



510 Preston Street
Houston, Texas 77002-1504
Tel: 713-546-0200
Fax: 713-228-4355
HGO.org

Patrick Summers

Artistic & Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Perryn Leech

Managing Director

60th ANNIVERSARY
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PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Christine Cantrell

christine@elmorepr.com
713-524-0661

Judith Kurnick

HGO Director of Communications
jkurnick@hgo.org
713-546-0240

HGO Hosts Book Signing and Children's Book Drive Tied to World Premiere of Opera *A Christmas Carol*

Actor, author, and director Simon Callow to sign Dickens biography December 3; children's book drive to begin December 5

Houston, November 18, 2014— Houston Grand Opera will partner with Houston organizations for a public book signing with esteemed English actor, director, and author Simon Callow; and for a children's book drive during the run of the company's world premiere production of *A Christmas Carol* this December.

Book Signing with Simon Callow, December 3 at 6 p.m.

On Wednesday, December 3, HGO and Brazos Bookstore will co-host a book signing event with author Simon Callow and his book *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World*—hailed as the “best biography for Dickens newcomers” by *Library Journal*— in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center beginning at 6:00 p.m. The vivid biography detailing the life and works of Charles Dickens, the famed author of the timeless novella, *A Christmas Carol*, will be available for purchase. Guests will have the opportunity to mingle with Callow and gain insight into his successful career as an actor, director, and author. Books will be available for purchase on-site or via pre-order through Brazos Bookstore.

One of Britain's most adored actors and winner of an Olivier Award for Best Direction, Simon Callow will direct and penned the libretto for HGO's upcoming world premiere opera, *A Christmas Carol*. He can be recognized from films such as *Amadeus* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, and has successfully portrayed Dickens on Broadway, in London's West End, and in television's *Doctor Who*. When he took to the stage with the monodramatic version of *A Christmas Carol* that forms the basis of his libretto, Callow was heralded as “an absolute master when it comes to Dickens” (*Telegraph*, U.K.).

Children's Book Drive with *Books Between Kids*, December 5–21

Charles Dickens was a crusader for improving the lives of those in need, and particularly better education for children. In honor of Dickens's legacy, HGO will partner with *Books Between Kids* (BBK)—a nonprofit organization committed to building home libraries for children in need—for a children's book drive to take place in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater for two hours prior to every performance of HGO's *A Christmas Carol*. Beginning December 5, opera-goers can bring their gently used books to designated book drops in the Wortham, to be collected by *Books Between Kids*. BBK will redistribute the books to at-risk, elementary-aged children in Houston.

***A Christmas Carol*: world premiere launches HGO's cycle of new holiday-themed commissions
(Dec. 5–21, 2014)**

A Christmas Carol launches HGO's cycle of presenting holiday-themed works and adds to the company's longstanding tradition of creating and premiering important new operas. The 90-minute opera runs from December 5 through 21, 2014, at the Wortham Theater Center. The score is the work of composer **Iain Bell**, of whose first opera, *A Harlot's Progress*, the *New York Times* observed: "Mr. Bell knows how to write for the human voice." Bell based his recasting of **Charles Dickens's** festive favorite on the author's little-known performance adaptation: an eerie, yet ultimately heartwarming, one-man show in which a single narrator undertakes all the roles, from Scrooge to the three ghosts he encounters. Tenor **Jay Hunter Morris**, whose distinguished international career includes major roles in new operas as well as standard repertoire, will perform The Narrator. *A Christmas Carol's* opening run will be led by **Warren Jones**, former assistant conductor of the Metropolitan Opera and "a musician par excellence no matter what he is interpreting" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*).

Houston Grand Opera's presentation of *A Christmas Carol* is made possible in part through the generous support of the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.; The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. Anthony G. Petrello; The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and PwC.

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About Houston Grand Opera

Since its inception in 1955, Houston Grand Opera has grown from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. HGO enjoys a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including 54 world premieres and seven American premieres since 1973. In addition to producing and performing world-class opera, HGO contributes to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation through a diverse and innovative program of performances, community events, and education projects that reaches the widest possible public. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and has won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards—the only opera company to have won all three awards.

Through HGOco, Houston Grand Opera creates opportunities for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to observe, participate in, and create art. Its *Song of Houston* project is an ongoing initiative to create and share work based on stories that define the unique character of our city and its diverse cultures. Since 2007, HGOco has commissioned sixteen new works along with countless innovative community projects, reaching more than one million people in the greater Houston metropolitan area. The NEXUS Initiative is HGO's multi-year ticket underwriting program that allows Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy world-class opera without the barrier of price. Since 2007 NEXUS has enabled more than 175,000 Houstonians to experience first-quality opera through discounted single tickets and subscriptions, subsidized student performances, and free productions.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA

Book Signing co-presented by Brazos Bookstore

Simon Callow: *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World*

Published by Vintage Books in 2012

December 3 at 6 p.m.

500 Texas Avenue, Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center

Books available for purchase on-site and pre-order online at Brazosbookstore.com

Cost: \$16.00 plus tax

HGO Book Drive for *Books Between Kids*

December 5, 9, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20: 6:00–8:00 p.m.

December 7, 14, 21: 12:30–2:30 pm

500 Texas Avenue, Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center

Iain Bell and Simon Callow: A Christmas Carol (world premiere of new HGO commission)

Dec. 5, 7m, 9, 11, 14m, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21m, 2014

Conductor: Warren Jones*

Director: Simon Callow*

Set and Costume Designer: Laura Hopkins*

Lighting Designer: Mark McCullough

The Narrator: Jay Hunter Morris (except Dec. 17 and 20) Kevin Ray+: Dec. 17, 20

* HGO debut

+ current or former HGO Studio artist

Media Contact: Christine Cantrell, Christine@elmorepr.com, (713) 524-0661

Director of Communications: Judith Kurnick, jkurnick@hgo.org (713) 546-0240

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