinner, where the sounds of Mariachi Calmecac welcomed around 750 people. The celebration continued until 1:30 a.m.

“Tonight is a tribute to HGO...To resilience, perseverance, and ultimately, faith.”

—ANA MARÍA MARTÍNEZ

(1) Margaret Alkek Williams and Plácido Domingo; (2) Fred Burns and Dianne McDonough; (3) Richard Lydecker and Donna Kaplan; (4) Terry Wayne Jones, Steve Wyatt, Lyn Wyatt, Jesse H. Jones II, and Louisa Stude Sarofim; (5) members of Mariachi Calmecac; (6) Allyn and Jill Risley; (7) Brady and Zane Carruth; (8) Ann Ziker, Joe Greenberg, and Claire Liu
THE LATE BUSINESSMAN and civic leader Gus S. Wortham and his wife, Lyndall, were proud of Houston. They believed that supporting arts organizations like HGO would have a profound impact on the future of this great city. It was The Wortham Foundation’s extraordinary investment that transformed Houston forever in 1987—by making the dream of a world-class opera house come true.

The magnificent Wortham Theater Center is named to honor the visionary who made it possible. That’s why it’s so fitting that now, more than 30 years later, The Wortham Foundation’s generous support helped bring HGO home after Hurricane Harvey, and the Foundation continues to be one of the Opera’s greatest champions year after year.

Mr. Wortham could barely have imagined devastation on the scale of Hurricane Harvey to Houston’s Theater District. But we know he would have been proud that the trustees of The Wortham Foundation honor his and Lyndall’s legacy by protecting cultural treasures like HGO.

Coming home after a year of rebuilding and resilience would be impossible without our guardian angel: The Wortham Foundation. Our gratitude is too immense for words, so we’ll express it the way we always have—by filling the theater with the sounds of beautiful music again.

A PHOENIX RISING

Donors bring Tarik O’Regan and John Caird’s The Phoenix to life.

EVERY OPERA that you’ve ever loved—from Handel to Heggie—was made possible by visionary patrons just like you.

Why are new works important to create? We must continue to infuse our art form with new stories and voices that are relevant not just to today’s audiences, but to future generations.

Next up is The Phoenix, our 66th world premiere, coming to life next spring. A select group of donors received a sneak peek in a workshop in Houston this past August. Tarik O’Regan and John Caird’s comedy follows Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart’s larger-than-life librettist. A quintessential “American dream” story, The Phoenix shows how Italian-born Da Ponte reinvents himself over and over and eventually immigrates to America in search of a better life.

“I’m so excited to be working with a new composer of Tarik’s stature and musicianship, and with a maestro as broadminded and careful of the art form’s future as Patrick [Summers] is. I’m also grateful for HGO’s wonderful audience members and supporters, who truly understand the importance of new work,” says frequent HGO collaborator John Caird, librettist and director of The Phoenix.

HGO Trustees Rhonda and Donald Sweeney explain why they support new works like The Phoenix: “HGO works with the best artists in the world on new commissions. We know that future generations of opera lovers will be talking about The Phoenix for years to come.”
THE QUEST OF A LIFETIME

This summer, you sent a group of 25 curious high school students on a journey they will never forget.

HGO’S GROUNDBREAKING Seeking the Human Spirit initiative explores the role of great art in bringing purpose and meaning into our daily lives. One of our partners on this journey last season was Sacred Sites Quest (SSQ)—an outstanding organization that works with diverse groups of high school students to discover sacred spaces, serve their community, and create public art installations to inspire others to do good.

When your support brought these Sacred Sites “Questers” to the HGO Resilience Theater last season to experience the Seeking the Human Spirit operas La traviata, The House without a Christmas Tree, and Norma, they were blown away. The performing and visual arts experiences they enjoyed at the George R. Brown Convention Center were just the beginning of a year of artistic study that culminated this past July in the Questers’ voyage to Italy—the birthplace of opera.

With hands-on learning experiences in science, technology, engineering, art, and math, the Questers set out to explore the power of the human spirit by visiting sacred sites in Italy, building a labyrinth in Pesaro, and enjoying plenty of opera along the way.

“The trip was truly memorable and has changed my life significantly,” says Matthew Moreno, a proud Quester. “Traveling to Italy and helping to create an art installation for future generations to enjoy, all while transcending language barriers and cultural differences—these experiences changed my perspective.”

Nothing brings people together and broadens their horizons like opera, whether onstage at the Wortham or at a festival in Italy. Your incredible support helps young people all over Houston learn about opera as they grow to become engaged global citizens. Thank you!

Linda Murray grew up with opera—and now she’s making sure the kids of tomorrow can, too.

WHEN YOU SPEND your childhood backstage, playing dress-up in the Costume Department at the Eastman School of Music, swinging prop swords around with the children of famous singers, and riding around with Aaron Copland in your mom’s Plymouth station wagon—opera is in your blood.

That’s how it was for HGO Patron Linda Murray, whose mother was a pianist and whose father was an opera singer, educator, and director. Linda’s younger brother, David, is a percussionist, and Linda made her career in marketing in the oil and gas industry.

Linda delights in sharing the arts with her three adopted children from Latvia: her adult daughters, Angelina and Nicole, and her son, Rik, a senior in high school. She has a five-year-old granddaughter, Emilija, and another grandchild arriving this spring.

Linda is a member of the HGO Laureate Society, a special group of opera lovers who have made commitments to HGO in their estate plans. She’s remembering HGO in her will because she wants to honor her father’s wonderful legacy in the world of opera and to give the gift of arts education to future generations.

“My father instilled in us the importance of giving back,” says Linda, “so we can make sure that arts education opportunities continue—regardless of students’ socioeconomic backgrounds.”

For information regarding charitable estate gift planning and how it might positively impact you, your loved ones, and Houston Grand Opera, please contact Richard Buffett, director of major gifts and legacy giving, at 713-546-0216 or visit HGO.org/LaureateSociety.
The Flying Dutchman

“Taken together, this ‘Dutchman’ is eminently seaworthy, a rousing but eerie production that may give the audience goosebumps even as it invites them to practically smell the salt air.”
—Houston Chronicle

La bohème

“The cast is uniformly excellent with voices that Puccini dreamed of when he wrote the opera. All are Italianate squillando red-sauce voices with thrilling high notes…Nicole Heaston and…Ivan Magrì are easily believable as the accidental lovers. Both have perfect voices for the roles and sing with a dedication to Puccini’s intent.”
—Theater Jones