Quick-Start Guide to the opera

p. 26

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Quick-Start Guide to the Opera

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FALL 2017|18

LA TRAVIATA

| OCT. 20 | OCT. 22m | OCT. 28 | NOV. 01 |
| NOV. 03 | NOV. 05m | NOV. 07 | NOV. 11 |

JULIUS CAESAR

| OCT. 27 | OCT. 29m | NOV. 04 |
| NOV. 08 | NOV. 10 | |

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A scene from La traviata
Photo by Robert Kusel
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Welcome to HGO Resilience Theater at George R. Brown Convention Center! We are thrilled to have this place of refuge after the devastating flooding we experienced at our home, the Wortham Theater Center—and we are in awe of the brilliant work of our technical and production staff in creating a magnificent performance space right here in Exhibit Hall A3 at the George R. Brown.

Three remarkable women take charge in our season opener, Verdi’s *La traviata*: conductor Eun Sun Kim in her HGO debut, director Arin Arbus, and soprano Albina Shagimuratova—one of our most renowned HGO Studio alums—as Violetta. Tenor Dimitri Pittas returns as Alfredo, and in his HGO debut, baritone George Petean sings Germont.

Handel’s *Julius Caesar* returns in the inventive James Robinson production we premiered in 2003, with the opera framed as a movie being shot on a backlot during Hollywood’s golden age. Three amazing countertenors—Anthony Roth Costanzo, David Daniels, and incoming HGO Studio artist Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen—sing the title role, Ptolemy, and Nirenus, respectively. We welcome back soprano Heidi Stober and mezzo Stephanie Blythe as Cleopatra and Cornelia, as well as recent HGO Studio alumna Megan Mikailovna Samarin as Sextus.

To our staff, our HGO subscribers and donors, and the entire artistic community that is part of our extended family: We all watched in horror as the forces of nature upended lives and destroyed property. But we must never forget that we are a force of nature, too—more than enough to stand up to Harvey—with a powerful art form that can heal and restore. We deeply thank everyone who has been at our side during these challenging times.

More than ever, the world needs what we have to offer.

Sincerely,

Patrick Summers
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For more information, please contact Jennifer Wijangco, director of development, at 713-546-0704 or jwijangco@hgo.org.
For information on providing leadership support for *Seeking the Human Spirit*, please contact Greg Robertson at 713-546-0274

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Welcome to Class!

On August 15, we welcomed the 2017–18 class of students to the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio (BFHVS), the first class to include both high school juniors and seniors.

The BFHVS at HGO is a year-long, tuition-free program for students who are preparing to study vocal music at the college/conservatory level. The program includes weekly private voice lessons from Houston-area college voice teachers, monthly masterclasses with world-class artists and teachers, and multiple performance and scholarship opportunities.

The audition application process for the class of 2018–19 will open January 15, 2018. Preliminary auditions will be held in the greater Houston metropolitan area in late February-mid March, with final auditions in early April 2018.

For more information, please visit HGO.org/HSVS.

Show of Strength

The slogan for the evening was “Houston Strong” on September 27, when all seven of Houston’s major performing arts groups came together to honor local heroes and raise funds for the Mayor’s Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund. All artists involved—from performers to stage hands—donated their services.

HGO’s presence was felt throughout the evening. HGO favorite Ana María Martínez started off the evening with “La petenera” from Torroba’s zarzuela La marchenera. HGO Studio artists took the solo parts for the Brindisi from La traviata and “Make Our Garden Grow” from Candide, both performed with the HGO Chorus and an orchestra composed of players from the Houston Ballet and HGO orchestras and conducted by HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers.

HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech, chairman of the board of directors of the Houston Theater District, addressed the supportive crowd.

The evening concluded with an audience singalong of “America, the Beautiful,” led by HGO Chorus Master Richard Bado and featuring the combined HGO and TUTS choruses.

The Nominees Are...

A documentary produced last spring about HGO’s Ring cycle has been nominated for an Emmy Award. HGO partnered with Alex and Whitney Douglas of Sculpting with Time Productions to make the documentary, which was nominated by the Lone Star chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences—the second-largest chapter in the United States. The film was nominated in three categories: Promotion-Commercial, Editor, and Director. The awards will be announced on November 11. HGO already has two Emmy Awards to its credit.
EVERY HOUSTONIAN has been touched by Harvey, some more than others. Thousands lost homes, cars, and personal belongings—and some lost their lives. Not only did the floodwaters wreak havoc on our city, they also drenched our spirits.

Or rather, they could have. By comparison, the HGO family was lucky—the damage was to property, not to our lives or to our spirits. Kristen Burke, whose home was flooded, walked in waist-deep water alongside a boat that rescued her daughter and her visiting mother. She didn’t know the two men who came to her aid with their rowboat—“citizen rescuers” emerged as the heroes of Harvey. Another staff member whose home was flooded, Lee Whatley, tells of complete strangers stopping by to drop off water, cleaning supplies, cookies for the kids. One of the two family cars was flooded, and his daughter’s teacher gave him a car to
Music Director Patrick Summers pointed out that the Wortham Theater is not HGO—we are, along with our extended family, friends, and supporters. We are thankful that our separation from our artistic home is only temporary, but we are secure in the knowledge that great opera does not depend upon the Wortham. The season must—and will!—go on.

Managing Director Perryn Leech added that work is a huge part of the healing process. Besides working fervently to create HGO Resilience Theater, many HGO staffers have joined together to help others. Many helped with clean-up for colleagues whose homes were flooded. More than 40 worked a shift at the Houston Food Bank, and after the shift, several HGO Studio artists performed for all the volunteers. It was great to see HGOco head out to shelters to perform for children who had lost their homes and were cooped up there (we bet the adults enjoyed the performances as much as the kiddos!). HGO participated with the city’s other major performing arts groups in “Houston Strong,” a benefit at Miller Outdoor Theatre to raise money for the Mayor’s Hurricane Relief Fund.

As we begin our Seeking the Human Spirit initiative this season, we find that the connections between art and the spirit seem even clearer than before. In truth, they are inseparable. We watched great music work its healing magic on Houston Food Bank volunteers, on children and families who had lost everything to the floodwaters, on a crowd of arts lovers at Miller Outdoor Theatre. The heartbreak is still there, for all the losses our fellow Houstonians have suffered. But the healing has begun.
Dear Opera Patron,

Welcome to Houston Grand Opera’s production of Verdi’s most romantic opera, *La traviata*. ConocoPhillips is honored to partner with HGO to bring this timeless tale of love and sacrifice to life.

As the world’s largest independent energy exploration and production company based on production and proved reserves, we pride ourselves on supporting the people and organizations that enrich the community. That’s why we’ve been a proud partner of HGO for more than 30 years.

World-class performing arts are part of what makes this city alive with culture and opportunity. We are honored to support HGO’s mainstage operas as well as the innovative HGOco arts education and community collaborations that bring the power of great art to Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds.

Thank you for your support of HGO, and for joining us for *La traviata*. We hope you enjoy the opera!

Sincerely,

Janet Langford Carrig
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Proud to be Official Airline of Houston Grand Opera.
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Dear Opera Patron,

On behalf of Schlumberger, welcome to Houston Grand Opera's fall performances of Verdi's *La traviata* and Handel's *Julius Caesar*. We are proud to support the Schlumberger Series for HGO's thrilling 2017–18 season.

Schlumberger is the world's leading supplier of technology, integrated project management, and information solutions to the energy industry. Employing over 100,000 people in more than 85 countries, Schlumberger exemplifies global citizenship through the diversity and integrity of our workforce.

Since 1996, Schlumberger has been a lead supporter of HGO. We are proud to invest in cultural resources like HGO, which helps to make Houston a global leader in arts and culture and shares great opera with over 200,000 Houstonians each season.

We hope you enjoy the performance. Thank you for your support of HGO and we look forward to seeing you at the opera this season!

Sincerely,

Dan Domeracki
Vice President, Government and Industry Relations
Lend your voice...

...to the chorus of volunteers who help Houston Grand Opera. Whether for a few hours or a longer commitment, during your time as a HGO Guild volunteer you will learn more about this classical music form, meet people involved in productions, and share your experience with new opera-loving friends.

SAVE THE DATES

November and December
Volunteer to help HGCco at student performances as greeters and guides. Look for dates and details in Guild e-news and mailers. If you would like to receive information about this and other guild events, please send an email to guild@hgo.org.

November 14
Visit a Guild board meeting. Guild members are always welcome at monthly board meetings. Find out more about Guild activities, suggest new programs, and meet board members who work with various programs.

January 10, 2018
Opera Night Live
This informative presentation features an artist from one of the winter rep productions and performances by members of the HGO Studio. Everyone is welcome. Reservations recommended.

March 24, 2018
HGO Guild Spring Event
An evening of fun you will not want to miss!

Have fun... as you help HGO

(Right) Bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green and Karina Kagramanova visit during the Guild’s Hospitality Team Cast Party for The Abduction from the Seraglio.

(Far right, from left) Efrain Corso and Andrew Bowen introduce HGO Studio baritone Thomas Glass to highlights of Houston and Houston Grand Opera at the HGO Studio Buddies Welcome Party for the Studio in September.

Let’s make beautiful music together!

For more information on Guild activities, visit hgoguild.org, email guild@hgo.org, or call 713-546-0269.

Thanks to our supportive HGO Guild members. Underwriter: Penny Prater; Sustaining Members: Richard Merrill and Thea Fabio
“Visual art, like opera, stirs the soul, and has always been used as a form of expression for humanity’s deepest emotions. MFAH is proud to participate in this meaningful project that celebrates the power of art in our lives.”

—Gary Tinterow, MFAH Director

SEEKING THE HUMAN SPIRIT
PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

BY JIM TOWNSEND
Development Communications Manager

IN TODAY’S WORLD, PEOPLE hunger for meaning—and we’re not seeking it only in traditional places of worship. We long for adventure and inspiration and the transformative experiences that will bring purpose and beauty to our lives. Whether we travel the world in search of these experiences or find them in acts of service to our community, one thing is certain—the performing and visual arts have always been a part of that quest.

The driving questions behind Seeking the Human Spirit, HGO’s six-season multi-disciplinary initiative, are anything but simple: What is the role of art in contemporary Houston, and how do we connect with it spiritually?

For many of us, art is the lens through which we view the deeper truths about who we are, what we can mean to each other, and how we face the future.

A cornerstone of Seeking the Human Spirit is HGO’s partnership with another great artistic institution: the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH). When these two world-class institutions collaborate, we have the power to reach beyond our regular audiences and serve the community in exciting new ways.

Throughout the months of October and November, MFAH will host docent tours—designed around HGO’s Seeking the Human Spirit initiative—of the museum’s permanent collection on Thursdays and Fridays at 2 p.m. and on Saturdays at 3 p.m. These tours are free with the cost of admission and will guide visitors through an exploration of artworks that relate to the mainstage operas of the initiative and this year’s Seeking the Human Spirit theme, sacrifice.

Themed performances in the galleries are another vital part of this collaboration. The HGO Studio, HGO’s world-renowned young artist training program, collaborates with the MFAH to host a series of magnificent recitals every year. One recital per season will take place at the MFAH’s Audrey Jones Beck building, while two will be at Rienzi, the Museum’s European decorative arts wing. Patrons enjoy a moving artistic event amidst gorgeous surroundings, featuring
a repertoire of works selected and performed by HGO Studio members. Studio recitals will correlate with the annual theme of Seeking the Human Spirit, the works of art in the respective performance spaces, or with broad themes of spirituality.

Inspiring Houstonians with sublime music and tours of timeless artwork are not the only purposes of the partnership between MFAH and HGO. As Seeking the Human Spirit progresses, there will be many more opportunities to join forces in exploring and celebrating the role of the arts in contemporary life. The MFAH Book Club will feature Seeking the Human Spirit–themed novels and discussion questions. For more information about the book club, please visit mfah.org/bookclub.

As organizations like MFAH and HGO share the benefits of this important initiative with a wider community than ever before, enthusiasm for the collaboration is growing among the HGO family.

“All of the arts are connected,” says Mathilda Cochran, an HGO Trustee and Seeking the Human Spirit lead supporter who retired from MFAH where she served as manager of the Docent Program for 15 years. “Bringing the arts together is one of the most wonderful things about opera…between wonderful visuals, excellent literature, and the immediacy of live performance, opera feeds and nourishes the spirit. And HGO’s collaboration with MFAH will create so many opportunities for cosponsored events.

“With so many distractions, it’s hard in today’s world to have a deep inner life,” she continues. “With the drain of electronics, traffic, and bureaucracy, we aren’t as contemplative as we can be. I think it’s important to make an effort to stop and think and engage with the spirit. To me, the arts are part of that. They’re part of what makes life worth living.”

“We come to opera for its emotional journey and catharsis, and search for meaning on many planes, as well as for the opportunity to embark on that journey with others,” says Gabriel Loperena, HGO Trustee and associate in the corporate practice group of Porter Hedges LLP. Gabriel and his wife, Sara, are among the lead supporters of the Seeking the Human Spirit initiative. “By partnering with other organizations and art programs, HGO has opened a much broader discussion about art and life. Seeking the Human Spirit is a perfect match to the vision we have always had for our beloved art form; it makes us proud to be Houstonians and part of the HGO family.”

You can participate in HGO’s partnership with MFAH by attending these events.

**Docent tours of the museum’s permanent collection themed around Seeking the Human Spirit**

**Oct. 2017**
Thursday and Fridays, 2 p.m.
Saturdays, 3 p.m.
Arrange an additional tour date/time by contacting Merritt Peele at mpeele@mfah.org. **Advance notice required.**

**HGO Studio Recital Series**

**Nov. 16 (7:30 p.m.)**
Nov. 19 (5 p.m.)
Rienzi, 1406 Kirby Dr.

**February 23 and 24 (7:30 p.m.)**
MFAH, Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main Street

**May 10 (7:30 p.m.)**
May 13 (5 p.m.)
Rienzi, 1406 Kirby Dr.
Verdi’s OPEN LETTER to the WORLD
NOTES ON LA TRAVIATA
BY ARIN ARBUS
ONE MUST REMEMBER, *La traviata* scandalized the censors when it was written. Why? Because Verdi chose to write about the hypocrisies of the society in which he was living. As much as the opera is a deeply drawn psychological portrait of a woman struggling to love and survive, it’s also a social critique. The story depicts a woman destroyed by a brutal and petty world. The love that Violetta and Alfredo create together is a kind of rebellion against that world. The chorus embodies the arid desert of Paris from which Violetta attempts to escape. It’s a stratified and moneyed sphere, filled with courtesans who are briefly kept by upper-class and aristocratic patrons until they are discarded, often to destitution.

In his novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, upon which the opera is based, Alexandre Dumas fils writes: “[The courtesans of Paris] are suns which set as they rose, unobserved. Their death, when they die young, is heard of by all their lovers at the same moment, for in Paris almost all the lovers of a well-known woman are friends. A few recollections are exchanged, and everybody’s life goes on as if the incident had never occurred, without so much as a tear...one has friends only when one is perfectly well.”

Violetta’s life is a solitary and empty one, despite the crowds, the pleasures and the parties. She’s a smart businesswoman—from humble means, one assumes—who has ascended to the top of her social and professional circle, quite a remarkable achievement for a woman in her early twenties. But she has no friends. No family. This kind of life has made her sick—physically and psychically.

Alfredo’s father, Giorgio Germont, who comes from a different stratum of society, reveals the bourgeois principles from which Alfredo rebels. Germont has conventional, rigid ideas about right and wrong. He values appearances and reputation more than love or happiness. This is a world that Verdi knew well.

Years after his wife and children had died, Verdi endured admonishments in to Germont’s request, to sacrifice her love with Alfredo and preserve the honor of his young sister, stands in stark contrast to the cruel and superficial values of the world from which she has emerged. It’s a startling decision and one of the most devastating musical passages within the opera.

With this choice, we realize Violetta is neither a victim nor a saint, but rather, she is a strong woman choosing her own fate. Violetta sacrifices the only thing that has given her life meaning—Alfredo’s love—to preserve the honor of a young woman whom she has never met. She is a realist, boldly facing her own mortality, well aware of the limited options that young women with tarnished reputations inevitably confront. And in making this sacrifice, eventually, she gains a surrogate family that sees and values her for who she is, as opposed to the life that she has led.

We have set this production in the 19th century, as Verdi intended, because the dramaturgy rests so deeply upon 19th-century bourgeois concepts of morality and because the life and trade of a Parisian courtesan was so specific. There really isn’t an equivalent in our world—certainly it’s very different from our contemporary understanding of prostitution. Violetta’s shame and her precarious financial situation are rooted in the values of her time and sit at the crux of the tragedy.

But the period is just the surface. *La traviata* speaks deeply to us now. The immediacy of the music, the characters, their situations, and their passions remain vital and relevant.
FALL 2017

David Rice Lummis
Houston Trust Company
President & CEO
Founding Shareholder
Board Member
Client

QUICK START GUIDE

La traviata

STORY IN A NUTSHELL
A party is taking place at the house of Viole
tta Valéry, a famous and wealthy courtesan. She is
il and will die soon, but she is the only one who
knows this. Gastone introduces his friend Alfredo
Germont, telling Violetta that Alfredo is a secret
admirer. As the others go to another room to dance,
Alfredo tells Violetta he is in love with her, but
Violetta offers him only friendship. However, after
Alfredo has departed, Violetta can’t get him out of
her mind.

Violetta’s desire for genuine love soon leads her
to give up her extravagant lifestyle and move to the
country with Alfredo. One day while Alfredo is
gone, his father comes to visit Violetta. He asks her
to give up Alfredo, explaining that their scandalous
relationship is threatening his daughter’s chances for
a good marriage. Violetta finally agrees to sacrifice
her own happiness. She leaves Alfredo and returns
to her old life without explaining the reason. Alfredo
seeks revenge for her apparent betrayal.

Violetta’s illness has brought her to the point
of death when Alfredo returns to beg forgiveness,
having been told by his father about her selfless
sacrifice. They dream of a happy future together, but
it is too late.

A full synopsis appears on p. 34.

THE MUSIC
La traviata holds the crown as the world’s most
popular opera. Much of its appeal, as with all of
Verdi’s mature works, lies in the sheer number and
quality of show-stopping tunes. Each of the three
principal roles—Violetta, Alfredo, and his father,
Giorgio Germont—have recognizable tunes that
have permeated popular culture. Listen in the brief
overture how Verdi introduces us to two of the
opera’s critical melodies in reverse chronological order: first the fragility of an ill woman, followed by a broad, falling melody of unfettered love. The first melody remains fixed, while the second transforms throughout the opera as Violetta’s story unfolds.

**A COURTESAN’S LIFE**

*La traviata* is based on the Alexandre Dumas *fils* novel-turned-play *The Lady of the Camellias*. This French work was inspired by the true story of one of Dumas’s lovers, Alphonsine Plessis, renamed Marguerite Gautier in the book: the tragic, noble, yet helpless courtesan that Verdi refashioned into the titular fallen woman, Violetta Valéry. Options for single women without means were limited in 19th century Paris, and contemporary accounts tell of countless young women rescued from poverty and drudgery by wealthy, famous, or influential men. But as Alphonsine’s health declined, so did her place in society. As her body degenerated, so did her source of income and her treasured jewels were sold, one at a time. Dumas knew nothing of her death until he encountered an announcement advertising an auction of her remaining personal effects, which inspired him to write the first scene of the novel.

**LA TRAVIATA ON THE SILVER SCREEN**

Verdi’s opera of a tragically beautiful young woman whose fate is largely determined by the actions and decisions of wealthy, powerful men has led to numerous contemporary adaptations. *Pretty Woman*, the 1990 romantic comedy film starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere, tells a similar story—and the plot hinges on the duo attending a performance of the opera—but it should be noted that a Parisian courtesan and a Los Angeles prostitute held very different roles in society. Baz Luhrmann’s 2001 film *Moulin Rouge!* explores a story much closer to the source material as a young writer reflects on his relationship with the courtesan Satine, the “sparkling diamond” of 1900s Paris.

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The Universal Frame: Julius Caesar

By Patrick Summers
Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I made an early morning visit to London’s Westminster Abbey, that great reliquary of British history, and found it in the rarest of conditions for one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world: utterly silent. I found Handel’s grave peacefully ensconced amidst the fitting company of Shakespeare, Longfellow, and Tennyson, and I sat quietly in the ancient coolness of Poet’s Corner to ponder for a few moments the unending joys of this great composer.

After some time, I heard distant music. With the Abbey’s busy schedule of musical performances, it was safe to assume it to be a rehearsal. As I moved toward the exit, the music gained clarity; it was Handel’s *Ode for Saint Cecilia’s Day*. Definitely a rehearsal, I thought. The Abbey is so huge that it didn’t surprise me not to see any musicians.

On its surface, Handel’s music falls elegantly upon the ear, like silk on skin, but a deeper exploration of his many London operas, and each of them is a masterpiece—*Alcina*, *Rodelinda*, *Serse*, *Tamerlano*, *Partenope*, *Orlando*, *Ariodante*, *Radamisto*, and particularly *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar)—reveals a complex and psychologically probing composer who is unquestionably among the pantheon of opera’s greatest. His music can change stock characters into figures of Shakespearean depth, even while ravishing the ear with dazzling bravura and melodic invention. Handel’s writing for the human voice is extraordinary, surpassed only by Mozart, who so admired and emulated Handel that he lovingly re-orchestrated *Messiah* and *Acis and Galatea* in homage. Handel explores each character in his operas with boundless variety of vocal and orchestral writing. In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar and Cleopatra naturally have the majority of tours de force, but the secondary characters also have diverse showpieces. Cleopatra’s many varied arias bring to emotional life one of the most enduringly elusive women in history, from her erotic “V’adoro pupille” to the heart-wrenching “Se pietà, di me non senti” and “Piangerò il sorteggio mia.”

The castrati, adult male singers surgically altered in their youth to preserve their treble ranges, were the great stars of Handel’s era; enraptured audiences did not yell “bravo” to the castrati but rather, “evviva il coltello” (hail the knife). Handel was clearly inspired by the virtuosity of the great castrati Senesino and Farinelli, both of whom were among the most highly remunerated opera stars in history as well as the most erotically admired. Listen for the achingly sad beauty of Caesar’s “Aure, deh, per pietà,” as contrasted with his joyously humorous duet with the solo violin (played by our concertmaster, Denise Tarrant) that closes our first act, “Se in fiorito ameno prato.” Caesar’s aria “Va tacito e nascosto” presents the first use of the solo French horn in opera and remains, nearly 300 years later, an exemplar of brilliant writing for the instrument.

Eighteenth-century audiences were unlikely to question the masculinity of a male character singing in a female register: high pitch simply symbolized high rank. If there is an obstacle for modern audiences in appreciating a Baroque opera, it tends to be the organization of the narrative, the plot. Unlike later popular operas like *La traviata* or *Tosca*, which attempted to portray realistic situations, Baroque operas purposefully evaded reality, and allegory was considered the most direct route to emotional clarity. Because Handel’s arias are a matrix through which emotion is dissected and experienced, the arias are the action. Like all exalted emotions, Handel’s arias don’t so much repeat as they continue. For maximum enjoyment of a Handel opera, surrender your investment in the literal and invite yourself into Handel’s fantastically allegorical world. Baroque music correlates to that moment of *possibility* presented in the bouquet of newly opened wine, rather than to the feeling you have once the bottle has been emptied.

Handel wrote quickly and borrowed liberally from himself, reusing and reshaping music he’d written years before. As he most often conducted his own works from the keyboard, and his artists performed almost exclusively contemporary music, there was little necessity to write everything down, because much could be accomplished with a kind of musical shorthand. Thanks to the pioneers of the authenticity movement, we can now be confident in interpreting not only what Handel did write down but also the important inferences of what he did.
not. For example, certain rhythmically even, repeated figures should be played *inégaless—unevenly. Some, but not all, types of dotted figures should be double-dotted, creating a very angular rhythmic pattern. Tempo markings of the era more often indicate mood than speed.

Certain types of emotional situations lend themselves to vocal ornamentation, others do not. We have learned that Handel's orchestras were not especially small, although modern performances must take into account theaters that are huge in comparison with those of the Baroque era. Though we are performing on modern counterparts, knowledge of Baroque instruments informs our musical interpretation. We have gained profound insights into Baroque bowing styles: rather than trying to impose the “continuous melody” bow stroke from the modern era (mid-19th century to the present), we use short, elegant strokes that more authentically enliven Handel's music and his balanced sequences of tension and release. Baroque bows were of much lighter weight and were balanced differently from their modern equivalents, greatly changing the bowing style and thus, the sound.

Despite all we've learned from the authenticity movement, one dilemma remains: we cannot recreate the expectations and the experiences of an audience that was hearing Handel's operas for the first time. Eighteenth-century audiences did not sit politely in a darkened theater: the house lights (candles) remained illumined throughout the performance to facilitate glances at the translated Italian libretto, the early forerunner of supertitles. Eating, drinking, and talking were rampant, though I doubt even an 18th-century public could have tolerated cellular phones and texting during a performance. One shudders to contemplate the restroom break of 18th-century London. The private boxes of opera houses of the era were home to an abundant array of assignations, from commercial dealings to the older pleasures. So it is important that we honor Handel not by imprisoning him with immutable dogma, but by using our knowledge of his time to create something new and relevant in the context of the modern opera house.

We revive James Robinson's provocative 2003 production of *Julius Caesar*, which captures the fun, spectacle, and pathos inherent in Handel's rich score. Robinson sets the opera not in ancient Egypt but on the golden age of Hollywood backlot for a film set in Egypt. The symbolism of actors inhabiting an invented fantasy world, but with real emotions, is the embodiment of the Handelian idea. An ardent cast illuminates these roles, and their connections span generations of Handel performance around the world: Stephanie Blythe first performed in this opera in a different production by James Robinson that I conducted at Wolf Trap more than two decades ago, with Christine Goerke as the Nirenus! Megan Mikailovna Samarin and Federico De Michelis, both having just completed distinguished tenures in the HGO Studio, represent the emerging generation. Heidi Stober has distinguished herself worldwide in Baroque roles, and Cleopatra seems written especially for her buoyant and agile soprano. Three generations of countertenors form the core of this cast: Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen (Nirenus) is at the outset of an important career. David Daniels, one of the most dazzling exemplars of the countertenor art in operatic history, returns as Ptolemy in this production, for which he performed Caesar 15 years ago. And leading this cast in the title role is the incomparable Anthony Roth Costanzo in his HGO debut, having firmly established himself as one of the great singing actors of the age.

I often think back to that early morning in Westminster Abbey and wonder if I actually did hear an organ and a choir. In the passing years I find myself ignoring the most logical explanations, preferring instead to imagine something more eternal, as though Handel's music might always be there waiting to be heard and I just happened in at the right moment. I recall the choir finishing John Dryden's great words, “From harmony, from heavenly harmony this universal frame began,” just before I found myself back out in the din of modern London, hailing a cab.
QUICK START GUIDE

Julius Caesar

STORY IN A NUTSHELL
Julius Caesar has defeated his rival Pompey in Greece and pursues him to Egypt. There, Caesar finds refuge with Ptolemy XIII, who reigns over the Nile valley with his sister and wife, Cleopatra. Attempting to win Caesar's favor, Ptolemy orders Pompey's death and sends his severed head to Caesar as a gift. The gift backfires spectacularly: Caesar is infuriated and vows to punish Ptolemy. The king's adviser, Achillas, offers to kill Caesar in exchange for the hand of Pompey's widow, Cornelia, and Ptolemy agrees.

Cleopatra is tired of her joint reign with Ptolemy and, in an effort to become sole ruler of Egypt, she decides win Caesar's support by seducing him. Just as he is about to follow her into her quarters, he learns of Achillas's plot against him and rushes off to confront the conspirators. When Cleopatra receives news that Caesar has been killed, she takes control of the Roman armies and is captured by the Egyptians. But Caesar has survived and now rushes to save Cleopatra. Caesar and Cleopatra emerge victorious and everyone celebrates the return of peace.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION
Director James Robinson is known for "transporting" operas from their original settings to counterpart settings, comparable in key ways to the original, but closer to the modern audience's experience. His production of The Abduction from the Seraglio, which HGO presented last spring, was set not at a Turkish pasha's palace but onboard the Orient Express; Robinson and his designers have transported Julius Caesar to the late 1920s—early '30s—the golden age of the Hollywood movie musical—more specifically to an MGM backlot, where a movie with an exotic Egyptian setting is being filmed. Robinson says he chose that period because he sees similarities between the spectacle of the movie musical era and that of the Baroque period from which the opera came, and wanted to combine elements of both. He adds that Julius Caesar has the strongest narrative of the Handel operas, thus making it compatible with a cinematographic treatment.

HOW HISTORICAL IS THE OPERA?
The basic plot points of the opera are based in fact. Caesar did pursue his Roman rival Pompey to Egypt, where Pompey was assassinated by agents of Ptolemy XIII. Ptolemy did present Caesar with the head of Pompey in an effort to curry his favor, and Cleopatra did seduce Caesar to win his support for her rulership.

However, in this production, Cleopatra intrigues Caesar by staging an elaborate scene in which she emerges from a pyramid. According to the historical record, she had herself rolled up in a carpet and delivered to Caesar, who, in his 50s, was entranced with the young girl of about 21.

In one of the opera's most significant departures from historical fact, Cleopatra receives the false news that Caesar has drowned. History tells us that her husband-brother Ptolemy XIII actually drowned while trying to cross the Nile.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR
It has been Houston Grand Opera's practice to cast the three roles of Julius Caesar, Ptolemy, and Nirenus with countertenors, and we do so again with Anthony Roth Costanzo, David Daniels, and Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, respectively. All three roles were originally cast with castrati, males who were surgically altered to prevent their voices from dropping into a lower register. The countertenor is capable of singing in the same range as the castrati of old, about in the same range of mezzo-sopranos.

The emergence of modern-day countertenors is a relatively new phenomenon, which began in the 20th century with Alfred Deller. Most countertenors specialize in early repertoire but a growing number of new works are being composed for them. (More on countertenors, p. 83.)

Also listen for the da capo aria, one of the hallmarks of Baroque opera in which the singer repeats the first section of the aria but adds his or her own vocal ornamentation. Sometimes the singer improvises this ornamentation on the spot, making for a unique performance each time.
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA PRESENTS

LA TRAVIATA

An Opera in Three Acts  |  Music by Giuseppe Verdi  |  Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Houston Methodist is the official health care provider for Houston Grand Opera.

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The activities of Houston Grand Opera are supported in part by funds provided by the City of Houston and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.
**CAST** (in order of vocal appearance)

- **Violetta Valéry**: Albina Shagimuratova †
  - Mané Galoyan † (Nov. 5m, 7, 11)
  - Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/
    Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
- **Flora Bervoix**: Zoie Reams †
  - The Evans Family/John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer Fellow
- **Marquese d’Obigny**: Ben Edquist †
- **Baron Douphol**: Thomas Glass *†
  - Harlan and Dian Stai Fellow
- **Doctor Grenvil**: Anthony Robin Schneider *†
  - Beth Madison/Frances Marzio Fellow
- **Gastone, Vicomte de Letourières**: Richard Trey Smagur *†
  - Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
- **Alfredo Germont**: Dimitri Pittas
  - Yongzhao Yu † (Nov. 5m, 7, 11)
  - Albert and Ann Chao/
    Carolyn J. Levy Fellow
- **Annina**: Yelena Dyacheck †
  - Jill and Alyn Riedy/John M.
    O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow
- **Giuseppe**: Jon Janacek
- **Giorgio Germont**: George Petean *
  - Sol Jin † (Nov. 5m, 7, 11)
  - Mr. and Mrs. James W.
    Crownover Fellow
- **Flora’s Servant**: Cristina Perez *
- **Messenger**: Cristino Perez *

**CREATIVE TEAM**

- **Conductor**: Eun Sun Kim *
  - Bradley Moore (Nov. 5m, 7, 11)
  - Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
- **Director**: Arin Arbus
- **Set Designer**: Riccardo Hernández
  - Adapted for HGO Resilience Theater
    by the HGO Technical Department
- **Costume Designer**: Cait O’Connor *
- **Lighting Designer**: Marcus Doshi *
- **Choreographer**: Austin McCormick *
- **Chorus Master**: Richard Bado †
  - Sarah and Ernest Butler
    Chorus Master Chair
- **Musical Preparation**: Peter Pasztor ‡
  - Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Jr. Endowed Chair
  - Jonathan Gmeinder *†
  - Bill and Melinda Brungur/
    Lynn and Henry Gissel/
    Ms. Marianne Rah Fellow
  - Blair Salter *†
  - Dr. Saul and Ursula Balagura/
    Audrey Jones Beck Endowed Fund Fellow
- **Banda Conductor**: Geoffrey Loff ‡
- **Stage Manager**: Annie Wheeler
- **Assistant Director**: Mo Zhou *
- **Supertitles by**: Scott Heumann

**PRODUCTION CREDITS**

- **Assistant to the Choreographer**: Laura Careless
- **Supertitles called by**: Jeremy Johnson

The original production featured projections designed by Christopher Ash.

Performing artists, stage directors, and choreographers are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, the union for opera professionals in the United States.

Scenic, costume, and lighting designers and assistant designers are represented by United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E., Local USA-829.

Orchestral musicians are represented by the Houston Professional Musicians Association, Local #65-699, American Federation of Musicians.

Stage crew personnel provided by I.A.T.S.E., Local #51.

Wardrobe personnel provided by Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local #896.

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.

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* HGO debut      † HGO Studio artist      ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
SYNOPSIS

The performance lasts approximately 3 hours, including two intermissions.

SETTING
In and near Paris, around 1850.

ACT I
A party is taking place at the house of Violetta Valéry, a famous and wealthy courtesan. She is gravely ill and tries to conceal this fact from the guests. Gastone introduces his friend Alfredo Germont, telling Violetta that Alfredo is a secret admirer. As the others go to another room to dance, Violetta begins coughing violently. Alfredo stays behind and tells Violetta he is in love with her, but Violetta offers him only friendship. However, she gives him a flower and asks him to return when it has withered. Alfredo, realizing she has just invited him to come back the next day, joyfully takes his leave. When all her guests have departed, Violetta can’t get Alfredo out of her mind.

INTERMISSION

ACT II, SCENE 1, THREE MONTHS LATER
Violetta has given up her extravagant lifestyle in Paris for a simple existence with Alfredo in the country. Violetta has quietly been selling her property to pay their expenses; when Alfredo finds out, he leaves immediately for Paris to obtain some money. While he is gone, Giorgio Germont, Alfredo’s father, comes to visit Violetta. He asks her to give up Alfredo, explaining that their scandalous relationship is threatening his daughter’s chance of a good marriage. Violetta agrees to sacrifice her own happiness for the sake of Alfredo’s family name. In a letter, she explains to Alfredo that she is leaving him but does not tell him why. After she has gone, Alfredo finds a party invitation to Violetta from her friend Flora. He decides to go to the party in hopes of finding her.

SCENE 2
Alfredo is at Flora’s party—a Spanish themed costume ball—and the guests begin to gamble. Violetta arrives with a new lover, Baron Douphol, who challenges Alfredo to a game. Alfredo accepts and beats Douphol repeatedly. Violetta warns Alfredo that he is in danger from Douphol, and Alfredo says he will leave—if Violetta will come with him. Because she can’t reveal the true reason she left him, Violetta says she is in love with Douphol. In front of his father and all the party guests, Alfredo throws his winnings at Violetta’s feet and announces that he has now paid her for services rendered. Douphol challenges Alfredo to a duel.

INTERMISSION

ACT III, SOME MONTHS LATER
Violetta’s illness has brought her to the point of death. Only her physician and her maid remain at her side. Violetta reads a letter from Germont telling her that Alfredo wounded Douphol in the duel and that he told his son about Violetta’s sacrifice. Alfredo comes to beg her forgiveness, but it is too late.

HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY

SPECIAL CREDITS
Blazek & Vetterling LLP—Houston, Auditors
Apurva Thekdi, M.D., Consulting Physician and Otolaryngologist

Quan Law Group, PLLC
Immigration and Visa Attorneys
Vinson & Elkins LLP, Attorneys of Record
Shweiki Media, Printer, Opera Cues
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ORCHESTRA

Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

VIOLIN
Denise Tarrant *, Concertmaster
Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
Jonathan Godfrey *, Assistant Concertmaster
Natalie Gaynor *, Principal, Second Violin
Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin
Miriam Belyatsky *
Anabel Detrick †
Rasa Kalesnykaite *
Hae-a Lee-Barnes *
Chavdar Parashkevov *
Mary Reed *
Erica Robinson *
Linda Sanders *
Oleg Sulyga *
Sylvia VerMeulen *
Melissa Williams *
Oleg Chelpanov
Andres Gonzales
Kana Kimura
Maria Lin
Mila Neal
Sylvia Ouelette
Rachel Shepard
Hannah Watson

CELLO
Barrett Sills *, Principal
Erika Johnson *
Wendy Smith-Butler *
Steven Wiggs *
Max Dyer
Steve Estes

DOUBLE BASS
Dennis Whittaker *, Principal
Erik Gronfor *
Assistant Principal
Carla Clark *
Deborah Dunham

FLUTE
Seth Allyn Morris †, Principal
Christina Medawar *, Acting Principal
Monica Daniel-Barker

OBOE
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
Alison Chung †
Spring Hill

CLARINET
Sean Krissman *, Principal
Eric Chi *

BASSOON
Amanda Swain *, Principal
Conrad Cornelison †
Nathan Koch

FRENCH HORN
Spencer Park *, Acting Principal
Sarah Cranston *
Kimberly Penrod Minson *
Gavin Reed

TRUMPET
Jim Vassallo *, Principal
Randal Adams *

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén †, Principal
Mark Holley *, Acting Principal
Kyle Gordon *
Ryan Rongone

TUBA
Mark Barton *, Principal

TIMPANI
Nancy Nelson *, Principal

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown *, Principal
Christina Carroll

BANDA
Joan Eidman *, Principal—Harp
Rebecca Powell-Garfield—Piccolo
James Johnson—Clarinet
Roman Cisneros—Clarinet
Kevin McIntyre—Horn
James Wilson—Horn
Barbara Butler—Trumpet
Charlie Geyer—Trumpet
Steve Curtis—Tuba
Karen Slotter—Percussion

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER
Richard Brown *

* HGO Orchestra core musician † HGO Orchestra core musician on leave this production
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA CHORUS

Richard Bado, Chorus Master
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair

Ofelia Adame
Geordie Alexander
Debra Alons
Dennis Arrowsmith
Megan Berti
G. Leslie Biffle
Brennan Blankenship
Andrew Briggs
Christopher Childress
Patrick Contreras
Callie Jo Denbigh
Justin S. Dunkle
Stacia Morgan Dunn
Ashley Duplechien
Ashly Evans
Peter Farley
Douglas E. Henshaw
Frankie Hickman
Austin Hoeltzel
Julie Hoeltzel
Jon Janacek
James R. Jennings
Joe Key
Kirsten Lutz Koerner
Eric Laine
Wesley Landry
Sarah L. Lee
Laurie Lester
Katie Loff
Amelia Love
Miles Robert
Lutterbie
Lindsay Lymer
Keenan Manceaux
Neal Martinez
Katherine McDaniel
Jason Milam
Jeff Monette
Natasha Monette
Matthew Neumann
Miguel Pedroza
Cristino Perez
Kendall Reimer
Hannah Roberts
Leigh Whitney Rosh
Kade I. Smith
Kate Smith
Kaitlyn Stavinoha
Lauren Stocker
John Weinel

DANCERS

Joshua De Alba
Rachael Hutto
Kelsey Kincaid-Gibbs
Donald Sayre

SUPERNUMERARIES

Conner Borne
Adam Castaneda
Christian L. Scott
Miguel Stonecipher
Rodney White
Cylis Wilson

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Instrumentalists, and Soloists
Yi-Chiu Rachel Chao, Pianist
Rutter, Vaughan Williams, Basler, Bernstein, Kern

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Tuesday, 11/28/17
7:30 PM
Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
Poulenc, Gloria
Texas Medical Center Orchestra
HCC Choirs
Houston Sings! All-State

ELIJAH
Sunday, 4/22/18
4:00 PM
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church
Mendelssohn, Elijah
Mark Diamond, Baritone
Duke Kim, Tenor
Andrea Jaber, Mezzo-Soprano
Madison Leonard, Soprano
Bryan Anderson, Organist

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Eun Sun Kim (Korea)
Conductor
Eun Sun Kim makes her North American debut with these performances of La traviata. Other important operatic debuts this season are at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich (Hansel and Gretel) and Zurich Opera (Carmen). She will return to Semperoper Dresden (Rigoletto), Berlin State Opera (Ariadne auf Naxos), Bergen National Opera (The Flying Dutchman) and Frankfurt Opera (La sonnambula). Concert engagements will lead her to Aarhus, Oslo, Malmö, and Bergen. Last season led her back to the Royal Opera Stockholm with The Barber of Seville and the Berlin State Opera with Madama Butterfly, Ariadne auf Naxos, and La traviata; she also conducted The Marriage of Figaro at the Toulon Opera and a new production of Carmen at the Den Norske Opera in Oslo. Additionally, she conducted concerts with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. In the 2015–16 season, she made her successful debuts at Royal Opera Stockholm with Madama Butterfly, at the Semperoper Dresden with La bohème, at Berlin State Opera with Un ballo in maschera and at the Cologne Opera with a new production of Lucia di Lammermoor. At the Frankfurt Opera, she conducted Lehár’s Graf von Luxemburg and Wagner’s The Flying Dutchman. Eun Sun Kim studied composition and conducting in Seoul and continued her training in Stuttgart where she graduated with distinction. Immediately after graduation she was awarded first prize in the International Jesús López-Cobos Opera Conducting Competition.

Bradley Moore (United States)
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair Conductor
Bradley Moore is HGO’s associate music director and serves as music director for both the HGO Studio and HGOco. He conducted HGOco’s world premiere of Some Light Emerges (2017); The Little Prince (2015); and performances of The Elixir of Love (2016), Tosca (2015–16), and The Magic Flute (2014–15). He also serves as pianist for HGO’s Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. He recently conducted The Cunning Little Vixen, Dead Man Walking, and The Crucible at the Miami Music Festival; he has conducted Madame Butterfly at the Castleton Festival and The Barber of Seville at Opera Colorado, and has worked on the music staffs of the Metropolitan Opera, the Salzburg Festival, Paris Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Los Angeles Opera, among others. Moore recently performed in recital with Jamie Barton at the Toronto Summer Music Festival. He and Barton have appeared at Carnegie Hall, Frankfurt Opera, the Kennedy Center, and other venues and have joined Angela Meade in recital at the U.S. Supreme Court. He has collaborated with Renée Fleming and Susan Graham at Carnegie Hall and on several national tours, and enjoys partnerships with Christine Goerke, Alice Coote, Eric Cutler, Eric Owens, and clarinetist Julian Bliss. TV appearances include performing live on A Prairie Home Companion with Renée Fleming and Yo-Yo Ma. Later this season at HGO, he will conduct the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s The House without a Christmas Tree.

Arin Arbus (United States)
Director
Arin Arbus made her HGO debut directing The Rape of Lucretia (2012). She is a resident artist at Theatre for a New Audience in Brooklyn, New York, where she directed The Skin of Our Teeth (Obie Award); repertory productions of Strindberg’s The Father and Ibsen’s A Doll’s House; and King Lear, Much Ado about Nothing, The Taming of the Shrew, Machbeth, Measure for Measure, and Othello. She staged this production of La traviata at Canadian Opera Company and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She was a Drama League Directing Fellow and a Princess Grace Award recipient, and spent several years creating theater with prisoners at a medium-security prison in upstate New York in association with Rehabilitation through the Arts.

Riccardo Hernández (United States)
Set Designer
Riccardo Hernández’s work has been seen previously at HGO in the world premiere of A Coffin in Egypt (2014) and in Carmen (2006, 2000). He has designed more than 200 productions internationally and across the United States. Recent work includes La Mouette (Cours d’Honneur, Avignon Festival); Jan Karas, mon nom est une fiction (Opera Theatre, Avignon Festival, Polish Theater); Abigail’s Party (Oslo National Theater); the world premiere of Philip Glass’s Appomattox (San Francisco Opera); Il tabarro/ Pagliacci and Sweeney Todd (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); The Abduction from the Seraglio (Nice Opera); The Lost Highway (English National Opera/Young Vic); Il postino (Los Angeles Opera).
Angeles Opera, Théâtre du Châtelet, Theater an der Wien, PBS telecast); and James Joyce’s The Dead (Abbey Theater, Dublin). He designed the world premieres of Charles Wuorinen’s Haroun (New York City Opera) and Anthony Davis’s Amistad (Lyric Opera of Chicago) as well as Mother Courage (starring Meryl Streep) for New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater NY. His Broadway credits include The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess (2012 Tony Award for best musical revival); The People in the Picture; and Tony Kushner’s Caroline, or Change, which was also performed at the Royal National Theater in London and won both Olivier and Evening Standard awards for best musical.

CAIT O’CONNOR
(UNITED STATES)
Costume Designer
Cait O’Connor is a designer, painter, and illustrator working and exhibiting in the United States and abroad. She is making her HGO debut. Her recent projects include The Skin of our Teeth, directed by Arin Arbus (Theatre for a New Audience); Hamlet, directed by Barry Edelstein (The Old Globe); Titus Andronicus, directed by Michael Sexton (The Public Theater); Inspiré (Cirque du Soleil); The Witch of Edmonton, directed by Jesse Berger (Red Bull Theater); Hamlet, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte (The Wooster Group); and Stravinsky’s Le rossignol with Michael Curry and directed by Robert LePage.

O’Connor received a Lucille Lortel Award nomination for The Witch of Edmonton and won the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Costume Design for this production of La traviata.

AUSTIN MCCORMICK (UNITED STATES)
Choreographer
Austin McCormick is making his HGO debut. In 2006, he created Company XIV, a unique blend of circus, Baroque dance, opera, and lavish design. Recent credits include choreography for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, the Juilliard School, Guggenheim Works in Process, La Serenissima Festival at Carnegie Hall, Gotham Chamber Opera, and the Kennedy Center. McCormick has been nominated for Drama Desk awards in the categories of Best Choreography and Unique Theatrical Experience; The Bessie Awards for Best Lighting, Set, and Costume Design; and the Grand Jury Prize Dance on Camera Lincoln Center. He won the Robert L. B. Tobin Director-Designer Grant from Opera America, the Innovative Theater Award for Outstanding Choreography/ Movement, and the Susan Braun Award. He’s a graduate of the Juilliard School.

RICHARD BADO
(UNITED STATES)
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Chorus Master
Richard Bado has been HGO’s chorus master for 30 seasons and recently returned as head of music staff, a position he held from 1991 to 2005. Bado made his professional conducting debut in 1989 leading HGO’s acclaimed production of Show Boat at the newly restored Cairo Opera House in Egypt. Also for HGO, he conducted the Robert Wilson production of Thomson’s Four Saints in Three Acts on tour to the Edinburgh Festival and, most recently, Carousel (2016). He has also conducted for La Scala, Paris Opera, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, Tulsa Opera, Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, and Wolf Trap Opera. This season he conducts performances of The Nutcracker for the Houston Ballet. An accomplished pianist, Bado appears regularly with Renée Fleming in recital, including a Texas recital tour this 2017. He has also played for Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Denyce Graves, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey, Jamie Barton, Ryan McKinny, and Nathan Gunn. Bado holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award, and West Virginia University. He also studied advanced choral conducting with Robert Shaw. He
DENISE TARRANT
(UNITED STATES)
Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
Concertmaster
For information about Denise Tarrant, please see p. 50.

ALBINA SHAGIMURATOVA
(RUSSIA)
Soprano—Violetta Valéry
HGO Studio alumna Albina Shagimuratova first came to international attention during her Studio tenure—as the Gold Medal winner in the 2007 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. This was followed quickly by her European opera debut as the Queen of the Night (Salzburg Festival under the baton of Riccardo Muti), a role that she has since performed with HGO; the Metropolitan Opera; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; La Scala; Vienna State Opera; and many other companies internationally. HGO audiences most recently heard her as Konstanze in The Abduction from the Seraglio last season; other HGO roles include Violetta in 2012, her signature role Lucia in Lucia di Lammermoor (2011), Gilda in Rigoletto (2009), and Musetta in La bohème (2008), among others. This season, she also returns to the Lyric Opera of Chicago to perform Elvira (I puritani) conducted by Enrique Mazzola. European appearances include Rigoletto (Gilda) with Deutsche Oper Berlin, Semiramide (title role) at Bavarian State Opera, and Queen of the Night at the Salzburg Festival. Highlights of the past season include a role debut of Rossini’s Semiramide (title role) at the BBC Proms conducted by Sir Mark Elder at the Royal Albert Hall and recorded by Opera Rara and performances as Lucia di Lammermoor in a production by Graham Vick and conducted by Enrique Mazzola at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Her Konstanze with HGO last season was part of a quartet of Mozart operas she recently performed, which also includes The Magic Flute (Paris, Vienna), Don Giovanni (Vienna), and Mitridate, re di Ponto (Covent Garden).

MANÉ GALOYAN (ARMENIA)
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
Soprano—Violetta Valéry (Nov. 5, 7, and 11)
This fall, Mané Galoyan begins her third season as an HGO Studio artist.

FALL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS! 2017 THEATRE AND OPERA EVENTS

MAN AND SUPERMAN / October 6 – 13 / Wortham Theatre
UH School of Theatre & Dance presents George Bernard Shaw’s battle of the sexes loosely inspired by Don Juan.

THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES / October 20 – 23 / Moores Opera House
Part fairy tale, part vaudeville and part circus, this dazzling phantasmagoria of an opera will delight your ears and eyes with spectacle and high spirits.

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG / November 3 – 12 / Quintero Theatre
Suzan-Lori Parks’ Pulitzer Prize-winning play takes on brotherly love, sibling rivalry and family identity. Lincoln and Booth, brothers whose names were given to them as a joke, are haunted by the past and forced to confront the shattering reality of their future.

WINNERS / November 17 – 19 / UH School of Theatre & Dance, Studio 208
Every year, we select a new play to produce by an emerging playwright from our theatre program. This year’s story by Will Inman is a dark comedy about success, failure, money, death and waffles.

LUCHAROLA! / November 17 – 19 / Wortham Theatre
Lupita shares her tale about growing up in 1960s Texas, recalling life as a teen tomboy – riding bikes, working at a flower stand and training for Mexican wrestling, or lucha libre. When her ailing father starts preparing for the lucha libre World Championship, Lupita secretly trains to take his place.

EMERGING CHOREOGRAPHERS / December 1 – 2 / Quintero Theatre
In this annual performance, UH Dance students choreograph, design and produce an evening of dance highlighting their collective talent.

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Her previous roles at HGO include Adina in performances of *The Elixir of Love*, Kitchen Girl in *Rusalka*, and Forest Bird in *Siegfried* as well as two roles in world premieres: Margaret Hughes in Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players* and Lucy in David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann’s *After the Storm*. Major competition awards include first prize in HGO’s 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, third place in the women’s voice division of the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition, a 2014 prize in the Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition, and first prize in the Seventh Bixigul Tulegenova International Singing Competition in Kazakhstan. She participated in HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy in 2013. In summer 2016, she sang Smorfiosa in Gassmann’s *L’opera seria* with Wolf Trap Opera. Later this season, she appears at HGO as the Confidante in *Elektra*.

**DIMITRI PITTAS (UNITED STATES)**

Tenor—Alfredo Germont

Dimitri Pittas opened HGO’s season last year as Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love* and has also been seen as Rodolfo in *La bohème* and Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He has performed on leading opera stages throughout North America and Europe, including debuts with the Bavarian State Opera, the Vienna State Opera, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. He is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and has been heard on the Met stage as Rodolfo, Macduff in *Macbeth*, Nemorino, and Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. He made his Canadian Opera Company debut as the Duke in *Rigoletto*. Operatic engagements of the current season include Nemorino with Pittsburgh Opera and the Verdi Requiem with the Atlanta Symphony and the Portland Symphony. Last season, he sang Verdi’s Requiem for the BBC Proms with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment led by Marin Alsop, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Oslo Philharmonic, and Rachmaninoff’s *The Bells* with the Orchestre Metropolitain de Montreal, under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Operatic engagements included a return to the Bolshoi Opera in the title role of *Don Carlo*, his role debut as Lt. Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Washington National Opera, and performances of Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with Santa Fe Opera. Other recent highlights include performances of CASSIO in an opening night production of *Othello* at the Metropolitan Opera, directed by Bartlett Sher, and, also at the Met, Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*, a role he later reprised at the Saito Kinen Festival in Japan.

**YONGZHAO YU (CHINA)**

Anne and Albert Chao/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

Tenor—Alfredo Germont (Nov. 5m, 7, and 11)

Yongzhao Yu, who won the Audience Choice Award and the Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award in HGO’s 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, is beginning his third season in the HGO Studio. Last season, he performed the tenor Winged Angel in the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*. He has performed Flavio in *Norma* with the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, Naulz in *Visitors on the Icy Mountain* with the Shanghai Grand Theater, and Alfredo in *La traviata* in the concert hall of the Shanghai Oriental Art Center. He has performed in concert in the Grand Theatre of the Suzhou Culture and Arts Center and in an *Eternal Verdi* concert in Shanghai in honor of the bicentenary of Verdi’s birth. His awards include first prize in Opera Concorso. In summer 2016, he performed Rodolfo in *La bohème* with Wolf Trap Opera. This past summer, he sang Alfredo in *La traviata* with Aspen Opera Center. He will be heard later this season at HGO as Flavio in *Norma*.

**GEORGE PETEAN (ROMANIA)**

Baritone—Giorgio Germont

George Petean, born in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, is making his HGO debut. He made his Romanian debut in 1997 in the title role in *Don Giovanni*, followed by Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Silvio in *Pagliacci*, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, Valentin in *Faust*, Ford in *Falstaff*, and Marcello in *La bohème* at the Romanian National Opera in Cluj-Napoca. From 2002 to 2010, he was a member of the Hamburg State Opera. He has performed *The Barber of Seville* with the Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Beijing opera companies and at the Vienna State Opera; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Paris Opera (Bastille); and the Teatro Comunale in Bologna. Other credits include Silvio in *Pagliacci* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Conte di Luna in *Il trovatore* at the Bregenz Festival and Grand Théâtre de Genève; Marcello at the Paris Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and in Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Monte Carlo; Rodrigo in *Don Carlos* at the Vienna State Opera, and in Frankfurt, Munich, and Hamburg; Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Vienna State Opera, Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg, and in Frankfurt and Hamburg; Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* at Paris Opera (Bastille) and in Hamburg; David in *L’amico Fritz* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin (recorded by Deutsche Grammophon); Renato in *Un ballo in maschera* at the Vienna State Opera and in Liège, Lausanne, Essen, and Hamburg; and Giorgio Germont in...
La traviata at the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and in Hamburg and Seville. Future engagements include Il trovatore in Berlin and Chicago, Andrea Chénier in Munich, Rigoletto in Liège, and Lucia di Lammermoor in Vienna.

**SOL JIN (KOREA)**

*Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow*

**Baritone—Giorgio Germont (Nov. 5m, 7, and 11)**

Named as one of 25 rising stars by *Opera News*, Sol Jin is beginning his second season in the HGO Studio. He won the Audience Choice Award in the 2016 Eleanor McCallum Competition Concert of Arias and was also named a Grand Prize winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He has appeared in concert as Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* and Prince Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades* and covered the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* with San Francisco Opera’s Merola Program; he covered the title role in Ernest Bloch’s *Macbeth* with the Manhattan School of Music. Other credits include the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Long Island Opera Company. He recently performed at Carnegie Hall and with the Merola Program as Giorgio Germont in scenes from *La traviata*, a role he sang for his debut at Long Island Opera Company. He sang Germont again this summer with Aspen Opera Center. Later this season at HGO, he will also appear as the Sergeant in *The Barber of Seville*.

**RICHARD TREY SMAGUR (UNITED STATES)**

*Michelle Beade and Dick Anderson Fellow*

**Tenor—Gastone de Lotorières**

Richard Trey Smagur, of Clarkesville, Georgia, joins the HGO Studio for the 2017–18 season. He participated in HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy in 2012. This past summer, he performed as Tsarevich Gvidon in *The Golden Cockerel* at Santa Fe Opera. He has also appeared professionally as Tamino in *The Magic Flute* with OK Mozart and covered Des Grieux in *Manon* at Des Moines Metro Opera. In concert, he performed in *Elijah* with the Tucson Desert Song Festival and as a tenor soloist with the Cincinnati Boy Choir. Last summer, he was a fellow at Steans Music Institute at Ravinia Music Festival. Smagur’s roles during his college training include the title role in *Peter Grimes*, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, Don José in *Carmen*, Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Ralph Rackstraw in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and the Prince in *Cendrillon*. He will sing Young Servant in *Elektra* later this season at HGO.

**ZOIE REAMS (UNITED STATES)**

*The Evans Family/John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer Fellow*

**Mezzo-soprano—Flora Bervoix**

Zoie Reams, second prize winner in HGO’s 2016 Eleanor McCallum Competition Concert of Arias, is beginning her second season in the HGO Studio. Last season, she sang Third Secretary in *Nixon in China*, the alto Winged Angel in the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*, and Cece in the HGO classic world premiere of *Some Light Emerges*. She won first place in the Emerging Artist category of the 2015 Classical Singer competition and second place in the Gulf Coast Region in the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Past roles include Béatrice in *Béatrice et Bénédict*, Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, and Katisha in *The Mikado*. In summer 2016, she performed Tituba in *The Crucible* with Glimmerglass Festival Opera, and this past summer she sang Clarice in Rossini’s *La pietra del paragone* with Wolf Trap Opera. This season, she will be heard at HGO as Third Maidservant in *Elektra* and Rosalia in *West Side Story*.

**THOMAS GLASS (UNITED STATES)**

*Harlan and Dian Stai Fellow*

**Baritone—Baron Douphol**

Thomas Glass, born and raised in Edina, Minnesota, joins the HGO Studio for the 2017–18 season after winning third prize in HGO’s 2017 Eleanor McCallum Competition Concert of Arias. Last season, he was a member of Minnesota Opera’s Resident Artist Program, performing Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Gustave in the world premiere of Bolcom and Campbell’s *Dinner at Eight*, and Schaunard in *La bohème*, and covering Mercutio in *Romeo*, Donner in *Das Rheingold*, and Dan Packard in *Dinner at Eight*. For the Wolf Trap Opera Studio, he sang Joseph in *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Bragherona in Gassmann’s *L’opera seria*, also covering the roles of Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia* and Schaunard. He received his master of music degree in voice performance from Rice University, where he sang Snug in Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, Peter in *Hansel and Gretel*, and L’Humana Fragilità in Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*. He joined San Francisco Opera’s Merola Program this past summer. His role assignments at HGO this season also include Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville* and Chino in *West Side Story*. 
**BEN EDQUIST**  
(UNITED STATES)  
Baritone—Marchese d’Obigny  
HGO Studio alumnus Ben Edquist (2015–17) was named one of Opera Now’s 10 Young Opera Singers to Watch in 2016. At HGO, he sang performances of Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* (2016–17); Wagner in *Faust*, Jigger Craigin in *Carousel*, and Edward Kynaston in the world premiere of *Prince of Players* (2016); performances of the Pilot in *The Little Prince* (2015); and the Captain in *Eugene Onegin*, Sciarrone in *Tosca*, and Sir Walter Raleigh/Astronaut in HGOco’s world premiere of *O Columbia* (2015). He was a finalist in the Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias (2015) and is an alumnus of the Young Artists Vocal Academy (2013). Last summer, Edquist returned to Wolf Trap Opera as a Filene Young Artist to perform the roles of William in *The Fall of the House of Usher* and the Father in *The Juniper Tree*. Later this season, he performs in HGOco’s presentation of Tom Cipullo’s *Glory Denied*, Manfred in Jake Heggie’s *Out of Darkness: Two Remain* with Atlanta Opera, and as Remo in David Saver’s *The Skating Rink* for Garsington Opera. Other recent roles include Jigger Craigin in *Carousel* and Papageno in *The Magic Flute* for Glimmerglass Festival Opera.

**ANTHONY ROBIN SCHNEIDER**  
(AUSTRIA/NEW ZEALAND)  
Beth Madison/ Frances Marzio Fellow  
Bass—Doctor Grenvil  
Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation  
Scholarship recipient Anthony Robin Schneider is beginning his first season in the HGO Studio. The trilingual singer (English, French, and German) recently graduated from the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, where he performed Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Archibaldo in *L’amore dei tre re*, the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, Méphistophélès in *Faust*, Colline in *La bohème*, and Le comte des Grieux in *Manon*. Other recent highlights include singing part of Handel’s *Messiah* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, reaching the semifinals of the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and taking part in masterclasses with Joyce DiDonato at Carnegie Hall. In summer 2017, he joined Wolf Trap Opera as a Filene Young Artist, performing Fabrizio in Rossini’s *La pietra del paragone* and the Sacristan in *Tosca*. At HGO this season, he will be heard as Curius in the concurrent performances of *Julius Caesar*, and Tutor/Old Servant in *Elektra*.

**YELENA DYACHEK**  
(UKRAINE/UNITED STATES)  
Jill and Allyn Risley/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow  
Soprano—Annina  
Yelena Dyacheck is beginning her second season in the HGO Studio. She won the Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award in the 2016 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, and shortly thereafter, she was named a Grand Prize Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Last season at HGO, she sang First Secretary in *Nixon in China* and Dominique de Menil in the HGOco world premiere of *Some Light Emerges*. Previous roles include Frau Von Daubek in the concert premiere of Thomas Morse’s *Frau Schindler*, the Composer in *Ariodante auf Naxos*, Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito*, the title role in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, and Madama Cortese in *Il viaggio a Reims* at USC’s Thornton School of Music. With the Aspen Opera Center, she sang Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (also with the Merola Opera Program) and Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*. Later this season at HGO, she will be heard as Berta in *The Barber of Seville* and Clotilde in *Norma*.

**JON JANACEK**  
(UNITED STATES)  
Tenor—Giuseppe  
Jon Janacek previously sang the Official Registrar in *Madame Butterfly* (2015) at HGO and is a member of the HGO Chorus. He earned a bachelor’s degree in music from Baylor University, where he performed as one of the Armed Guards in *The Magic Flute*, Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Olin Blitch in *Susannah* as a bass-baritone. Other roles include Peter in *Hansel and Gretel* with the Waco Lyric Opera and the Temple College Opera; and Alfio in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Canio in *Pagliacci*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, and Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, all with Kingwood Summer Opera.

**AUSTIN HOELTZEL**  
(UNITED STATES)  
Bass—Flora’s Servant  
Austin Hoeltzel is a member of the HGO Chorus and is making his house debut in a named role. He hails from the tiny town of Marshall, Michigan. After completing a bachelor’s degree at the University of Michigan, he ventured to Texas to obtain a master’s degree in vocal performance from the University of Houston. When he is not performing around Houston as a vocalist and church musician, he can be found at Pearl Hall Elementary where he teaches classroom music.
CRISTINO PEREZ (UNITED STATES)
Bass—Messenger
This is Cristino Perez’s seventh season as a member of the HGO Chorus. He has also performed with HGOco’s Opera to Go!, as George and Ogrum in Sterling Tinsley’s Daniel and the Dreamcatcher and Mr. Rodriguez and the Policeman in David Hanlon’s Past the Checkpoints. This summer, he appeared as Don Alhambra in The Gondoliers with the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Houston, with which he has also performed the roles of Dick Dead-Eye in H.M.S. Pinafore, Strephon in Iolanthe, and Pish-Tush in The Mikado.
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA PRESENTS

JULIUS CAESAR

An Opera in Three Acts | Music by George Frideric Handel | Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym

HGO RESILIENCE THEATER, GEORGE R. BROWN CONVENTION CENTER

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

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Photo by Brett Coomer

OCT. 27 | OCT. 29m | NOV. 04 | NOV. 08 | NOV. 10
CAST (in order of vocal appearance)

Julius Caesar
Anthony Roth Costanzo *
Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2017–18

Cornelia
Stephanie Blythe

Sextus
Megan Mikailova Samarin ‡

Achillias
Federico De Michelis †

Curius
Anthony Robin Schneider †
Beth Madison/Frances Marzio Fellow

Cleopatra
Heidi Stober ‡

Nirenus
Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen *‡
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow

Ptolemy
David Daniels

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director
James Robinson

Associate Director
Michael Shell *

Set Designer
Christine Jones
Adapted for HGO Resilience
Theater by the HGO Technical Department

Costume Designer
James Schuette

Lighting Designer
Marcus Doshi

Fight Director
Adam Noble *

Musical Preparation
Kirill Kuzmin ‡
Richard Bado ‡
Sarah and Ernest Butler
Chorus Master Chair
Peter Walsh †
Nancy and Ted Haywood/
Stephanie Larsen Fellow

On-Stage Solo Violinist
Denise Tarrant
Sarah and Ernest Butler
Concertmaster Chair

Continuo Ensemble
Patrick Summers, harpsichord
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
Barrett Sills, cello
Michael Leopold, plucked instruments

Stage Manager
Kristen E. Burke

Assistant Director
Jennifer Williams *

Supertitles by
Floyd Anderson and Scott Heumann, adapted by Daniel James

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Supertitles called by Meredith Morse

Performing artists, stage directors, and choreographers are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, the union for opera professionals in the United States.

Scenic, costume, and lighting designers and assistant designers are represented by United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E., Local USA-829.

Orchestral musicians are represented by the Houston Professional Musicians Association, Local #65-699, American Federation of Musicians.

Stage crew personnel provided by I.A.T.S.E., Local #51.

Stage crew personnel provided by Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local #896.

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.

* HGO debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
The performance lasts approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes, including one intermission.

**SETTING**

During the late 1920s–early ’30s, the golden era of the Hollywood musical, a movie with an exotic Egyptian setting is being filmed on a Hollywood backlot.

In the film, Julius Caesar has defeated his rival Pompey in Greece and pursues him all the way to Egypt. There, Caesar finds refuge with King Ptolemy XIII, who reigns over the Nile valley with his sister Cleopatra.

**ACT I**

Caesar arrives triumphantly in Egypt with his tribune, Curius. Pompey’s wife, Cornelia, and son, Sextus, come to plead with Caesar for the warfare to cease. Caesar is agreeing to end the hostilities when Ptolemy’s general, Achillas, arrives with a gift from his master—the severed head of Pompey. Repulsed, Caesar declares he will punish Ptolemy for this barbarous act and Sextus vows to avenge his father’s murder.

Cleopatra is plotting to become the sole ruler of Egypt and decides to visit Caesar and enlist his aid. In the meantime, Achillas reports to Ptolemy about Caesar’s angry reception of his “gift.” Ptolemy is furious and fearful of Caesar’s growing power, so he agrees when Achillas promises to kill Caesar in exchange for Cornelia’s hand.

Cleopatra comes to Caesar pretending to be Lydia, one of her handmaidens, and claiming that Ptolemy has robbed her. Captivated by her beauty, Caesar promises to help her.

At the palace, Caesar reproaches Ptolemy for Pompey’s death. Cornelia and Sextus arrive unexpectedly, railing at Ptolemy, and both are promptly arrested. Sextus is imprisoned in the palace and Cornelia is put to work in the garden of the harem. Achillas offers to free Cornelia in exchange for her favors, but she angrily refuses.

**ACT II, SCENE 1**

Cleopatra, still posing as Lydia, has prepared an elaborate performance intended to captivate Caesar. She succeeds, and Caesar gets ready to follow her into her quarters.

**INTERMISSION**

**ACT II, SCENE 2**

In the palace gardens, Cornelia continues to fend off Achillas’s unwanted advances. Ptolemy himself then tries to seduce her, but she refuses him. In despair, she resolves to take her own life but is saved by Sextus, who has escaped with the help of Nirenus, Cleopatra’s confidant. Nirenus reports that Ptolemy has ordered Cornelia to be taken to the harem and offers to sneak Sextus in as well, so that he can catch Ptolemy by surprise.

A tender encounter between Caesar and Cleopatra is interrupted by Curius, who informs Caesar of the assassination plot against him. Cleopatra reveals her true identity to Caesar and prays for his safety as he rushes off to confront the conspirators.

In the harem, Ptolemy puts aside his weapons and tells Cornelia that she will be his that night. Sextus is about to seize the king’s sword when Achillas rushes in and grabs it. Achillas tells Ptolemy that battle is imminent: Caesar has perished in trying to escape the ambush and Cleopatra has taken control of the Roman armies. Achillas then claims the hand of Cornelia as his reward, but Ptolemy refuses.

**ACT III**

Betrayed by Ptolemy, Achillas switches his allegiance to Cleopatra, but Ptolemy overcomes her forces and she is captured.

Caesar has not perished, however; he has swum across the port of Alexandria and arrives onshore, where he sees Sextus and Nirenus come upon the wounded Achillas, who is near death. Achillas gives Sextus the signet ring that gives its owner authority to command a troop of warriors. Coming out of hiding, Caesar takes the ring and hurries to save Cleopatra.

Ptolemy, thinking himself victorious, resumes his pursuit of Cornelia, and Sextus finally has his chance to rush upon Ptolemy and kill him.

Caesar and Cleopatra appear in triumph at the harbor. Caesar crowns Cleopatra as the sole ruler of Egypt and she acknowledges his sovereignty. Everyone celebrates the return of peace as Caesar and Cleopatra set sail down the Nile.

**HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY**

Julius Caesar was most recently performed at HGO during the 2003–04 season, with the three countertenors David Daniels, the late Brian Asawa, and Matthew White in the roles of Caesar, Ptolemy, and Nirenus, respectively, and Laura Claycomb as Cleopatra. The opera was also performed at HGO during the 1989–90 season.
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ORCHESTRA

Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

VIOLIN
Jonathan Godfrey *, Acting Concertmaster
Oleg Sulyga *, Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Natalie Gaynor *, Principal, Second Violin
Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin

Miriam Belyatsky *
Anabel Detrick †
Rasa Kalesnyaite *
Hae-a Lee-Barnes *
Chavdar Parashkevov *
Mary Reed *
Erica Robinson *
Linda Sanders *
Sylvia VerMeulen *

VIOLA
Eliseo Rene Salazar *, Principal
Lorento Golofeev *, Assistant Principal
Gayle Garcia-Shepard *
Erika C. Lawson *
Suzanne LeFevre *

CELLO
Barrett Sills *, Principal
Erika Johnson *, Assistant Principal
Steven Wiggs *
Steve Estes

DOUBLE BASS
Dennis Whittaker *, Principal
Erik Gronfor *, Assistant Principal

FLUTE
Seth Allyn Morris, Principal †
Christina Medawar *, Acting Principal
Rebecca Powell-Garfield

OBOE
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
Alison Chung †
Spring Hill

CLARINET
Sean Krissman †, Principal
Eric Chi †

BASSOON
Amanda Swain *, Principal
Conrad Cornelison †
Nathan Koch

FRENCH HORN
Spencer Park *, Acting Principal
Sarah Cranston *
Kimberly Penrod Minson *
Kevin McIntyre

TRUMPET
Jim Vassallo †, Principal
Randal Adams †

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén †, Principal
Kyle Gordon †
Mark Holley †

TUBA
Mark Barton †, Principal

TIMPANI
Nancy Nelson †, Principal

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown †, Principal

HARPSICHORD
Kirill Kuzmin †

BANDA
Melissa Williams *—Violin
Wendy Smith Butler *—Cello
Carla Clark—Bass

STUDIO ARTIST
Anabel Detrick

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER
Richard Brown *

* HGO Orchestra core musician  † HGO Orchestra core musician on leave this production  ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
SUPERNUMERARIES

Cristina Amaro
Joe Serpa Daniels
Kacee Dugas
Troy Faldyn
Steve Hampton
Xzavier Hollins
Brian Mitchell
Darin Montemayor
Sarah Myers
Sommer Neugebauer
Anna Pruitt
Katherine Rinaldi
Tyler Smith
Sarah Warren

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For more information, please contact Richard Buffett at 713-546-0216 or rbuffett@hgo.org.

HGO.org/LaureateSociety

NORTON DITTO

West Alabama @ Kirby Drive
nortonditto.com
directed new productions for San Francisco Opera (*Norma, Il trittico, and The Elixir of Love*); the Canadian Opera Company (*Norma, Elektra, and Nixon in China*); the Santa Fe Opera (*Capriccio, Cosi fan tutte, and The Rake’s Progress*); and New York City Opera (*La bohème, Hansel and Gretel, and Il viaggio a Reims*). His work has also been seen at the Australian Opera, the Washington National Opera, the Los Angeles Opera, the Seattle Opera, the Royal Swedish Opera, the Dallas Opera, the Minnesota Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater. Recent highlights include *Vanessa* for Santa Fe Opera, *The Elixir of Love* for Canadian Opera Company, and the critically acclaimed 2013 world premiere of Terence Blanchard’s *Champion* for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, which he later directed at Washington National Opera. This season at HGO, he will also direct the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s *The House without a Christmas Tree*.

**CHRISTINE JONES (UNITED STATES)**

Set Designer

Christine Jones is an award-winning set designer and the Artistic Director of Theatre for One, a portable private performing arts space. Her work has been seen previously at HGO in this production of *Julius Caesar* and in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, both in 2003. Her Olivier Award–winning scenography can be seen in the hit two-part stage play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, which opened in the West End in 2016 and is scheduled to open on Broadway in 2018. Her Broadway credits include *American Idiot* (Tony Award), *Old Times, Hands on a Hardbody, On a Clear Day, Spring Awakening* (Tony nomination), *The Green Bird* (Drama Desk nomination), *Coraline*, and *Everyday Rapture*. Her West End work includes *Close to You: Bacharach Reimagined* and *Let the Right One In*. Jones made her Metropolitan Opera debut with her design for *Rigoletto*. Her designs were featured in the 2008 exhibition *Curtain Call: Celebrating a Century of Women Designers for Live Performance* at Lincoln Center Library for Performing Arts. In 2013, she served as the Denzel Washington Guest Chairperson for the Theatre Department of Fordham University. In 2015, she won the Obie for Sustained Excellence in Set Design. Jones has lectured at Princeton University and teaches at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts.
JAMES SCHUETTE (UNITED STATES)
Costume Designer
James Schuette’s work has previously been seen at HGO in last season’s Nixon in China, this production of Julius Caesar (2003), and La bohème (2008, 2002), all with director James Robinson. His recent work as a set and/or costume designer includes Champion at Washington National Opera, Vanessa at the Santa Fe Opera, Grapes of Wrath, Shalimar the Clown, 27, Ariadne on Naxos, and Emmeline at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Dolores Claiborne at San Francisco Opera; Macbeth at Glimmerglass Opera; and Norma at L.A. Opera. His work has also been seen at American Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Classic Stage, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Mark Taper Forum, Manhattan Theatre Club, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Playwrights Horizons, Seattle Rep, Signature Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Trinity Repertory Theatre, UCLA’s Royce Hall, Wexner Center, Yale Repertory Theatre, Boston Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Seattle Opera, New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, and internationally. Upcoming projects include Alcina at Washington National Opera and Regina at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. He is the costume designer for HGO’s world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s The House without a Christmas Tree this season.

MARCUS DOSHI (UNITED STATES)
Lighting Designer
For information about Marcus Doshi, please see p. 38.

Michael Shell is making his HGO debut. Recent engagements include his critically acclaimed new production of The Barber of Seville at Opera Philadelphia, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Opera Omaha, and Virginia Opera; a new production of Silent Night for Opera San Jose; and a new production of A Little Night Music for Piedmont Opera. He has directed several productions for Indiana University Opera Theater as well as the A. J. Fletcher Opera Institute. In 2013 and 2014, he directed the Apprentice Showcase Scenes at Santa Fe Opera and was associate director on the world premiere of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Shell made his international debut in 2010 at the Wexford Festival Opera with Richard Wargo’s Winners. Other career highlights include directing a double bill of The Telephone and Trouble in Tahiti at the Wexford Festival Opera, Joshua’s Boots and Cosi fan tutte with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, The Golden Ticket with Atlanta Opera, The Abduction from the Seraglio with Pittsburgh Opera, The Magic Flute with Virginia Opera, and Fidelio with Opera Omaha. He also won the Wilde Award for Best Director/Best Opera for Julius Caesar at Michigan Opera Theater. Upcoming engagements include a new production of West Side Story (Indiana University), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Virginia Opera), The Barber of Seville (Lyric Opera of Kansas City), and Silent Night (Arizona Opera).

ADAM NOBLE (UNITED STATES)
Fight Director
Adam Noble is associate professor of acting and movement for the School of Theatre & Dance at the University of Houston. In addition to his role as professor, Noble is a movement specialist with coaching, choreography, and combat credits in the worlds of film, theater, and opera. Some notable credits include The Kennedy Center, Shakespeare in the Park (Delacorte Theater), Lincoln Center Director’s Lab, P.S. 122, Seattle Rep, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Stages Repertory Theatre, and the Houston Shakespeare Festival. Noble serves as the movement instructor for the Houston Grand Opera Studio and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. He is a certified teacher and fight director with the Society of American Fight Directors, where he serves on the governing body as treasurer. He has taught movement and stage combat both nationally and internationally, and has choreographed the violence for well over 100 stage and film productions.

DENISE TARRANT (UNITED STATES)
Concertmaster Chair
Onstage solo violinist
Texas native Denise Tarrant started her professional violin career at the age of 16 with the Midland Odessa (Texas) Symphony. Afterward, she studied at the University of Houston, Rice University, Trinity University (London), and the Royal College of Music (London). She became HGO’s concertmaster under the baton of Patrick Summers in 1999. Highlights of her work at HGO include the world premieres of Carlisle Floyd’s Cold Sassy Tree (2000) and Tod Machover’s Resurrection (1999), as well as Catán’s Florencia en el Amazonas (2001), and Floyd’s Of Mice and Men (2002), all of which were released on CD by Albany Records. She further performed in the world premieres of Jake Heggie’s It’s a Wonderful Life (2016),
Three Decembers (2008), and The End of the Affair (2004); Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players (2016); André Previn’s Brief Encounter (2009); Mark Adamo’s Lysistrata (2005); Catán’s Salsipuedes (2004); and Rachel Portman’s The Little Prince (2003). She performed onstage as the solo violinist in this production of Julius Caesar when it premiered in 2003. She has been concertmaster of the Houston Ballet Orchestra since 1988 and has been featured as a violin soloist in numerous Houston Ballet productions including Stanton Welch’s Maninyas (Ross Edward’s Violin Concerto), Clear (Bach’s Concerto for Violin and Oboe), The Four Seasons (Vivaldi), and Natalie Weir’s Steppenwolf (Bruch Violin Concerto).

ANTHONY ROTH COSTANZO
(UNITED STATES)
Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2017–18
Countertenor—Julius Caesar

Countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo won first place and the Audience Choice Award in HGO’s 2010 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and is now making his house and role debut as Handel’s Julius Caesar. Other engagements this season include his debut at the Florida Grand Opera as the title role in Orfeo ed Euridice and a return to Opera Philadelphia as The Boy in George Benjamin’s Written on Skin. He also appears in Lincoln Center’s White Light Festival in staged performances of the Pergolesi Stabat Mater. This past summer, he became an exclusive recording artist for Decca Gold, and his first album, a collection of arias by Handel and Phillip Glass with Les Violons du Roy, will be released in fall 2018. Costanzo has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as both Ferdinand and Prospero in the world premiere of The Enchanted Island and Prince Orlofsky in a new production of Die Fledermaus after making his debut as Unulfo in Rodelinda. He also gave critically acclaimed performances of the title role in Philip Glass’s Akhnaten at the English National Opera and the Los Angeles Opera. He made his European debut at the Glyndebourne Festival in Rinaldo and has since appeared at the English National Opera in Indian Queen, the Teatro Real Madrid in Death in Venice, and the Finnish National Opera in Kaija Sariaaho’s Only the Sound Remains. He recently created roles in the world premieres of Jimmy Lopez’s Bel Canto at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Jake Heggie’s Great Scott at the Dallas Opera.

Houston Grand Opera congratulates ANTHONY ROTH COSTANZO on being the recipient of the 2017-18 Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Award.
HEIDI STOBER (UNITED STATES)
Soprano—Cleopatra
HGO Studio alumna Heidi Stober (2004–06) won first prize in HGO’s 2004 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. She has appeared at HGO as Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro (2016), Musetta in La bohème (2012), Atalanta in Xerxes (2010), Blonde in The Abduction from the Seraglio (2008), Drusilla in The Coronation of Poppea (2006), Norina in performances of Don Pasquale (2006), and many others. She enjoys a longstanding relationship with Deutsche Oper Berlin, appearing in a variety of leading roles including Pamina in The Magic Flute, Micaëla in Carmen, Susanna, Adina in a new production of The Elixir of Love, Gretel in Hansel and Gretel, Oscar in A Masked Ball, Nannetta in Falstaff, Zerlina in Don Giovanni, and Princess Ninette in Robert Carsen’s new production of Il trittico. Fricka in both Das Rheingold and Die Walküre and Zita in Tancredi, Mignon, Dalila, Orfeo ed Euridice, La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein, Tancredi, Mignon, and Julius Caesar, Frugola, Principessa, and Zita in Il trittico; Fricka in both Das Rheingold and Die Walküre; Waltraute in Günterdämmerung; Azucena in Il trovatore; Ulrica in A Masked Ball; Baba the Turk in The Rakés Progress; Ježibaba in Rusalka, Jocasta in Oedipus Rex; Mère Marie in Dialogues des Carmélites; Mistress Quickly in Falstaff; and Ino/Juno in Semele. Recent performances include creating the role of Gertrude Stein in Ricky Jan Gordon’s 27 at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd at the San Francisco Opera, and Nettie Fowler with the New York Philharmonic. She has premiered several song cycles written for her, including Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson by the late James Legg; Covered Wagon Woman by Alan Smith, commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and recorded with the ensemble (CMS Studio Recordings); and Vignettes: Ellis Island, also by Smith and featured in the special television program Vignettes: An Evening with Stephanie Blythe and Warren Jones. This season, she returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Madame de la Haltière in Cendrillon and appears at the Atlanta Opera as Marquise de Berkenfield in The Daughter of the Regiment. She is the artistic director of the Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar at the Crane School of Music.

STEPHANIE BLYTHE (UNITED STATES)
Mezzo-soprano—Cornelia
Stephanie Blythe made her HGO debut as Nettie Fowler in Carousel (2016). She has sung with many of the renowned opera companies and orchestras in the United States and Europe. Her wide repertoire includes the title roles in Carmen, Samson et Dalila, Orfeo ed Euridice, La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein, Tancredi, Mignon, and Julius Caesar, Frugola, Principessa, and Zita in Il trittico; Fricka in both Das Rheingold and Die Walküre; Waltraute in Günterdämmerung; Azucena in Il trovatore; Ulrica in A Masked Ball; Baba the Turk in The Rakés Progress; Ježibaba in Rusalka, Jocasta in Oedipus Rex; Mère Marie in Dialogues des Carmélites; Mistress Quickly in Falstaff; and Ino/Juno in Semele. Recent performances include creating the role of Gertrude Stein in Ricky Jan Gordon’s 27 at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd at the San Francisco Opera, and

MEGAN MIKAILOVNA SAMARIN (UNITED STATES)
Mezzo-soprano—Sextus
Recent HGO Studio alumna Megan Mikailovna Samarin (2014–17) has been seen at HGO as Second Secretary in Nixon in China (2017); Siébel in Faust, Lady Meresvale/Mistress Revels in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players, and Third Wood Nymph in Rusalka (2016); and Olga in Eugene Onegin, Lady Columbia in the HGOco world premiere of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek’s O Columbia, Johanna in Sweeney Todd, and Second Lady in The Magic Flute (2015). She was a finalist in HGO’s 2014 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and an alumna of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. Additional highlights include her Glimmerring Festival debut as Marzia in the American premiere of Vivaldi’s Cato in Utica, as well as La Marchande in Les mamelles de Tirésias in her Wolf Trap Opera debut. This past summer, she sang Baroness Aspasia in Rosssini’s La pietra del paragone as well as Son in Glass/Moran’s The Juniper Tree at Wolf Trap Opera. Later this season, she will make her debut with the Houston ensemble Mercury in “Loving Clara Schumann,” a theatrical multimedia project incorporating the music of both Robert and Clara Schumann. She returns to HGO during the holidays to sing Carla Mae in HGO’s world premiere of Ricky Jan Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s The House without a Christmas Tree.

DAVID DANIELS (UNITED STATES)
Countertenor—Ptolemy
David Daniels made his HGO debut as the title role in Julius Caesar (2003) and later performed Arsamenes in Xerxes (2010). Daniels has appeared with the world’s major opera companies and concert halls, and was the first countertenor ever to give a solo recital in
the main auditorium at Carnegie Hall. Recent engagements include Bertarido in Rodelinda at the Bolshoi Theatre and appearing as a featured soloist on The Metropolitan Opera’s 50th Anniversary Gala. In concert, he sang Orfeo in Orfeo ed Euridice with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Spano, which was recorded live, and made his debut with Boston Baroque as the alto soloist in Bach’s Mass in B minor, conducted by music director Martin Pearlman. He was artist-in-residence with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival this summer, performing three concerts featuring music of Vivaldi, Handel, and Hahn; he also returned to Wigmore Hall for a recital with Martin Katz. The Santa Fe Opera world premiere of Theodore Morrison’s Oscar, a piece that was written for him, remains a career highlight, and Daniels has since given the East Coast premiere of Oscar with Opera Philadelphia. Additional highlights include his debut at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow as Bertarido, the role of Trinculo in Ades’s The Tempest with Vienna State Opera, the title role in Radamisto at Theatre an der Wien, and an international concert tour of the same opera with The English Concert under the direction of Harry Bicket.

**FEDERICO DE MICHELIS (ARGENTINA)**

**Bass-baritone—Achillas**

Federico De Michelis is a recent alumnus of the HGO Studio (2015–17). At HGO, he sang performances of Dr. Dulcamara in The Elixir of Love, Thomas Betterton in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players conducted by Patrick Summers, Antonio in The Marriage of Figaro, performances of Angelotti in Tosca, Zaretsky in Eugene Onegin, and the King in The Little Prince. Other performances include Colline in La bohème and Brander in La damnation de Faust with Aspen Music Festival, and Mr. Flint and Timur in Billy Budd and Turandot, respectively, at Des Moines Metro Opera. At the Auditorio Sony Madrid, the artist performed the roles of Leporello in Don Giovanni, the title role in Don Pasquale, and Don Magnifico in La Cenerentola. While at the Opera Studio of Teatro Argentino de La Plata, De Michelis performed Don Alfonso in Così fan tutte, Antonio in Il viaggio a Reims, El Hombre Mayor in Gandini’s contemporary opera La ciudad ausente, Johann in Werther, Narrator in Rota’s I due timidi, Plutone in Il ballo dell’ingrate, and Tempo in Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria. His engagements this season include his debut with Palm Beach Opera performing Figaro in The Marriage of Figaro, his Philadelphia Orchestra debut performing Sciarrone in Tosca under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and a series of concerts in Key West, Florida.

**ANTHONY ROBIN SCHNEIDER (AUSTRIA/NEW ZEALAND)**

**Beth Madison/ Frances Marzio Fellow**

**Bass—Curius**

For information on Anthony Robin Schneider, please see p. 42.

**ARYEH NUSSBAUM COHEN (UNITED STATES)**

**Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow**

**Countertenor—Nirenus**

Incoming HGO Studio artist Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen won first prize in HGO’s 2017 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, and was a Grand Finals winner in the 2017 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, recipient of a 2017 Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, and winner of the 2017 Irvin Scherzer Award from the George London Foundation. This past summer, he joined Wolf Trap Opera for The Juniper Tree. He made his European debut at the Theater an der Wien, singing the leading role of Timante in the modern premiere of Gluck’s Demofonte. Other roles include Nerone and Ottone in L’incoronazione di Poppea, Raphael (The Angel) in Jonathan Dove’s Tobias and the Angel, and Cefalo in Gli amori d’Apollo e di Dafne. Nussbaum Cohen earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Princeton University. This season at HGO, he will also perform Second Maidservant in Elektra.
Kelly Finn has been at HGO since 2010 and has risen rapidly through the ranks to become HGO’s director of development for institutional giving.

PERRYN LEECH: I have learned through doing many of these interviews that no two journeys of people arriving at HGO are the same, so tell me how yours started.

KELLY FINN: I was brought up in the southwest suburbs of Chicago—a happy time of candy, pop, pizza, friends, family, school, and lots of playing outside in our four distinct seasons!

My mom started computer programming in the days of code written on punch cards. She became a full-time mom, only to seamlessly re-enter the workforce as a software tester two decades later despite “missing the whole internet thing.”

My dad’s been the athletic director at Moraine Valley Community College since 1983 and was also the men’s basketball coach for 22 years. He still rains blood from three-point land on unsuspecting college kids everyday over his lunch break.

I have a younger brother, Michael. And I have almost forgiven him for the time he hit me on the head with a Frank Thomas Louisville Slugger in the basement.

Since your dad is an athletic director, did he encourage you and your brother to play sports?

Being Coach Finn’s kid and wearing size 13 shoes in eighth grade, I guess you could say there was mild pressure to play basketball!

My brother was all sports, all the time, and spent hours a day practicing his MJ dunk while playing the Gatorade “Be Like Mike” jingle tape over and over. And
The French horn was the instrument I settled for the second most impossible to join the fifth-grade band and had my invasion—all you need! I couldn’t wait for the Oldies 104.3 FM. Motown, rock, British invasion—all you need! I was obsessed with getting into the University of Chicago. I submitted a portfolio of creative writing to be considered for merit scholarships, to make school affordable for me. My eyes were opened to philanthropy. I’ll always be grateful to the Andrew Family and the Heyman Family. I guess that was my first grant-writing exercise! U of C was the experience of a lifetime. I studied social sciences. My classmates were brilliant kids from all over, “push the pull door” smart. They remain my best friends today. I even married one!

I was a resident assistant in the dorms, and was technically on tennis team, even though my main function was to make sure the vans didn’t get lost and that we never ran out of Junior Mints. I’ve always been fascinated by world cultures and employees. They sang a musical style from the Old Believers, religious exiles to Siberia. The sound was dissonant, nasal, and beautiful and it just knocked me over when I heard it.

That’s not the most obvious of music styles to be based at a university in Chicago! I’m sure that you didn’t expect that when you went there. I had no idea what to expect. I am most surprised by the fact that I actually got a job after I graduated! I was set on becoming a Chicago police officer and scored high on the entrance exam, which is like the SAT of common sense. But as soon as I saw the physical requirements, I knew I was toast.

My dorm resident heads pushed the idea of working for the University’s development team. Working with people and supporting the university I loved? I couldn’t believe that was an actual job. So, I lived in Hyde Park by Lake Michigan, walked to work on the beautiful campus, and had a great job as part of a new fundraising project for parents and family of U of C students.

I did school musicals, consistently cast as the mom, teacher, or Woman #3. I was the yearbook photographer, igniting a lifelong passion for scrapbooking. But most of all, I loved writing. Stupid poems, school newspaper articles, homework assignments, and even my own plays. I quickly learned you could truly write your way out of anything! And I always had great teachers who encouraged creativity.

Writing your own plays? How did you manage to do all that on top of the demands of high school? I was a bit of an overachiever, and was obsessed with getting into the University of Chicago. I submitted a portfolio of creative writing to be considered for merit scholarships, to make school affordable for me. My eyes were opened to philanthropy. I’ll always be grateful to the Andrew Family and the Heyman Family. I guess that was my first grant-writing exercise!

U of C was the experience of a lifetime. I studied social sciences. My classmates were brilliant kids from all over, “push the pull door” smart. They remain my best friends today. I even married one!

I was a resident assistant in the dorms, and was technically on tennis team, even though my main function was to make sure the vans didn’t get lost and that we never ran out of Junior Mints. I’ve always been fascinated by world cultures and got to study abroad in India for three months—an absolutely transformative experience for a girl from the ‘burbs.

I’m sure India was eye opening! Were you too busy to be involved in the arts when you were at U of C? I switched into a Russian poetry class after nearly failing a math course. For badly needed extra credit, I went to a concert of a Siberian folk choir made up of University faculty, students, and
applied for a grant-writing job at HGO, being fully upfront with the fact that I had never seen an opera.

**What did you think of your first opera?**
It was Madame Butterfly. I adored it, and it was what I had envisioned a great opera to be. One week later, I saw Peter Grimes and was completely blown away. That showed me what opera could do. I still have nightmares of the HGO Chorus coming after me with chairs and torches.

It’s interesting that was the piece that unlocked opera for you. Has your taste stayed more towards the nonstandard repertoire?
I guess so, as the next show that left me speechless was Cruzar la Cara de la Luna. I was on the job about a month when David Chambers, who was then the director of institutional giving, asked if I’d like to help with a few corporate events. It was fun not just to write grants, but also to get to know our donors and be involved in building relationships.

**So, did you have to learn quickly?**
Yes! But in [HGO Chief Advancement Officer] Greg Robertson, [Senior Director of Development] Deborah Hirsch, and David, I had great support and mentorship. After David left, I was delighted to be trusted enough to head the department. Our fabulous corporate, foundation, and government partners—the very people who work so hard to keep our city going—work just as hard to make sure Houston has great arts. It’s humbling. It’s also incredibly humbling to work with my HGO colleagues—I can’t believe I get to share a vending machine with these people.

I’m guessing that you didn’t expect to be running an institutional giving department for an opera company when you were at college.
Not at all. And yet, I can’t imagine it any other way!
I went down to the ocean, thought about
jumpin’ in
Is there any reason to stay?
When you can’t see which way is home, you
either gotta sink or swim
God, take me away

But there’s this memory of my family
And a wind across my face
Yeah, there’s this memory, of all my family
Spirit calling out my name…

―“Anchors Aweigh” by Kate Wasserman

This Veterans Day, we invite you to join HGOco in celebrating the experiences of Houston’s veterans, servicepeople, and their loved ones the way we know best—through words and music.

ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, at 2:30 p.m., HGOco will present the Veterans Songbook Final Concert at Christ Church Cathedral, free to the public, as part of HGO’s Seeking the Human Spirit initiative.

For the past three years, HGOco’s innovative Veterans Songbook program has brought local veterans together with teaching artists, writers, composers, and musicians with the goal of sharing veterans’ stories through song. This culminating concert will be an unforgettable and moving rumination on conflict, courage, strength, sacrifice, and hope.

Many original songs from Veterans Songbook will be included, combined with personal narratives from veterans who participated in the workshops at HGO and with our partners at the Alley Theatre and The Telling Project. This date will also mark the launch of HGO’s Veterans Songbook website, an online portal that makes all veterans songbook content available to the public, including music, lyrics, and testimonials, and encourages users to share their own stories and experiences. A short film will debut at this concert, a composite of portraits of local veterans by noted photographer Lynn Lane that will be set to the music of Veterans Songbook.
A THREE-YEAR JOURNEY
Since 2014, HGOco has been working together with local veterans service organizations to customize 8–10 week music and storytelling workshops for groups of veterans. Each workshop includes a series of storytelling sessions in which participants are prompted to share personal experiences about their time in service or their experiences afterward. Teaching artists work with participants to turn these stories into pieces of writing: anything from a letter to a short poem or a journal entry.

The final step brings composers and musicians together with participants to help create a song that captures the spirit of the story musically. Each of these unique and powerful entries is now part of the Veterans Songbook. From humorous Country Western style songs illuminating friendship and moments of levity, to patriotic hymns, to revelations of deep fears and dark moments made even more powerful by the human voice, the Veterans Songbook boldly captures the many facets of military service from several generations of veterans as well as their friends and family.

“IT GAVE AN AVENUE OF EXPRESSION.”
Teaching artists work with participants to turn these stories into pieces of writing: anything from a letter to a short poem or a journal entry. The final step brings composers and musicians together with participants to help create a song that captures the spirit of the story musically.

“It was beneficial—I learned more about myself and others”
This short song cycle by Houston composer Madeline Styskal, which will be performed at the November 11 concert, provided inspiration for a workshop that brought service members and veterans together to share their stories and create music. The performance was a powerful way for participants to come to terms with their experiences.

A DIFFERENT THERAPY
Through this creation process, veterans were encouraged to face experiences, memories, fears, and hopes that were part of their service, and to come to terms with them, either through embracing or, often, letting go. On many occasions, participants said that writing and music were very therapeutic and made it easier to share experiences and communicate challenging emotions to their loved ones and friends. Several participants have even shared that writing down and creating music from their darkest moments helped them work toward acceptance and healing and has helped them sleep better and live more calmly. The program has been emotionally therapeutic not only for the participants, but also for the teaching artists who lead it.

According to Kate Wasserman, a composer and music therapist who has been active in the Veterans Songbook initiative, each workshop was customized to fit the needs of the participants. For example, an all-female workshop was held in partnership with Grace After Fire, a nonprofit organization that serves the unique needs of female veterans. This workshop provided inspiration for a short song cycle by Houston composer Madeline Styskal, which will be performed at the November 11 concert.

The Veterans Songbook performances have been held in a range of spaces, from small, intimate gatherings at veterans organizations to larger concerts at HGO and venues like Christ Church Cathedral. One Veterans Songbook highlight, Mark Buller’s Overboard, is a choral composition in three movements based on the stories of survivors of the Battle of Sunda Strait, a pivotal display of heroism and brotherhood among American and Australian servicepeople onboard the USS Houston and the HMAS Perth, both of which were sunk by the Japanese navy in 1942. The song cycle premiered on March 2 in conjunction with the opening of the Guardians of the Strait of Sunda exhibit at the Julia Ideson Library created by the Australian National Maritime Museum to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the battle. The event brought together Australian and American dignitaries, veterans, and families of survivors of the battle itself.

In addition to Buller and Wasserman, the November 11 concert will also feature works by composers Henry Darragh, Nicholas Davies, Clare Glackin, George Heathco, Madeline Styskal, Mary Carol Warwick, and Ryan Adam Wells.

A diverse set of partner organizations made this program possible: U.S. Vets, Multicultural Education and Counseling Through the Arts (MECA), Carpetbag Theatre, Goodwill, Grace After Fire, the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) at the Veterans Hospital, Writers in the Schools, Alley Theatre, Combined Arms, and Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

“IT IS VERY THERAPEUTIC TO LET GO OF STORIES WE HOLD INSIDE.”
US Navy photo by Electronics Technician 2nd Class Jason Whitmore
Sandbeach Dreamings: Australian Aboriginal Paintings from Lockhart River

Irene Namok, West Claudie River Crossing, 26” x 37”
Silas Hobson, Spirits, 35” x 35”

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HGOco is HGO’s broad initiative for connecting the company with the community in which we live. Among HGOco’s many projects, the touring group Opera to Go! performs family-friendly works in schools, churches, and community venues. Each year, HGOco also offers student performances (for school groups only) of a popular opera.

IN FEBRUARY, HGOCO and Opera to Go! will present the world premiere of Monkey & Francine in the City of Tigers, a delightful new work for children and families that will tour to school and community venues. Composer Kamala Sankaram answers some questions about the piece from Dennis Arrowsmith, HGOco’s touring programs manager.

DENNIS ARROWSMITH: What led you to become a composer?
KAMALA SANKARAM: I’ve been writing music for most of my life (opus 1, entitled “Flutter By, Butterfly” and written at age four, still exists on a VHS tape somewhere…) but I never dreamed that it would end up being my career. Coming from a South Asian background, I was expected to become a doctor. And indeed, after doing my undergraduate work in composition, I pursued a doctorate in cognitive psychology. But the need to write and the awareness of musical sounds in the world was always a constant for me. Coming from a South Asian background, I was expected to become a doctor. And indeed, after doing my undergraduate work in composition, I pursued a doctorate in cognitive psychology. But the need to write and the awareness of musical sounds in the world was always a constant for me. While working on my PhD, I wrote music in my spare time—for bands, for friends’ chamber ensembles, for friends’ plays, and whenever anyone asked me to. Eventually, people I didn’t know started asking me to write for them, and as that continued, I found myself spending more time on music and less on research. So, I suppose I became a composer because I couldn’t help but become one!

What kind of music do you like to listen to and does it influence your compositions?
As a child, I heard both classical Carnatic music and classical Western music at home. I think the influence of that early exposure is that I tend to seek inspiration from and to hear connections between very different kinds of music. I’m sort of a musical polyglot—I go through phases of listening intensely to varying composers and musical genres. I have many favorite composers, but lately I’ve been listening to Messiaen, Schnittke, and Reich. I’m a die-hard fan of Pink Floyd and Radiohead. I also love global pop and rock music from the ‘60s and ‘70s, particularly R. D. Burman, the great Bollywood composer. Lately, I’ve been listening to a lot of Afrobeat, including Francis Bebey and Bob O arity. I do think it finds its way into my composition in that I’m often looking for ways to bring together the sounds and rhythms that I love in each of these kinds of music.

Kamala Sankaram
Have you written music for young audiences before? What are the challenges and opportunities?
I worked with the Brooklyn Youth Chorus last year on the Silent Voices concert at BAM. However, that piece was meant to be performed in front of a mixed audience of youth and adults. *Monkey & Francine* represents my first time writing specifically for a young audience. The challenge will be to create something that is at once accessible and a true representation of the operatic form. But the opportunity is that, if we’re successful, the piece could be a gateway for a young person into the world of opera. I can’t think of anything more exciting!

What will *Monkey & Francine in the City of Tigers* sound like?
The libretto for *Monkey & Francine* draws on monkey stories from India and West Africa, so I decided that the music should also draw on Indian and African musical traditions. In the score, you’ll hear Hindustani ragas and melodic patterns inspired by the Mbira. These non-Western scales and modes are paired with lyric operatic singing and danceable grooves.

Have you been to Houston or Texas before?
My partner is from Dallas, so I’ve been to Dallas a few times. My only time in Houston was about 15 years ago, but I was singing in a tour of a music-theater show, so I didn’t get out to see very much. I’m looking forward to exploring the city!

What would you do if you weren’t a composer?
Practically speaking, I suppose if I weren’t a composer I’d pursue a career as a researcher and academic. But I can’t imagine my life without music in some form, so I think I’d still write, even if it wasn’t my career.

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HGOco programs, including Student Performances and HGO’s performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre, are supported through the NEXUS Initiative, which is made possible by:

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OUR 2017–18 HGO STUDIO season got off to a dramatic start, as Hurricane Harvey arrived only days after most of our artists arrived in town! While it was quite a “welcome” (especially for our new artists), all were safe and supported by our incredible community. I’d like to especially thank the HGO staff and volunteers of the HGO Guild for helping the Studio through the storm and providing resources to get us back to work. I’m proud to say that so many of the challenges presented by Harvey have been overcome by the generosity and kindness of our community, and the Studio artists have resumed their usual activities: their days are filled with rehearsals, coachings, language lessons, voice lessons, movement classes, and acting lessons. While we weren’t able to move forward with our usual Studio Showcase in September, we plan to reschedule it for the spring, and I hope you’ll join us then.

I am especially excited to present all 12 Studio artists in our fall mainstage repertoire. Our production of La traviata includes eight of the singers: Yelena Dyachek (Annina), Zoie Reams (Flora), Richard Trey Smagur (Gastone), Thomas Glass (Baron Douphol), and Anthony Robin Schneider (Doctor Grenvil) appear in all performances. Three artists cap their fall season with public alternate-cast performances of the opera’s leading roles on November 5 and 11, as well as a High School Night performance on November 7: Mané Galoyan (Violetta), Yongzhao Yu (Alfredo), and Sol Jin (Germont). New to this year’s Studio, pianist/coaches Blair Salter and Jonathan Gmeinder serve on the music staff for the production.

This fall’s production of Julius Caesar presented the perfect opportunity for the HGO Studio’s very first countertenor: Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, winner of the 2017 Concert of Arias, sings the role of Nirenus, alongside superstar countertenors Anthony Roth Costanzo (the 2010 Concert of Arias winner) and David Daniels. Joining him in the cast is Anthony Robin Schneider as Curius. Pianist/coach Peter Walsh joins them as music staff and prompter.

HGO’s 2017–18 artist lineup calls to attention the many longstanding relationships between the company and the Studio’s alumni. In the season’s first three productions, we’re proud to have seven Studio alumni appearing on the stage: Heidi Stober, Megan Mikailovna Samarin, Federico De Micheli, Ben Edquist, Albina Shagimuratova, Daniel Belcher, and Lauren Snouffer. Another important Studio alum rejoin HGO full time—HGO’s longtime chorus master, Richard Bado, returns to the position of head of music staff. We’re proud to see alumni return to the company amidst their flourishing careers.

Don’t forget to get your tickets for our first HGO Studio Recital at Rienzi on November 16 (7:30 p.m.) and 19 (5 p.m.). As always, you’ll get a thrilling, up-close look at some of our artists singing repertoire they love in a beautiful space. This recital features mezzo-soprano Zoie Reams, tenor Richard Trey Smagur, baritone Thomas Glass, and pianist Jonathan Gmeinder. See you there!

—Brian Speck, HGO Studio Director
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The HGO Studio also receives generous support from Frosch International Travel, Mr. Jackson D. Hicks, Frances Marzio, Jerry and Sharyn Metcalf, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Reynolds.

The HGO Studio is grateful for the in-kind support of the Texas Voice Center and RSM US, LLP.

The Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA) is generously underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Wakefield, Frosch International Travel, and the HGO Guild. Additional support for YAVA is provided by Mr. Patrick Carfizzi and Dr. David and Mrs. Norine Gill.

Hotel accommodations for YAVA generously provided by the Lancaster Hotel.

Additional support for Houston Grand Opera Studio is provided by the following funds within the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.:

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Don’t miss these opportunities to hear HGO Studio artists! Purchase tickets to the events listed here online at HGO.org/scheduletickets/calendar or by telephone at 713-228-OPERA (6737).

**SAVE THE DATE**

**NOV. 16 & 19**

**HGO STUDIO RECITAL SERIES**

Hear HGO Studio artists perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive, November 16 (7:30 p.m.) and November 19 (5 p.m.).
HGO is proud of our longstanding partnership with Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™. The Rodeo is dedicated to benefiting youth, supporting education, and facilitating better agricultural practices through exhibitions and presentation. Since 1932, the Rodeo has become the largest livestock show and rodeo in the world, attracting more than 2.6 million people annually, and the Show’s support of Texas youth is more than $430 million.

As a major supporter of HGOco, the company’s community collaboration and arts education initiative, the Rodeo makes it possible for over 70,000 young Houstonians to experience programs like Opera to Go!, Storybook Opera, and the Student Performance Series each season.

In June, the Rodeo elected Jim Winne as its new chairman. Winne was a founder, chairman, and CEO of Legend Production Holdings, which operated more than 1,000 oil and gas wells in Texas. In 2013, he retired after 12 years with the company. “I look forward to utilizing those past experiences and hope to contribute to the continuing success of the Show,” says Winne.

He and his wife, Lynda, a member of the Calf Scramble Donors Committee, live in Fulshear, Texas. Winne’s daughter, McKenzy, is a current Show member and raises cattle with her father.

Houston Grand Opera is honored to welcome Marcos and Sara Rodriguez to our Young Patrons Circle.

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in northern Virginia, Marcos is the chief accounting officer for Nobilis Health Corp. A graduate of Louisiana State University, Marcos worked previously as the director of Opportune LLP, an energy consulting firm, and as an audit senior manager for Deloitte & Touche. He’s currently in the MBA program at Baylor University. Sara is originally from the Dallas–Fort Worth area. She is the district chief financial officer for Kindred Healthcare and holds a master’s degree from Texas A&M University. She was also an auditor with Deloitte & Touche.

Marcos and Sara first came to the opera when some friends invited them to a Young Patrons Circle event. “We love the arts, whether it’s the symphony, musicals, or theater—but HGO’s Young Patrons group has given us something more…we feel like it’s something we belong to,” says Marcos.

Marcos and Sara are active members of Saint Francis Episcopal Church. They love to travel, experience new restaurants, play sports, and watch SEC College Football (Geaux Tigers & Aggies). Their three-and-a-half-year-old son, Dax, is excited about welcoming a baby brother this coming January.

Houston Grand Opera is thrilled to welcome De la Rey Venter to the HGO Board of Directors. De la Rey is the executive vice president of integrated gas ventures at Shell. He has been with Shell since 2002 and moved to Houston last year from The Hague, Netherlands.

De la Rey grew up on a sheep farm in the Karoo Desert of South Africa. “It was far away from any opera house, but our house was always filled with music,” he says. De la Rey’s grandfather, a local teacher, was also a saxophone player and a pianist. He passed a love of music on to his mother, who passed it on to him. De la Rey and his wife, Rialda, have instilled the love of music in their nine-year-old son, Johan.

De la Rey is passionate about the future of HGO and classical music in general: “Opera is a kind of conduit for understanding history and the cultures that bring forth these art forms. I see real excellence at this company and a drive to be even better…not just at presenting the classical repertoire, but at making opera stay relevant and reach even more people at an emotional level.”
ZANE & BRADY CARRUTH
CHAIRMEN

Houston Grand Opera, along with Zane and Brady Carruth, chairmen, sincerely thank all of the individuals and companies who supported the 2017 Opera Ball.
A MASKED AFFAIR

With masked anticipation, event chairmen Zane and Brady Carruth welcomed friends of HGO to Opera Ball on April 8 for a magical evening at Carnevale di Venezia. The event raised over $1.25 million for HGO programs. Upon arrival on the red carpet, guests were greeted by mysterious and elaborately masked Carnevale characters including a 10-foot-tall marionette. Inside, The Events Company had transformed the Wortham’s Grand Foyer into Venice’s Piazza San Marco, complete with its iconic astrological clock tower soaring over dinner guests from the sixth floor. Sparkling chandeliers and Venetian tapestries hung overhead, while playfully costumed marionettes and jaw-dropping florals adorned dinner tables where City Kitchen Catering served up an inspired feast. An entertainment highlight came from one of the HGO Studio’s most distinguished alumni, soprano Albina Shagimuratova, and the Encore After Party—chaired by Carrie and Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl—warmed up the dance floor with a well-orchestrated flash mob and then cooled things off with limoncello slushy shots. A surprise gondolier glided onto the dance floor in the late hours, delighting guests with his Italian accent and providing photo ops galore.
ENCORE heats up the dance floor

Lynn Wyatt, Richard Flowers, Donna Chapman

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ENCORE heats up the dance floor

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Concert of Arias
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA
30th Annual Eleanor McCallum Competition for Young Singers

RINI AND EDWARD ZIEGLER, CHAIRMEN
DR. ELLEN R. GRITZ AND MILTON D. ROSENAU JR., HONOREES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2018

6 PM | Champagne Reception
7 PM | Vocal competition at Stude Concert Hall, Rice University
POST-PERFORMANCE | Celebration Dinner at Hotel Zaza

Black Tie Attire
Tickets from $600 | Tables from $6,000

Where Passion Blossoms!

Concert of Arias brings the best young opera singers to Houston for this annual competition. Each year, hundreds of singers from across the globe audition for the HGO Studio, one of the world’s most prestigious young artist programs. Finalists come to Houston to sing in an unforgettable live finals concert filled with anticipation and passion, followed by an elegant dinner with the budding artists.

SAVE A SPOT ON YOUR DANCE CARD FOR FRED AND GINGER!

OPERA BALL
SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2018
Elizabeth Grimm and Jack Roth, Chairmen

HGO.ORG/SPECIALEVENTS
BROOKE ROGERS | 713-546-0271 | BROGERS@HGO.ORG
The Impresarios Circle is Houston Grand Opera’s premier donor recognition society. These vanguard supporters who provide annual support of at least $100,000 are instrumental to HGO’s success. For information, please contact Greg Robertson, chief advancement officer, at 713-546-0274.

Robin Angly, Chairman

**JUDY AND RICHARD AGEE**

HGO subscribers since 2000–01, Judy and Dick are ardent believers in the power of storytelling through words and music. They partnered with the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Inner-City Catholic Schools to bring HGOco programs to economically disadvantaged students. Judy and Dick, the founder and chairman of Wapiti Energy LLC and Bayou Well Holdings Company LLC, are members of HGO’s Founders Council. Beyond their generous support of general operations and HGOco, they also support Concert of Arias and HGO’s mainstage productions.

**ROBIN ANGLY AND MILES SMITH**

HGO subscribers Robin and Miles joined the Founders Council in 2010. The company is honored to have Robin on the HGO Board of Directors and as a member of HGO’s Laureate Society. The couple is very familiar with the view from the HGO stage as well—both are former singers in the HGO Chorus. Robin and Miles have been donors to HGO special events, the Young Artists Vocal Academy, and HGO’s Ring cycle.

**DENISE AND PHILIP BAHR**

Denise and Philip have supported the Opera since 1996, underwriting special events and mainstage productions. They have a special love for the HGO Studio, where opera’s rising stars have benefited from their support since 2000. Denise, currently an HGO Trustee, is a former member of the HGO Board of Directors, and the Opera has been privileged to have Philip’s participation on the board since 1998. The Opera was honored to have the couple chair the 2010 Opera Ball.

**JANICE BARROW**

Jan’s relationship with HGO extends back to the early 1980s, when she and her late husband, Dr. Thomas Barrow, first became subscribers. Jan is a member of HGO’s Laureate Society and the Founders Council, contributing to HGO’s main stage and special events. She is also supports the HGO Studio, having underwritten several rising opera stars over the past 20 years. Jan’s late husband, Tom, former chairman of the HGO Board of Directors, was instrumental in the concept and construction of the Wortham Center. A lifelong lover of music, Jan is past president of the Houston Symphony and has a special affinity for Puccini and Wagner.

**ANNE AND ALBERT CHAO**

Anne and Albert have been subscribers and supporters of HGO for the past two decades. While serving as president and CEO of Westlake Chemical Corporation, Albert finds time for numerous cultural causes. He is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and was the co-chair of Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera. Over the years, the Chaos have sponsored HGO special events, the HGO Studio, HGOco’s Song of Houston, and mainstage productions. The couple has also supported the HGO Endowment through their family foundation, the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation.

**THE BROWN FOUNDATION, INC.**

The Brown Foundation, Inc., established in 1951 by Herman and Margaret Root Brown and George R. and Alice Pratt Brown, has been a treasured partner of HGO since 1984. Based in Houston, the Foundation distributes funds principally for education, community service, and the arts, especially the visual and performing arts. HGO is tremendously grateful for The Brown Foundation’s leadership support, which has been critical to the company’s unprecedented growth and success in recent years.

**CONOCOPHILLIPS**

For over 30 years, ConocoPhillips has supported various programs at HGO, from special events to mainstage productions, including the 2017–18 season-opening production, Verdi’s La traviata. In 2009, the company gave a major multi-year grant to establish ConocoPhillips New Initiatives, a far-reaching program that allows HGOco to develop new and innovative education and community collaboration programs. Janet L. Carrig, ConocoPhillips’s senior vice president, legal, general counsel, and corporate secretary, serves on the HGO Board of Directors and also as senior chairman of the HGO Endowment Board.
BOBBIE-VEE AND GERALD COONEY
Bobbie-Vee and Jerry have been HGO subscribers since 1979 and have generously supported HGO productions of the most beloved classics of the Italian repertoire, including Aida, La bohème, Tosca, and Madame Butterfly. The Cooneys also supported HGO’s innovative commission *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (2010, 2013), the world’s first mariachi opera. They have been active supporters of all HGO special events for many years, from the Opening Night Dinner, which Bobbie-Vee chaired in 2004, to Concert of Arias, which the couple chaired together in 2014. HGO is honored to have Bobbie-Vee serve on the HGO Board of Directors.

THE CULLEN FOUNDATION
For more than three decades, The Cullen Foundation has been a vital member of the HGO family. Established in 1947, the Foundation has more than a half-century history of giving generously to education, health care, and the arts in Texas, primarily in the Greater Houston area. The Opera is very grateful for the Foundation’s longstanding leadership support of HGO’s mainstage season.

THE CULLEN TRUST FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts has been a lead underwriter of HGO’s mainstage season for nearly 30 years. The Trust was established from assets of The Cullen Foundation to specifically benefit Texas performing arts institutions, particularly those within the Greater Houston area. In recent years, The Cullen Trust has provided lead support for memorable productions including HGO’s Holiday Opera Series.

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT, INC.
HGO is grateful for the longtime leadership support of the Houston Endowment, a private foundation established in 1937 by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones to improve the quality of life for all Houstonians. Houston Endowment recently supported an expansion of our Opera to Go! program that allows for free performances in underserved communities, schools, and other venues. The Endowment made a historic $5 million grant to HGO in 2007 to help us launch NEXUS, our affordability program.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ENDOWMENT, INC.
Established and incorporated in 1982, the Houston Grand Opera Endowment (HGOE) is a vital financial management tool that ensures HGO has a reliable, regular source of income. Today, the Endowment contains over 50 named funds, both unrestricted and restricted, and annually distributes 5 percent of the Endowment’s average market value to HGO, making it the largest single annual funder of the Opera. HGOE leadership includes Chairman Thomas Rushing, Senior Chairman Janet L. Carrig, and several members of the HGO Board of Directors.

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™
For more than 15 years, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ has supported HGOco’s arts education programs, helping more than one million Houston-area students experience the magic of live opera through Opera to Go!, the Student Performance Series, and Storybook Opera. A Section 501(c)(3) charity, the Show has committed more than $400 million to the youth of Texas since 1932. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is the world’s largest livestock show and rodeo, with more than 2.6 million attendees in 2017.

HOUSTON METHODIST
This year, Houston Grand Opera celebrates 10 seasons of partnering with Houston Methodist, the official health care provider for HGO, and the Center for Performing Arts (CPAM). The only center of its kind in the country, CPAM comprises a specialized group of more than 100 physicians working collaboratively to address the specific demands placed on performing artists. In addition to the first-rate medical care CPAM provides HGO artists, Houston Methodist also generously supports HGO special events and mainstage productions like this season’s *The Barber of Seville*. Houston is fortunate to have Dr. Barbara Bass and Dr. Mauro Ferrari, president and CEO, Houston Methodist Research Institute, serve as Houston Methodist’s corporate trustees.

THE HUMPHREYS FOUNDATION
Based in Liberty, Texas, the Humphreys Foundation has been a major underwriter of HGO’s mainstage season since 1980. Geraldine Davis Humphreys (d. 1961), a member of the pioneer Hardin family of Liberty, Texas, bequeathed her estate to the Humphreys Foundation, which was formally established in 1959. The Foundation provides support for performing arts in Texas and college scholarship funding for students in the arts. Linda Bertman, Louis Paine, and Robert Wall serve as trustees of the Humphreys Foundation. In recent years, the Foundation’s generous support has helped make possible unforgettable mainstage productions, such as last season’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

DONNA KAPLAN AND RICHARD LYDECKER
Richard Lydecker has been an HGO subscriber and supporter for more than three decades. He is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Richard has great passion for opera, especially Wagner, and he and Donna were underwriters for HGO’s *Ring* cycle. They are also special events sponsors, supporting Opera Ball and Concert of Arias.

NANCY AND RICHARD KINDER
Nancy and Rich became HGO subscribers during the 2000–01 season. Rich is co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Kinder Morgan, and Nancy is a focused philanthropist whose work has positively impacted communities throughout Houston and beyond. Rich and Nancy established the Kinder Foundation in 1997 to provide impactful gifts to projects dedicated to urban green space, education, and quality-of-life issues in the Greater Houston area. HGO is indebted to the Kinders for their visionary support in areas including general operations, mainstage productions, special events, and especially HGOco, the Opera’s innovative education and community collaboration initiative.
LyondellBasell Industries where she led the corporate finance team and was formerly a managing director with Bank of America. Joe is founder, president, and CEO of Alta Resources, L.L.C., a private company involved in the development of shale oil and gas resources in North America. Claire and Joe support many organizations, with particular emphasis on educational organizations including YES Prep and Teach for America. An avid runner, Claire has completed a marathon in all 50 states.

**BETH MADISON**
This season marks Beth’s 22nd as an HGO subscriber. HGO has had the honor of her support since 2004. Past chair of the HGO Board of Directors, she currently serves on the Executive, Finance, and HGO Studio Committees, and is an active member of HGO’s Founders Council. She was the honoree at the 2017 Concert of Arias. Beth generously supports the HGO Studio, special events, and mainstage operas. Beth has been inducted into the Greater Houston Women’s Hall of Fame and serves on the University of Houston System Board of Regents.

**JANICE AND ROBERT MCNAIR**
Janice and Bob McNair, longtime HGO subscribers, are well known for their incredible philanthropy and for bringing the NFL back to Houston. Bob is chairman and CEO of The McNair Group, a financial and real estate firm, and owner of the Houston Texans. The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation provides leadership support to Houston-area organizations supporting educational opportunities for youth. The McNair Foundation is the lead supporter of HGO’s Holiday Opera Series. Bob is a former chair of the HGO Board of Directors (1995–97).

**M.D. ANDERSON FOUNDATION**
The M.D. Anderson Foundation has provided general operating support to HGO for more than 30 years. The Foundation was established in 1936 by Monroe Dunaway Anderson, whose company, Anderson, Clayton and Co., was the world’s largest cotton merchant. While the Foundation started the Texas Medical Center and was instrumental in bringing to it one of the premier cancer centers in the world, the Foundation’s trustees also looked to improve the wellness of communities through the arts. HGO is privileged to have such a longstanding and committed partner as the M.D. Anderson Foundation in enhancing the quality of life for all Houstonians.

**THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION**
HGO is honored to partner with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, based in New York City. The Mellon Foundation’s opera program supports a small number of companies demonstrating a longstanding commitment to artistic innovation by developing and presenting ambitious new works or those rarely heard. Mellon Foundation-supported projects include the world premiere of Prince of Players by legendary American composerCarlisle Floyd and HGOco’s Song of Houston initiative.

**MILLER THEATRE ADVISORY BOARD**
The Miller Theatre Advisory Board (MTAB), appointed by Houston’s mayor and confirmed by the City Council, acts as a steward of public and private funds to provide professional-caliber performances free to the public at the Miller Outdoor Theatre for the cultural enrichment of Houston’s diverse communities and visitors to the city. HGO’s partnership with MTAB extends back nearly six decades, making great opera accessible to thousands of Houstonians each year through live mainstage and Opera to Go! performances at Miller Theatre. June Deadrick is an HGO trustee representing the Miller Theatre Advisory Board.

**SARA AND BILL MORGAN**
Sara and Bill have been supporting HGO since 2002. Sara is a co-founder of the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, where she currently serves on the board. Bill is a co-founder of the Kinder Morgan companies and the retired vice chairman and president of Kinder Morgan, Inc., and Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, LP. The Morgans support HGOco, HGO’s special events, and mainstage productions, including the Holiday Opera Series, represented last season by It’s a Wonderful Life. HGO is thrilled to have Sara serve on the HGO Board of Directors and as a member and past chair of the HGOco Committee.

**FRANCI NEELY**
Franci is among the opera’s strongest friends and advocates, having been a subscriber since the 1983–84 season and one of the first members of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Franci is a senior member of the HGO Board of Directors and serves on the Special Events Committee. She was the inaugural chair of the HGOco Committee and generously supports HGOco initiatives as a guarantor.

**OPERA AMERICA**
HGO is honored by our longstanding partnership with Opera America, a New York based service organization that has been providing members with the resources and expertise to advance the art form of opera in North America since 1970. Current Opera America supported projects include the Seeking the Human Spirit initiative and the upcoming Song of Houston commission Home of my Ancestors. HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech is proud to serve on the board of Opera America.

**CYNTHIA AND ANTHONY PETRELLO**
Cynthia and Tony are deeply committed to improving the lives of Houstonians through their support of health care and the arts. Tony is the chief executive officer of Nabors Industries, the world’s largest land-based drilling contractor. Cynthia, a community leader, currently serves on the HGO Board of Directors and Special Events and HGOco Committees. HGO is grateful for the Petrellos’ support of HGOco, special events, and mainstage productions. The Petrellos also support HGOco programs for children, including the Student Performance Series and Opera to Go!
Schlumberger
Schlumberger, Ltd., is a leading corporate contributor to HGO, supporting the main stage and a wide range of special projects over nearly 20 years. Schlumberger’s leadership gift was integral to launching HGO’s ongoing affordability program, the NEXUS Initiative, in 2007—since then, NEXUS has made great opera accessible to more than 250,000 people. HGO is honored to count Schlumberger among its most dedicated corporate supporters. Fred Dyen, Cameron Group HR director, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

Dian and Harlan Stai
Harlan, a member of the HGO Board of Directors, and Dian are charter members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence, and their leadership support includes mainstage productions, the HGO Studio, the HGO Endowment, and special events. The Stais have also sponsored HGO Studio artists and they host annual recitals featuring HGO Studio artists at Mansefeldt, their renowned Fredericksburg ranch. HGO was privileged to recognize Dian and Harlan as the honorees of Opening Night 2008 and the 2014 Concert of Arias.

Tenenbaum Jewelers
HGO is thrilled to welcome Tenenbaum Jewelers as the preferred jeweler of Houston Grand Opera. For 40 years, Tenenbaum has been Houston’s premier destination for unique, rare, and collectible estate jewelry with styles ranging from antique to vintage to contemporary. Owners Tony Bradfield and Kevin Black are familiar faces at HGO performances, recitals, and events. From donating fabulous one-of-a-kind auction items to generously supporting our mainstage opera season and special events, the Tenenbaum team helps HGO sparkle and shine.

John G. Turner & Jerry G. Fischer
John and Jerry, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, travel around the world to experience the best that opera has to offer. HGO subscribers and donors for over a decade, the couple’s leadership support of Wagner’s Ring cycle (2014–17) was the largest gift ever made to HGO for a single production. John, a shareholder at Turner Industries Group, is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and past chair of the HGO Studio Committee. Jerry is a board member of Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra. In recent years John and Jerry have supported HGO mainstage productions, the HGO Studio, and special events. They are members of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence, and John is a member of HGO’s Laureate Society.

Vinson & Elkins LLP
HGO has been privileged to have the support of international law firm Vinson & Elkins for nearly three decades. V&E is deeply committed to empowering the communities in which it serves. It has enriched the cultural vibrancy of Houston by supporting HGO through in-kind legal services and contributions to special events and mainstage productions, including this season’s West Side Story. The Opera is honored to have two V&E partners serve on its board of directors: from left, Mark R. Spradling and Glen A. Rosenbaum.

Margaret Alkek Williams
Margaret, a longtime singer, possesses a deep affinity for all music, and especially opera, supporting HGO for over 30 years. Currently, Margaret continues her parents’ legacy as chairman of their foundation, where her son Charles A. Williams serves as president. HGO is humbled by Margaret’s incredible generosity and dedication to the company, both as an individual donor and through her family’s foundation. She has endowed the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair, held by HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, and is a member of HGO’s Laureate Society. A valued member of the HGO Board of Directors, Margaret was the honoree of the 2009 Opera Ball and chairman of the 2014 Ball.

The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
In the 1980s, the Wortham Foundation contributed $20 million to lead the capital campaign for the Wortham Theater Center, guided by businessman Gus S. Wortham’s early recognition of the vital role of the arts in making Houston an appealing place to live and work. During their lifetimes, Gus and his wife, Lyndall, were dedicated to improving the lives of Houstonians. The Foundation continues to support the Opera through the Wortham Foundation Permanent Endowment and generous annual operating support. This leadership support has been vital to HGO’s growth and commitment to excellence.
Members of Houston Grand Opera’s Patrons Society support the opera at a level of $4,000 or more, thereby making possible the incredible work of HGO. Members of the Society are entitled to many benefits at the opera, including complimentary valet parking, Masterson Green Room privileges during performance intermissions, personalized ticket service, two tickets to all open dress rehearsals, Opera Guild membership, a discount on Opera Guild Boutique purchases, and more. HGO gratefully recognizes our Patrons Society members. For information on joining the Patrons Society, please call Jennifer Wijangco at 713-546-0704.

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BRINDISI
From the very first *oom-pah-pah*, the brindisi in Act I of Verdi’s *La traviata* is immediately recognizable, even to those who’ve never seen the opera. That’s because it’s been used as background music for numerous commercials, including, of all things, Huggies diapers!

So, what is a brindisi? The word translates as “toast” — and in opera, a brindisi is a drinking song, usually with one character urging the others to make merry and the whole ensemble joining in. Other operas with brindisis include Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Verdi’s *Otello*.

The specific title for the brindisi in *La traviata* is titled “Libiamo ne’ lieti calici” (Let us drink from the joyful cups). It is sung early in the opera, when Alfredo and Violetta have just met at a party at Violetta’s house. Alfredo begins the brindisi and is joined by Violetta and then the chorus.

CONTINUO
In Baroque-era operas like *Julius Caesar*, you will notice that, at times, singers are accompanied not by the full orchestra but by a bass line with much simpler instrumentation — usually harpsichord and plucked instruments, which provide some harmonies. This is the *basso continuo*, or continuous bass. It was extremely popular as an accompaniment to recitative (remember that term from the summer issue?) during the 17th and 18th centuries that the time was sometimes referred to as the continuo era.

Conductor Patrick Summers also plays the harpsichord for our continuo in *Julius Caesar*. (It was the norm until the early 19th century for an instrumentalist to double as the conductor. HGO’s continuo also includes Kirill Kuzmin, harpsichord; Barrett Sills, cello; and Michael Leopold, who will play the guitar and two instruments common during the Baroque era, the theorbo and archlute. Both have extended necks and are plucked, like a guitar.

COUNTERTENOR
The countertenor is a male voice type of a high range, about the same as a mezzo-soprano’s. Today’s countertenors are the natural heirs to the early repertoire that was composed for castrati, men who were surgically altered to preserve their high voices. Castrati first came to prominence in sacred music, with Pope Sixtus’s 1588 ban on women singing in churches. When opera was born in the early 17th century, it was only natural that composers would write roles for the castrati.

You will hear three brilliant countertenors in *Julius Caesar* in the title role (Anthony Roth Costanza), Ptolemy (David Daniels), and Nirenus (Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen), but you will also hear a mezzo-soprano singing the male role of Sextus. It’s the same vocal range, so why not another countertenor? Read on.

TROUSER ROLE
A trouser role (pants role, breeches role) is a young male operatic role sung by a woman. Many of these roles are well known, such as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Sièbel in *Faust*, both of which were recently seen at HGO.

The trouser role of Sextus in *Julius Caesar* will be sung at HGO by Studio alumna Megan Mikailovna Samarin. What’s interesting, and a little confusing, is that the role was originally composed for a woman, Margherita Durastanti. This is a role in the same vocal range as the three roles that were originally written for castrati. Why was Sextus written for a woman?

The answer may be simple. Durastanti enjoyed a long relationship with Handel, longer than any other singer. He may have written the role for her because she inspired him, in the same way that Jake Heggie today has been inspired by Frederica von Stade and Talise Trevigne.

Or it may have been that Handel didn’t have a choice—he may have been told what singers to write for. A contemporary parallel can be found in HGO’s world premiere of Mark Adamo’s *Little Women*, which was an HGO Studio production. HGO’s Richard Bado says that when Adamo accepted the commission, he was aware it would be a Studio production and he was therefore writing for those voices. (Luckily for Adamo, some of those voices belonged to Joyce DiDonato, Chad Shelton, and Daniel Belcher!) Whatever the reason for the role of Sextus originating as it did, the trouser role is one of opera’s interesting eccentricities.
For information and to purchase tickets for all Houston Grand Opera events, call the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7323) unless otherwise noted. For information about HGOco events, please call 713-546-0230, email HGOco@hgo.org, or visit HGO.org/community-programs.

### OCTOBER
20, 22m, 28, Nov. 1, 3, 5m, 11
Performances of Verdi’s *La traviata*. HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 20 performance only.

20
Opening Night Dinner: HGO celebrates the opening of the 2017–18 season following the performance of *La traviata*. For more information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

22
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *La traviata* immediately following the performance. Free.
HGOco presents mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe in a masterclass with the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio. 2–3:30 p.m. St. Mark’s United Methodist Church, 600 Pecore St. Free.

25
HGOco presents Tom Philpott, author of *Glory Denied* (the book on which Tom Cipullo’s chamber opera is based) for a reading and Q & A at Brazos Bookstore, 2421 Bissonnet St. Free. RSVP to smichael@hgo.org.

27, 29m, Nov. 4, 8, 10
Performances of Handel’s *Julius Caesar*. HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 27 performance only.

29
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *Julius Caesar* immediately following the performance. Free.

### NOVEMBER
6 & 9
HGOco presents Tom Cipullo’s chamber opera *Glory Denied*, 1940s Air Terminal Museum Hangar Building near Hobby Airport. 7:30 p.m. Visit HGO.org/community.

7
High School Night: HGOco hosts high school students and their chaperones at a full-length performance of Verdi’s *La traviata*. School groups only. HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center, 7 p.m. Visit HGO.org/StudentPerformances to reserve.

11
HGOco presents the final Veterans Songbook Concert. Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave. 2:30 p.m. Free.

16 & 19
HGO Studio Recital Series: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive. Nov. 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 19 at 5 p.m.

30, Dec. 2, 3m, 6, 8, 10m, 14, 16m, 17m
World premiere performances of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s *The House without a Christmas Tree*. HGO Resilience Theater at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

### DECEMBER
3
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *The House without a Christmas Tree* immediately following the performance. Free.

5
Student Matinee: HGO hosts groups of students in grades 4–8 and their chaperones at a performance of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s *The House without a Christmas Tree*. School groups only; reserve online at HGO.org/StudentPerformances.

### JANUARY
10
Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to enjoy wine and snacks and learn more about *The Barber of Seville* from a special guest. 6:30 p.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

19, 21m, 27, 31, Feb. 2
Performances of R. Strauss’s *Elektra*.

21
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *Elektra* immediately following the performance. Free.

26, 28m, Feb. 3, 8, 10
Performances of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 26 performance only.

### FEBRUARY
1
Concert of Arias: the 30th Annual Eleanor McColloch Competition for Young Singers. Champagne reception at 6 p.m., competition at 7 p.m. Celebration Dinner to follow. For information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

2 & 3
HGOco and Opera to Go! present the world premiere of Kamala Sankaram and David Johnston’s *Monkey & Francine in the City of Tigers*. Heinen Theatre at Houston Community College, central campus, 9:30 and 11 a.m. daily. *Monkey & Francine* tours from Jan. 29 through May 18. Book a performance at HGO.org/OperaToGo or by calling 713-546-0231.

23 & 24
HGO Studio Recital Series: Artists of the HGO Studio perform at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main Street, 7:30 p.m.
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**ELEKTRA**

Jan. 19 | 21m | 27 | 31 | Feb. 2

Elektra
Christine Goerke

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Set and Costume Designer
John MacFarlane

Lighting Designer
Jennifer Tipton

Chorus Master
Richard Bado
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Opera Chorus Chair

Grand Guarantors—Mr. John G. Turner and Mr. Jerry G. Fischer
Grand Underwriter—Chevron

**THE BARBER OF SEVILLE**

Jan. 26 | 28m | Feb. 3 | 8 | 10

Figaro
Lucas Meachem *

Count Almaviva
David Portillo

Rosina
Sofia Selovsky *

Don Basilio
Eric Owens *

Doctor Bartolo
Peixin Chen *

Berta
Yelena Dyachek *

Conductor
Julian Wachner *

Director
Joan Font

Chorus Master
Richard Bado
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Opera Chorus Master Chair

Grand Guarantor—The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation.
Guarantor—The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts.
Grand Underwriter—The Cullen Foundation.

**NORMA**

Apr. 27 | 29m | May 5 | 8 | 11

Norma
Liudmyla Monastyrska

Adalgisa
Jamie Barton *

Pollione
Chad Shelton *

Oroveso
Peixin Chen *

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Lighting Designer
Jessica Jahn

Chorus Master
Richard Bado
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Opera Chorus Master Chair

Grand Guarantor—The Wortham Foundation, Inc.


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Grand Underwriters—Vinson & Elkins; Margaret Alkek Williams

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* HGO debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
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OUT OF CHARACTER

Composer’s Advocate: Eun Sun Kim

IT’S EASY TO KNOW what a singer is supposed to do, or a director, or a costume designer. But most people would be hard pressed to describe the work of a conductor, beyond cueing musicians, controlling the tempos, and keeping everyone together.

When we asked Eun Sun Kim—a young South Korean conductor making her HGO debut (and indeed her North American debut) as our conductor for La traviata—“What are some misconceptions people have about the work of a conductor? What advice would you give to a young person who wants to become a conductor?” she answered this way:

“There is a book by Erich Leinsdorf, The Composer’s Advocate. This book is the first step to understanding the profession, whether it’s for an audience or a young person who wants to become a conductor.” The title of the book reveals an important premise, which clearly resonates with Eun Sun Kim—the conductor is the one who must safeguard the composer’s intentions.

The conductor shared more of her thoughts with Laura Chandler in a late-summer email interview.

LAURA CHANDLER: How did you decide to become a conductor?
EUN SUN KIM: I thank my teacher for that. When I was a composition student, I used to accompany my colleagues while they learned their opera roles. In my last year, I joined the university opera team as music staff. After a month, the conducting professor, who later became my teacher, gave me a few compliments and told me he was observing how I play piano following his conducting, how I listen to the singers and work with them, etc. Ultimately, he asked me if I could imagine being a conductor. I considered it for almost half a year because at that time I was planning to go to Germany to continue my composition studies. What helped me decide was his advice that one can compose even at 90 years old, but to conduct, you have to start when you are still young and have strength. I studied conducting with him for two years and then finally left for Germany. For me, it’s still something of a miracle that he discovered my talent in conducting.

Who do you think are today’s greatest conductors? Do they have qualities in common?
Two conductors have influenced me the most: Daniel Barenboim and Kirill Petrenko. What surprised me while I worked with them was that they both really begin at a place where most people would stop. In that way, I learned from them how to read a score, how to communicate with the musicians. I still try to attend their rehearsals whenever I’ve got a little time, and it gives so much motivation.

You’ve conducted quite a variety of repertoire, from operetta to Wagner—what repertoire do you feel most connected to?
Honestly, I feel good in any repertoire. However, La bohème is very special to me because it was the piece with which I first began to learn the very basics of conducting in the university opera. At the time, my colleagues and I were as young as the protagonists, and as socially critical as the composer! Every time I perform the piece, I automatically think of that time, and it makes me feel at home.

Why do you like conducting La traviata?
Simply answered, because it’s a masterpiece! Of course, I try to perform it as closely as possible to what Verdi imagined and wanted, but each performance will always be interpreted differently by each of us, whether musicians or audience, because we come at it from different points of view, and because we see ourselves reflected in this kind of work, whether while living in the time of Verdi or today. This is what attracts me to conducting opera.
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