

UNLEASHED

SPRING 2012 | HOUSTONGRANDOPERA.ORG | 713-546-0200 | 510 PRESTON STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77002

The House that Donors Built: The Wortham Theater Center Turns 25

For 25 years, HGO patrons have been experiencing the magic of live opera in the magnificent Wortham Theater Center—built entirely through private gifts.

Since 1987 the Wortham Theater Center has been not only one of the nation's premier opera houses, but also a monument to the generosity and entrepreneurial spirit of Houston.

It was designed and built during the oil bust of the 1980s. Despite the challenge of one of Houston's most difficult economic periods, more than 3,500 donors contributed \$66 million to make the Wortham a reality.

HGO Endowment chair Terrylin Neale, who was the executive director of the Wortham Theater Foundation at the time, notes that the design and construction went very smoothly. In fact, the

facility opened several months early—in May 1987—and under budget!

Since its opening, the Wortham has attracted audiences of over five million to HGO, the Houston Ballet, and other performing arts organizations. HGO has staged more than 1,300 performances in the Wortham's two spaces—the Alice and George Brown Theater and the



The Wortham Theater Center during and after construction.



▶ **LA BOHÈME**
OCTOBER 19–NOVEMBER 10

▶ **THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS**
OCTOBER 26–NOVEMBER 11

▶ **SHOW BOAT**
JANUARY 18–FEBRUARY 9

▶ **DON GIOVANNI**
JANUARY 25–FEBRUARY 10

▶ **TRISTAN AND ISOLDE**
APRIL 18–MAY 5

▶ **IL TROVATORE**
APRIL 26–MAY 11

(cont. from p. 1)

Lillie and Roy Cullen Theater.

HGO made its grand Wortham debut on October 15, 1987, with Plácido Domingo and Mirella Freni starring in *Aida*, a production that Terrylin remembers as “magnificent, colorful, and grand.”

The scale and quality of the Wortham’s facilities have everything to do with the company’s success. Terrylin says, “The Wortham has given HGO many more possibilities for different types of productions. The size of the stage and the backstage areas, as well as the rehearsal and dressing rooms, provide what a great opera production needs.”

HGO is proud to celebrate twenty-five years in the Wortham. Our home base would not have been possible without the generosity and loyalty of our donors.



John Adams’s *Nixon in China* was the first of the twenty-four HGO world premieres (so far) to be held in the Wortham Theater Center.

From our Subscribers

HGO fans are more than just audiences—they’re family. Many of them have been attending since the Wortham Center opened, and we asked some of them what opera and HGO mean to them.

“Opera encompasses everything—staging, singing, orchestra—it’s always a festive evening, and the opera house is beautiful.”

—Dr. and Mrs. Richard B. Pesikoff, subscribers since 1983

“I must have opera in my life. It’s the only art that keeps calling. [Also,] it’s fun to see HGO Studio artists who have graduated into lead roles.”

—Mrs. Jean L. Fauntleroy, subscriber since 1982

“HGO has a commitment to artistic excellence, to showcasing young talent, and to new work.”

—Ms. Sultana Kaldis, subscriber since 1983



NEW ARRIVALS

A journey from fear to hope

WORLD PREMIERE

June 16 • 1 P.M.

Baker Ripley Neighborhood Center
(part of Houston’s World Refugee Day)
6500 Rookin Street

June 17 • 4 P.M.
Rothko Chapel
3900 Yupon Street

June 22 • 7:30 P.M.
Asia Society Texas Center
1370 Southmore Boulevard

June 19 • 7 P.M.
Baker Ripley Neighborhood Center
6500 Rookin Street

June 23 • 2 P.M.
Asia Society Texas Center
1370 Southmore Boulevard

A new opera by
John Glover and Catherine Filloux

Part of *Song of Houston*
**EAST
WEST**

The Andrew W. Mellon
Foundation

Kinder Foundation

ANDREWS
ATTORNEYS
KURTH LLP
STRAIGHT TALK IS GOOD BUSINESS.®

Bank of America

Comcast

ART WORKS.
arts.gov

ConocoPhillips

is Underwriter of HGOco’s
New Initiatives Projects

Marathon Oil
Corporation

is Underwriter of *Song of Houston*
education and community programs

HGO Brings Neighborhoods Together with East + West

Why should an opera company sing the stories of its culturally diverse home city? Because opera should belong to everyone. HGO dreamed it could happen—your generous giving is making it possible.

June brings HGO's forty-seventh world premiere: *New Arrivals*, a chamber opera commissioned as part of HGOco's East + West program. East + West is a four-year series of new works that focus on Houston's diverse Asian populations and celebrate our city as a meeting place of cultures. East + West helps HGOco forge new partnerships in the community and connect to new audiences.

New Arrivals tells the inspirational story of a real Houstonian, Yani Rose Keo, a Cambodian who came to Houston as a refugee in the early 1970s. She has since devoted herself to helping other refugees start new lives in the United States through her organization, the Alliance for Multicultural Community Services (AMCS). The AMCS provides a variety of services, community resources, and employment opportunities for refugees in Houston and has helped more than 90,000 people.

Together with AMCS and Neighborhood Centers, Inc., HGOco will present the premiere of *New Arrivals* on June 16 as part of Houston's celebration of World Refugee Day at the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center in Sharpstown. HGOco is also partnering with Asia Society Texas to present the opera in the performing arts space of the new Asia Society Texas Center building on June 22 and 23.



The Bricklayer was the most recent premiere from HGOco's East + West program.

Here's what the press is saying about HGO's East + West opera *The Bricklayer*:

"[Librettist Farnoosh Moshiri's] arias are models of compact expression, skillfully externalizing the very internal world of the story... [Composer Gregory Spears] matches the sparseness of Ms. Moshiri's text with luminous, pointillistic writing for his five-piece chamber orchestra."

—Heidi Waleson, *Wall Street Journal*

"In subject matter—not in scale—*The Bricklayer* has its place alongside John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* and Nixon in China and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. These larger works reach beyond a timely theme du jour to probe existential, and sometimes controversial, issues of national, international and political significance."

—Joel Luks, *CultureMap*

New Arrivals is supported by:

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Kinder Foundation

Andrews Kurth LLP

Bank of America

Comcast

National Endowment for the Arts

ConocoPhillips is Underwriter of HGOco's New Initiatives Projects

Marathon Oil Corporation is Underwriter of *Song of Houston* education and community programs

Viva Italia!

On April 14, 2012, the annual white-tie-and-tails Opera Ball reached new heights with Cynthia and Anthony Petrello at the helm. With 20,000 pink roses, the Grand Foyer at the Wortham was transformed into the gardens of Villa d'Este on Italy's Lake Como. A performance by the HGO Chorus and a silent auction rounded out the fabulous evening.

photos by Priscilla Dickson



Beau Miller, Lynn Wyatt, and Patrick Summers



Margaret Alkek Williams, Pat Breen, Cynthia Petrello, and Molly Crownover



Perryn Leech, Harlan Stai, Dian Stai, and Caroline Leech



Robert and Donna Bruni

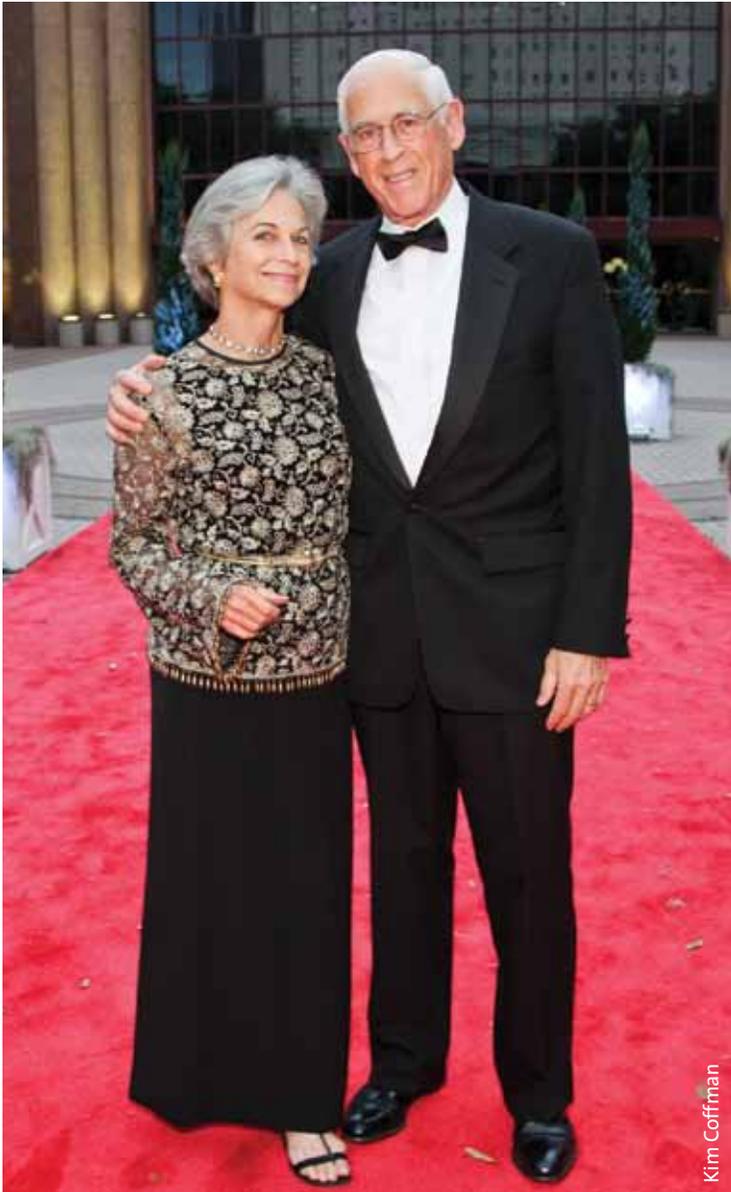
Houston's Next Generation of Philanthropy



At the Encore Party after the Opera Ball, HGO recognized the 2012 Ovation Award winners. These dynamic young professionals are leading the way in philanthropic, charitable, and civic endeavors in Houston. Congratulations to the 2012 recipients (pictured, left to right): Jason Bernhardt, Lindsey Brown, Carrie Carson, Paul Pettie, Caroline Starry LeBlanc, Lee Mitchell, Samira Salman, and John Urquhart.

Spellbound by Opera

John and Anne Mendelsohn help to ensure world-class opera in Houston by supporting HGO productions.



Kim Coffman

John and Anne Mendelsohn on the red carpet at the Opera Ball, an event they will chair in 2013.

John Mendelsohn heard lions roar when he attended the opera as a child. The sounds weren't coming from live animals on stage, though. They were coming from cages at the Cincinnati Zoo—the early home of the Cincinnati Summer Opera. John remembers his mother taking him to the zoo's open-air theater to see such operas as *Aida*, *Carmen*, and *Samson and Delilah*. He especially remembers the scene when Samson pushes on the columns supporting the temple and it collapses. "That made quite an impact on a young boy," he says.

That young boy, of course, grew up to become one of the brightest lights of cancer research. Mendelsohn spent fifteen years as president of MD Anderson Cancer Center following ten years as chair of the Department of Medicine at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. He still fights cancer as director of MD Anderson's Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy. Their generous support of Houston Grand Opera has helped make it possible for others to be spellbound by opera, just as John was as a boy.

During their time in Houston, Mendelsohn and his wife of fifty years, Anne, have also become two of the city's brightest lights in philanthropy. They support organizations and causes they care deeply about, including medical research, education, and the arts.

"Opera is enormously enriching," says Anne. "It's really the queen of the arts, because it combines all of them." Having a strong opera tradition is important for the city, John says. "Houston is constantly recruiting and bringing in new citizens. If we want to attract the best people, it's important to provide access to the arts. Any city that is going to be vibrant today should support its arts, and the Opera is one of the leading candidates for Anne and me.

"I think opera is appealing to most people who are exposed to it. We have to be sure it is accessible and affordable," John continues. "I'm proud that HGO is reaching out to the many diverse cultures in our city and is developing operas that teach us about these cultures."

Keeping opera affordable, reaching out to the diverse communities of Houston, and offering traditional and new opera at world-class standards requires the commitment of people like the Mendelsohns—and you. Thank you for making great opera happen in Houston.

It's a Wrap!

HGO's 2011–12 season was a winner in every way, but it couldn't have happened without your support—through subscribing, attending, and donating.



The Barber of Seville



La traviata



Don Carlos



Mary Stuart

The season started last fall with “one of five must-see productions of 2011–12” (*Opera Now*, London) and ended with Katie Van Kooten and Joyce DiDonato—“a match made in operatic heaven” (*Houston Press*)—with four other stupendous productions in between.

HGO's 2011-12 season was one of our most successful to date, thrilling audiences and critics alike with each production. A new *Barber of Seville* charmed audiences with fast-paced comic antics and superior performances from Ana María Martínez, Nathan Gunn, Patrick Carfizzi, and Lawrence Brownlee. Karita Mattila and Simon O’Neill led an amazing cast in Beethoven’s *Fidelio*. Albina Shagimuratova sang her first Violetta and we ended our Britten cycle with a thought-provoking production of *The Rape of Lucretia*. The spring repertory gave us a magnificent *Don Carlos* in its original five-act French version. And Donizetti’s *Mary Stuart* ended the year with the heavenly pairing of Joyce DiDonato and Katie Van Kooten as Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I. The season showcased the extraordinary talents of the HGO Chorus, and our own HGO Orchestra played with impeccable precision, guided by the superior artistry of Patrick Summers.

And you rewarded us with an excellent year at the box office. All of our revenue goals were met in this very special season with thirteen of the thirty-two main stage shows sold at 90 percent or more—including seven sold-out performances.

Thank you for your support during this memorable year at HGO.

The Barber of Seville

“In sum, it was a triumphant performance. The production deserves praise not only for maximizing the opera’s musical/comic possibilities but for imaginatively renewing a canonic work.”

— *Opera News*

Fidelio

“HGO’s *Fidelio* soars with vocal splendor.”

— *Houston Chronicle*

La traviata

“The night ... belongs to Shagimuratova ... She integrates flawless vocal technique, risky and convincing interpretive choices and star-quality acting.”

— *Concerto.net*

The Rape of Lucretia

“Michelle DeYoung portrays a tragic and lovely Lucretia, whose physical presence and rich, womanly voice elevated her performance beyond a two-dimensional caricature of a chaste wife.”

— *OperaPulse*

Don Carlos

“HGO has met each challenge triumphantly—from the masterful conducting of Patrick Summers to the starkly powerful direction by John Caird to the extraordinary singing and impassioned acting of the stellar cast”

— *Houston Chronicle*

Mary Stuart

“There is no one like [Joyce DiDonato] on the opera stage today. She is a star, a superstar, in fact, and has all the finest qualities that overworked term brings to mind ... She is a phenomenon.”

— *Houston Press*