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*The Amazon rainforest; image of spears from the “Out of the Amazon” exhibit at the Houston Museum of Natural Science; a 1908 postcard depicting Long Reach, Buffalo Bayou in Houston.*
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The 2015–16 season is just around the corner! You have in your hands right now a guide to all that lies in store, and we hope it will help you get the most out of your opera experience.

In true HGO style, we’ve programmed operatic favorites (Puccini’s *Tosca*, Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*) along with some rarely seen gems that need just the right casting (Dvořák’s *Rusalka*, Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*). We continue our Holiday Opera series with Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright’s *The Little Prince*, an HGO commission that has delighted families all over the United States and internationally, and we present *Prince of Players*, a world premiere from legendary composer Carlisle Floyd, with whom HGO has enjoyed a decades-long company relationship that, to our knowledge, is unparalleled. We end the season with *Siegfried*, the third installment of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle in the riveting La Fura dels Baus production, paired with the great Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Carousel*, which continues our exploration of classic American music theater. Find out about each of these operas in our guide to the 2015–16 season, beginning on p. 23.

But even before the season opens on October 23, we have some great “pre-season” events we hope you won’t want to miss.

First, we’d love to see you at Studio Showcase on September 10 or 12. It’s a great opportunity to hear all of the artists of our acclaimed training program, the HGO Studio, as they present fully staged scenes from various operas—including the main-stage opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. Tickets are free to season subscribers and available for purchase to non-subscribers.

On September 23 and 24, we present the world premiere of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek’s *O Columbia* at the Revention (formerly Bayou) Music Center just across Texas Avenue from the Wortham Theater Center. This opera about exploration—the innate human desire to go where no one has gone before—is part of HGOco’s award-winning *Song of Houston* series, inspired by the real-life stories of Houstonians. NASA astronauts, scientists, and engineers collaborated with the creators to bring *O Columbia* to fruition, and it truly is a must-see.

As we embark upon the new season, we feel a little bit like explorers ourselves. We look forward to a year of discovery and delight, and we are glad you’re joining us for the journey.

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IN MEMORIAM

On July 10, the world lost one of its most febrile and riveting performers, Canadian tenor Jon Vickers, whose extraordinary Peter Grimes was one of the most indelible portrayals in the history of the art. Houston was fortunate to experience him in his most iconic role in 1977 and again in 1984. He made his company debut in 1964 as Gustav III in A Masked Ball; HGO audiences also saw him as Otello in 1979 and as Canio in Pagliacci in 1982.

Will McLendon, an HGO subscriber since the inaugural season in 1955–56, recalls, “When Jon Vickers returned for his second Peter Grimes here, my tastes had matured enough for me to recognize the subtlety and dramatic intensity he brought to this role for which he was justifiably world-famous. We are much indebted to Jon Vickers as one of the great stars who helped shape Houston Grand Opera’s standards of excellence.”

Vickers sang a vast repertoire in addition to the roles he sang at HGO: from Wagner’s Tristan and Siegmund to Saint-Saens’s and Handel’s Samson; from Don José in Carmen to Jason in Cherubini’s Medea. He balanced his career with a home life on his Canadian farm that kept him connected to nature and recharged for the passionate outpourings he demanded of himself on stage.

His expressive range was extraordinary: his voice could travel from rafter-shaking stentorian to dulcet sweetness in a single phrase. He probed the depths of great music with unique intelligence; finding the truth of the art was of highest importance to him. He was wary of the trappings of fame and thought personal publicity to be a dangerous distraction from the art he felt privileged to serve. Nothing that could be said about Vickers could compare with his own words, speaking at a master class at Mannes College of Music. These sentiments serve as powerful reminders to the stewards of this greatest of art forms:

As a singer, you’re not there to demonstrate your voice. You’re a servant, first of the composer, and like the composer, of the poet, of the public. You’re there to give, not to show off.

Don’t be a slave of the notes. Let them go. Allow your fears, your hopes to show. That’s what moves people. Never, ever, sacrifice line. The audience won’t know why, but if the line falters, you’ll lose them. Keep the line, and you’ll keep them with you…Surrender.

—Patrick Summers

John Vickers (with David Folwell) in Peter Grimes, 1977

BARTON WINS “HEISMAN TROPHY”

HGO Studio alumna Jamie Barton was in Houston last April to sing Fricka in Die Walküre when she learned she had won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award, often referred to as the Heisman Trophy of the opera world. Notifying her of the award was Barry Tucker, president of the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, who has described her as having a “once-in-a-generation voice.” Additionally, two Studio alumni—bass-baritone Michael Sumuel and baritone Reginald Smith Jr.—received career grants, and current Studio soprano D’Ana Lombard won a study grant.

The HGO family salutes all of them.

KATHLEEN MOORE EARNS INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM AWARD

HGO Guild member Kathleen Moore joined an elite group of honorees when she was recognized with the coveted Partners in Excellence Award from Opera Volunteers International (OVI) on May 8. The award was presented to her at the OVI awards dinner as part of the organization’s annual conference, held jointly with the Opera America Conference in Washington, D.C. Only four such awards were bestowed this year throughout North America.

Kathleen has been volunteering with the HGO Guild since the 1990s, holding multiple board positions and chairing numerous fund-raising events. She is particularly active with the HGO Studio, the company’s renowned training program for young artists. The Guild honored her with its Award of Distinction in 2002 and the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2004.
Houston Grand Opera mourns the loss of our dear colleague and friend, Sandra Bernhard, founding director of HGOco. She had been with HGO since 2007.

Sandy had rare ease with some of life’s most complex emotions: love, compassion, empathy, gratitude, fairness, and living with joy in every moment. It was mundane tasks like organizing and planning that she found challenging, largely because she found them distractions. She lived with a formidable energy and passion, and if you couldn’t or wouldn’t keep up, she simply pressed on with an infectious smile, trusting you would eventually get there.

For all of the many wonderful things that will be remembered about her, one thing is sure: if she could have lived one more healthy day, even one more hour, she would have done so with gusto, and she would have spent that time working on an HGOco project. Working, to Sandy, was synonymous with teaching, and she had a truly extraordinary gift for empowering others to learn. She profoundly believed that teaching was the greatest force in facing down prejudice, hatred, bigotry, and ignorance, and she was effortless at it.

For Sandy, everyone had a valid story, and opera, with its focus on words and music, was for her the supreme storytelling medium, something to be both cherished and challenged to burst its boundaries. She didn’t understand defensiveness in anyone, and she could disarm it with grace and humor. She had a rare gift for pointing out what was in plain sight but which others had missed, whether it was an emotion or something unique in nature. Even in the physical challenges of her final weeks she drew comfort from birdsong; from the quivering energy of a little dog in the hospice; from short visits with friends; from the presence of her dear partner, Lisa, her parents, and her brother; and by making plans she knew she would not live to oversee.

Her indelible spirit and energy will always hover over the memories of everyone who knew her, and anyone who heard her memorably sonorous laugh can undoubtedly hear it still. Sandy leaves one of the noblest of legacies: her life made the world a gentler place, and she opened the doors of education and self-expression for thousands who never met her. There was always a quality to Sandy that spoke of a higher purpose, something selfless, large, and important. She translated her inner peace into a radiating joy.

—Patrick Summers

Please join us in a celebration of Sandy’s life on Sept. 28, 4:30 p.m., at Miller Outdoor Theatre.
On April 11, 2015, the lobby of the Wortham Theater Center was filled with the sharp sound of *palmas*—the handclapping central to flamenco music. Dancers took center stage as dresses whirled with each movement. Thousands of fragrant roses decorated each table and if you looked closely, you would have seen more than one guest wearing a lace mantilla. *España*, the 2015 Opera Ball, chaired by HGO Board member Robin Angly and Miles Smith, was an unforgettable celebration of HGO and our generous city of supporters and arts lovers.

In addition to being the best party in town, the Opera Ball regularly nets over $1 million to support the company. But how does HGO keep outdoing itself with each special event, year after year? The answer is our fabulous event chairs!

Our three major fundraising events, Opening Night Dinner, Concert of Arias, and Opera Ball, are meticulously planned at least a year in advance by HGO’s four full-time Special Events staff members, who take the lead from our event chairs. Event chairs are HGO supporters whose leadership, passion, and hard work translate to unforgettable fundraisers. From garnering support and spreading the word to friends,
CHEERS TO THE CHAIRS!

to selecting the menu and décor, HGO’s event chairs work tirelessly year-round to create spectacular occasions that raise the profile of our company and consistently shatter fundraising goals.

HGO’s 2015–16 season kicks off on October 23, 2015, with the Opening Night Dinner gala, a major fundraiser that celebrates the beginning of the season and serves as a cast party for the opening night production, Tosca. Longtime HGO supporters Ward and Susan Pennebaker are our Opening Night Dinner chairs; Ward is a member of the HGO Board of Directors. “Opening Night is truly a special event—it’s so meaningful for us to chair this event, as we celebrate with our HGO family the beginning of another phenomenal season at the Wortham,” the Pennebakers said.

The chair for our annual Concert of Arias, the exciting final round of the Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, is no stranger to heading up fabulous events at HGO. HGO Board member Cynthia Petrello, a former Opera Ball chair, will lead the charge for HGO’s Concert of Arias on February 4, 2016, along with her husband, Tony. “Putting together a successful event is a very gratifying experience because the proceeds support all of the great work HGO does, both on the main stage and in our community,” said Cynthia.

HGO Board member Donna Josey Chapman and her husband, Max, will chair their first event at HGO on April 9, 2016, when they take the helm of the largest of HGO’s annual fundraisers, the Opera Ball. Donna has been busy this summer planning everything from the guest list to the theme, which will celebrate HGO’s beautiful new spring production of Carousel.

About chairing her first event at HGO, Donna shares, “I am honored to be the chairman of the Houston Grand Opera Ball 2016. HGO is recognized worldwide for its creative innovation and its recognition and training of young singers. Our opera company is a great asset to our city, because of what it brings not only to the education of our children and the greater Houston community, but also to our reputation as a cultural leader, attracting business and professionals from around the world to our great city.”

Last season, HGO’s events raised a spectacular $2.6 million in support of the company. We toast our fearless chairs, who, year after year, volunteer their time, resources, and energy to making sure HGO’s events are successful in every way.
Each new commission is developed over the course of months (and often years), and informed by painstaking research, interviews, and workshops focused on both music and text to ensure that the final piece is the best representation of its creators’ vision. This commitment to extending the boundaries of opera and fostering the development of emerging talents in all aspects of the creative process is a natural outgrowth of HGO’s emphasis on new works and young artists. In fact, in some cases members of the HGO Studio take principal roles in HGOco productions, affording them the opportunity to learn about contemporary opera and the process of collaborating with a living composer and librettist.

HGOco’s season is bookended by two new operas that are part of the award-winning Song of Houston series, inspired by the real-life stories of people in Houston-area communities.

We kick off the season in September with the world premiere of O Columbia, a new chamber opera by the exciting young composer-librettist team of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek. Developed through interviews with astronauts, scientists, and engineers at NASA’s Johnson Space Center, this luminous work celebrates the wonder of exploration and the human need to go beyond the known. O Columbia will feature three HGO Studio artists in the principal roles, supported by a dynamic ensemble of eight Houston-based singers. Director Kevin Newbury will create a venue-specific installation-style production at the Revention (formerly Bayou) Music Center—just across Texas Avenue from the Wortham—for two performances on September 23 and 24. Members of the creative team will mingle with audience members at the bar before the opera, and will offer a glimpse into the creative process at talk-backs following each performance.

In May 2016, HGOco rounds out its season with the world premiere of The Root of the Wind Is Water, a chamber opera by composer David Hanlon and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann. Hanlon, a former HGO Studio artist, moved to Houston just before Hurricane Ike hit in 2008, and the memory of that experience served as the impetus for this new work, which centers on a Galvestonian who refuses to leave her home during an impending storm. Hanlon and Fleischmann spent hours interviewing residents of Houston and Galveston...
and delving into historical records in order to understand the impact—both psychological and physical—of these natural disasters on the region, beginning with the Great Storm of 1900 and moving into the present. This evocative new opera will be directed by Matthew Ozawa, who most recently directed HGO’s A Little Night Music, and will feature HGO Studio artists alongside other talented local artists. Performances will take place in both Houston and Galveston.

Opera to Go!, HGOco’s longest-running and farthest-reaching program, has a busy season planned. This touring group brings high-energy 45-minute opera performances to over 50,000 students and families each year. A new Opera to Go! work—Mark Buller and Charles Anthony Silvestri’s The Puffed-Up Prima Donna—will premiere in January 2016 and will tour schools and community centers throughout the spring. This work was commissioned by HGOco after last spring’s success of Buller and Silvestri’s The Pastry Prince (An Italian Folk Tale). The Puffed-Up Prima Donna uses the same hilarious cast of characters (a troupe of Italian opera performers) to explore the subject of bullying through a story about collaboration and artistic differences. Opera to Go! has also scheduled a fall tour (September through December): a revival of The Velveteen Rabbit, based on the beloved children’s story, with music by Mary Carol Warwick and libretto by Kate Pogue.

This spring, HGOco is proud to premiere The Emeline Project (working title), a new chamber opera created by Houston-based composer John Cornelius II and librettist Janine Joseph. This unique project will illuminate the story of Emeline, an African-American woman in 1840s Houston who sued the man who claimed to own her and her children—and won, thus securing their freedom. This fascinating true story was unearthed in the records of the Harris County District Clerk’s office by State District Judge Mark Davidson, and further researched by Bill Kroger, a partner of the Baker Botts law firm. (Peter Gray, the young lawyer who represented Emeline, went on to found Baker Botts.) Baker Botts partner and longtime HGO supporter Richard Husseini facilitated the firm’s involvement in the project, which includes a generous $25,000 contribution to underwrite the commission. The creators of this work spent a fascinating day with Judge Davidson, Kroger, and the original court records at the Houston courthouse and are hard at work putting together a short-format chamber opera that will bring Emeline’s story to middle and high schools, with the goal of sparking a conversation about courage, justice, and perseverance rooted in Houston history.

We hope you’ll join us for these world premieres this season and engage with HGOco through our other programs and activities for students, teachers, families, and community members. From performances just for students at the Wortham Theater Center, to professional development programs for educators, free public performances for audiences of all ages, and performance opportunities through programs like High School Voice Studio and opera camps, there is truly something for everyone. We look forward to sharing the 2015–16 season with you!

To learn more about HGOco’s programs, please visit HGO.org/hgoco.
THE RING
WAGNER

HOUSTON
2014–2017

DAS RHEINGOLD
APRIL 11–26, 2014

SIEGFRIED
APRIL 16–MAY 1, 2016

DIE WALKÜRE
APRIL 18–MAY 3, 2015

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG
APRIL 22–MAY 7, 2017
For information on providing leadership support for the Ring, please contact Greg Robertson at 713-546-0274.
Opening Night Dinner Celebration
Friday, October 23, 2015
Honoring: Roy H. Cullen (posthumously)
Chairs: Susan and Ward Pennebaker

7 p.m. – Giacomo Puccini’s Tosca
Post-performance Celebration Dinner
on Ray C. Fish Plaza
Wortham Theater Center

Attire: Black Tie

Concert of Arias
Thursday, February 4, 2016
Honoring: Pat and Daniel Breen
Chairs: Cynthia and Anthony Petrello

6 p.m. – Champagne Reception
7 p.m. – Vocal Competition
Post-performance Celebration Dinner
in the Grand Foyer
Wortham Theater Center

Attire: Black Tie

2016 Opera Ball
Saturday, April 9, 2016
Chairs: Donna Josey Chapman and Max Chapman

Seven o’clock in the evening
Wortham Theater Center

Attire: White Tie

HGO.ORG/SPECIALEVENTS
Scott Ipsen • 713-546-0242 • sipsen@hgo.org
JUST THE FACTS

GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR 2015–16 REPERTOIRE
WITH HGO DRAMATURG PAUL HOPPER.
CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

PUCCINI

TOSCA

Brown Theater
Sung in Italian with projected English translation

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Guarantor: Margaret Alkek Williams
Grand Underwriter: ConocoPhillips

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago

Floria Tosca
Liudmyla Monastyrska
Kelly Kaduce ♦

Mario Cavaradossi
Alexey Dolgov
Chad Shelton ‡◊

Baron Scarpia
Andrzej Dobber *
Weston Hurt *◊

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director
John Caird
Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2012–13

Set/Costume Designer
Bunny Christie

Lighting Designer
Duane Schuler

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

Children’s Chorus
Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, Chorus, and Children’s Chorus

* Houston Grand Opera debut
◊ Alternate cast
‡ Former Houston Grand Opera Studio artist
High-voltage emotions lead to an even higher body count in Puccini’s gripping lyric drama Tosca. Since it premiered in 1900, Tosca has riveted audiences with its fervent tale of forbidden love, political persecution, and violent devotion. Tosca is a star vehicle for an outstanding soprano, and HGO welcomes back Liudmyla Monastyrska for that very reason. Tosca was one of three works that Houston Grand Opera presented in its second season (1956–57) and it continues to leave audiences breathless until the final curtain—and body—falls.

**BACKGROUND**

Puccini first considered setting Victorien Sardou's stage drama La Tosca in 1889, two years after the play premiered. Ricordi, Verdi's longtime publisher, had tagged Puccini as Verdi's successor and pressured the younger composer to keep his focus on Manon Lescaut. When Puccini got word that Ricordi had asked composer Alberto Franchetti to write an operatic adaptation of Sardou's play, Puccini convinced his rival that the source material would not easily transfer to the operatic stage. Franchetti relinquished the rights to the play and Puccini deviously snatched them up the following day. The 1900 premiere in Rome was a success, for the most part. Cavaradossi's Act III aria “E lucevan le stelle” was encored and the composer took six curtain calls. Some audience members and critics were scandalized by the opera's unsparing political love triangle, and the opera has since been called a “shabby little shocker.” With Tosca, Puccini ventured into verismo, a style featuring realistic portrayals of daily life, including violence and police brutality. Audiences reacted with empathy to the real-world emotions on stage but were also startled by the graphic, naturalistic staging. Later the same year, Toscanini conducted performances at La Scala in Milan, cementing Tosca as a fulcrum of the Italianate repertoire.

**SYNOPSIS**

Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer, meets her lover Mario Cavaradossi in the church where he is working on a fresco. Cavaradossi is providing refuge to Angelotti, a comrade and political prisoner on the run. When the police chief, Baron Scarpia, charges in and demands a search of the chapel, Cavaradossi and Angelotti flee as Scarpia watches his plans to seduce Tosca and destroy Cavaradossi fall into place. Tosca takes matters into her own hands, manipulating Scarpia to ensure Cavaradossi's freedom before making a sharply impulsive decision with an even sharper knife. Plans are made for a mock execution and a stealthy escape, but when Cavaradossi is killed by firing squad, Tosca realizes she has been caught in her own trap. With Scarpia's henchmen moments away, Tosca curses Scarpia and leaps from the roof of the prison to her tragic demise.

**FUN FACT**

Castel Sant’Angelo, the Roman prison that provides the setting for the third act, poses a question of accuracy in Sardou’s riveting play. The castle, a historical landmark, is open to the public, and a trip to the top of the castle quickly proves that the leap that marks Tosca’s climax would be virtually impossible. A series of ledges, each just a few feet below the next, would require a running start and herculean jump to clear in just one leap.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Created for HGO, the sets and costumes by Tony Award–winning designer Bunny Christie bring director John Caird’s vivid, urgent staging to life. Religious imagery permeates this production, which moves the action from its original setting of 1800 to the time of the opera’s composition—turn-of-the-20th-century Rome.

Following her triumphant HGO debut opening the 2013–14 season in the title role of Verdi’s Aida, Ukrainian soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska returns as Tosca, the role that thrust her career into international stardom in Berlin just a few years ago. Russian tenor Alexey Dolgov, seen at HGO last season as Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly, reprises his passionate interpretation of the artist Mario Cavaradossi. Polish baritone Andrzej Dobber makes his highly anticipated HGO debut as the vile Baron Scarpia. HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conducts the star-studded international cast and the HGO Orchestra, Chorus, and Children’s Chorus in Puccini’s fiery score.
TCHAIKOVSKY
EUGENE
ONEGIN

Brown Theater
Sung in Russian with projected English translation

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Eugene Onegin
Scott Hendricks ‡

Tatyana
Katie Van Kooten

Lensky
Norman Reinhardt ‡

Olga
Megan Samarin †

Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow

Prince Gremin
Dmitry Belosselskiy

Conductor
Michael Hofstetter

Production
Robert Carsen

Revival Director
Paula Suozzi *

Set/Costume Designer
Michael Levine

Lighting Designer
Christine Binder

Choreographer
Serge Bennathan *

Chorus Master
Richard Bado ‡

The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus

Master Chair
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Premier Guarantor—The General and Mrs. Maurice Hirsch Opera Fund
A Canadian Opera Company production. This production of Eugene Onegin was originally created for the Metropolitan Opera.
From the composer who penned the cherished ballet scores of Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and The Nutcracker comes a drama replete with passion, unrequited love, and a heart-stopping duel. Tchaikovsky valued the portrayal of emotions and subtle characterizations for the principal roles in Eugene Onegin and worried that professional singers of the era would assume that beautiful singing alone would satisfy their duties. With that in mind, he entrusted the premiere of the piece to students of the Moscow Conservatory in 1879.

BACKGROUND

Tchaikovsky received a love letter from his student Antonina Milyukova in May 1877. Soon after, a friend suggested he consider setting Pushkin’s verse-novel Eugene Onegin as an opera. At first Tchaikovsky was unsure if Pushkin’s story of social conventions and the loss of youthful naïveté would translate successfully to the operatic stage. When he read the passage in which Tatyana writes a letter to Onegin professing her love for him, inspiration struck. Two months later Tchaikovsky and Milyukova were wed and the opera was two-thirds complete.

Unfortunately their relationship did not survive to see opening night. Composition was delayed by their quickly deteriorating marriage, and by the premiere in March 1879 Milyukova and Tchaikovsky had separated. This marked the second failed marriage of Tchaikovsky, a deeply closeted homosexual.

SYNOPSIS

At their family’s country estate, the hopelessly romantic Tatyana and her sister Olga sing of love. Their neighbor Lensky arrives accompanied by his friend Onegin. Tatyana, who always has her head in a romance novel, identifies Onegin as the man destined for her. That night, in a passionate outpouring, Tatyana puts all of her feelings for Onegin down in writing by her head in a romance novel, identifies Onegin as the man destined for her. That night, in a passionate outpouring, Tatyana puts all of her feelings for Onegin down in writing. The feelings are not mutual, and Tatyana is humiliated as Onegin reproaches her for being too forward with a stranger. Tensions build at Tatyana’s name day party, leading to a deadly duel. After many years, Tatyana and Onegin are reunited, only to realize their chance at love has passed.

FUN FACT

Eugene Onegin is one of a number of operas in which the writing or reading of a letter functions as a major musical and dramatic moment. Affectionately known as the Letter Scene (“Puskai pogybnu ja” or “I cannot hide my love”), Tatyana’s heartfelt Act I outpouring of love for Onegin is some of the most glorious music of the opera. Onegin echoes the music from this scene later in the third act when he declares his intention to write to Tatyana and tell her his feelings.

Verdi also recognized the dramatic power of a letter and used it in Violetta’s reading of Germont’s letter in Act III of La traviata (“Teneste la promessa”), as well as in numerous scenes of his final opera, Falstaff. Benjamin Britten’s hauntingly erotic setting of the Governess’s letter of concern to the children’s guardian in The Turn of the Screw sends the chilling plot into its final tragic twists. Act III of Massenet’s Werther opens with Charlotte rereading Werther’s letters on Christmas Eve, reliving extreme elation and crushing sorrow all at once.
RACHEL PORTMAN
NICHOLAS WRIGHT
Production by
FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO
THE LITTLE PRINCE
Based on the book by
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

The Little Prince

Andy Jones *
Cohle H. Smith *
Joshua Hopkins ‡
Ben Edquist †
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai,
Terrell Tone Owen Memorial
Endowed Fund at the
Community Foundation of
Abilene Endowed Fellow

John Kapusta *
Sofia Selowsky †
Mr. and Mrs. James W.
Crownover Fellow

Conductor
Bradley Moore
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Emily Senturia ‡

Production Director
Francesca Zambello

Revival Director
Ellen Douglas Schlaefer

Set/Costume Designer
Maria Bjornson

Original Lighting Designer
Rick Fisher

Children’s Chorus Director
Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Children’s Chorus

Sung in English
with projected English text

Commissioned through a generous gift made by Kathryn and David Berg in memory of Larry Pfeffer.

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

Rachel Portman’s delightful opera *The Little Prince* makes its triumphant return to Houston Grand Opera in Francesca Zambello’s beloved original production—the second in HGO’s series of family-friendly holiday operas. One of the most successful commissions in HGO’s extensive history of producing new works, *The Little Prince* received its world premiere in Houston on May 31, 2003. The piece went on to international success, having been programmed by New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Washington National Opera, as well as internationally in Hungary, Lithuania, and most recently in South Korea.

**BACKGROUND**

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s French novella *Le Petit Prince* (The Little Prince) is one of the most widely translated books in the history of publishing. Since the English translation was published in the United States during World War II, the number of available translations has continued to grow, reaching over 250 languages and dialects to date. The immediacy of the story and its ability to address universal issues that transcend cultural divides has allowed translations of the book to become a worldwide model for learning languages. It can be found in the curriculums of schools in the United States, France, and beyond.

Saint-Exupéry, a French writer and pioneering aviator, found his greatest success in writing *The Little Prince*. In addition to Portman’s operatic adaptation, the timeless story of a Pilot and a Prince crash-landing in a desert has been adapted into ballets, musicals, and multiple stage plays. The first full-length cinematic version premiered in 1967 in Lithuania while the 1974 Paramount movie musical, starring Bob Fosse and Gene Wilder, included lyrics and music by Lerner and Loewe.

**SYNOPSIS**

An unnamed Pilot crash-lands his airplane in the Sahara Desert. He soon meets the Little Prince, a young boy who traveled to Earth from a far-off planet. Together they share stories from their past, from the Pilot’s frustrations as a child being misunderstood by adults, to the Prince’s encounters with a snake, a rose, and a group of stubborn baobab trees.

Much like Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, *The Little Prince* addresses large issues while camouflaged as a fairy tale. Through their chance encounter, the young Prince and the Pilot explore the uniqueness of the human spirit, the pain of separation, and the necessity of imagination.

**FUN FACT**

Composer Rachel Portman was the first female to win an Academy Award for Best Musical or Comedy Score for *Emma* in 1996. She went on to garner more nominations for her scores for *The Cider House Rules* and *Chocolat*.

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**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Francesca Zambello’s definitive production returns to the Cullen stage this December. The late Maria Bjørnson’s costumes and sets transport the audience to a fanciful world of singing trees, pompous kings, and wise foxes. Bradley Moore and Emily Senturia conduct the cast and HGO Orchestra, joined by 20 child choristers, through Portman’s whimsical score.

The title role of *The Little Prince* is shared by boy sopranos Andy Jones and Cohle H. Smith, both making their HGO debuts. Joshua Hopkins, who also performs Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* this season, sings the Pilot, with HGO Studio baritone Ben Edquist taking on the role for the December 19 and student matinee performances.
MOZART
THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Brown Theater
Sung in Italian with projected English translation

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CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Figaro
Adam Plachetka *
Heidi Stober ‡
Joshua Hopkins ‡
Ailyn Pérez
Lauren Snouffer ‡
Peixin Chen ‡
Catherine Cook

Susanna
Count Almaviva
Countess Almaviva
Cherubino
Dr. Bartolo
Marcellina

Conductor
Harry Bicket *

Production
Michael Grandage
Ian Rutherford
Christopher Oram

Revival Director
Paule Constable

Set/Costume Designer
Ben Wright *

Original Lighting Designer
Richard Bado ‡

Movement Director
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus

Chorus Master
Master Chair

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

* Houston Grand Opera debut
† Houston Grand Opera Studio artist
‡ Former Houston Grand Opera Studio artist

Guarantor—Houston Methodist
Grand Underwriter—PwC

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera
Pierre Beaumarchais’s trilogy of plays that provided the source material for The Marriage of Figaro was so scandalously sexual and politically explosive at the time that it was banned in France in 1784 and in Vienna later the same year. Emperor Joseph II advised Mozart and his librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte, to tame down the story in fear of provoking audiences, yet the second performance was met with five encores from the audience. When the third performance called for seven encores, the emperor got involved again—this time imposing a ban on exorbitant encores at future performances: “To prevent the excessive duration of the operas, but without prejudice to the fame often sought by opera singers from the repetition of vocal pieces, I deem the enclosed notice to the public (that no piece for more than a single voice is to be repeated) to be the most reasonable expedient.” Only solo numbers were to be encored, leaving Mozart’s brilliant ensembles to be enjoyed in one fleeting moment, the audience clamoring for more.

BACKGROUND
Numerous works from Mozart’s oeuvre remain perennial favorites at opera houses worldwide, but none have the well-deserved recognition of his three collaborations with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. At first glance they seem to be a disparate pair: Mozart’s life had been defined by hard work and seriousness, debuting concertos, playing concerts, and winning awards by the age of seven. Da Ponte operated in the world of comedy, becoming the champion of opera buffa in spite of remaining illiterate until age 14.

This partnership developed into the single most noted composer-librettist relationship of the operatic canon. Beginning with Figaro and continuing with Don Giovanni and Cosi fan tutte, Mozart and Da Ponte developed a new style of storytelling. They transformed opera into an emotionally manipulative art form, telling stories of real people that audiences could empathize with and recognize. This synergistic relationship provided the backbone that defined the late 18th century—the perfection of classical form.

SYNOPSIS
Mistaken identities, spousal humiliation and madcap comedy converge over the course of one single day of madness in the second installment of the Beaumarchais trilogy. Flanked by the stories of The Barber of Seville and The Ghosts of Versailles, The Marriage of Figaro follows Figaro and Susanna, a young servant couple preparing for their wedding day, their happiness interrupted by the Count’s desire to invoke his feudal right and sleep with his wife’s maid before the marriage. Identities are exchanged and jealousy escalates, culminating in the most treasured virtue of all: forgiveness.

FUN FACTS
The original Barbarina, Anna Gottlieb, was just 12 years old at the premiere in 1786. Francesco Benuci, who originated the title role, later went on to sing Leporello in the first Viennese production of Don Giovanni and had continued success with Mozart’s Da Ponte operas as Guglielmo in Cosi fan tutte.

The production team behind this season’s Figaro features the most awarded creative team of the season, all members having won both Tony and Olivier Awards among other accolades. Michael Grandage’s production and Christopher Oram’s vivid sets and costumes transport the action to Morocco in the 1960s—a time when the convergence of cultures and growing liberalism paralleled the ideals of Mozart’s Vienna. Paule Constable’s luscious lighting evokes warm Moroccan days and opulent evening gardens.

Renowned interpreter of baroque and classical repertoire Harry Bicket makes his HGO debut conducting a superb young cast of singers chosen to represent the voice types of the singers who premiered the roles in 1786. Adam Plachetka makes his HGO debut in the title role alongside HGO Studio alumna Heidi Stober as Susanna. Ailyn Pérez, whose memorable house and role debut as Desdemona in Otello opened last season, appears as Countess Almaviva. Joshua Hopkins returns as her husband, Count Almaviva. Lauren Snouffer makes her first HGO appearance since graduating from the Studio, as the pageboy Cherubino.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Adam Plachetka
Heidi Stober
Joshua Hopkins
Ailyn Pérez
Lauren Snouffer
Harry Bicket
Michael Grandage
Ian Rutherford

The production team behind this season’s Figaro features the most awarded creative team of the season, all members having won both Tony and Olivier Awards among other accolades. Michael Grandage’s production and Christopher Oram’s vivid sets and costumes transport the action to Morocco in the 1960s—a time when the convergence of cultures and growing liberalism paralleled the ideals of Mozart’s Vienna. Paule Constable’s luscious lighting evokes warm Moroccan days and opulent evening gardens.

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**DVOŘÁK**

**RUSALKA**

**CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM**

Rusalka
- Ana Maria Martinez ‡
- Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2010–11
- Brian Jagde *
- Richard Paul Fink ‡
- Jill Grove ‡
- Maida Hundeling *

Prince

Vodník, a water sprite
- Rae Smith *

Ježibaba, a witch
- Donna Stirrup *

Foreign Princess

- Rick Nodine *
- Richard Bado ‡
- The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus
- Master Chair

**Conductor**
- Harry Bicket

**Production**
- Melly Still *

**Revival Director**
- Donna Stirrup *

**Set/Costume Designer**
- Paule Constable

**Original Lighting Designer**
- Rick Nodine *

**Movement Director**

**Chorus Master**
- Richard Bado ‡

**Guarantor**—Vinson & Elkins LLP

**Grand Underwriter**—Edward and Frances Bing Fund

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This production was created for Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

* Houston Grand Opera debut

† Former Houston Grand Opera Studio artist

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**Brown Theater**

Sung in Czech with projected English translation

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Photo by Bill Cooper
Mermaids, an evil Foreign Princess, and one disastrous wedding day: Hans Christian Anderson’s legendary tale The Little Mermaid comes to life in Dvořák’s lush adaptation of the iconic Slavic fairy tale. Dvořák’s most successful opera returns to Houston after a 25-year absence in a deeply moving, darkly fanciful production with Ana María Martínez in the title role. Packed with tragic melodies and bombastic symphonic ballets, Rusalka begins lightheartedly but dives into darker themes of betrayal and infidelity. World-class singing and acrobatic silk aerialists dramatically bring this haunting pillar of the Czech repertoire to life.

BACKGROUND
As an operatic composer, Dvořák is often overshadowed by his Czech contemporaries Smetana and Janáček. Dvořák wrote ten operas, but Rusalka remains the only one regularly performed today. The grim fairy tale is the only dramatic work that successfully harnesses Dvořák’s compositional voice, which comes through so strongly in his concert music. His other operas, of which The Devil and Kate is the most regularly programmed, depend more strongly on musical depiction of atmosphere than on character. Dvořák’s other stage works are often criticized for too closely resembling his influences—chiefly Wagner’s earlier operas Tannhäuser and Lohengrin. With Rusalka Dvořák contrasts the glittering and ethereal spirit world with a passionate, direct, and emphatically symphonic material world. As Rusalka is drawn into the arms of a mortal the styles blend with sublime majestic effect.

The celebrated first-act aria “Píseň Rusalky o měsíčku”—better known as Rusalka’s Song to the Moon, is surely the most recognizable music in the piece. Its haunting harp glissandos and string motif that begin the scene return throughout the score similarly to Wagner’s use of leitmotifs. This aria is but a sampling of the wealth of fine music in Dvořák’s score. The Wood Nymphs’ scene in Act III, in which the first nymph sings a delightful folk ballad, is a lustrous example of Dvořák’s lyrical writing. The poignant fairy tale culminates in some of the most spectacular music written for the stage as Rusalka bids farewell to everything she once desired.

SYNOPSIS
Rusalka, a mermaid of the lake and daughter of the water goblin Vodník, exclaims to her father that she has fallen in love with a Prince who comes to hunt near the lake where they live. She longs to become human, walk on solid ground, and love him as his wife. Vodník dismisses her idea, but refers her to the witch Ježibaba for help. The witch agrees to brew a potion that will transform Rusalka, warning her that she will lose her ability to speak, and, if either party is ever unfaithful, they both will be eternally damned. At their lavish wedding, the mute Rusalka is crossed by the evil Foreign Princess, who convinces the Prince to reject her. Broken, Rusalka recedes back into the lake as a bludička—a spirit of death. The Prince returns and Rusalka explains her silence, although it is too late. He begs for one final kiss, knowing it will mean certain death. Rusalka kisses him and slowly sinks into darkness, cursed to live alone in the abyss.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS
Radiant soprano Ana María Martínez adds the title role of Rusalka to the extensive list of leading heroines Houston audiences have had the pleasure of seeing her perform on the Brown stage. Martínez stars in Melly Still’s production, which was designed for her to debut the role at the 2009 Glyndebourne Festival. This organic and deliberate staging of Dvořák’s sad, modern fairy tale is brought vividly to life by set and costume designer Rae Smith. Highlighting Dvořák’s highly motivic score, Harry Bicket conducts the HGO Chorus and Orchestra in a piece indebted to the influences of Wagner, Smetana, and Meyerbeer. American tenor Brian Jagde makes an important house debut as the Prince whose fate is forever altered after meeting the beautiful Rusalka. Studio alumna Jill Grove, known for her committed portrayals of Wagner, Verdi, and Strauss roles, returns as the witch Ježibaba. Fellow HGO Studio alum and Grammy Award-winning bass-baritone Richard Paul Fink returns as Rusalka’s father, Vodník, and soprano Maida Hundeling makes her role and house debut as the Foreign Princess.
CARLISLE FLOYD
PRINCE OF PLAYERS
World premiere

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Cullen Theater
Sung in English with projected text

MAR. 5 8 p.m.
MAR. 11 8 p.m.
MAR. 13 2:30 p.m.

Edward Kynaston
Ben Edquist †
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai,
Terrell Tone Owen Memorial
Endowed Fund at the
Community Foundation of
Abilene Endowed Fellow

Margaret Hughes
Mane Galoyan †
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/
Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson
Fellow

Charles II
Chad Shelton †

Sir Charles Sedley
Joseph Evans

Villiers,

Duke of Buckingham
Scott Quinn ‡

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Composer/librettist
Carlisle Floyd

Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2015–16

Conductor
Patrick Summers

Director
Michael Gieleta *

Set Designer
Shoko Kambara *

Costume Designer
Gregory Gale *

Lighting Designer
Renée Brode

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

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Grand Guarantors—Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.;
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. David B. Duthu

Guarantor—Cynthia and Anthony Petrello

Grand Underwriter—Lynn Wyatt

Commissioned by Houston Grand Opera.
Based on Compleat Female Stage Beauty by Jeffrey Hatcher. By special arrangement with Lionsgate.

* Houston Grand Opera debut
† Houston Grand Opera Studio artist
‡ Former Houston Grand Opera Studio artist

Photo by Lynn Lane
Prince of Players marks yet another milestone in composer Carlisle Floyd’s 40-year relationship with Houston Grand Opera. No other American opera company has had such a prolific relationship with a living composer, and next spring’s production will mark the fifth Floyd world premiere commissioned by HGO. In a firm departure from the romantic Americana of Floyd’s earlier works, Prince of Players transports us to London in the 17th century as a significant moment in theatrical history forever impacts the life of one performer.

BACKGROUND
An avid cinephile, Floyd found inspiration in the 2004 Richard Eyre film Stage Beauty. Adapted from Jeffrey Hatcher’s play Compleat Female Stage Beauty, the story examines the life of the historical figure Edward Kynaston, the preeminent interpreter of Shakespearean heroines in the mid-17th century. Up to this point women were not permitted to act on stage, leaving all roles to be played by men. After King Charles II reversed the ban, allowing women on stage and forbidding men to play female roles, those who were once in the spotlight were left desperate, trying to redefine their careers and learn to interpret male roles, often falling victim to physical and emotional abuse by a public struggling to understand these fallen celebrities.

SYNOPSIS
Prince of Players illustrates one man’s triumph over crisis as he is forced to reexamine his personal and professional life when an outside force upturns both. Set in 1661, at a pivotal point in the history of British theater, Prince of Players opens with the wildly acclaimed Edward Kynaston performing his signature role—Desdemona in Shakespeare’s Othello. Kynaston’s life onstage often bleeds into his personal life, as wealthy women love to be seen in his company, demanding that the androgynous star keep his costume on. On one such occasion, Sir Charles Sedley makes advances to Kynaston, thinking he is a female prostitute, with the result that Sedley is humiliated and determined to get revenge on Kynaston. After King Charles’s edict and a brutal physical attack instigated by Sedley, Kynaston is broken. But with the help of his dresser and confidante, Margaret Hughes, Kynaston makes a triumphant return to the stage in a gripping performance in the title role of Othello. The opera explores how people react in times of extreme crisis, and questions about sexual identity and society’s acceptance of alternative lifestyles that resonate just as clearly today as they did 350 years ago.

FUN FACT
Carlisle Floyd retired from composing opera in 2001. After attending a performance of Mary Stuart at HGO in 2012, however, he declared that he wanted to compose one more opera—and if he was going to write it, it had to premiere at Houston Grand Opera.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Acclaimed American composer Carlisle Floyd has cemented his legacy in the operatic repertoire with successes such as Susannah (1955), Of Mice and Men (1960), and Cold Sassy Tree (an HGO commission that premiered here in 2000). Floyd’s relationship with HGO extends well beyond the stage: in 1977, he co-founded the Houston Grand Opera Studio with David Gockley, HGO’s general director from 1972 to 2005. Michael Gieleta makes his Houston debut directing the world premiere production. Shoko Kambara’s set designs transport us to the theater world of 17th century England and allow an intimate behind the scenes view of life in the theater. Gregory Gale’s costumes evoke the era of King Charles II and reflect Kynaston’s descent from theater idol to a life in the bowels of society.

HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conducts the world premiere cast. Baritone Ben Edquist tackles the difficult role of Edward Kynaston, balancing both his “onstage” appearances as Shakespearean heroines with the man left to deal with the remnants of a life once defined by his career. Mane Galoyan sings Margaret Hughes, Kynaston’s dresser and emotional ally. HGO Studio alumnus Chad Shelton returns as King Charles II and Joseph Evans debuts the role of the vengeful Sir Charles Sedley.
CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Wagner
Siegfried

Brown Theater
Sung in German with projected English translation

APR. 16 6 p.m.
APR. 20 6 p.m.
APR. 23 6 p.m.
APR. 28 6 p.m.
MAY 1 2 p.m.

Siegfried
Jay Hunter Morris
Wanderer
Iain Paterson
Brünnhilde
Christine Goerke
Sponsored by Dr. Elizabeth Grimm and Dr. Jack A. Roth
Mime
Rodell Rosel
Alberich
Christopher Purves
Erda
Meredith Arwady
Fafner
Andrea Silvestrelli

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
La Fura dels Baus
Carlus Padrissa

Production

Directors

Movement/Associate Director

Set Designer

Costume Designer

Lighting Designer

Projection Designer

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

Premier Guarantors—Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.; Mr. John G. Turner and Mr. Jerry G. Fischer.
Grand Guarantor—Medistar
Guarantors—Robin Angly and Miles Smith; Mrs. Janice Barrow; BBVA Compass.
Grand Underwriters—The Brown Foundation, Inc., Carol Franc Buck Foundation; Chevron; Dr. Elizabeth Grimm and Dr. Jack A. Roth; Donna Kaplan and Richard A. Lydecker; Beth Madison; Mr. and Mrs. J. Landis Martin; Will L. McLendon

A co-production of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia, and Maggio Musicale, Florence
Following the success of the initial two chapters of Houston Grand Opera’s first complete Ring cycle, Siegfried marks the story that inspired the creation of the entire saga. If Wagner’s four opera epic represented the seasons, this year’s installment would signify the coming of autumn. The passion from Die Walküre has faded as the preparation for the harsh reality of the final saga begins. The remarkable production from La Fura dels Baus continues to tell the story with exceptional narrative clarity, while presenting images and settings consistent with the Norse mythology that inspired the cycle. We finally meet Siegfried, for whom the sword collected in Die Walküre is destined. The hero is charged with the tremendous task of preventing the downfall of the gods in this staggering Ring for the 21st century.

SYNOPSIS

When we last left our saga Sieglinde had run to the forest to birth the greatest of all heroes, and Wotan had kissed the godhead away from his favorite daughter, Brünnhilde. Now, condemned to sleep on the mountaintop, surrounded by a ring of fire, she can be awakened only by the noblest of all men. Before the third installment gets underway, Sieglinde fulfills her destiny, dying while giving birth to the hero Siegfried. Mime, Alberich’s henchman, finds Siegfried and raises him in a cave near the lair of Fafner, the giant-turned-dragon that protects the ring.

Siegfried opens quietly; Wagner sets a tone fraught with apprehension and anticipation. Mime attempts to connect the pieces of the sword that have been left for Siegfried, prompting the youth to demand to learn his true identity. The solemn Wanderer enters, whom we know as Wotan in disguise, and through a set of riddles informs Mime that only one “who has never felt fear” can fulfill the sword’s destiny. Siegfried is victorious in assembling the sword and slaying the dragon, eliminating Mime after his failed attempt to poison the hero. The dragon’s blood gives Siegfried the power to interpret birdcalls, so he understands the Forest Bird’s song about a woman in distress. Triumphantly Siegfried penetrates the ring of fire and awakens the now-mortal Brünnhilde. In the opera’s glorious conclusion, Brünnhilde and Siegfried sing of their mutual love and the gods’ imminent demise in what is the first proper duet of the entire cycle.

FUN FACT

Siegfried will feature 35 supers, whose fearless bodies have portrayed such memorable visuals in previous Ring installments as the walls of Valhalla, the stolen gold, and last season’s staggering wrecking ball pendulum that opened the third act of Die Walküre. This season’s chapter spotlights our daring group of supers more than ever before.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Houston Grand Opera welcomes back the creative team that has been dazzling HGO audiences since the Ring cycle began with Das Rheingold: Carlus Padrissa of the illustrious theater group La Fura dels Baus returns to direct. This installment continues the astonishing visual storytelling, with gripping representations of Mime’s murky lair, the face-off between Siegfried and the dragon Fafner, and human bodies exemplifying the effects of the gods’ greed.

Jay Hunter Morris sings the title role of Siegfried, one of the most demanding tenor roles in the repertoire. He returns to the role after winning a 2013 Grammy Award for a complete recording of the cycle. After entrancing audiences in her searing performance of the title role in last season’s Die Walküre, soprano Christine Goerke returns as Wotan’s now-mortal daughter Brünnhilde. Iain Paterson will sing his first Wanderer (Wotan in disguise), and Rodell Rosel and Christopher Purves return as Mime and Alberich, respectively.

Meredith Arwady brings her stentorian contralto to the Earth mother Erda, and Andrea Silvestrelli returns as the thunderous Fafner. Houston Grand Opera Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conduct this superlative cast and the HGO Orchestra in Wagner’s complex, rich score.
### CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

**Conductor/Chorus Master** Richard Bado †

**The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus**

**Master Chair**

**Director/Choreographer** Rob Ashford

**Set Designer** Paolo Ventura *

**Costume Designer** Catherine Zuber

**Original Lighting Designer** Neil Austin

**Sound Designer** Andrew Harper

**Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus**

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**Billy Bigelow**
- Duncan Rock *
- Andrea Carroll ‡
- Lauren Snouffer ‡
- Alexander Lewis *
- Stephanie Blythe*
- Ben Edquist †
- *Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai, Terrell Tone Owen Memorial Endowed Fund at the Community Foundation of Abilene Endowed Fellow*

**Julie Jordan**
- Julie Jordan

**Carrie Pipperidge**

**Enoch Snow**
- Enoch Snow

**Nettie Fowler**
- Nettie Fowler

**Jigger Craigin**
- Jigger Craigin

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**Brown Theater**

*Sung in English with projected English text*

**APR. 22**
- 7:30 p.m.

**APR. 24**
- 2 p.m.

**APR. 27**
- 7:30 p.m.

**APR. 29**
- 7:30 p.m.

**APR. 30**
- 7:30 p.m.

**MAY 6**
- 7:30 p.m.

**MAY 7**
- 7:30 p.m.

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**Grand Underwriter**—Mr. and Mrs. D. Bradley McWilliams, Brucie and Andrew Moore

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A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. *Carousel* is presented through special arrangement with R&H Theatricals: [www.rnh.com](http://www.rnh.com).
Lyricist-composer team Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II joined forces again for Carousel after the colossal success of their first collaboration, Oklahoma! The Mozart–Da Ponte of the musical theater world, this legendary pair went on to collaborate on South Pacific, The King and I, Cinderella and The Sound of Music. Opening with the bittersweet “Carousel Waltz” and featuring show stopping favorites like “June Is Busting Out All Over” and “If I Loved You,” Carousel dives deeper into the human psyche than many other American musicals. Exploring darker social themes of spousal abuse, cold-blooded crime, and death in the family, Carousel was far ahead of its time in the musical genre. Culminating in the seminal ballad “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” Carousel concludes with healing and redemption.

**BACKGROUND**

Ferenc Molnár’s 1909 play Liliom, the source material for Carousel, proved to be one of the hardest stories to snag for a dramatic musical adaptation. Both Giacomo Puccini and Kurt Weill tried to pressure Molnár into releasing the rights, but the playwright denied both. Rodgers and Hammerstein strategically suggested meeting Molnár after he attended a performance of Oklahoma! This proved to be a well-crafted plan, as Molnár exclaimed that if they could do as good a job as they did adapting Lynn Rigg’s 1931 play Green Grow the Lilacs (the source material for Oklahoma!), then he would be honored to leave his story in their hands.

Rodgers and Hammerstein were initially convinced of the feasibility of adapting Liliom into a musical. The Hungarian play was not successful at its 1909 premiere, but gained popularity when it was staged in post-war New York in an English translation. The pair had numerous concerns. The settings of Budapest, Hungary, and a nondescript area outside the gates of Heaven didn’t lend themselves naturally to the American musical stage. More distressingly, a violent slap near the end of the play, leading to the damnation of the principal male character, didn’t exactly scream “box office hit.”

The team toyed with different settings, including transferring the action to Louisiana. Progress came when Rodgers, who owned property in Connecticut, envisioned a New England setting, with crowds of sailors, mill workers, and clambakes. The details fell into place, leaving just the final moments of the piece in question. Finding a way to soften the impact of the slap and adding the graduation scene that completes Carousel proved to be just what Molnár’s story needed.

**SYNOPSIS**

In a small New England town at the end of the 19th century, carousel barker Billy Bigelow charms and marries the young millworker Julie Jordan. The couple falls on hard times and Billy finds himself caught in an attempted robbery—a crime he saw as his only option to support his pregnant wife. Facing the reality of a life behind bars, he takes his own life. Fifteen years later, Billy is granted a return to earth from “up there” for just one day. Meeting the daughter he never knew, he urges her to believe in herself, leaving a legacy of hope and absolution as he ascends toward heaven.

**FUN FACT**

John Raitt, the original Billy Bigelow, was discovered while producers were auditioning replacements for the role of Curly in Oklahoma! The first selection they asked him to sing was “Largo al factotum,” Figaro’s aria from The Barber of Seville.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Stage director and choreographer Rob Ashford leads the creative team for Carousel, bringing back his distinct blend of dance, drama, beauty, and grit that dazzled Houston audiences in his recent new production of Carmen. Ashford is a Tony Award-winning director whose dynamic vision brings life and energy to this new HGO co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago. Italian artist Paolo Ventura’s haunting set design transports us to a small New England town where the darkly romantic tale unfolds.

Richard Bado conducts a fresh cast of operatic singers through Rodgers and Hammerstein’s charming and poignant score. Australian baritone Duncan Rock makes his HGO debut as Billy Bigelow, the carousel barker. He catches the eye of the ingénue Julie Jordan, played by stunning soprano Andrea Carroll, making her first appearance at HGO since her tenure in the HGO Studio. Fellow alumna Lauren Snouffer sings the role of Carrie Pipperidge and Alexander Lewis makes his HGO debut as Enoch Snow. Distinguished mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe makes a long overdue HGO debut as Nettie Fowler. Her rendition of the climactic ballad “You’ll Never Walk Alone” is sure to be a highlight of the season.
Prince of Players, the latest opera from composer Carlisle Floyd, represents a departure from his “calling cards,” such as Susannah, Of Mice and Men, and Cold Sassy Tree. The folksy characters of Floyd’s earlier operas are nowhere to be found in the new piece, and the setting is not rural America but London of the 17th century. What Prince of Players does share in common with its older siblings is the same compassion, even tenderness, for its central characters that marks Floyd’s earlier works.

Prince of Players is based on the play Compleat Female Stage Beauty, but even more closely on the movie inspired by the play, Stage Beauty, starring Billy Crudup and Claire Danes. It tells the story—fictionalized yet rooted in history—of the actor Edward Kynaston, the last and best among the “boy players” in the early part of the Restoration in England. Boy players specialized in female roles, since women of the time weren’t allowed to appear on stage. By all accounts, notably that of Samuel Pepys, whose famous diary painted an invaluable portrait of life in Restoration England, the androgynous Kynaston was simultaneously the most beautiful woman in the house and the handsomest man.

The historical Kynaston was born c.1640, so he was only a tot on August 22, 1642, when King Charles I began the English Civil War, pitting the Crown unsuccessfully against the Parliament. Only days later, on September 6, the Puritan-influenced Parliament issued an order that all theaters be closed. Charles was executed in 1649, his son

Composer Carlisle Floyd, the Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, 2015-16.

Above: set drawing by designer Shoko Kambara depicting a party hosted by King Charles II.
Opposite: King Charles II, Margaret Hughes, and Edward Kynaston.

This page: rendering by set designer Shoko Kambara.
Opposite from left: King Charles II, Margaret Hughes, and Edward Kynaston.
Charles II was exiled, and the monarchy came to a temporary end. England was declared a republic, controlled by Puritan Oliver Cromwell until his death in 1658. But the theaters remained closed...until Charles II was invited to come back to Britain in 1660. The monarchy was restored, and almost immediately, King Charles II began to grant licenses for theaters to open.

This is the point at which *Prince of Players* begins—in the early part of the Restoration, an “exuberant” period in English history that was “a response to the end of 20 years of austerity under Oliver Cromwell,” says director Michael Gieleta. In the opening scene, Kynaston is at the height of his powers and in the midst of a performance as Desdemona in *Othello*. At the end of the scene, the audience leaps to its collective feet in adulation.

But Kynaston’s career as a boy player would be short-lived, in the opera as well as in history: Charles II, whose mistress Nell Gwynn aspired to be an actress, issued an edict in 1661 not only allowing women to perform, but *forbidding* men to perform as women. Kynaston and other boy players were out of a job, unless they were willing and able to transition to male roles. Kynaston was neither.

It was that crisis that captured Carlisle Floyd’s interest as he watched the film *Stage Beauty*. “Opera is about crisis,” Floyd says. “Everyday activity has no place on the operatic stage. What could cause more tension than Kynaston losing his art and his life?”

Floyd sees the opera as a story of Kynaston’s evolution, both as an artist and a human being, alongside an equally compelling love story between the actor and his dresser, Margaret Hughes—who has her own acting ambitions and becomes his greatest rival. But all good operas are multi-layered, and *Prince of Players* is no exception. To Michael Gieleta, approaching it from a director’s standpoint, the core of the piece has to do with the very nature of acting and how an actor transforms himself—or herself—into another character. Also, the opera sensitively explores the themes of sexuality, gender, and identity: when Kynaston says, “There are things I can be as a woman that I could never be as a man,” one understands he means not only on stage but in life.

The greatest musical challenge in composing *Prince of Players*, Floyd says, was that he didn’t want it to sound at all like his American operas because of the place and period: “I wanted to avoid any kind of American folk quality.” Floyd’s musical idiom, which he describes as “conservative and quite melodic,” is discernible in *Prince of Players*, even though the style is different.
from that of his established works. The listener should be prepared for some appropriately placed dissonance as well as moments of melting lyricism.

Incoming HGO Studio baritone Ben Edquist will sing the formidable role of Edward Kynaston, which Floyd points out is one of the biggest roles he has ever written. Kynaston appears in every scene. “I would have to check it out more carefully, but I don’t think I’ve written a leading character who is in every scene since Susannah,” says Floyd.

We don’t think we’re giving away too much to say that Kynaston fares a bit better in his opera than Susannah does in hers. At the end of her story, Susannah has triumphed over her community’s unjust attacks, but at great personal cost and with an uncertain future. Kynaston, too, pays dearly for his triumph, but by the end of the opera, he has come full circle. He is once again the Prince of Players.
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Omni Houston Hotel

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Maria Blake
Bravo Award Winner
Systems Manager, Houston Grand Opera

Also recognizing
Volunteers of Distinction: Melinda Anderson, Lynn Guggolz, and Joe Sims
Rising Stars: Janis Doty, Marcheta Leighton-Beasley, and Isabel Trainer
Crescendo Award Winner: Richard’s Liquors & Fine Wines

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Joyce DiDonato
Mezzo-soprano
Houston Grand Opera Studio alum

United
Official Sponsor of Houston Grand Opera Guild
Perryn Leech: Can you tell me about your childhood and your early family life?

Richard Wong: I was born in China and my family (of six) lived in Guangzhou just outside of Hong Kong. My dad was a farmer and worked incredibly hard every day just to make sure that we had enough to eat. My mother had to quit school at the age of 10 and started in the fields as a farmer as well. At that young age, she needed to work after losing her mother and father. As most families in rural China at that time, we were very poor.

So how did you get to the United States?

My uncle had gone to America in the 1950s. My dad knew that one day he wanted to join him and give our family the chance of a better life. My mother had to quit school at the age of 10 and started in the fields as a farmer as well. At that young age, she needed to work after losing her mother and father. As most families in rural China at that time, we were very poor.

That was a long shot, though, surely?

Yes, the whole process took over 20 years. It was extremely difficult to get out of China during those years. Finally in the 1970s the United States started talks with China after years of no diplomatic contact. With the senator’s help we were eventually able to get over.

How old were you when you arrived?

I was four and I did not speak a word of English. At pre-school I was completely lost as I couldn’t communicate at all. I listened and watched and slowly started to learn English and did well at school. My mother and father were working in a Chinese restaurant, and we learned to work hard from them. That work ethic is really ingrained in me and my sisters.

That is a wonderful story about how hard work at school really pays off! What did you decide to do next?

I decided that I wanted to give something back to the country that had given our family so much, so I joined the U.S. Marine Corps. I completed basic training at MCRD San Diego and then went on to communications school in Twentynine Palms, California. It was tough training—three months in boot camp and then another three months of combat training. The communications training is another four months.

After completing school I was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, and finally went on to Camp Pendleton. I was assigned to Charlie Company of the 1st Surveillance Reconnaissance Intelligence Group and my specialty was satellite communications. I was able to make sergeant by the end of my third year after
successive meritorious promotions. That made my family very proud. One of my most significant life moments came at the end of boot camp. My father was never one for telling us he loved us, but at the end of the three months he hugged me and looked me in the eye and said he was proud of me. That was a huge deal for me.

How long were you on active duty?

I served four years. When my first enlistment was coming to an end in 1998, I planned to re-enlist. Then Saddam Hussein vetoed the weapons inspections and suddenly everything went up a level. I was in Charlie Company and Alpha and Bravo had been deployed to Saudi Arabia. We were the only line company that was still back in the States. We were lucky and my company was never deployed to the Middle East. Saddam backed down and let the inspectors in. It had been relatively quiet and I had felt very safe for three and half years, but that conflict changed everything. I knew that my mother in particular was worried sick, so I decided not to re-enlist.

That is completely understandable. So what did you decide to do after the Marines?

I wanted to go back to school. I used the GI Bill to attend school at North Harris and got my associate’s degree. I then went on to the University of Houston to study business. In my junior year at the University of Houston, I got a job at a call center to earn some extra money. My boss, the hiring manager, was an ex-marine and hired me straight in as a supervisor. I found that I could do the job well. During this time I got engaged to Tracy, who has been my wife for over 14 years now. Once we got married, I decided to put school on hold and work full time.

Did you come to HGO from there?

Not quite! I took a job opportunity at WorldCom in Nederland, Texas, as a call center supervisor and was there for three years. I ended up working full time and going to school full time during this period. I was able to finish up and get my bachelor’s degree from Lamar University. I ended up as department manager but WorldCom was struggling as a business and eventually folded. My wife and I were really anxious to get back to Houston by this point and then the job at HGO came up.

That position was call center manager, but in a very different field from telecommunications. Were you surprised to get the job?

I didn’t really have any arts experience at all so I knew that was an area that I would need to learn fast. I did feel that I could add value in the organization with my experience running a call center. At the time, it was not run as a “business” call center and my first boss—Jo LaBrecque—was determined to make it better. I learned a lot about opera very quickly by watching whenever I could, although I rarely saw entire shows as I was always working at the same time!

So a really steep learning curve, then!

HGO was very different. At WorldCom, the calls were often technical in nature or about the rates. There was a huge volume of calls and they were nearly all aggressive! At HGO the majority of calls are driven by ticket and service issues. We are also an inbound and outbound center, so there are a greater variety of calls that keep the job interesting.

And I know that the call center has continued to evolve since you joined us.

That is right. We have managed to get a better focus on customer interaction. We now have portfolio managers who build relationships with each customer. This allows customers to feel better connected. People love knowing they can call a specific person who can take care of any changes or issues they have. That commitment to excellence is very important and I think that we are in the best shape we have ever been.
What about the next generation of HGO supporters? Are your kids starting to come and see operas yet?

No, they are a bit young yet! Hunter is ten and Tristen is eight, and they are into a bit of everything, but mainly sports. My wife and I are determined to give them a balanced education and they are learning the same lessons from us that I learned from my family. If you work hard, then you can accomplish great things. I believe that by learning, they can continue to live the American Dream my family has lived ever since they came from China.

Richard, his wife, Tracy, and their sons Hunter and Tristen

Based on Professor Gaille’s course at the University of Chicago, Shale Energy Development provides an introduction to the commercial and legal aspects of shale ventures.

—Amazon Books, 2014

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Meet the new HGO Studio director and the seven young artists who will enter HGO’s premier training program this season. They join returning singers Pureum Jo, D’Ana Lombard, Megan Samarin, and Sofia Selowsky, and pianist/coach Sahar Nouri.

NEW IN THE STUDIO

Brian Speck was officially named the director of the HGO Studio on January 20 of this year—just in time to take the helm of Concert of Arias, the biggest artistic and social event of the Studio’s entire season. It was a baptism by fire, but Brian was up for the challenge. “If you had asked me four or five years ago what I would ultimately want, if I could just dream it up, it would have been this job,” he says.

Trained in classical singing (Pepperdine University and Rice University), he gravitated to the administrative side of opera after recognizing that while he loved the rehearsal process of discovery and collaboration, he didn’t have the burning desire to perform—a quality that is generally required for surviving the often-difficult early years of getting established in a career. His first contact with the company was through the HGO Chorus, which he joined in 2005. He joined the staff during the 2012–13 season as artist liaison, was named company manager in his second season, and advanced to the position of his dreams in his third season.

His voice training is a strong asset. “I understand what it feels like to try to create an operatic sound and what is involved in the mechanics of the vocalism. I spent a long time myself studying with Stephen King, who teaches everyone in the Studio. And I also understand what kind of pressure there is on young artists,” he says.

“One thing that excites me about the HGO Studio historically, compared to some other training programs, is that decisions about who enters the Studio are based on something unique about them, not just general capability. We look for something that, even if it’s still rough cut, is deeply interesting and ultimately can be developed into a world-class, recognizable sound, instead of a very competent bland one.”

“My challenge is to help each of the Studio artists find his or her place within the opera industry without sacrificing their individual artistry,” he sums up.

Says HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, “After a comprehensive search, what a unique joy to find that we had an emerging talent like Brian already on our staff, earning his forward momentum with the strength of his own talents and by fully embracing the experiences of learning the art form in the only way learning happens: little by little and day by day.

“Brian possesses the rare set of skills required by such a position: a knowledge and passion for the singing voice, with an ability to hear beyond the present moment. He has the masterful organizational skills of a great administrator, and an ability to seek advice and consensus while holding fast to his own knowledge. He is positive and supportive, and he is also something rarer these days, a kind and polite professional, free of cynicism. I’m thrilled to be working with Brian and look forward to his continued upward trajectory in an art form greatly in need of talented administrators.”

Brian, along with the rest of the HGO family, welcomes the returning Studio artists and the following seven new ones, a truly international group that is a metaphor for the universality of our art form.

Argentinian bass-baritone Federico De Micheli’s route to the HGO Studio began in Neumarkt, Germany, at the International Meistersinger Akademie. That’s where he met and had the opportunity to work with the HGO Studio’s director of vocal instruction, Dr. Stephen King, who encouraged him to audition for HGO’s Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. “When I went to the competition,” Federico explains, “I went there to sing. I didn’t understand at first that it could lead to membership in the Studio.” Federico won third prize, and says he is looking forward to becoming part of the big

FEDERICO DE MICHELIS
bass-baritone
Beth Madison Fellow

CHRIS BOZEKA
tenor
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow

By kindergarten, Chris Bozeka of Akron, Ohio, was already performing. At first he thought he might want to be a Broadway star, and at one point considered going into politics because he enjoyed public speaking. But as a junior in a performing arts high school, he had a life-changing experience: he participated in a master class with tenor Lawrence Brownlee. He was the youngest student among the participants and in fact was the only high school student among them. Afterwards, Brownlee sent a message to Chris’s teacher, Sandra Schlub, that he had been the standout in the class. “Tell him to keep at it,” Brownlee said. His words carried a lot of weight with Chris, who says, “Until that happened, I didn’t think I was anybody that special. I didn’t think being a singer was a viable career option, but that changed my mind.”

Chris—who comes to the HGO Studio after winning second prize in the 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias—says he is most excited about performing in the world premiere of Floyd’s Prince of Players next season. HGO audiences will also hear him sing Drunkard/Lamplighter in The Little Prince, Don Curzio in The Marriage of Figaro, and Huntsman in Rusalka.

BRIAN SPECK
Director of HGO Studio

Meet the new HGO Studio director and the seven young artists who will enter HGO’s premier training program this season. They join returning singers Pureum Jo, D’Ana Lombard, Megan Samarin, and Sofia Selowsky, and pianist/coach Sahar Nouri.
family that is HGO. “Everyone has been so generous and so kind,” he says.

He has firm opinions about what it takes to be successful as a singer in today’s artistic climate: “It’s not enough to enjoy it, study it, be good at it,” he says. “You must have the need of doing it, so that you cannot go on if you cannot be on stage.”

During the coming season, he is most looking forward to his performances of Angelotti in Tosca—“I like the role, and to open an opera is exciting!” He will also be seen as Zaretsky in Eugene Onegin, the King in The Little Prince, Antonio in The Marriage of Figaro, and Thomas Betterton in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players.

Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow

Armenian soprano Mane Galoyan comes to the HGO Studio after winning first prize in HGO’s 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, and, just this summer, winning third place in the women’s voice division of the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition.

“My grandfather taught me to listen to classical and jazz music, and to feel the emotions of music. When I was nine years old, I went to music school as a pianist and singer,” she says. When her teacher discovered her voice was well suited to opera, nothing could have pleased her more: “I always wanted to be an opera singer.”

In 2013, when Mane participated in the Sixth International Competition of Opera Singers in St. Petersburg, winning second prize, she met HGO Director of Artistic Administration Diane Zola, a member of the jury. Zola encouraged Mane to audition for HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. Her experience in YAVA led her to audition for the HGO Studio, and she regards her membership in the Studio as the “first serious step of my career.”

HGO audiences can look forward to hearing her sing the Kitchen Girl in Rusalka, Margaret Hughes in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players, and Forest Bird in Siegfried.

Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai, Terrell Tone Owen Memorial Endowed Fund at the Community Foundation of Abilene Endowed Fellow

“I was the loudest child in our children’s choir at church,” says baritone Ben Edquist, a native of Lake Jackson, Texas. The choir director encouraged him to audition for community musical theater, and soon he was performing regularly. But when it was time to consider college, he was doing so well academically that he hesitated when his mother suggested that he major in music; “I was thinking of studying law like my father,” he says.

He compromised by double majoring in music and math at Vanderbilt University, where he sang the leading role of Charlie in Jake Heggie’s Three Decembers. Heggie recommended he apply to HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA) and he was accepted; two years later he was a finalist in Concert of Arias. He also sang in the HGOco world premieres of Past the Checkpoints and The Ninth November I Was Hiding.

This season, he is thrilled to sing the leading role of Edward Kynaston in HGO’s world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players, citing the “amazing array of emotions” Kynaston must portray. HGO audiences will also hear him in the HGOco world premiere of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek’s OColumbia, and as the Captain in Eugene Onegin, Sciarrotte in Tosca, in performances of the Pilot in The Little Prince, and as Jigger Craigin in Carousel.

No one in my family is a musician—my parents are borderline tone deaf,” Miami, Florida, native Geoffrey Loff says with a laugh. He began playing violin at age seven and the piano at age 10, when he visited his grandmother along with his brother and cousins. After hearing her play from memory the only piece she knew, “Für Elise,” Geoff astonished everyone by playing it by ear. Something had clicked. “Playing the piano makes more sense to me than anything in the world,” he says.

He pursued piano study mostly on his own until a highly regarded professor at University of Miami, Frank Cooper, accepted him as a student. It was Cooper who encouraged a 15-year-old Geoff to apply to the University “just to see what happens”—with the result that Geoff began his college education at age 16 and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees at University of Miami. It was also Cooper who set him on the collaborative piano path by encouraging him to play for singers.

“I couldn’t be happier with my HGO assignments this season,” Geoff says. He’ll stay busy coaching Siegfried, Tosca, and The

HGO.org
Marriage of Figaro—and getting ready for a wedding. He and soprano Katie Kupchik plan to be married on February 27, 2016.

YONGZHAO YU

Albert and Anne Chao/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

Chinese tenor Yongzhao Yu had the great good fortune to be born into an operatic family in Beijing. He learned to sing almost as a matter of course and was often encouraged to perform for friends. “Gradually,” Yongzhao says, “singing became part of my life. Every character in opera gives me different feelings, and I like to be another version of myself in each character.”

Concert of Arias 2015 attendees will remember that Yongzhao emerged as the winner of both the Audience Choice Award and the inaugural Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award. “It was truly memorable,” says Yongzhao. “The HGO Studio is one of the most famous young artist programs in the world. I have been looking at it for a long time, because Chen-Ye Yuan and Peixin Chen came from here, and they are both artists of the first magnitude.”

During the 2015–16 season, Yongzhao will appear with the Studio in various performances and will concentrate on English language skills. “Coming to HGO is a new beginning for me, and also brings me closer to my dream of being a real opera singer. I will cherish every chance to be onstage and every role I perform,” he says.

baritone Liam Bonner
Joseph Li, piano
in recital to benefit Houston District Met Auditions

Sunday, October 18, at 2:30 p.m.
First Congregational Church
10840 Beinhorn Road
Houston, TX 77024

Mr. Bonner, an HGO Studio alumnus, was a national semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He won first prize in the 2011 Corda Lissner Foundation Competition and the Audience Choice Award in HGO’s 2005 Eleanor McCollum Competition at Operalia.

Tickets: 713-970-7112 or 281-455-5777
RSVP to MONCHouston@gmail.com
It’s been a great summer for HGO’s Studio artists, who have traveled the world to learn languages, study, and perform. From St. Petersburg, Berlin, Prague, and Madrid to New York, Washington, Aspen, and San Francisco, they’re making a big impact on the opera world, and we couldn’t be more proud of their accomplishments.

The 2015–16 HGO Studio members arrive in Houston on August 19, and we’ll hit the ground running to prepare our Studio Showcase. The program will be performed twice in the Cullen Theater, on September 10 and 12 at 8 p.m. The entire HGO Studio will perform; our Studio pianists will accompany the singers in scenes from The Marriage of Figaro, Carmen, Susannah, Ariodante, Hansel and Gretel, and more. The evening will be hosted by HGO’s dramaturg, Paul Hopper. Season subscribers are invited to attend for free, but you’ll need a ticket! Please contact the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) to reserve your seats. If you’re not a subscriber, we still hope you’ll attend—tickets are available on the HGO website for $15.

This year, several of our HGO Studio artists have a great opportunity to collaborate with the dynamic teams behind world premiere operas. Working directly with the composer, librettist, conductor, and director of a new piece is a valuable experience that will serve the artists well in today’s dynamic opera industry. This season, Studio artists will take on major roles in three projects commissioned by HGO: O Columbia, Prince of Players, and The Root of the Wind Is Water. Join us on September 23 and 24 at the Revention (formerly Bayou) Music Center, when Pureum Jo, Ben Edquist, and Megan Samarin sing leading roles in the world premiere of O Columbia. The new opera by composer Greg Spears and librettist Royce Vavrek focuses on themes of exploration and discovery, including a moving account of the 2003 Columbia space shuttle disaster that had a profound effect on our friends at NASA and the Houston community.

Each artist’s tenure in the HGO Studio is a time of tremendous growth and exciting opportunities. As you enjoy their performances this season, I hope you’ll also learn about them and watch as their careers blossom and grow. You can find out more about the Studio artists at HGO.org/studio. Don’t forget to join us for the Studio Showcase in September—there couldn’t be a better way to get to know our new artists!

—Brian Speck
Director, HGO Studio
The HGO Studio is grateful for the in-kind support of McGladrey, LLP. The Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA) is generously underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Wakefield and the HGO Guild. Additional support for YAVA is provided by Mr. Patrick Carfizzi, Dr. David and Mrs. Norine Gill, and Gwyneth Campbell. Hotel accommodations for YAVA generously provided by the Lancaster Hotel. United Airlines is the official airline of Houston Grand Opera and Concert of Arias.


**HGO Studio Artists 2015–16**

- **Chris Bozeka**, tenor
  - Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
- **Federico De Michelis**, bass-baritone
  - Beth Madison Fellow
- **Ben Edquist**, baritone
  - Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai, Terrell Tone Owen Memorial Endowed Fund at the Community Foundation of Abilene Endowed Fellow
- **Mane Galoyan**, soprano
  - Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
- **Pureum Jo**, soprano
  - Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/Nancy and Ted Haywood Fellow
- **Kirill Kuzmin**, pianist/coach
  - Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D./Bill and Melinda Brungier Fellow
- **Geoffrey Loff**, pianist/coach
  - Lynn Guggolz/Mrs. Marianne Kah Fellow
- **D’Ana Lombard**, soprano
  - Lynne Murray Sr. Educational Foundation Fellow
- **Sahar Nouri**, pianist/coach
  - Audrey Jones Beck Endowed Fund/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow
- **Megan Samarin**, mezzo-soprano
  - Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
- **Sofia Selowsky**, mezzo-soprano
  - Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow
- **Yongzhao Yu**, tenor
  - Albert and Anne Chao/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

**SAVE THE DATES**

Don’t miss these rapidly approaching opportunities to hear HGO Studio artists! Purchase tickets to the events listed here by calling Customer Care at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or online at HGO.org, unless otherwise noted.

**SEPT. 10 & 12**
**STUDIO SHOWCASE**

Enjoy a fully staged program of opera scenes in the Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater, 8 p.m. Free to subscribers but must be reserved through the Customer Care Center. Mezzanine tickets are available to non-subscribers for $15.

**SEPT. 23 & 24**
**O COLUMBIA**

HGO Studio artists sing leading roles in the world premiere of a new work by Gregory Spears and Royce Varev, Revention (formerly Bayou) Music Center, across Texas Ave. from the Wortham Theater Center, 8 p.m. Tickets $20. More information and tickets at HGO.org/Columbia.

**NOV. 12 & 15**
**RECITALS AT RIENZI**

Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of MFAH, at 1406 Kirby Drive. Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 15 at 5 p.m.
Opera to Go! bounds into the 2015–16 season with a revival of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Adapted from the beloved book by Margery Williams, this 45-minute opera by Mary Carol Warwick and Kate Pogue tells the story of the enduring bond between a child and his favorite toy. *The Velveteen Rabbit* tours to area schools and community centers from September 14 through December 18. Highlighting the tour are three free performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre: September 23–25 at 11 a.m. daily.

Opera to Go! is also thrilled to present HGO’s 58th world premiere this winter with *The Puffed-Up Prima Donna* by Mark Buller and Charles Anthony Silvestri. This tongue-in-cheek comedy features a fictitious troupe of opera performers struggling with artistic differences as they prepare to celebrate a wedding. Will the overbearing prima donna ruin everything or is she simply misunderstood? Free public performances will be held January 28–30, 2016, at the Heinen Theater on the central campus of Houston Community College. *The Puffed-Up Prima Donna* will tour from January 25 through May 20, 2016.

To book Opera to Go! performances, please call 713-546-0231 or visit HGO.org/operatogo.

The first-place winner, baritone Tyler Resto, will attend University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; second-place winner Emily Wolf, a soprano, will attend Baylor; and the third-place winner, tenor Cullen King, will attend University of Texas–Austin.

A round of applause

HGO congratulates the High School Voice Studio Class of 2014–15! At their final event of the season last May, an adjudicated graduation recital, three talented members were awarded scholarships to support musical study at their respective universities.

Throughout the season, the high school seniors chosen for membership in HSVS attended HGO dress rehearsals, participated in master classes with main-stage artists, and received regular voice lessons.

MUSICAL CHOICES FOR CHILDREN

In an effort to reach the youngest audiences, HGOco offers First Songs and Storybook Opera, designed to foster engagement and literacy for newborns through grade 2, along with their parents and caregivers. First Songs nurtures the bond between caregivers and young ones (newborn through early Pre-K) with music during reading time. A teaching artist helps participants learn fun songs and activities to accompany reading activities, perfect for community groups, parent clubs, and libraries. For slightly older students (Grades Pre-K through 2), Storybook Opera presents an engaging introduction to opera with singing storytellers. This program features over 10 delightful tales such as *Opera Cat* and *Westward Ho, Carlotta!*, including bilingual options.

For more information and to order please visit HGO.org/firstsongs or HGO.org/storybook.

Children at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic School enjoy a performance by Opera to Go!

Right: HGOco brought First Songs to Discovery Green during Spring Break.

Photos by Lynn Lane.
THE HALLS WERE ABUZZ WITH THE SOUND OF CAMPERS

For three weeks this summer HGOco hosted over 70 students from all over the Houston area for our annual Opera Camps. Students in grades 4–12 joined us at the Wortham Theater Center to learn, create, and perform as part of three different camp experiences.

Opera Experience (grades 4–9) offered campers the opportunity to gain a better understanding of vocal technique, sight singing, and music theory. By the end of the week participants learned and performed songs from opera and musical theater, including “Edelweiss” from *The Sound of Music* and “Getting to Know You” from *The King and I*.

In Create an Opera, campers entering grades 3–6 learned the steps involved in creating an opera from start to finish. Guided by HGO teaching artists, the campers wrote a libretto, composed all the music, and designed and created sets, puppets, and props. At the end of the week they performed an original opera based on the picture book *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt and Oliver Jeffers, a clever tale in which crayons learn that collaboration is the key to success.

The final camp of the summer, Art of Opera, welcomed teens in grades 7–12. Over the course of this intensive two-week camp, campers learned music, staging, and choreography for *The Tinker of Tivoli*, a short opera based on the music of Rossini. The camp culminated in a fully staged performance at Houston’s historic Heinen Theater.

Registration for 2016 Opera Camps will open in February.

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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.
HGO is thrilled to welcome Occidental Petroleum Corporation as a new corporate supporter.

Occidental is an international oil and gas exploration and production company with operations in the United States, the Middle East, and Latin America. Headquartered in Houston, Occidental is one of the leading U.S. oil and gas companies, based on equity market capitalization, with more than 40,000 employees and contractors worldwide. Occidental is committed to respecting the environment, operating safely, and upholding high standards of social responsibility throughout the company’s worldwide operations.

Occidental is proud to be a leadership supporter of HGOco, the Opera’s community collaboration initiative that brings performances to over 100,000 students, families, and educators each season. From Opera to Go!, HGO’s touring troupe that performs 45-minute operas at schools and libraries, to The Veterans Songbook, a multi-year collection of songs based on the stories and experiences of Houston-area veterans, Occidental’s support helps HGO share opera with Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds.

Marcia Backus, senior vice president and general counsel at Occidental, represents the company as a member of the HGO Board of Directors. Marcia is ranked among the leading business lawyers in oil and gas and energy by both Chambers USA and Chambers Global. A member of the HGO family since 1998, she is also a trustee of The University of Texas Law School Foundation and a co-founder of the Center for Women in Law.

**DONOR SPOTLIGHT**

**ANDREA AND JAMES MAHER**

Andrea and James Maher are longtime members of the HGO family. The couple began attending performances in the 2004–05 season and have been active as HGO Patrons since 2010.

Andrea’s passion for opera began at the age of nine, when her father took her to see a production of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*. For Andrea and her father, National Trustee Jorge Bernal, attending the opera is a family affair, with Jorge sometimes flying in from Bogotá to attend performances with Andrea. James and Andrea’s daughter, Lorena, is also an opera lover—her first opera was HGO’s 2010 performance of *Madame Butterfly*.

Andrea is a civil engineer for Civilia S.A., a company based in Bogotá, Colombia, that specializes in concrete construction for residential and commercial work, institutional facilities, and civil work. Andrea holds degrees from Universidad de los Andes and Purdue University.

James is the president of Trendsetter Vulcan Offshore, Inc., which specializes in finding innovative solutions for the floating systems, risers, and equipment for the floating drilling and production industry. He has founded several deepwater technology companies and has been involved in the development and commercialization of many technologies, including spar technology. James holds degrees from the University of Notre Dame and Purdue University.

The couple has two children, Lorena and Jimmy. Andrea is an active philanthropist, volunteering with Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart and The Regis School.
Board Member Spotlight

ZANE CARSON CARRUTH

Houston Grand Opera is delighted that Zane Carson Carruth has joined the HGO Board of Directors—a vital force for our company. HGO’s board members bring their passion for opera and strong leadership skills to ensure our company’s continued artistic success.

Zane and her husband Brady have been attending HGO performances and events for many years, and the two have a great passion for opera and philanthropy.

Zane is the founder and president of Carson Marketing, a Houston-based marketing company that provides integrated marketing solutions for businesses. Zane has over 25 years of marketing experience and has successfully launched several startup businesses, with a client focus on retail and insurance-related businesses.

Brady is the chief executive officer and president of the Saratoga Financial Group, serves as the chairman of the board of Aggredyne, Inc., sits on the Executive Committee of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLS&R), and serves as the president of the Wortham Foundation.

In addition to HGO, Brady and Zane are involved with the Museum of Fine Arts, HLS&R, and Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Zane serves on the board of directors for the Houston SPCA and the Discovery Green Conservancy.
60TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT AND GALA

On March 19, Houston Grand Opera celebrated its 60th season with a gala anniversary concert in the Cullen Theater featuring international opera star Joyce DiDonato. An intimate black-tie dinner followed onstage in the Brown Theater, chaired by longtime HGO supporter Terrylin Neale. With elegant décor by The Events Company and a sumptuous meal by Jackson and Company, the event raised over $600,000 for the HGO Endowment.
SWEENEY TODD CAST PARTY

Chris and Kristine Williams hosted HGO patrons at a late-night reception in their beautiful Tanglewood home following the opening performance of Sweeney Todd. The cast and creative team were introduced to great applause by Patrick Summers, HGO’s artistic and music director.

EL PASADO CAST PARTY

After HGO’s opening performance of the mariachi opera El Pasado Nunca Se Termina, patrons gathered in the Founders Salon of the Wortham Theater Center to celebrate composer José “Pepe” Martínez and librettist/director Leonard Foglia along with cast and crew. Members of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán mingled with guests as they enjoyed Mexican-themed food and specialty tequila drinks.
PATRONS CIRCLE RECITAL

This year’s Patrons Circle Recital, hosted by Jackson and Company and Geo. H. Lewis & Sons at The Corinthian, featured a performance by baritone Nathan Gunn. In town for his title role in Sweeney Todd, he charmed the crowd with a collection of his favorite songs accompanied by his wife, pianist Julie Jordan Gunn.

OPERAS TO GO! VISITS BROOKWOOD

The citizens of Brookwood Community were treated to a special performance when HGCo’s Opera to Go! program made its annual visit on May 22. Made possible by the Guyla Pircher Harris Project, the performance of The Pastry Prince delighted all who attended and included a photo session with the cast after the show.
LET THERE BE OPERA, ALWAYS

Join the Laureate Society!

By including HGO in your will or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or insurance policy, you become a partner with HGO in perpetuating the art form we love, sustaining its vibrant good health for future generations. As a member of the Laureate Society, your legacy gift helps ensure opera forever in Houston.

For more information, please contact Richard Buffett at 713.546.0216 or rbuffett@hgo.org. Also visit HGO.org/LaureateSociety.

ENCORE AFTER PARTY KICKOFF

On March 2, HGO Young Professionals gathered at the Burberry boutique in the Houston Galleria to kick off the Encore Opera Ball After Party and shop the latest collection. Encore Party Chairman Brian McCulloch hosted the event, with a percentage of proceeds from the evening benefiting Houston Grand Opera.

Photos by Wilson Parish
**DIE WALKÜRE CAST PARTY**

To celebrate the opening of *Die Walküre*, the second installment of HGO’s four-season *Ring* cycle, lead sponsors John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer pulled out all the stops for a celebration at the newly opened JW Marriott Houston Downtown. Guests dined on a German-themed buffet and enjoyed polka music provided by Das Ist Lustig.

**Photos by Jacob Power**

Christine Goerke, Jerry G. Fischer, John G. Turner, and Patrick Summers

Carol Horany, Monzer Hourani, and Perryn Leech

Robert Turner, Frances Marzio, and Peter Speliopolis

Jack Roth, Elizabeth Grimm, and Liz Travis

Kelly Kaduce and Iain Paterson

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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 main-stage productions, including last season’s Otello and Madame Butterfly.

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 and 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 main-stage 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.

BBVA Compass
HGO is privileged to partner with BBVA Compass, a U.S. subsidiary of BBVA, a Spain-based global financial services group founded in 1857. BBVA Compass, committed to financial education, diversity, and the arts, is a lead corporate sponsor of HGO’s Ring cycle and also supports the NEXUS Initiative, HGO’s affordability program. David Powell, BBVA Compass’s co-head of the U.S. corporate and investment banking business and head of global clients and investment banking, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

PAT AND DANIEL BREEN
Pat and Dan realize the importance of supporting HGO’s main-stage work, having sponsored many of the company’s most cherished productions over the past two decades. They have generously provided leadership support to HGO’s Inspiring Performance campaign. Pat is one of the most dedicated members of the HGO Board of Directors, having first joined in 1987, and currently serves on the Special Events and Governance Committees. Dan is owner of the investment firm Breen Investments LP.

THE BROWN FOUNDATION, INC.
The Brown Foundation, Inc., established in 1951 by Herman and Margarett 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.

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 main-stage productions. The couple has also supported the HGO Endowment through their family foundation, the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation.
serve on the board of directors. HGO is honored to have Bobbie-Vee HGO special events for many years, from the Opening Night Dinner, world’s first mariachi opera. They have been active supporters of all innovative commission (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 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 main-stage season.

THE CULLEN TRUST FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts has been a lead underwriter of HGO’s main-stage 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 of Carmen, A Christmas Carol, and the 2015–16 production of The Little Prince.

MARIANNE AND DAVID DUTHU
Marianne and David have been HGO subscribers since 1991 and members of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence since 2009, and David is a member of the HGO Board of Directors. The couple chaired Concert of Arias in 2011, an event they have generously supported for many years, and were the event’s honorees in 2013. David, an engineer, is the founder of Texas Energy Engineers, Inc./CCRD Partners Consulting Engineers. Marianne is retired from Vopak North America, a chemical storage company. When not working or attending opera, they love to collect art and to restore rare vehicles.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ENDOWeNT, 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 Janet L. Carrig, Senior Chairman Terrylin Neale, and several members of the HGO Board of Directors. This season, HGO is thrilled to have HGOE as the premier guarantor of Siegfried.

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 repertory, including Aida, La bohème, Tosca, and Madame Butterfly. The Cooneys also supported HGO’s 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 board of directors.

THE HUMPHREYS FOUNDATION
Based in Liberty, Texas, the Humphreys Foundation has been a major underwriter of HGO’s main-stage 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 main-stage productions such as last season’s Così fan tutte and 2014’s Rigoletto.

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, main-stage productions, special events, and especially HGOco, the Opera’s innovative education and community collaboration initiative.
**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 is an underwriter for HGO’s Ring cycle. He is also a special events sponsor, supporting Opera Ball and Concert of Arias.

**BETH MADISON**

This season marks Beth’s 21st 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. Beth generously supports the HGO Studio, special events and, last season, Die Walküre. 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.

**MEDISTAR**

Medistar is a full-service real estate development company that specializes in the design, development, financing, and construction of hospitals, long-term acute care facilities, cancer centers, integrated medical plazas, medical office buildings, and other medical facilities for the health care industry. The company is led by founder Monzer Hourani, an internationally renowned engineer whose innovations of many building techniques and concepts have had a great impact on the U.S. construction industry. Medistar joined the HGO family as a Grand Guarantor of Wagner's Ring cycle (2014–17).

**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. Upcoming Mellon Foundation–supported projects include the world premiere of Prince of Players by legendary American composer Carlisle Floyd, as well as 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 main-stage and Opera to Go! performances at Miller Theatre. June Deadrick (left) is an HGO trustee representing the Miller Theatre Advisory Board.

**BRUCIE AND ANDREW MOORE**

Brucie and Andy have been a treasured part of the Opera family for more than 20 years. Subscribers since the 1998–99 season, Brucie and Andy are members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Brucie has served on the HGO Board of Directors since 2013. She is also a lifetime member of the board of governors of Leadership Corpus Christi, a board member of the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra, principal underwriter for the Corpus Christi Area Youth Orchestra, and board president of Harbor Playhouse. Andy was the 2012 winner of HGO’s Singing with the Houston Idols and regularly performs in musical theater productions.

**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 HGO's special events and main-stage productions, including HGO's new holiday opera series, with It's a Wonderful Life in the 2016–17 season. HGO is thrilled to have Sara serve on its board of directors, and as a member and past chair of the HGOco Committee.
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.

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.

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 Committee, and chairs the HGOco Committee. HGO is grateful for the Petrellos’ support of HGOco and the main stage, underwriting this season’s Prince of Players. 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 200,000 people. HGO is honored to count Schlumberger among its most dedicated corporate supporters. Dan Domeracki, vice president of government and industry relations, 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 main-stage productions, the HGO Studio, the HGO Endowment, and special events. The Stais have also sponsored HGO Studio
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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* denotes 10 or more years of service
SEPTEMBER

10 & 12
- Studio Showcase: The singers and pianists of the HGO Studio perform in a fully staged program of opera scenes, Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater, 8 p.m. Free to season subscribers; nonsubscribers may purchase mezzanine tickets at HGO.org.

23 & 24
- HGOco presents world premiere performances of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek’s O Columbia. Revention (formerly Bayou) Music Center, 8 p.m. Tickets: HGO.org/Columbia.

23, 24, 25
- The Velveteen Rabbit: HGOco and Opera to Go! present this favorite at Miller Outdoor Theatre, 11 a.m. daily. Free. The Velveteen Rabbit tours from September 14 through December 18. To book a performance, visit HGO.org/OperaToGo or call 713-546-0231.

OCTOBER

3
- Fall Awards Lunch: the HGO Guild honors stellar volunteers and supporters at the Omni Houston Hotel, 4 Riverway, 11:30 a.m. For information, contact Gwyneth Campbell at 713-885-5024 or visit HGOguild.org.

25
- Veterans Songbook Showcase: selections from HGOco’s Veterans Songbook project will be performed in the Brown Alcove before the performance of Tosca, 1:15 p.m.
- Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Tosca immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free

30, NOV. 1, 7, 10, 13
- Performances of Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 30 performance only.

NOVEMBER

1
- Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Eugene Onegin immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free

5
- High School Night: HGOco hosts high school students and their chaperones at a full-length performance of Puccini’s Tosca. School groups only. Wortham Center’s Brown Theater, 7 p.m. Visit HGO.org/StudentPerformances to reserve.

8
- Veterans Songbook Concert: HGOco presents selections from the Song of Houston Veterans Songbook project at Christ Church Cathedral, 7:30 p.m. Free

12 & 15
- Recital at Rienzi: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of MFAH, at 1406 Kirby Drive. Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 15 at 5 p.m.

25
- Holiday Tree Lighting at the Wortham Theater Center, noon.

DECEMBER

2
- Professional Development Workshop: HGOco presents a workshop for educators on The Little Prince. Wortham Theater Center, 5:30 p.m.

4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20
- Performances of Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright’s The Little Prince. Wortham Theater Center’s Cullen Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the December 4 performance only.

6
- Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about The Little Prince immediately following the performance.

8, 9, 15
- Student Matinees: HGOco hosts groups of students in grades 4–8 and their chaperones at performances of Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright’s The Little Prince. School groups only: reserve online at HGO.org/StudentPerformances.

JANUARY

3
- HGOco presents the High School Voice Studio Winter Recital at the Wortham Theater Center, Rehearsal Room 3, 6 p.m. Free.

7
- Opera Night Live: The Marriage of Figaro: the HGO Guild invites you to the Wortham Theater Center to enjoy wine and snacks and learn more about the opera from a special guest. 7 p.m. Contact event chair Dr. Alice Gates at 713-522-1178 for information.

22, 24, 30, FEB. 3, 5, 7
- Performances of Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 22 performance only.

24
- Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about The Marriage of Figaro immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free

28, 29, 30
- HGOco and Opera to Go! present world premiere performances of Mark Buller and Charles Anthony Silvestri’s The Puffed-Up Prima Donna. Heinen Theatre at Houston Community College, central campus, 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. daily. The Puffed-Up Prima Donna tours from Jan. 25 through May 20. Book a performance at HGO.org/OperaToGo or by calling 713-546-0231.
Performances of Dvořák’s *Rusalka*. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 29 performance only.

**FEBRUARY**

4  
• Concert of Arias: the 28th Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater. Champagne reception at 6 p.m., competition at 7 p.m. Celebration Dinner to follow in the Grand Foyer. For information, contact Scott Ipsen at 713-546-0242 or sipsen@hgo.org.

MARCH

5, 11, 13  
• World premiere performances of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*. Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater.

13  
• Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *Prince of Players* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

16, 17, 18  
• Spring Break at Discovery Green: HGOco presents activities and performances at Discovery Green, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily.

18 & 20  
• Recital at Rienzi: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of MFAH, at 1406 Kirby Drive. March 18 at 7:30 p.m. and March 20 at 5 p.m.

APRIL

2  
• Spring Event: the HGO Guild holds its annual fundraiser at the Houston Racquet Club, 10709 Memorial Dr. 6:30 p.m. Contact Gerry Aitken at 281-242-4466 for information.

FEBRUARY

6  
• Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to the Wortham Theater Center to enjoy wine and snacks and learn more about *Carousel* from a special guest. 7 p.m. Contact event chair Dr. Alice Gates at 713-522-1178 for information.

9  
• Opera Ball 2016: Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center, 7 p.m. Followed by the Encore Party. For information, contact Scott Ipsen at 713-546-0242 or sipsen@hgo.org.

13  
• Professional Development Workshop: HGOco presents a workshop for educators on *Siegfried*. Wortham Theater Center, 4:30 p.m.

16, 20, 23, 28, MAY 1  
• Performances of Wagner’s *Siegfried*. Wortham Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 16 performance only.

22, 24, 27, 29, 30, MAY 6, 7  
• Performances of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Carousel*. Wortham Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 22 performance only.

24  
• Veterans Songbook Showcase: songs from HGOco’s Veterans Songbook project will be performed in the Brown Alcove before the performance of *Carousel*, 1:15 p.m.

MAY

1  
• Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *Siegfried* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

5 & 8  
• Recital at Rienzi: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of MFAH, at 1406 Kirby Drive. May 5 at 7:30 and May 8 at 5 p.m.

15  
• HGOco presents the High School Voice Studio Graduation Recital, Duncan Recital Hall, Rice University, 6 p.m. Free.

JUNE

1  
• HGO Association Annual Meeting: Wortham Theater Center, 5–7 p.m. Open to board, trustees, and donors. Call 713-546-0217 for information.

6–10  
• Opera Experience: HGOco’s Opera Camp for students entering grades 4–9 in the fall of 2016. Wortham Theater Center.

13–17  
• Create an Opera: HGOco’s Opera Camp for students entering grades 3–6 in the fall of 2016. Wortham Theater Center.

13–24  
• Art of Opera: HGOco’s Opera Camp for students entering grades 7–12 in the fall of 2016. Wortham Theater Center.
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Want to brush up on the opera before you attend? Need directions to the theater? This information and much more is available on our website where you can also purchase tickets and make a donation: www.houstongrandopera.org

HGO's Customer Care Center is another great resource. For performance information, to purchase or exchange tickets, or to make a donation to HGO, contact the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372). You can also e-mail customercare@houstongrandopera.org. Throughout the season, the Center will be staffers Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (or until curtain time on performance days). The Center will be open on Saturdays and Sundays only when there is a performance, from noon until curtain. Hours are subject to change.

You can purchase tickets and make exchanges in person at the HGO Box Office, located in the Wortham Theater Center at 550 Prairie. Hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. If there is a performance on Saturday or Sunday, the Box Office will be open from noon until curtain. Hours are subject to change.

**Brown and Cullen Alcoves**

The Wortham Theater Center’s newly renovated alcoves were designed with your comfort in mind. Step inside one of these golden-hued spaces in the Grand Foyer, and you’ll find a calm place to reflect on the evening’s performance over dinner or drinks.

**Exchanging Your Tickets**

Full-season and Opera-to-Order subscribers may exchange their tickets for a different performance of the same opera without fee, subject to availability. Exchanges can be made by phone until 24 hours before the performance begins; for exchanges within 24 hours of curtain time, please visit the Box Office in person. Non-subscription single tickets may be exchanged with a service fee of $10 per ticket. When exchanged for tickets of greater value, the customer will be responsible for the difference; no refunds will be made. No exchanges are permitted after the performance has begun.

**Lost or Misplaced Tickets**

There is no charge for replacing lost tickets. More than 24 hours prior to the performance: call the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372) to request replacement tickets. They will be reprinted and held at the Will Call window for your performance. Within 24 hours of the performance: go to the Box Office Manager’s window. The Box Office Manager will access your account and reprint your tickets free of charge.

**Patrons with Disabilities**

The Wortham Theater Center features wheelchair access to both theaters with a choice of seating locations and ticket prices. An FM assistive listening device, generously provided by the Houston First Corporation, is available for use free of charge at all performances. Please call the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372) for full details.

**Descriptive services** for persons with vision loss are available with 48-hour advance reservations. Please call 713-546-0203 for details.

**Food and Beverage Services**

To pre-order food and beverages at the Grand Foyer Café prior to the performance, call Aramark at 713-250-3650. Pre-order beverages for intermission at any of the lobby bars when you arrive at the theater. When you return at intermission, your beverages will be waiting for you.

Full-season subscribers in the Founders Boxes, Premium Orchestra, and Loge Boxes may dine in the Founders Salon. Reservations are required, and meals must be ordered in advance. To take advantage of this subscriber-only benefit, Call Elegant Events and Catering by Michael at 713-533-9318.

**Parking**

Valet parking is a benefit of membership for Patrons Circle and National Patron donors; the valet station is located on Prairie Street. If you would like information about membership at this level, please contact a member of HGO’s Development staff at 713-546-0704, or e-mail us at donorservices@houstongrandopera.org.
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