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DIE WALKÜRE
APRIL 18, 22, 25, 30
MAY 3

SWEENEY TODD
APRIL 24, 26, 29
MAY 2, 8, 9

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HGOco and Cristo Rey Jesuit create cross-curricular learning through video games, all inspired by the themes of Wagner’s Ring.

Find out what your exceptional generosity to the **Inspiring Performances** campaign has made possible.

Stage manager Kristen Burke keeps the many moving parts of an opera performance in sync.

Go inside Richard Wagner’s mind for insight about **Die Walküre**.

Who—and what—is Sweeney Todd?

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Cover photo for **Die Walküre** by Tato Baeza/Palau de Les Arts Reina Sofia. Cover for **Sweeney Todd** designed by Pattima Singhalaka. This page, a scene from **Sweeney Todd**, photo by Marie-Noëlle Robert.
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Welcome to the Wortham Theater Center and to Houston Grand Opera’s spring repertory: Wagner’s *Die Walküre* and Stephen Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd*.

*Die Walküre*, the second work in Wagner’s *Ring* cycle, is nothing less than epic, with gods and mortals vying for the powerful gold ring we encountered in last season’s *Das Rheingold*. It’s a fantasy world, but one whose characters seem very recognizable today. We are thrilled to welcome back the creators of this dazzling production, the Catalan theater group La Fura dels Baus, and soprano Christine Goerke in her first staged U.S. performances of the title role, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde. We at HGO have been privileged to participate in her evolution from a rising young singer (she made her HGO debut in 2001 as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*) to a full-fledged star around whom opera companies build their seasons. She is surrounded by other exceptional Wagnerians, several of whom continue their portrayals from *Das Rheingold*.

Sharing the spring repertory with *Die Walküre* is *Sweeney Todd*, whose impact on musical theater is indisputable, and on opera as well—HGO was only the first (in 1984) of many companies that recognized its operatic potential and put it on their stages. In the title role, we welcome back baritone Nathan Gunn, who made his HGO debut as Guglielmo in the same *Così fan tutte* as Christine Goerke and most recently delighted us as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* (2011). We also welcome back conductor James Lowe, an HGO Studio alumnus and former associate conductor who has been pursuing a wonderful career as a conductor of opera and musical theater. Likewise, director Lee Blakeley regularly works in both opera and musical theater, and we are delighted to have him back.

Please take a moment to look at the listing on pp. 74–92, which contains the names of every person who supported *Inspiring Performance—the Campaign for Houston Grand Opera*. We were amazed and grateful to every single donor—all 6,648 individuals who made the commitment to invest in great art. Learn more about what these generous contributions are making possible in our article “You Did It!”

Please enjoy the performance.
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Dear Opera Patron:

Welcome to Houston Grand Opera for the exciting continuation of Wagner’s epic four-opera Ring cycle. As a Guarantor of HGO’s 2014–15 season, BBVA Compass proudly supports these performances of Die Walküre, the second opera in HGO’s Ring series, as well as HGO’s NEXUS Initiative for affordability.

Headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, with more than 1,500 employees based in Houston, BBVA Compass provides financial services in over 31 countries and to 50 million customers throughout the world. To celebrate the bank’s Spanish heritage, BBVA Compass proudly supports Spanish arts and culture all over the world. We are especially pleased to support HGO’s visually stunning Ring cycle, directed by Carlus Padrissa of the legendary Catalan stage collective La Fura dels Baus.

In addition to promoting Spanish arts and culture, BBVA Compass’s community philanthropy focuses on access, diversity, and financial inclusion. We are thrilled to be longtime supporters of the NEXUS Initiative, HGO’s affordability program that provides free performances and deeply underwritten tickets to ensure that everyone in Houston can experience world-class art without the barrier of price.

Thank you for attending this performance of Die Walküre and we hope you enjoy the opera.

Sincerely,

Manuel “Manolo” Sánchez
BBVA Chairman and CEO
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Dear Opera Patron:

Welcome to Houston Grand Opera’s production of Stephen Sondheim’s wickedly clever musical thriller, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP is a proud supporter of HGO’s American Musical Series, a multi-year celebration of our nation’s rich musical theater heritage. Brilliant works like *Sweeney Todd* deserve the full performing forces of the HGO Orchestra and the world’s finest vocal talents, including American baritone Nathan Gunn in the title role and British soprano Susan Bullock as Mrs. Lovett.

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP is an international law firm with 485 lawyers in Texas; New York; Washington, D.C.; Connecticut; Seattle; Dubai; and London. The firm serves Fortune 500 companies, major financial institutions, leading private investment funds, governmental entities and individuals concentrated in the energy, technology, and financial services sectors worldwide.

The firm and our employees offer time, resources, and professional services to many civic, charitable, and cultural endeavors. It is our pleasure to partner with HGO in order to make Houston a culturally vibrant urban destination. Please enjoy *Sweeney Todd* and thank you for supporting HGO.

Sincerely,

Mark Evans
Managing Partner
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HOW DO I MAXIMIZE THE BENEFIT OF MY CHARITABLE GIFTS?
Following the success of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, the world’s first mariachi opera and an HGO commission, we bring a new mariachi opera to HGO in May from the same creators, José “Pepe” Martínez and Leonard Foglia.

*El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past Is Never Finished* — is set on a Mexican hacienda in 1910, just as the Mexican Revolution is about to erupt. The story traces how the conflict shapes one family across multiple generations through the present day. The opera will be sung in Spanish and English with projected translations.

*Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán*—considered the finest and most influential mariachi ensemble in the world—takes the place of a conventional orchestra for *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, as it did for *Cruzar*. The cast features soprano Abigail Santos Villalobos, tenor Daniel Montenegro, baritone Paul La Rosa, baritone Ricardo Rivera, and boy tenor Sebastien E. De La Cruz, all in their HGO debuts. Returning artists are mariachi singer Vanessa Alonzo, who created the role of Lupita in *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, baritone Luis Ledesma (Escamillio in *Carmen*, 1998), and baritone Octavio Moreno, an alumnus of the HGO Studio who created the leading role of Laurentino in *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*.

*El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, a co-creation of Lyric Opera of Chicago and Houston Grand Opera, premiered in March at Lyric Opera and two other locations in the Chicago area. It travels to San Diego Opera in April before coming to Houston for three performances in May. It is not part of our 2014–15 subscription series; tickets must be purchased separately.

*El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, May 13, 16, and 17m, in the Brown Theater of the Wortham Theater Center. Call 713-228-OPERA (6737) for tickets or purchase online at HGO.org.

**HGO Studio Artist Wins Two Major Awards**

On March 15, second-year HGO Studio artist Reginald Smith Jr. was selected as one of five winners in the Grand Finals of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. The honor comes with a $15,000 cash prize; previous winners include Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Eric Owens, Samuel Ramey, and Frederica von Stade.

But that’s not all! Only two weeks earlier, on February 27, Smith was one of six top prize winners in the George London Foundation Awards Competition. Like the National Council Auditions, it is one of the most prestigious opera competitions in the world and comes with an equally impressive roster of former winners. The award comes with a $10,000 cash prize.

**Congratulations to Reggie!**

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

**HGO’s A Christmas Carol Up for International Award**

*A Christmas Carol*, an HGO commission and the first in a series of holiday-themed operas, is one of six finalists in the World Premieres category of the International Opera Awards. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on April 26.

British composer Iain Bell wrote the score to a libretto by actor, director, and author Simon Callow; the retelling of the familiar story is based on Dickens’s own one-man performance adaptation of his most popular work. *A Christmas Carol* premiered at HGO last December, starring tenor Jay Hunter Morris.
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CRISTO REY JESUIT AND HGOCO
Partners in Creative Learning

BY KIM ANDERSON

As HGO celebrates Wagner’s epic Ring cycle over a four-year period, a unique collaboration with local high school Cristo Rey Jesuit encourages students to explore the archetypal themes of each opera, one year and one theme at a time.

HG Oco and Cristo Rey Jesuit College Preparatory High School are working to develop a curriculum for each of the four works in Wagner’s Ring cycle focused on the central themes of power, creativity, discovery, and destiny. The school’s existing learning objectives are retained while specifically noting where these topics exist in literature, ethics, and theology. The curriculum will evolve across grade levels as each opera is presented.

Evaluating the mythology of the Ring has an intense writing component that requires students to synthesize their understanding of the operas’ metaphors with their existing knowledge. The Houston-based organization Writers in the Schools, a longtime partner of HG Oco, supports the creative writing instruction. Each year, students create a culminating project that gives a verbal and nonverbal representation to their understanding of the archetypal themes studied.

Through the HG Oco collaboration, the students are also learning programming skills in order to create digital interpretations of Wagner’s Ring operas and their meaning. The freshman class is learning to organize multiple plot lines into a leveled game system. This instruction requires the students to design problems and solutions through programming. The end result is individually created games that use music and avatars from the operas to solve power struggles in the student-generated virtual world. This set of lessons requires students to use linear thinking and creative problem-solving to create a viable game.

The sophomores are using a gaming program designed for classroom use that presents them with a set landscape. Each college-readiness course begins with the same map, and is presented with multiple problems and decisions that each class must resolve through consensus. The issues presented are parallel to the conflicts found in the operas. As each class progresses through the lessons, their landscapes begin to differ depending on their solutions. At the end of the 10-week unit, the classes will see each other’s virtual worlds. A series of activities using Microsoft’s Office Suite will compare and contrast the various results. The sophomores will also reflect on their experience of the democratic process and the consequences of decision making.

Typically, my students have little to no exposure to the arts. Through our project with HGO, my students’ thinking and writing skills were noticeably improved. The impact of adding performing arts into the core curriculum enriched my instruction and planning.

—From a letter written by Kim Anderson to the Texas Commission on the Arts evaluation panel

Kim Anderson teaches English composition at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School.
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Let’s go back to August 1955, when 16 ambitious arts-loving Houstonians met in the home of Mrs. Louis G. Lobit to launch what would soon become Houston Grand Opera. For its inaugural season, HGO planned only two productions—Strauss’s *Salome* and Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. However, since there were not yet any ticket buyers or underwriters to provide funding, the $40,000 needed to fully support the season was proving an early challenge.

By the meeting’s end, Walter Herbert, the newly appointed conductor and director of HGO, announced that an anonymous donor had made a gift so large that the first season was guaranteed. A short six months later, on a frigid January night, the curtain went up on *Salome* at the Music Hall. An enthusiastic audience was on hand.

The anonymous donor who helped realize HGO’s inaugural season was later revealed to be Gus S. Wortham. His generous spirit and passion to make our city a leader in arts and culture is clearly alive and well here in Houston.

Fast-forward to December 31, 2014. *Inspiring Performance*—the Campaign for Houston Grand Opera, HGO’s first comprehensive fundraising campaign and the largest fundraising effort in the history of Houston’s performing arts, closed with a flourish. HGO raised an unprecedented $172.9 million, exceeding our goal of $165 million by nearly eight million dollars.

A record-setting 6,648 donors contributed to HGO during the seven years of *Inspiring Performance*—that’s three Brown Theaters full of people! In
addition to HGO’s dedicated base of individual, corporate, government, and foundation supporters, an incredible 4,558 new donors joined the campaign and became part of the HGO family.

Thanks to you, we were able to fund all six priority areas of *Inspiring Performance*. Each of these priorities helps HGO to achieve its vision: to be the most innovative, inclusive, and transformative opera company in America.

**ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE—$94.2 MILLION**
Artistic excellence is the core of everything we do. HGO brings internationally renowned singers to Houston and works with the most creative, artistic minds in the world to craft some of the most innovative works in opera today. Thanks to the success of *Inspiring Performance*, during the course of the campaign Houston audiences experienced 17 new productions, seven world premieres, and 25 co-productions with top companies around the world.

Now, with your support, we continue our first-ever *Ring* cycle, one of the most important artistic projects in the company’s history, marking HGO’s full maturation as a world-class opera company.

**AFFORDABILITY: NEXUS INITIATIVE—$13 MILLION**
At HGO, we believe that great art should be available to everyone. The number one reason more people do not experience top-tier performing arts is cost—it is simply too expensive.

With your generous support of the NEXUS Initiative through *Inspiring Performance*, we have been able to remove the price barrier of opera for Houstonians. Since its inception in 2007, the NEXUS Initiative has provided deeply discounted and free tickets to over 175,000 families, students, young professionals, senior citizens, and underserved community members.

The NEXUS Initiative makes our inspiring art form as accessible as possible, including free performances at venues such as Miller Outdoor Theatre and the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, our dramatically discounted Student Performance Series, reduced-price NEXUS subscriptions, and single NEXUS tickets. Now everyone can experience the transformative magic of live opera.

**RELEVANCE: HGOCO—$11 MILLION**
A national model for how an arts organization serves its community, HGOCO provides opportunities for artistic observation, participation, and creation for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds. HGOCO’s programs include new commissions of community-focused chamber operas through *Song of Houston*, collaborative musical workshops with local organizations, and robust curriculum-aligned arts education programs for students, like *Opera to Go!* and Storybook Opera.
Formally launched in 2007, HGOco has already reached an incredible 1.25 million people, working with 150 schools, one hundred organizations, and over 100,000 Houstonians each season.

One of HGOco's many initiatives is the prestigious High School Voice Studio, which provides year-long scholarships to high school seniors who wish to pursue a professional singing career. Catherine Goode, a HSVS alumna and now a college senior, writes "As part of the HSVS, I had the opportunity to sing in master classes with world-class performers, teachers and coaches...HSVShaped the way I view performing and collegiate-level education." Since the program's inception in 1999, 100 percent of all HSVS participants have been accepted to an institution of higher learning.

Thanks to Inspiring Performance, HGOco continues to break down barriers to the arts by creating innovative new ways to collaborate with the community and tell the stories of Houston through words and music. For example, HGOco has forged an exciting new partnership with NASA and Houston's space exploration community, resulting in O Columbia, a new chamber opera that explores the American spirit of exploration that will premiere in fall 2015.

HGO STUDIO: $6 MILLION

Inspiring Performance helped further strengthen the HGO Studio, one of the world's most prestigious young artist programs. HGO Studio alumni are among the top echelon of international singers—Joyce DiDonato, Rachel Willis-Sørensen, Jamie Barton, Denyce Graves, Eric Owens, and Ana María Martínez all trained in the HGO Studio.

The HGO Studio has grown in essential ways, and in 2011, HGO added the Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA), a new program that provides serious training for young artists at the undergraduate level. Undergraduate singers nationwide audition for placement in YAVA, which fills a critical gap in the training of young vocalists. The testament to YAVA's success can be found in their alumni—three of whom were 2015 Concert of Arias finalists!

HGO is now the only company in the United States that nurtures young voices from childhood (Children’s Chorus and Opera Camp), through high school (High School Voice Studio), undergraduate studies (YAVA), and post-graduate level and beyond (HGO Studio). Thanks to Inspiring Performance, HGO is doing its part to develop and support the next generation of great opera singers.

HGO ENDOWMENT: $17.1 MILLION

The HGO Endowment ensures that the company is a permanent part of the life of our city—a transformative force in the lives of future generations of Houstonians.

During Inspiring Performance, gifts and pledges helped to grow the value of the HGO Endowment from 28.7 million in 2007 to an astounding 53 million by the campaign's end. The importance of building the HGO Endowment cannot be overstated and was a major focus area of our campaign.

LEGACY GIFTS: $31.6 MILLION

Another vital component of Inspiring Performance was legacy giving and we encouraged HGO's most devoted supporters to consider remembering HGO in their estate plans. During the span of Inspiring Performance, HGO's Laureate Society, a group of dedicated donors who have made commitments to HGO in their estate plans, increased its membership from 130 members to an incredible 235 members. The foresight of Laureate Society members creates the legacy for future generations of the HGO family.

OUR THRILLING FUTURE

This year, we celebrate our 60th anniversary season and continue our commitment to serve the cultural needs of our young, diverse, ever-expanding city. An opera company can never stand still. HGO must expand—to allow more people than ever before to experience our art, to impact more people, and to ensure that we continue to transform and inspire lives in the decades to come.

Inspiring Performance proved that Houstonians truly believe in the importance of arts and culture to our city. Thanks to you, HGO is now operating at an all-time high, in both the artistic quality and quantity of our programs, performances, and collaborations. And, from Gus S. Wortham's first major gift in 1955 to each and every one of the 6,648 donors to Inspiring Performance—we could not have done it without you.

If all of us here at Houston Grand Opera said “thank you” 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it would take almost seven years to say it 173 million times. We start now. Thank you for showing that great art matters to Houston. You are truly inspiring.
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Scholarship recipients are currently attending more than 100 Texas colleges and universities, with awards worth nearly $40 million!

Just this year, More than 2,100 students are attending college on Show scholarships!

Learn more at rodeohouston.com
One of the wonderful things about being a theater stage manager is that it is rarely a straight, chosen path. It’s a career that often evolves through twists and turns and exploring many different interests before the penny drops and one finally realizes that being a stage manager is a “real job.”

Stage managers must have great organizational skills (think wedding planner), the ability to prioritize a thousand things that are constantly moving on their command (think quarterback), unending patience (think nun), and a sixth sense about things that will happen in the future (think clairvoyant!).

At HGO, we are lucky to have one of the finest stage managers in the field of opera—Kristen Burke. I spoke to Kristen about the incredible journey that led her to Texas and the difficulties she overcame that made HGO home.

Perryn Leech: So was this your calling? A bright light that begged to you to walk towards it? I MUST be an opera stage manager?

Kristen Burke: Not at all—I wanted to major in physical therapy while I was at the University of Minnesota. Pretty soon after I started I realized that it wasn’t what I wanted to do. I had a background working with athletes and thought it would be a fun career. Suddenly, I was doing a lot of workers’ comp cases and paperwork. I just realized that it wasn’t what I wanted.

My counselor asked me what I enjoyed and I mentioned I had done some work on events. She suggested I create my own major and work with the theater department to learn more about lighting and sound. I was then persuaded to study stage management and I loved it straight away. The people were incredible to work with and my experience in events created a very good fit for me.

So how did that progress into a full-time job?

Not easily! For over two years, I worked for the Development Department at the Guthrie Theater in Minnesota planning events. It was a long way from the stage.

An opportunity arose for me to be the assistant company manager for Sesame Street Live’s nine-month tour. It was very large scale and different from many of the shows at the Guthrie. After the tour, I knew I wanted to gain experience in other

HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech continues his season-long profile series on Houston Grand Opera’s “unsung heroes”—the men and women whose work is vital to HGO’s success but who often go unrecognized.
theater projects. At times, I had three or four overlapping jobs.

Minnesota Opera had heard about my work and offered me the position of assistant stage manager. It was my introduction to opera. The fact that I could read music was a huge asset. The position was for a one-season contract but I ended up staying for four and a half years.

**How different did you find opera from theater and events?**

I would describe it as the same but different. There are so many more moving parts to an opera and it does take some getting used to. I was very happy at Minnesota Opera but the company hit a hard time and reduced its season. I had the opportunity to take a contract at Atlanta Opera and made the decision to head south. The artistic standard and scale were very different in Atlanta. I found I wasn't enjoying myself and it wasn't as interesting as my work in Minnesota.

**And so what did you think when you got the call from HGO?**

I was so excited to get the chance to work at a top-level company that had such a wonderful reputation and did such amazing work. Also, the season tied in
perfectly with my work at Glimmerglass Opera in the summer. Suddenly, I was almost a full-time worker!

In Houston, I started as an assistant stage manager under a production stage manager and did not get to “call” shows. She left unexpectedly after only one season and you asked me to step up. I shared the management of the department and called every other show. That was a good opportunity for me and we had built a really good team.

In my second year in my new position, I became pregnant and was very sick. HGO was amazing, especially considering that I was on a freelance contract, and allowed me time off when I needed to concentrate on getting well. What made it even harder was that my partner was not in Houston at the time. I was essentially becoming a single mother.

My team here and others in the company were like a giant family to me. I was living in your garage apartment, and just having someone to look out for me—and then Shelby when she was born—was a huge help, and still is.

Those were certainly tough times. The following year turned out even more traumatically, didn’t it?

That is an understatement! I was having great difficulty breathing easily after Shelby was born. After a while, I knew that I needed to go and find out if there was anything that could be done to help.

When I went to see the doctor, she examined me and really wasn’t happy with what she saw. She decided to take a sample and run some tests. When she called me with the results, she actually told me to sit down. She had some surprising news.

I had a very rare cancer (nasopharyngeal carcinoma) that is normally only found in middle-aged, Asian men living in China. I was going to need to start aggressive chemotherapy and radiation treatment straight away. It was a real body blow. Once reality sank in, I knew that I was going to be able to fight it with support from my family and my HGO family.

My parents moved down to Houston almost immediately to help out. I proceeded to miss most of that season as I underwent the treatment. I decided to start my blog, “Call me Mr. Chang,” to document what was going on. It also allowed me a creative outlet to assist with my recovery.

Undergoing chemotherapy while raising a child less than 12 months old was very trying at times. Everyone rallied around me and gave me strength. I truly could not have done it without all their love and support.

I remember those dark times very well indeed. You were able to miraculously come back as a cancer survivor and resume your career.

Yes, but since Shawn, my partner, was still working all over the country, I had to find day care for Shelby around what most people would consider a totally ridiculous schedule. Having to drop off your child at 2:00 p.m. and then wanting to pick them up at midnight can give people the wrong idea!

As the years pass, it actually gets more difficult in some ways to balance work and parenting. You have to work around school hours and make choices about what she can do after that. Shelby loved ballet and gymnastics and used to go to classes, but that is almost impossible now during the school year. On the positive side, it has certainly made Shelby a confident and assured child! This summer, I have decided to go back to Glimmerglass Opera. My partner can stay through the opening of the show so it will be a great place to have some family time.

So why do you still do it? It is clearly difficult to plan consistently.

I still get a huge kick out of the work! New productions and new challenges on every show coupled with amazing colleagues and friends make it worth it. Juggling multiple things at work is something that I have become very used to, and now it’s normal in my family life as well. It is certainly never dull!
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THE LITTLE PRINCE
DEC. 4–20, 2015

MOZART
THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO
JAN. 22–FEB. 7, 2016

DVOŘÁK
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WAGNER
SIEGFRIED
APR. 16–MAY 1, 2016

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CAROUSEL
APR. 22–MAY 7, 2016
THE 2015–16 SEASON

Puccini
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Karen Reeves

Sofia Selowsky †
Ben Edquist †
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The Pilot

Tchaikovsky
EUGENIE ONEGIN
Oct. 30, Nov. 1m, 7, 10, 13
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Eugene Onegin
Scott Hendricks ‡
Tatyana
Ekaterina Scherbachenko *
Lenka
Norman Reinhardt ‡

Olga
Eugene Onegin
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Prince Gremm
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Conductor
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Serge Bennathan *
Chorus Master
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The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair

Rachel Portman/Nicholas Wright
THE LITTLE PRINCE
Dec. 4, 6m, 9±, 11±, 13m ±, 16, 18, 19±, 20
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Grand Underwriter—The Cullen Foundation

The Pilot
Joshua Hopkins ‡
Ben Edquist ‡
The Fox
Sophia Selowsky †

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Children’s Chorus
Conductor
Bradley Moore
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Emily Senturia † ±

Production
Francesca Zambello
Revival Director
Ellen Douglas
Schlaefer
Set and Costume Designer
Maria Bjornson

Original Lighting Designer
Ricky Fisher
Children’s Chorus Director
Karen Reeves

Wagner
SIEGFRIED
Apr. 16, 20, 23, 28, May 1m
Premier Guaractors—Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.; The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Mr. and Mrs. D. Bradley McWilliams.

Edward Kynaston
Ben Edquist ‡
Margarite Hughes
Mane Galoyan †
Charles II
Chad Sheltion †

Sir Charles Sedley
Joseph Evans
Villiers, Duke of Buckingham
Scott Quinn ‡

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margarite Hughes

Production
La Fura dels Baus

Director
Ricard Gisela *

Mozart
THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO
Jan. 22, 24m, 30, Feb. 3, 5, 7m
Grand Underwriter—PwC

Figaro
Adam Plachetka *
Susanna
Heidi Stober ‡
Count Almaviva
Joshua Hopkins ‡
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Cherubino
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Conductor
Harry Bicket *

Production
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Ian Rutherford Set and Costume Designer
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Ben Edquist ‡
Margarite Hughes
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Sir Charles Sedley
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Scott Quinn ‡

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margarite Hughes

Production
La Fura dels Baus

Director
Ricard Gisela *

Rusalka
Ana Maria Martinez ‡
Prince
Brian Jagde *
Vodnik, a water sprite
Richard Paul Fink ‡

Jezibaba, a witch
Jill Grove ±
Foreign Princess
Maida Hunderling *

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Conductor
Harry Bicket

Production
Melly Still *
Revival Director
Donna Stirrup *
Set and Costume Designer
Rae Smith *
Original Lighting Designer
Paule Constable

Rogers and Hammerstein
CAROUSEL
Apr. 22, 24m, 27, 29, 30, May 3, 5
Grand Underwriter—Mr. and Mrs. D. Bradley McWilliams

Puccini
RUSALKA
Jan. 29, 31m, Feb. 6, 9, 12
Guarantor—Vinson & Elkins LLP
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Rusalka
Ana Maria Martinez ‡
Prince
Brian Jagde *
Vodnik, a water sprite
Richard Paul Fink ‡

Jezibaba, a witch
Jill Grove ±
Foreign Princess
Maida Hunderling *

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Conductor
Harry Bicket

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Revival Director
Donna Stirrup *
Set and Costume Designer
Rae Smith *
Original Lighting Designer
Paule Constable

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Fire Starter
Inside the Mind of Richard Wagner
Richard Wagner was an igniter. He set fire to language, harmony, and the cultural experience of gathering for live theater, and the blaze is still burning. Over the four centuries of its existence, opera has undergone countless cultural and historical shifts that have affected it by varying degrees, but there was a time before and after Richard Wagner. Culturally speaking, he cleaved the world in two.

The mania for his “music dramas” (a term he preferred over “opera”) has never waned in the century-and-a-third since his death. Indeed, it is perhaps as strong today as it has ever been. Fans of Wagner know every symbol enfolded within the name of each of Brünnhilde’s Valkyrie sisters and every profession of every Meistersinger, and they endlessly debate the references from various world religions hidden within Parsifal. There are Wagner tourists who travel the world solely to see his operas. Last season’s Das Rheingold at HGO was attended by patrons from 41 U.S. states and 14 foreign countries, representing a 309 percent increase in our “out of town” attendance.

WAGNER’S ART

Wagner’s theatrical ideal and chief muse was a playwright who shared his own taste for revolution, the ancient Greek Aeschylus (525–456 BCE). It was in the imagination and spirituality of Aeschylus’s trilogy Oresteia where Wagner found the synthesis of a wide range of divergent ideas and styles he had been seeking, and it became his obsession to achieve the same thing in opera. He called the concept gesamtkunstwerk, a total work of art. Describing his first reading of the Oresteia, Wagner wrote in his 1870 autobiography Mein Leben (My Life):

There was nothing to equal the exalted emotion evoked in me by Agamemnon; and to the close of Eumenides, I remained in a state of transport from which I have never really returned to become fully reconciled with modern literature. My ideas about the significance of drama, and especially of the theater itself, were decisively molded by these impressions.

The ancient Greek theater choruses commented, foretold, and warned both characters and audience, as they were both within and outside the main action. This magnetism of opposites significantly fired Wagner’s musical imagination, and he moved this idea into the dense, large orchestral texture of his operas, writing grandly symphonic music with its own philosophical
narrative. As so beautifully stated by Father M. Owen Lee, *The Ring of the Nibelung* is “the vastest piece of music ever conceived by the mind of man.” And so it is. Much is discussed about the length of Wagner’s operas, when what is actually so remarkable, given the scope of their ambitious ideas, is their brevity.

**WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?**

*Das Rheingold* unfolds like a fairy tale that contains within it a symbolic history of sentient life: in the beginning there is nothing but hazily undulating water. The opera concludes with an overwhelming blaze of orchestral majesty, a great slow march across a bridge of rainbows. Between the outer scenes, the entire machine of the *Ring*’s plot is set in motion: the dwarf Alberich has stolen the eponymous gold from the Rhinemaidens and forged it into a ring that has made him seemingly invincible. In turn, the chief of the gods, Wotan, steals Alberich’s treasure for himself but then must use it to pay the giants Fafner and Fasolt for constructing the gods’ fortress, Valhalla. At the conclusion of *Das Rheingold* we are left with a world only intermittently at peace and significantly in danger.

The action of *Die Walküre* takes place many years after *Das Rheingold*. Enough time has elapsed for Wotan to sire nine daughters with the earth goddess, Erda, including the title character, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde. With a different mother, a she-wolf, he fathers the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde. In order to maximize their chances of recovering the ring, Wotan separates them at birth; that is why, when they meet as adults, they do not recognize each other and fall in love. Wotan has no children with his lawful wife, Fricka. Also between the action of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Wotan has been living near the giant Fafner’s cave, hoping to recover the stolen gold, the curse of which has become temporarily dormant because the giant has used the gold’s power to transform himself into a dragon now guarding the gold beneath his slumbering mass. We will meet Fafner again in the second act of *Siegfried*.

*Die Walküre* is an opera about familial strife and love relationships, and thus is heavily weighted with duet scenes and soaringly lyrical and longing music: brother and sister/husband and wife (Siegmund and Sieglinde), competing lovers of Sieglinde (Hunding and Siegmund), husband and wife (Wotan and Fricka), cousins (Siegmund and Brünnhilde), and most poignantly, in two scenes, father and daughter (Wotan and Brünnhilde). Much of the action of *Die Walküre* is recognizably universal: though the characters are gods, these deities behave shockingly like the rest of us. Wotan, whose actions set in motion all of the events of *Die Walküre*, from the opening storm to the final foreboding fire, is left completely heartbroken in the remarkable scene with his favorite daughter, Brünnhilde, that ends the opera. The opera’s most famous music, The Ride of the Valkyries, is relatively brief. It opens the third act and is the music of war: the Valkyrie sisters are gathering the bodies of heroes from the battlefield. The war symbolism was famously extended in Francis Ford Coppola’s use of this music in his 1979 Vietnam War drama, *Apocalypse Now*.

**FINDING WAGNER’S VISUAL “VOICE”**

Physical manifestations of Wagner’s operas have been so wildly diverse that it is pointless to even attempt a survey of them, for a brief overview would generalize and an analysis of any depth would take decades of research and dozens of eventual volumes. Houston Grand Opera’s production, which originated at the Palau des Arts in Valencia, Spain, is by the Barcelona-based theatrical troupe La Fura dels Baus,
founded by some brilliant nonconformists in the late 1970s to develop various types of street theater and to integrate audiences with performers. Blurring the lines between theater and life has been at the forefront of their artistic mission.

On the surface, the Ring doesn’t seem a natural fit for this daring and innovative group, which specializes in integrating modern technology with old and traditional theatrical forms. Carlus Padrissa, the director and theatrical force behind this production, had never seen a production of the Ring cycle before creating this one and claims still to have never experienced any other Ring. Instead of immersing himself in the interpretations of others, he chose a much riskier but more creative course: to immerse himself in the source literature that inspired Wagner, seeking to draw an interpretive parallel.

Most importantly, Padrissa traveled to the ancient Greek amphitheater at Epidaurus, the type of performing space that Wagner aspired to recreate in the theater he designed and built exclusively for his own works at Bayreuth, Germany. It was at Epidaurus that Padrissa discovered the origin of the term deus ex machina (machine of the gods): there, cranes affixed to the top of the stage were used to raise and lower actors portraying gods. This became one of Padrissa’s most important concepts for his Ring.

All of the imagery of the Fura Ring production comes from ancient literature. There isn’t a single symbol from the 20th or 21st centuries; if the production resembles science fiction it is only because science fiction shares some of the same sources as the Ring mythology. The technological conveyances are modern, like video or Loge’s Segway, but their symbolism is not: Wagner’s visual imagination was generations ahead of what was physically possible in his era, his frustration about that fact constantly on display in his letters and particularly in Cosima Wagner’s copious diaries. The images displayed by the video are sometimes literal but often carry their own visual leitmotifs, as Wagner’s words and music often convey multiple sets of interlocking images and ideas. Wagner imagined that Loge, god of fire, would be capable of going anywhere, just like fire itself. But Loge is only a demi-god and does not have the power of flight; hence, the Segway. These are but two examples—this Ring production is filled with such inventiveness, and it is difficult to imagine that the provocateur Richard Wagner would not have delighted in it.

Wagner loved the symbiosis of imagery and music, and a great part of the appeal of this production is that it can be followed without prior knowledge of the Ring cycle and even without glancing at the supertitles. But surely the profoundest consistent imagery of this production is the centrality of human life, and in this it aligns most closely with Wagner’s lifelong inspirations. The thrilling exoskeleton of Valhalla conjures the human toil it would have taken to build it. Even the gold itself is a living entity, not just an extraction from the earth, and Alberich’s terrible corruption is depicted not merely as the marketing of a commodity, but as the devaluation of human life.

Wagner’s extensive stage directions for the Ring make for wonderful reading. They anticipate a cinematic era Wagner did not live to see and are fanciful and beautiful, infused with a rare visual imagination. In the final moments of Die Walküre, Wagner’s written instructions for Wotan and his daughter Brünnhilde fill his moving music with even more poignancy:

Wotan lingeringly kisses both her eyes. She sinks back, with eyes closed, into his arms, as consciousness slips away...he gazes at her, then closes her helmet; his eye then rests on the form of the sleeping woman, which he now covers completely with her warrior’s great steel shield...he directs the point of his spear towards a large rock...a stream of fire springs from the rock, gradually increasing in intensity until it becomes a brilliant fiery glow...he stretches out his spear as though casting a spell. He then gazes sorrowfully back at Brünnhilde, turns slowly to leave and looks back once more before disappearing through the flames. The curtain falls.

And his most valiant and radiant daughter, asleep upon a rock, peacefully awaits the arrival of a hero not yet born.
The human brain craves categorization. Developing minds seek out patterns, repetition, and ordered structures in order to organize, identify, and classify day-to-day behavior. This framework of standard situations, known as schemas, allows the brain to extract common elements to categorize events. These structures help us identify and differentiate between a birthday party and a funeral, a Mozart sonata and a Madonna album, a domesticated dog and a wild beast.

But what happens when reality falls outside the realm of expectation? Herein lies the allure of Sweeney Todd. Stephen Sondheim’s chilling and yet comedic take on the story of a demon barber bent on revenge has baffled and intrigued audiences since its 1979 premiere. Refusing to fall politely into any one category, the piece challenges the audience to question what we anticipate from a serial killer, and eventually asks that we sympathize with this man who may be teetering on the edge of sanity. Sweeney Todd lives in this tense land of shattered expectations.

**Musical or Opera?**

The perennial question when approaching Sweeney Todd remains “Is it a musical, or is it an opera?” The answer lies in the expectations of an audience. A century of great American musicals has instructed the audience to anticipate ingénues being swept off their feet by dashing leading men, choruses remaining subordinate to the individualism of the principals, and plots wrapped up comfortably and succinctly.

Opera, of course, comes with its own litany of expectations. We envision the formality of a darkened hall, dazzling costumes and grand scenery, tragic divas in complex love triangles, and the human voice reigning as the highest priority. Sweeney Todd does not give either audience exactly what it expects.

In many ways, Sweeney Todd’s mosaic construction, rapidly shifting moods, recurrent leitmotifs, and complex vocal ensembles define it as an opera. Spoken dialogue, gut-busting comedy, and a premiere on Broadway shift our expectations much closer to musical theater. After the Broadway premiere on March 1, 1979, a successful run in London’s West End and a U.S. national tour followed. Houston Grand Opera and New York City Opera were the first opera companies to produce the work, in 1984, which may have added to the confusion of how to categorize the piece.

Sondheim himself thinks that one defining characteristic may be the context of the performance. Speaking of Gian-Carlo Menotti’s works, Sondheim once said, “I truly believe that when The Medium and The Telephone were done on Broadway, they were shows… And when they were done in opera houses, they were operas.” By this measure, Sweeney can undoubtedly be considered an opera.

Nomenclature aside, the greatness of Sweeney Todd is palpable from the first crash of the organ. Sondheim, who had been mentored by his surrogate father Oscar Hammerstein II from a very early age, learned how Hammerstein penned the now-iconic lyrics to Oklahoma!, Show Boat, and South Pacific—and then promptly rejected the style. Beginning with West Side Story, Sondheim crafted
lyrics that operated on a deeper level, setting rhymes to illuminate characters, not simply to fit the melody.

Sondheim’s superior lyrics are apparent from the first vocal entrance when the chorus describes the mysterious Todd. Sondheim takes his single-syllable last name and rhymes it with odd, trod, nod, and God. Unexpected turns in the lyrics, rhythm, and melody paint a vivid picture of our title character as the piece explodes into action.

**TENSION…**

Sondheim says that in *Sweeney Todd*, he set out to write a score for a horror film. “All those chords, and that whole kind of harmonic structure…the use of electronic sounds and the loud crashing organ had a wonderful Gothic feeling. It had to be unsettling, scary, and very romantic.”

Inspiration was found in the music of Bernard Hermann, Alfred Hitchcock’s preferred composer of film soundtracks. Hermann penned the iconic scores for *Psycho, Vertigo*, and *North by Northwest*, and Sondheim was fascinated by his use of dissonance to sustain tension over time—which he effectively uses throughout the entirety of the score, particularly in scenes with spoken dialogue over orchestral underscoring. Sondheim says, “I figured the only way to tell a horror story is to keep musical texture going, because in most horror films what really scares you, apart from the lighting and makeup, is the music.”

Much like his fellow eminent American composers Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and Leonard Bernstein, Sondheim does not fit into either category of popular or classical. Instead (to use his own words to describe Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Carousel*) he exists in the twilight zone—the space between musicals and opera that is full of possibility, free of restrictions, and open for exploration.

Joanne Gordon, author of *Art Isn’t Easy: The Theater of Stephen Sondheim*, variously calls him an avant-garde artist working in the populist art form; an acerbic cynic who manages to capture the ambivalent pain of passion; a brilliant intellectual who excels in bawdy, lascivious comedic wit.

**…AND RELEASE**

When Sondheim attended a performance of Christopher Bond’s play *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, he was delighted that it was not a naturalistic horror show à la Grand-Guignol, the Parisian theater that specialized in the genre. Sondheim found himself enraptured by a compelling melodrama that splintered his expectations. “Melodrama and farce are my two favorite forms of theater because…they are opposite sides of the same coin,” he says.

In adapting the century-old story that was the source material for Bond’s play, Sondheim balanced tension and release with great effectiveness. As Todd himself says, “there are two types of men and only two” and his razor-fast shifts from melodrama to farce provoke both comedy and uncertainty.

In the grand sequence that closes the first act, Todd laments his missed opportunity at getting the revenge he has so longed for. Through the course of “Epiphany”—which undoubtedly constitutes an aria—we watch Todd change from wanting to kill only one man to proclaiming that all should die: “Because the lives of the wicked should be made brief/For the rest of us, death will be a relief/We all deserve to die!” In this moment we see our title character shift from a vengeful husband and father to a cold-blooded serial killer.

The melodrama then modifies to farce as Mrs. Lovett, an unsuccessful piemaker, suggests a mutually beneficial solution to their current problems. The hilarious “Have a Little Priest” juxtaposes Todd’s smooth waltz rhythms with Lovett’s incessant chattering in excruciating counterpoint as they contemplate the various kinds of human flesh they will use in their pies, leaving the audience cackling their way into the intermission.

Didn’t expect to be laughing at a thriller musical drama about a vengeful serial killer? Don’t expect to despise our title character by the end of the show either.
MAD MAN—OR BAD MAN?

In the more romantic days of psychiatry, there was a mental disorder called folie à deux—craziness for two. Lovett and Todd are bound by mutual madness, sharing a skewed view of the universe and bolstering each other’s distortions while warbling happily about pies made out of people. This shared madness also happens on a larger scale between the artists and the audience. The theater beckons us to enter another world, and to follow and believe this other domain. Ventures to the theater can be seen as our own desire to experience madness; we enter a darkened room and surrender to an alternate reality created by other minds using only sound, shapes, movement, and light. The more clever the minds, the easier it is to submit to this other world.

Sweeney is much more than a fantasy world. It is an intense and slippery universe where tension and release are manipulated to keep us off guard. An off-balance audience is more vulnerable to artistic vision, and Sondheim uses plot twists to engage our higher thinking levels, while sustained dissonance creates visceral tension deep beneath the surface. Comedy sweeps in at the last moment to release the tension, only to slowly start building it back again. As beliefs are redefined and juxtaposed with cacophonous aural landscapes and wry humor, the audience must be attentive, contemplative, and hyper-aware.

Sondheim has created the perfect comic villain in the sociopath Mrs. Lovett. Her crimes are subtler than Todd’s, and while she claims to love him, her first reaction to his unraveling is to try to make a profit. Todd, on the other hand, is much more complex. Is he hero or villain, victim or perpetrator? When he finally snaps under the weight of his own obsession, are we to pity his madness or condemn his evil? And how do we feel about our reactions to him? It’s relatively easy to assign the label of “insane” to a serial killer who is not in control of his own actions; the alternative is to believe that Todd, a character we have come to see as fully human, is also fully lucid.

In the final scenes of the piece, while our serial killer’s hands drip with blood, our expected schema is washed away and we’re left with feelings of compassion instead of loathing toward the titular source of terror. Simply attending Sweeney Todd is no small feat, but surrendering to the brilliance of Stephen Sondheim’s storytelling leaves us breathless, bewildered, and wondering if the next Sweeney is already watching and waiting.
Hauptbühnenpremieren:

**Das Rheingold**
April 11 – 26, 2014

**Die Walküre**
April 18 – May 3, 2015

**Siegfried**
April 16 – May 1, 2016

**Götterdämmerung**
April 22 – May 7, 2017
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Die Walküre

A Music Drama in Three Acts
Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner

Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Sung in German with Projected English Translation

CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

Siegmund       Simon O’Neill
                Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2014–15
Sieglinde      Karita Mattila
Hunding        Ain Anger
Wotan          Iain Paterson
Brünnhilde     Christine Goerke
Fricka         Jamie Barton *
                Sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Michael Cochran
Gerhilde       Julie Makerov *
Helmwige       Kelly Kaduce
Waltraute      Catherine Martin *
Schwertleite   Meredith Arwady
Ortlinde       Natalya Romaniw *
Siegrune       Eve Gigliotti *
Grimgerde      Renée Tatum
Rossweisse     Faith Sherman *

A co-production of Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía, Valencia, and Maggio Musicale, Florence.

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Conductor                  Patrick Summers  
                        Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
Production                 La Fura dels Baus
Director                   Carlus Padrissa
Associate Director        Esteban Muñoz
Set Designer               Roland Olbeter
Costume Designer          Chu Uroz
Lighting Designer          Peter van Praet
Video Designer             Franc Aleu
Lighting Realizer          Antonio Castro *
Musical Preparation       Peter Pasztor ‡
                        Bradley Moore  
                        Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
                        Christopher Turbessi †
                        Ms. Marianne Kahl/Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D., Fellow

German Diction Coach       Irene Spiegelman
Stage Manager              Christopher Staub
Assistant Director         Katrina Bachus
Surtitles by               Paul Hopper

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Surtitles cued by          Emily Senturia †
                        Beth Madison Fellow
                        Catherine Schaefer (April 25)

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

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

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

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

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

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.

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

**Synopsis**

**Die Walküre** lasts approximately 4 hours and 50 minutes, including two intermissions.

**Act I**

On a stormy night, exhausted from fighting, Siegmund stumbles upon a house where he seeks shelter. It is the home of Sieglinde and her ill-tempered husband, Hunding. As Sieglinde tends to her unexpected visitor; they are instantly and deeply attracted to one another—which does not go unnoticed by Hunding when he arrives. He asks the stranger who he is: Siegmund explains that his mother was killed and his sister abducted. He wandered for some time with his father, who later abandoned him. In trying to save a young woman from a forced marriage, he killed her brothers and was pursued by relatives seeking vengeance. Hunding replies that he was among the kinsmen searching for him and warns Siegmund to be ready to fight the next day.

But Siegmund has no weapon—his sword was wrenched away from him during his last battle. Alone, he calls on his father for the sword he once promised him. Sieglinde returns, having given Hunding a sleeping potion so that the stranger can flee. She shows him a sword imbedded in an ash tree, having been thrust into it by a mysterious visitor. She explains that many have tried to pull it out, but all failed. Siegmund realizes the sword is the one promised by his father, and Sieglinde recognizes Siegmund as her own twin brother. Siegmund pulls the sword from the tree and claims Sieglinde as his bride.

**Intermission**

**Act II**

As Siegmund and Hunding prepare for their duel, Wotan, leader of the gods, tells his daughter, the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, that she must defend Siegmund in the fight. He doesn’t explain that Siegmund is the hero he has been grooming to do what his treaties forbid him to do: regain the ring. But Fricka, Wotan’s wife and the goddess of marriage, is outraged by the incestuous relationship of Sieglinde and Siegmund and insists that Hunding’s marital rights should prevail. Wotan realizes that if he doesn’t enforce the law, he will lose his power, so he reverses his instructions to Brünnhilde: she is now to fight for Hunding.

Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund telling him that he will die in the duel and instructs him to follow her to Valhalla. When he learns that Sieglinde cannot accompany him there, however, he tells Brünnhilde he will not go. Moved by his love for Sieglinde, Brünnhilde decides to disobey Wotan and help Siegmund. A furious Wotan appears and shatters Siegmund’s sword, allowing Hunding to kill him. With a wave of his hand, Wotan kills Hunding, and then sets out to find Brünnhilde, who has escaped with Sieglinde and the shards of the broken sword.

**Intermission**

**Act III**

On their way to Valhalla with the slain heroes they have gathered, the Valkyries are assembling on a mountaintop when Brünnhilde arrives with Sieglinde. When they learn Brünnhilde has disobeyed Wotan and that he is pursuing her, they are afraid to help her and Sieglinde to hide. In despair, Sieglinde wishes she had died with her lover, but when Brünnhilde tells her she is carrying Siegmund’s child, she is eager to survive. Brünnhilde gives her the pieces of the sword, saying that the child will grow up to forge the pieces anew, and Sieglinde makes her escape. Brünnhilde bravely remains to face Wotan’s wrath: he strips her of her divinity, making her a mortal woman, and decrees that she be left asleep until a man awakens her and claims her as his wife. She implores Wotan to surround her with a wall of fire so that only the bravest of men would ever attempt to penetrate it. Wotan then invokes Loge, the god of fire, and leaves her alone on the mountain surrounded by flames.

**HGO Performance History**

Die Walküre is the only Ring opera staged at HGO prior to the current cycle. The company’s sole staging of the opera took place during the 1959–60 season. Margaret Harshaw, one of the most important Wagnerian heroines of her day, was the Brünnhilde, and the great Jerome Hines sang Wotan.

Performances beginning at 6 p.m. will end at approximately 10:50 p.m.

The performance beginning at 2 p.m. will end at approximately 6:50 p.m.

At HGO performances, the excellent natural acoustics of the theaters in the Wortham Theater Center are relied upon to convey sound from the stage and pit. Electronic sound enhancement is used only with spoken dialogue (as in The Merry Widow), in musicals (as in A Little Night Music), in sound effects (thunder), and at the composer’s direction (as in Nixon in China and The Little Prince). Visible microphones are positioned to record performances for archival purposes.
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

VIOLIN
Denise Tarrant *, Concertmaster
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
Jonathan Godfrey *, Assistant Concertmaster
Erica Robinson *, Principal Second Violin
Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin
Miriam Belyatsky *
Rasa Kalesnykaite *
Hae-a Lee *
Sarah Ludwig *
Chadash Parashkevov *
Anabel Ramírez *
Mary Reed *
Linda Sanders *
Oleg Sulyag *
Sylvia VerMeulen *
Melissa Wilmot *
Matthew Detrick
Aloyis Friedmann
Andrés Gonzále
Emily Herdeman Kelly
Kana Kimura
Fiona Lofthouse
Mila Neal
Sylvia Ouellette
Rachel Shepard
Trung Trinh
Hannah Watson

DOUBLE BASS
Dennis Whittaker *, Principal
Erik Grönfor *, Assistant Principal
Carla Clark *
Hunter Capocci
Paul Elliott
Deborah Dunham

PICCOLO
Izumi Miyahara

FLUTE
Seth Allyn Morris *, Principal
Christina Medawar *
Melissa Suhr

OBOE
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
Robin Hough *
Spring Hill

ENGLISH HORN
Robert Atherton

CLARINET
Sean Kriessman *, Principal
Eric Chi *
James P. Johnson

BASS CLARINET
Molly Mayfield

BASSOON
Amanda Swain *, Principal
Joseph Grimmer †
Conrad Cornelison
Nathan Koch

FRENCH HORN
Sarah Cranston *, Principal
Kimberly Penrod Minson *
Scott Strong †
Scott Höhn
Alex Koving
Kevin McIntyre
Emily Nagel
Spencer Park
Gavin Reed
James Wilson

TRUMPET
Jim Vassallo *, Principal
Randal Adams *
George Chase

BASS TRUMPET
Brent Phillips

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén *, Principal
Mark Holley *

BASS TROMBONE
Ilan Morgenstern *
Jeremiah Stones *

TUBA
Mark Barton *, Principal

HARP
Joan Eidman *, Principal
Laurie Meister

TIMPANI
Nancy Nelson *, Principal

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown *, Principal
Christina Carroll
Karen Slotter

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER
Richard Brown *

* HGO Orchestra core musician
† HGO Orchestra core musician on leave this production
Supernumeraries

Claire Anderson  
Kaleb Babb  
Brandon Balque  
Melanie Bell  
Danielle Bunch  
Laura Estrada  
Samuel Flash  
Amanda Gamel  
Storey Hinojosa  
Emily Jesse  
Lydia Lara  
Stephanie Marzuola  
Nicole McNeil  
Aki Ohinata  
Diana A. Perez  
Christian Quiroga  
Dustin Salinas  
Ori Shalev  
Cicily Smith  
Mika Stepankiw  
Taelon Stonecipher  
Vicki Wood

Crane Operators

Domingo Fos Ferrandis  
Lucas Fedell  
Lorenzo Gabaldón Ortiz  
Ferrán Garrigues Insa  
Joel Grothe  
Brock Hatton  
Kendrick Lattimore  
Andrew Love  
Darnea Steven Olson  
Enrique Jose Sanmartín Paya  
Lenvi Tennessee

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
LA FURA DELS BAUS (SPAIN)

**Patrick Summers (United States)**

*Conductor*

**HGO Appearances:** HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers has conducted more than fifty operas at HGO since joining the company in 1998.

**About the Artist:** Patrick Summers was named artistic and music director of HGO in 2011 after having served as the company’s music director since 1998. He has been responsible for many of HGO’s important artistic advances, including the development of the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra. At HGO, he has conducted the world premieres of André Previn’s Brief Encounter, Christopher Theofanidis’s The Refuge, Jake Heggie’s The End of the Affair and Three Decembers, and Carlisle Floyd’s Cold Sassy Tree; Verdi’s Don Carlos, La traviata, Nabucco, Rigoletto, Il trovatore, Simon Boccanegra, Falstaff, and A Masked Ball; Puccini’s La bohème, Madame Butterfly, Manon Lescaut, and Tosca; Mozart’s Cosi fan tutte, The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, The Abduction from the Seraglio, and Idomeneo; Donizetti’s Mary Stuart, The Elixir of Love, Lucia di Lammermoor, and Don Pasquale; Lehár’s The Merry Widow; Handel’s Julius Caesar; Rossini’s The Barber of Seville; Strauss’s Ariadne auf Naxos; Britten’s Billy Budd, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Turn of the Screw, and Peter Grimes; and Wagner’s Das Rheingold, Tristan and Isolde, and Lohengrin. He has also led HGO’s Show Boat and the American premiere of Weinberg’s The Passenger (at HGO and on tour to the Lincoln Center Festival). He conducts regularly at the Metropolitan Opera and is principal guest conductor for San Francisco Opera. Earlier this season at HGO, he conducted Otello and Così fan tutte; he also conducted Anna Bolena at Lyric Opera of Chicago and will lead The Marriage of Figaro at San Francisco Opera this summer.

**LA FURA DELS BAUS (SPAIN)**

**Production**

**HGO Appearances:** Das Rheingold (2014).

La Fura dels Baus is the innovative Barcelona-based theater group behind this production of Wagner’s Die Walküre.

Established in 1979, La Fura began as a street theater group and over the years has developed its own “Furan language,” style, and aesthetics based on collective creation. Since the early 1990s, La Fura dels Baus has diversified its creative efforts, moving into plays, digital theater, film, opera, and major corporate events. La Fura produced the opening ceremony for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, which was broadcast and watched live by more than 500 million viewers. Since then, such companies as Pepsi, Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot, Volkswagen, Swatch, Airtel, Microsoft, Absolut Vodka, Columbia Pictures, Warner Bros., the Port of Barcelona, Telecom Italia, and Sun Microsystems have commissioned the group to produce large-scale “macro” shows for them around the world. La Fura’s production L’home del mil·leni, celebrating the new millennium, drew an audience of more than 20,000 in Barcelona; Divine Comedy was performed in Florence for more than 35,000 spectators; La navaja en el ojo, which opened the Valencia Biennial, attracted an audience of more than 20,000. A number of courses and workshops have trained actors in Furan language. La Fura’s work in opera includes productions of Atlántida, The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, The Damnation of Faust, The Magic Flute, Le grand macabre, Aida, and A Masked Ball (Australia’s Helpmann Award for best opera direction). In 2010, for the first time in its history, La Fura dels Baus visited five continents, with two macroshows in South America, an opera and a macroshow in Australia, a macroshow in Africa, more than 500 performances in the Spanish pavilion of the Universal Exhibition in Shanghai, and numerous performances in Europe, including premieres at La Scala, Teatro Real de Madrid, and the Mariinsky Theater. In December 2013 and 2014, La Fura organized the city of Barcelona’s New Year’s Eve celebration, which brought an audience of 70,000 each time.

**Carlus Padrissa (Spain)**

*Conductor*

**HGO Appearances:** Das Rheingold (2014).

**About the Artist:** Carlus Padrissa is one of the six artistic directors of the innovative Spanish theater company La Fura dels Baus, founded in 1979. Padrissa was the driving force behind the group’s participation in the opening ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, which he and Àlex Ollé directed in collaboration with Hansel Cereza, Jordi Arús, Miquel Badosa, and Pera Tantiñá. Padrissa’s early work in opera and in collaboration with Àlex Ollé and the plastic artist Jaume Plensa began with Falla’s La Atlántida (1996) and Debussy’s Le martyre de Saint Sébastien (1997). These were followed by La damnation de Faust (Salzburg Festival); The Magic Flute (Ruhr Biennale); and Bartók’s Bluebeard’s Castle and Janáček’s song cycle Diary of a Missing Person (Paris Opera and Gran Teatre del Liceu). One of La Fura’s most ambitious projects was converting the ship Naumon, a barge 60 meters long and weighing 1,100 tons, into a modern floating performance center that has logged more than 40,000 miles from the Atlantic Ocean via the Mediterranean all the way to the China Seas. The company describes it as “a series of shows brought together by a journey.” Padrissa has also directed Turandot (2011) at Bavarian State Opera, Stockhausen’s Michaels Reise um die Erde in its Austrian premiere and on an international tour that included the Lincoln Center, Tamnhäuser (2010) at La Scala, Les Troyens (2010) at the Palau de les Arts of Valencia and the Mariinsky in St. Petersburg, Parsifal (2013) at the Cologne Opera, Elektra (2014) in Sweden, and many others.
Esteban Muñoz (Chile)
Associate Director
HGO Appearances: Das Rheingold (2014).
About the Artist: Esteban Muñoz studied performance, musicology, and art history at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, completing a master’s degree in dramaturgy at the Bavarian Theater Academy. He began his career as stage manager at the Teatro Municipal in Santiago de Chile, where he later acted as assistant director and production manager. He has worked as assistant to directors including Calixto Bieito, Michael Hampe, Emilio Sagi, Christian Boesch, Balázs Kovalik, and Hugo de Ana in productions of the Teatro Municipal de Santiago de Chile, Teatro del Lago (Chile), Opéra de Lausanne, and at the Prince Regent Theater in Munich and numerous open-air opera productions. Since 2011, he has worked closely with Carles Padrissa and La Fura dels Baus. He has frequently been invited to the Bavarian State Opera, where he principally works as an assistant director. Muñoz won the 2013 ProArte Prize (Chile) for Young Artist of the Year. His most recent engagements include the dramaturgy of Vivier’s Kopernikus for the Munich Biennale and Martin y Soler’s Librario di Diana at the Prince Regent Theater in Munich. Upcoming productions include Jephtha’s Daughter with choreographer Saar Magal for the Munich Opera Festival and a new production of Berlioz’s Benvenuto Cellini as associate director with Carles Padrissa for the Cologne Opera.

Roland Olbeter (Germany)
Set Designer
HGO Appearances: Das Rheingold (2014).
About the Artist: Roland Olbeter has lived and worked in Barcelona since 1986. Formally trained as a concert violinist, and a member for two years of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, he has worked extensively for the theater, opera, and cinema, as well as for sound and kinetic installations. In his work for opera, he has collaborated intensively with Carles Padrissa of La Fura dels Baus for many years. He won the Franco Abbiatti award for the design of this production of the Ring. His work has been seen at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, La Scala, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Maggio Musicale, Vienna Pocket Opera, Cologne Opera, the Mariinsky in St. Petersburg, the Bavarian State Opera, the Arena di Verona, and New York’s Lincoln Center, among others. He has worked with some of the most prestigious conductors in the world, such as Eliahu Inbal, Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, Lorin Maazel, Kent Nagano, Peter Rundel, and Howard Arman. For the past 15 years, Olbeter has worked on developing electro-acoustic instruments to perform music in festivals and museums with the support of the German high-tech company Festo. He realized the opera Orlando furioso for five robotic instruments and soprano with music by German composer Michael Gross. He is working on a full-scale automatic puppet opera with music by Russian composer Elena Kats Chernin to be played by instruments he created, to premiere in summer 2016.

Chu Uroz (Spain)
Costume Designer
HGO Appearances: Das Rheingold (2014).
About the Artist: Chu Uroz studied at the Barcelona and Valles Schools of Architecture before specializing in industrial design at the Elisava School of Design. In 1985, he began working with Basi S.A.–Lacoste and joined the firm of the Barcelona menswear designer Armand Basi. In 1992, Uroz participated in the artistic direction of the ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Barcelona, receiving the Gold Award for his conceptual work in designing the official Barcelona Olympic coins. For ASICS, the official shoe supplier of the 1992 Olympics, he designed a Tiger Onitsuka shoe that was worn by all the Olympics staff and torchbearers and became an emblem of the games. Uroz’s work in cinema includes films of the late director Bigas Luna including Jamón, jamón (production designer and art director), Huevo de oro (curator and film production), Yo soy la Juani and Di Di Hollywood (production designer), Comedias bárbaras and Gaudí nouvelle (artistic director), and Second Origin, to be released this year. With the band U2, Uroz has worked as a stage and wardrobe consultant. He began to work as costume designer and art director with La Fura dels Baus in 2000; he won the Abbiati Prize for his work on La Fura’s Das Rheingold and Die Walküre. Other collaborations with La Fura dels Baus include the opening ceremony of the Valencia Biennale (2001) and the operas Les Troyens, Tannhäuser, the world premiere of Babylon, Aida for the Verdi bicentenary at the Arena di Verona, and many others.

Peter van Praet (Belgium)
Lighting Designer
HGO Appearances: Das Rheingold (2014).
About the Artist: Peter van Praet began his career managing the technical lighting department of the Flemish Opera. He has designed lighting for many productions by Robert Carsen, including Jenůfa, The Cunning Little Vixen, Katya Kabanova, and Richard III at the Flemish Opera; Rusalka and Capriccio in Paris; Fidelio in Amsterdam and Florence; Les Boréades in Paris and New York; Tosca at Gran Teatre del Liceu; Der Rosenkavalier in Salzburg; La traviata at La Fenice; Elektra in Tokyo; A Midsummer Night’s Dream in Barcelona; Iphigenie en Tauride at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and in Madrid and Toronto; Candide at La Scala, English National Opera, and in Japan; The Makropulos Case and The Cunning Little Vixen in Strasbourg; Don Giovanni at La Scala; Falstaff at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, La Scala, and the Metropolitan Opera; and the creation of JIR (Citizen de Genève) in Geneva. With director Pierre Audi, Van Praet has lit productions of Les Troyens (Amsterdam) and Alceste and Zoroastro (Drottningholm and Amsterdam). His work with La Fura dels Baus also includes Les Troyens, Le grand macabre, and
Oedipe (Brussels, Buenos Aires). With La Fura director Valentina Carrasco, he lit the Colón-Ring (an abridged version of Wagner’s Ring for Teatro Colón) and The Turn of the Screw (Lyon). Future projects with Robert Carsen include the world premiere of CO2 at La Scala, A Midsummer Night’s Dream in Aix-en-Provence, and Les fêtes vénitiennes in Toulouse and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

**Antonio Castro (Spain)**

**Lighting Realizer**

Houston Grand Opera Debut

About the Artist: Antonio Castro began his career in lighting as a result of his training in electrical engineering combined with his work as a lighting technician with Cánovas Theater in Málaga (Spain). After graduating with honors, he joined several theater companies as a technician on tours, and later as a lighting designer for theater, dance, and live music. He has cooperated with the School of Dramatic Arts and the Conservatory of Dance of Málaga, and with Escénica (Andalusian Center for Performance Studies). Since 2006 he has been working at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia (Valencia Opera House), currently as the resident lighting designer, where he has collaborated with such lighting designers as Guido Levi, Albert Faura, Peter van Praet, Bruno Poet, Felice Ross, and Eduardo Bravo and stage directors such as Pierluigi Pier’Alli, Henning Brockhaus, Carlos Saura, Jonathan Miller, and Davide Livermore. Some of his recent work includes designing lighting for Mefistofele, The Telephone, Amelia al ballo, The Marriage of Figaro, Dido and Aeneas, Tristan und Isolde, Così fan tutte, L’in coronazione di Dario, Juditha Triumphans, and La forza del destino, among many others. La forza del destino was recognized with a 2014 Campoamor Award in the category of Best Opera Production.

**Franc Aleu (Spain)**

**Video Designer**

HGO Appearances: Das Rheingold (2014)

About the Artist: Visual artist Franc Aleu is a recent winner of the Catalonian government’s prestigious National Culture Award in the audiovisual category. He has created scenic and visual effects for theater, dance, and opera, and his work has been seen in the major theaters and opera houses of the world, including Gran Teatre del Liceu, La Scala, La Monnaie, Teatro Colón, Maggio Musicale, and Vienna Pocket Opera, among others. He has worked with such noted conductors as Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, the late Lorin Maazel, and Kirill Petrenko. He also works in creative disciplines outside the performing arts: he has created visual projections on facades of landmark buildings such as Barcelona’s City Hall and the Catalan Parliament and he works in advertising, design, conceptualization, and direction of all kinds of events. He has created architectural designs for exhibition pavilions such as the Expo Zaragoza 2008, for which he designed the building for the Extreme Water exhibition and conceptualized all the content for
the exhibition. Besides his own work as an artist, he gives master classes and lectures about his work in major European cultural centers such as Milan, Cologne, Madrid, and Barcelona.

**Christine Goerke (United States)**

**Soprano—Brünnhilde**


**About the Artist:** Christine Goerke has sung much of the great soprano repertoire, beginning with the Mozart and Handel heroines and now moving into the dramatic Strauss and Wagner roles. She has received acclaim for her portrayals of the title roles in Elektra, Ariadne auf Naxos, Norma and Iphigénie en Tauride; Kundry in Parsifal; Ortrud in Lohengrin; Leonora in Fidelio; Eboli in Don Carlos; Dyer’s Wife in Die Frau ohne Schatten; Rosalinde in Die Fledermaus; Ellen Orford in Peter Grimes; Female Chorus in The Rape of Lucretia; Alice in Falstaff; and Madame Lidoine in Dialogues des Carmélites. Her recording of Vaughan Williams’s A Sea Symphony with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra won the 2003 Grammy Award for Best Classical Recording and Best Choral Performance. Her close association with the late Robert Shaw yielded several recordings including the Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes, Poulenc’s Stabat Mater, Szymanowski’s Stabat Mater, and the Grammy-nominated recording of Dvořák’s Stabat Mater. Earlier this season, she made her first fully staged performances as Brünhilde in Die Walküre with Canadian Opera Company, performed the title role in Florencia en el Amazonas at the Washington National Opera, and the title role of Elektra at the Michigan Opera Theatre. Other future plans include the full Ring cycle at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera. She will continue her portrayal of Brünhilde at HGO next season in Siegfried, the third work in Wagner’s Ring cycle.

**Iain Paterson (United Kingdom)**

**Bass-baritone—Wotan**

**HGO Appearances:** Wotan in Das Rheingold (2014).

**About the Artist:** Since his debut in the 2007 Salzburg Easter Festival in Das Rheingold under Sir Simon Rattle, Iain Paterson’s operatic engagements have taken him to the most prestigious theaters in the world. Recent operatic highlights include Oreste in Elektra at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Captain Balstrode in Peter Grimes at the Vienna State Opera and at English National Opera (ENO); Amfortas in Parsifal at the Beijing Festival; and the title role of Don Giovanni for Vlaamse Opera. Highlights this season include his role debut as Kurwenal in Tristan and Isolde at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Peneios in Daphne for La Monnaie; Hans Sachs in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg for English National Opera, a role debut; Wotan in Die Walküre with Leipzig Opera; and a debut at the Bayreuth Festival as Kurwenal in Tristan and Isolde. Past highlights also include Wotan in a concert performance of Das Rheingold conducted by Daniel Barenboim as part of the Berlin State Operas production of the Ring cycle at the BBC Proms; the Ring cycle revival at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Don Giovanni at ENO; Götterdämmerung in Munich and at the Metropolitan Opera; Das Rheingold in Berlin and debut at La Scala; Forester in The Cunning Little Vixen for Bergen National Opera; and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andris Nelsons. He will again portray Wotan/Wanderer at HGO next season as Wagner’s Ring cycle continues with Siegfried.

**Karita Mattila (Finland)**

**Soprano—Sieglinde**


**About the Artist:** This season, Karita Mattila sings Janáček’s Jenůfa at the Hamburg State Opera, the title role of Ariadne auf Naxos at the Paris Opera, and concerts with Lisbon’s Gulbenkian Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, and on many stages of her native Finland. She has collaborated with such directors as Luc Bondy in Don Carlos, which she performed in Paris and London and at the Edinburgh Festival; Lev Dodin in his productions of Elektra for the Salzburg Easter Festival, and The Queen of Spades and Salome at the Opéra National de Paris; Peter Stein for his Simon Boccanegra in Salzburg and Don Giovanni in Chicago; and Jürgen Flimm for his Fidelio at the Metropolitan Opera. She regularly collaborates with eminent contemporary composers to premiere new works, recently performing in the world premiere of Émilie by Kaija Saariaho at the Opéra National de Lyon. Her numerous honors include Musical America’s Musician of the Year and Opera News awards. She was also named a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, one of the highest honors given by the French government. Recent highlights include Emilia Marty in The Makropoulos Case at the Metropolitan Opera and at San Francisco Opera; the title role of Janáček’s Katya Kabanova at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Lisa in The Queen of Spades at the Metropolitan Opera; Marie in Wozzeck at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and concert performances of Erwartung with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra.

**Simon O’Neill (New Zealand)**

**Tenor—Siegfried**

**HGO Appearances:** Title role in Otello (2014), Florestan in Fidelio (2011), title role in Lohengrin (2009).

**About the Artist:** Simon O’Neill is a principal artist with the Metropolitan Opera; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; La Scala; and the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals. He has performed the role of Siegmund in Die Walküre all over the world to critical acclaim, including for the opening of La
Scala’s season with Daniel Barenboim, in the celebrated Keith Warner Ring cycle at the Royal Opera with Antonio Pappano; in the Otto Schenk production and in the Robert Lepage Ring cycle at the Metropolitan Opera; at the Bavarian State Opera with Kent Nagano; Vienna State Opera with Franz Welser-Möst; and at the Berlin and Hamburg State opera companies. Other career highlights include Parsifal with Christian Thielemann at the Vienna State Opera; the title role of Lohengrin, Florestan in Fidelio, and Stolzing in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Jenik in The Bartered Bride with Charles Mackerras for his house debut at Covent Garden; The Magic Flute with Riccardo Muti at the Salzburg Festival; Gran Sacerdote in Idomeneo with James Levine for his Metropolitan Opera debut; Lohengrin with Andris Nelsons and Parsifal with Daniele Gatti at the Bayreuth Festival; Chairman Mao in Nixon in China at San Francisco Opera; and Cavaradossi in Tosca in Tokyo, Berlin, and Hamburg. In the 2014–15 season and beyond, he performs Verdi’s Requiem and gala concerts in Mumbai; Erik in The Flying Dutchman at the Ravinia Festival, and Fidelio at the Hamburg State Opera; and returns to the Berlin State Opera, New National Theatre, and Opera Australia.

Jamie Barton (United States)
Sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Michael Cochran

Mezzo-soprano—Fricka


About the Artist: Jamie Barton is the winner of both the Main and the Song Prizes at the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, a winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and a Grammy nominee. Her 2014–15 season began with her San Francisco Opera debut as Adalgisa in Norma, followed by Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with Donald Runnicles in Atlanta, the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s The Work at Hand with the Pittsburgh Symphony at Carnegie Hall, the Verdi Requiem with the Toronto Symphony and Sir Andrew Davis, and Giovanna Seymour in Anna Bolena with Lyric Opera of Chicago. As the latest recipient of the Marian Anderson Award, she also appeared in recital at the Kennedy Center. Later this season, she will sing her first Azucena in Il trovatore with the Cincinnati Opera and Fenena in Nabucco with the Seattle Opera. Recent engagements include a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Adalgisa in Norma, Katisha in The Mikado with Opera Memphis, and her Japanese debut as Meg Page in a new production of Falstaff at the Saito Kinen Festival. Future projects include returns to the Metropolitan Opera and debuts at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; the Frankfurt Opera; the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Los Angeles Opera; and Washington National Opera, all in leading roles.
Kelly Kaduce (United States)  
**Soprano—Helmwige**  
*About the Artist:* Kelly Kaduce’s 2014–15 engagements include her debut with Canadian Opera Company as Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly*, her debut with Lyric Opera of Chicago as Katya in *The Passenger*, and a return to Florida Grand Opera as Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly*. Her debut with Minnesota Opera as Cio-Cio-San was *Die Fledermaus* with Seattle Opera and *Company*. Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* with Canadian Opera Company; Senta in Salzburg under Sir Ivor Bolton; Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* with Canadian Opera and Freia in *Walküre* with the American Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Philippe Auguin. Among concert projects are Peneios (Daphne) with The Cleveland Orchestra at home and at New York’s Lincoln Center under Franz Welser-Möst, and the title role in Tobias’s *Des Jona Sendung* with the MDR Leipzig Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig and Tallin under Neeme Järvi.

Julie Makerov (United States)  
**Soprano—Waltraute**  
*Houston Grand Opera Debut*  
*About the Artist:* Julie Makerov was the 2010 winner of the Dora Award, Canada’s highest honor for live theater, for her portrayal of Senta in Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*. Recent engagements include Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* with the American Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leon Botstein, Chrysothemis in *Elektra* with Des Moines Metro Opera, and the Queen of Hearts in Unsuk Chin’s *Alice in Wonderland* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Other notable engagements include her debuts with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Los Angeles Opera, singing the roles of the Mother in *Hansel and Gretel* and Senta in *The Flying Dutchman*, respectively; the title role of *Tosca* with Canadian Opera Company; Senta in Salzburg under Sir Ivor Bolton; Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* and Freia in *Das Rheingold* with Canadian Opera Company; Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* with Seattle Opera and Sarasota Opera; *Tosca* with Sarasota Opera; Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly* with Palm Beach Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Opera San Jose; and Leonora in *Il trovatore* and Alice Ford in *Falstaff* with Opera San Jose. Upcoming engagements include a return to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in a leading role.

Natalya Romaniw (United Kingdom)  
**Soprano—Ortlinde**  
*About the Artist:* Welsh soprano Natalya Romaniw studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she was awarded the prestigious Gold Medal in her final year. This season’s engagements include the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* for Glyndebourne on Tour, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 for Garsington Opera, a series of Viennese gala concerts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Woglinde in a concert performance of excerpts from *Das Rheingold* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, and an Opera Gala for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Previous operatic engagements include *La rondine* and Giulia in *La scala di seta* with British Youth Opera, the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Clonter Opera and Giunia in *Lucio Silla* for Classical Opera Company, and an acclaimed portrayal of Malìella in *I gioielli della Madonna* at Opera Holland Park. Next season, she will sing Fiora in *L’amico Fritz* for Den Jyske Opera, and a major role with Garsington Opera.

Catherine Martin (United States)  
**Mezzo-soprano—Waltraute**  
*About the Artist:* Catherine Martin’s engagements for this season and beyond include a return to Opera Santa Barbara as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, her debut with Dayton Opera as Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking*, joining the American Symphony Orchestra for Hindemith’s *The Long Christmas Dinner*, a debut with Opera Colorado as Amneris in *Aida*, and a return to Washington National Opera. She recently sang Amneris with Opera Santa Barbara, the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Glimmerglass Festival, Mary in the premiere of *Madame Butterfly*. Recent engagements include Micaela in *Carmen*, Mrs. Anderssen in *A Little Night Music*, and Krystyna in *The Passenger* (2014); performances of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* (2014, 2013); Priestess in *Aida* and Ines in *Il trovatore* (2013); Mimi in performances of *La bohème* (2013, 2012). Second prize in HGO’s Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias (2012). HGO Studio artist (2012–14).  
*About the Artist:* Welsh soprano Natalya Romaniw studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she was awarded the prestigious Gold Medal in her final year. This season’s engagements include the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* for Glyndebourne on Tour, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 for Garsington Opera, a series of Viennese gala concerts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Woglinde in a concert performance of excerpts from *Das Rheingold* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, and an Opera Gala for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Previous operatic engagements include *La rondine* and Giulia in *La scala di seta* with British Youth Opera, the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Clonter Opera and Giunia in *Lucio Silla* for Classical Opera Company, and an acclaimed portrayal of Malìella in *I gioielli della Madonna* at Opera Holland Park. Next season, she will sing Fiora in *L’amico Fritz* for Den Jyske Opera, and a major role with Garsington Opera.
of *The Lion, the Unicorn and Me* in her Washington National Opera debut, and Annina (cover: Octavian) in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the National Symphony Orchestra. She also performed Schubert’s *Mirjam's Siegesgesang* with the San Antonio Symphony, and Amadora/Stelladora in John Musto’s *Bastianello* and Lucrezia in William Bolcom’s *Lucrezia* in a double bill with Urban Arias. Recent concert performances include Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* with New Haven Symphony and Alan Louis Smith’s *Covered Wagon Woman* with West Coast Chamber Players.

**Eve Gigliotti (United States)**
**Mezzo-soprano—Siegrune**


*About the Artist:* This season, Eve Gigliotti reprised the title role in *The Italian Girl in Algiers* with Opera Santa Barbara and made her role debut as Bradamante in director R. B. Schlather’s gallery installation of *Alcina* in association with Whitebox Art Center. Future seasons include a debut with Washington National Opera and returns to Opera Philadelphia and Gotham Chamber Opera. After her debut with the Metropolitan Opera as Mercedes in *Carmen*, she made return appearances as Mercedes and as Siegrune in *Die Walküre*, led by James Levine, broadcast worldwide in HD. She was also recently seen as Nazimova in *The Dream of Valentino* with Minnesota Opera, Cornelia in *Julius Caesar* with Florentine Opera, Ruth in the world premiere of Nico Muhly’s *Dark Sisters*, the title role of Mascagni’s rarely performed *Zanetto* with Boston’s Odyssey Opera, and the title role in an updated version of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* with Wendy Taucher Dance Theater Opera Project in Martha’s Vineyard. The recently released *Opera America Songbook* features Gigliotti performing “Archaeology,” a song written exclusively for her by the composer/librettist team of David Little and Royce Vavrek.

**Renée Tatum (United States)**
**Mezzo-soprano—Grimgerde**

*HGO Appearances:* Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold* (2014).

*About the Artist:* Renée Tatum opened the 2014–15 season with a return to the Metropolitan Opera as the Second Lady in Julie Taymor’s production of *The Magic Flute* led by Adam Fischer. Last season, the California native made her role debuts as Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly* with Chautauqua Opera and as
Rosina in The Barber of Seville with Opera Las Vegas. Concert appearances included Salome with Andris Nelsons and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Mozart’s Requiem with Music Director Daniel Stewart and the Santa Cruz Symphony, and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with conductor Daniel Wachs and the Orange County Philharmonic Society. An alumna of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, Tatum has performed at the Met in The Magic Flute conducted by Jane Glover, Rusalka led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Die Frau ohne Schatten with Vladimir Jurowski, Otello with Semyon Bychkov, and in Francesca da Rimini conducted by Marco Armiliato. Also at the Met, she sang Fenena in Nabucco and Flosshilde in Robert Lepage’s production of Der Ring des Nibelungen. Other highlights include performing Hátia in The Bartered Bride in a new production by Stephen Wadsworth and conducted by James Levine in a collaboration between the Metropolitan Opera and The Juilliard School, and Flosshilde and Grimergerde in San Francisco Opera’s Ring cycle conducted by Donald Runnicles.

Faith Sherman (United States)

Mezzo-soprano—Rossweisse


About the Artist: Faith Sherman returns to HGO fresh from the inaugural season of the Philharmonie de Paris, where she sang the role of Catherine alongside Marion Cotillard in Honegger’s Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher with l’Orchestre de Paris led by Kazuki Yamada. Having reprised the role with Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and the Saito Kinen Festival, she will sing it with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center in June. She recently earned acclaim for her Smeaton in Anna Bolena with Welsh National Opera; other highlights include her European debut at English National Opera as the Pilgrim in Saariaho’s L’amour de loin; Concepcion in L’heure espagnole at Opera Frankfurt, and Verdi’s Requiem at the Ludwig Palace Festival and Opéra de Vichy under Michael Hofstetter. She premiered the mezzo-soprano lead in Ricky Ian Gordon’s Rappahannock County at Virginia Opera, appeared at the Lincoln Center Festival in Auerbach’s The Blind, and performed Berlioz’s La captive and Bernstein’s Jeremiah Symphony with the Colorado Springs Philharmonic. She will appear in recital on May 15 at Salem Lutheran Church, Houston.

Meredith Arwady (United States)

Contralto—Schwertleite

HGO Appearances: Erda in Das Rheingold (2014); Auntie in Peter Grimes (2010); Myrtle Bagot in Brief Encounter (2009).

About the Artist: Meredith Arwady’s engagements this season include a return to Frankfurt Opera as Mistress Quickly in Falstaff, her English National Opera debut as Martha in John Adams’s The Gospel According to the Other Mary in a production by Peter Sellars, a return to the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Hannah in Tobias Picker’s Emmeline, and debuts at Madison Opera as Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd. Appearances last season include Mistress Quickly under Nicola Luisotti at San Francisco Opera and also in a new production at Frankfurt Opera, and Mme. Croissy in Dialogues of the Carmelites at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She also performed in a Santa Fe Opera double bill of The Impresario (Fräulein Krone) and Le rossignol (Death) and sang Prokofiev’s Alexander Nevsky with the Spoke Symphony and Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 with the North Netherlands Orchestra. She has also sung Erda in the Ring at the Metropolitan Opera with Fabio Luisi and at Frankfurt Opera under Sebastian Weigle; Dvořák’s Biblical Songs and Prokofiev’s Ivan the Terrible in concerts with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia in Spain, and Gertrude in Romeo and Juliet with Arizona Opera. She garnered critical acclaim for her Kathy Hagen in the world premiere of Terence Blanchard’s Champion at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and for Auntie in Peter Grimes with the Aspen Music Festival. She returns to HGO next season as Erda in Siegfried, the next work in the Ring cycle.
Help HGO and You’ll See Stars
Join the HGO Guild at our Volunteer Gathering

Thursday, June 4, 2015
Wine, Food, Friends, Prize Give-aways and New Opportunities

6:30 p.m. Greetings and Registration
7:30 p.m. Program

United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Dr. at Feagan, off Memorial

Join us for complimentary wine and a light supper as you meet Guild committee chairs and hear how your special skills and talents can make the Guild more successful in helping Houston Grand Opera.

Our speaker this year will be Paul Hopper, new dramaturg at Houston Grand Opera. The event is designed to inform members and prospective members about the options for contributing to HGO as a volunteer: hospitality, special events, boutique, membership, docents, marketing, development, and other areas.

As a member of the Guild, you can enjoy learning more about opera, meet many of the art’s outstanding performers as well as other opera lovers, have fun, and help HGO. And if you are not a member of the Guild, you can join during the Volunteer Gathering!

RSVP: 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org by May 31.

Not a Guild Member? Join today.
Visit guild@hgo.org to register online.

“HGO Guild volunteers are unique among the international opera community. They are ever-welcoming, displaying the singular hospitality for which Houston is distinctly known and providing countless valuable services for HGO. As a long recipient of their generosity, I can say they truly make HGO a HOME for those of us lucky enough to grace your stage. They are truly to be treasured!”

Joyce DiDonato
Mezzo-soprano
Houston Grand Opera Studio alum
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA PRESENTS
Sweeney Todd/The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

A Musical Thriller
Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by Hugh Wheeler
From an Adaptation by Christopher Bond
Originally Directed on Broadway by Harold Prince
Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick
Originally produced on Broadway by Richard Barr, Charles Woodward, Robert Fryer, Mary Lea Johnson, and Martin Richards in Association with Dean and Judy Manos

Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Sung in English with Projected English Titles

CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

Anthony Hope Morgan Pearse †
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Mr. Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
Sweeney Todd Nathan Gunn
Beggar Woman Cynthia Clayton
Mrs. Lovett Susan Bullock
Judge Turpin Jake Gardner
The Beadle Kevin Ray ‡
Johanna Megan Samarin †
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
Tobias Ragg Nicholas Phan ‡
Adolfo Pirelli Scott Quinn ‡
Jonas Fogg Adam Gibbs *

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera.

This production premiered at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris on April 22, 2011, General Director Jean-Luc Choplin.

Houston Methodist is the official health care provider for Houston Grand Opera.
United Airlines is the official airline of Houston Grand Opera.

The activities of Houston Grand Opera are supported in part by funds provided by the City of Houston and Theater District Improvement, Inc., and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.
CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: James Lowe ‡
Director: Lee Blakeley
Set and Costume Designer: Tanya McCallin
Lighting Designer: Rick Fisher
Sound Designer: Andrew Harper
Choreographer: Lorena Randi *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado ‡
Musical Preparation: Patrick Harvey ‡

English Dialect/Dialogue Coach: Catherine Baxter *
Stage Manager: Kristen E. Burke
Assistant Director: Shawna Lucey

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

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Surtitles cued by: Logan Walsh

SWEENEY TODD is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI, 421 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019. Phone: 212-541-4684. Fax: 212-397-4684. www.MTISHows.com.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

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

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

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

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

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

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.
SWEENEY TODD LASTS APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS, INCLUDING ONE INTERMISSION.

ACT I

The young sailor Anthony Hope and Sweeney Todd have just returned to London from Australia. Anthony saved Todd from drowning while at sea; Todd is thanking him when they are approached by a Beggar Woman. Todd orders her away, and he and Anthony part company.

On Fleet Street, Todd wanders into Mrs. Lovett's Pie Shop hoping to find out what has happened to his wife, Lucy, and daughter, Johanna, while he has been gone. Mrs. Lovett recognizes him as Benjamin Barker, a barber she knew who was sent away to prison in Australia on a trumped-up charge by Judge Turpin, an evil man who desired Lucy. With Barker out of the way, the Judge raped Lucy and abandoned her. Mrs. Lovett tells Todd that Lucy poisoned herself and that Judge Turpin adopted Johanna. Todd swears to take revenge on the Judge and his henchman, Beadle Bamford. Mrs. Lovett brings Todd his razors, which she has kept in hopes he would return.

Anthony is passing by Judge Turpin's mansion when he catches sight of Johanna, whom the Judge keeps virtually imprisoned. The Beggar Woman reappears and warns Anthony not to trespass on Judge Turpin's property. Anthony and Johanna are so taken with each other that they don't notice the Judge's throat.

In the marketplace, Signor Adolfo Pirelli hawks his "miracle elixir" with the help of Tobias, his simple-minded assistant. Todd and Mrs. Lovett are among them. Todd incites the crowd against Pirelli and challenges him to a shaving contest with Todd. The Beadle promises to protect her. When Mrs. Lovett pulls out Pirelli's purse, he recognizes it. She says Todd gave it to her, which feeds Tobias's growing suspicions about Sweeney. She distracts Tobias by letting him grind the meat for pies. The Beadle comes by to investigate complaints about the odors coming from her chimney. She makes him wait until Todd returns, at which time the barber offers him a free shave before he inspects the ovens.

When the Judge enters, Sweeney suggests a visit to the pie shop for safekeeping. The Judge recognizes the Beggar Woman, who has come in to look for the Beadle. When Todd returns and discovers the Beggar Woman, he kills her and releases her down the chute. When the Judge enters, Sweeney suggests a shave before reuniting with Johanna. Todd reveals his true identity and slits the Judge's throat.

Mrs. Lovett's pies are so improved that the shop is mobbed with customers; Tobias has been enlisted to help out and to keep the Beggar Woman away. Todd rigs his barber chair so that he can send his victims down a chute directly to the bake house and into a meat grinder. In the lunatic asylum where the Judge has placed her, Johanna dreams of the moment when Anthony will free her.

Searching the streets for Johanna, Anthony hears her voice coming from Fogg's Asylum. He brings Todd news of her whereabouts, and Todd and Anthony form a plan: Anthony will go to the asylum posing as a wigmaker wishing to purchase hair. After rescuing Johanna, Anthony will bring her to the barbershop. To lure the Judge back to his premises, Todd writes an urgent letter telling him he can find Johanna and Anthony at the barbershop that evening.

Tobias has grown fond of Mrs. Lovett and promises to protect her. When Mrs. Lovett pulls out Pirelli's purse, she recognizes it. She says Todd gave it to her, which feeds Tobias's growing suspicions about Sweeney. She distracts Tobias by letting him grind the meat for pies. The Beadle comes by to investigate complaints about the odors coming from her chimney. She makes him wait until Todd returns, at which time the barber offers him a free shave before he inspects the ovens. When the Beadle's body comes down the chute, Tobias realizes what has been going on. Mrs. Lovett urges Todd to get rid of the boy.

Anthony succeeds in freeing Johanna and they arrive at the shop. Johanna and the Judge enter, Sweeney and Tobias are among them. Todd incites the crowd against Pirelli and challenges him to a shaving contest with Todd. Todd wins easily, and the Beadle is so impressed by Todd's skill that he promises to come in for a shave.

Judge Turpin is in his quarters spying on Johanna in an adjoining room. Mad with desire, he finally visits Johanna, telling her he plans to marry her to keep her safe from immoral young men.

Back at the pie shop, Anthony finds Todd and excitedly tells him about lovely young Johanna, with whom he has fallen in love. He tells Todd he is planning to free her from her prison. Without revealing he is Johanna's father, Todd tells Anthony he may bring her to the shop for safekeeping.

Stung by his public humiliation, Pirelli arrives with Tobias, who chats with Mrs. Lovett while Pirelli reveals himself to Todd as his former apprentice. Pirelli threatens to reveal Todd's true identity, and Todd panics and kills him.

On his way home from court, the Judge tells the Beadle he intends to marry Johanna; at that very moment, Anthony and Johanna are making plans to elope. The Beadle hints that the Judge should spruce up and suggests a visit to Sweeney Todd for a shave.

In Todd's barber chair, the Judge fantasizes about his future with Johanna. Just as Todd is about to kill him, Anthony rushes in to tell about his impending elopement. The Judge recognizes Anthony and leaves in a fury, threatening Todd.

To lure the Judge back to his premises, Todd offers him a shave before he inspects the ovens. Mrs. Lovett has deceived him. He shoves her to the oven. Mrs. Lovett is suddenly inspired—they can recycle Todd's victims into meat pies.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Mrs. Lovett's pies are so improved that the shop is mobbed with customers; Tobias has been enlisted to help out and to keep the Beggar Woman away. Todd rigs his barber chair so that he can send his victims down a chute directly to the bake house and into a meat grinder. In the lunatic asylum where the Judge has placed her, Johanna dreams of the moment when Anthony will free her.

Searching the streets for Johanna, Anthony arranges for her to be freed. Todd reveals his true identity and slits the Judge's throat. Johanna emerges from the trunk. Mistaking her for a sailor, Todd tries to attack her, but she escapes. He runs to the bake house and finds Mrs. Lovett dragging the Beggar Woman to the oven. When Todd sees the woman in the light, he realizes she is his wife, Lucy, and that Mrs. Lovett has deceived him. He shoves her into the oven and cradles Lucy.

Tobias appears, his hair now completely white from shock. He kills Sweeney just as Anthony, Johanna, and the police enter.
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A R T I S T I C  
A N D  
M U S I C  
D I R E C T O R

M A R G A R E T  
A L K E K  
W I L L I A M S  
C H A I R

VIOLIN
Denise Tarrant *, Concertmaster
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
Jonathan Godfrey *, Assistant Concertmaster

Erica Robinson *, Principal Second Violin
Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin

Miriam Belyatsky †
Rasa Kalesnykaite †
Hae-a Lee †
Sarah Ludwig *
Chavdar Parashkevov †
Anabel Ramirez *
Mary Reed *
Linda Sanders *
Oleg Sulyga *
Sylvia VerMeulen †
Melissa Wilmot *

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

CELLO
Barrett Sills *, Principal
Louis-Marie Fardet *, Assistant Principal
Erika Johnson *
Wendy Smith-Butler †
Steven Wiggs †

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

FLUTE
Seth Allyn Morris *, Principal
Christina Medawar *

OBOE
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
Robin Hough †

CLARINET
Sean Krisssman †, Principal
Eric Chi *, Acting Principal
James Johnson

BASSOON
Amanda Swain *, Principal
Joseph Grimmer †

FRENCH HORN
Sarah Cranston *, Principal
Kimberly Penrod Minson †
Scott Strong †

TRUMPET
Jim Vassallo *, Principal
Randal Adams *

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén *, Principal
Mark Holley *

BASS TROMBONE
Ilan Morgenstern *

TUBA
Mark Barton †, Principal

HARP
Joan Eidman *, Principal

TIMPANI
Nancy Nelson *, Principal

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown *, Principal

KEYBOARDS
Patrick Harvey ‡
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Endowed Chair
Sahar Nouri **
Audrey Jones Beck Endowed Fund/
John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER
Richard Brown

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

HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY
HGO was the first opera company to stage Sweeney Todd, in June 1984. Within the past five years, there have been 163 performances of Sweeney Todd by opera companies, representing 27 productions in 23 cities.

Performances beginning at 7:30 p.m. will last until approximately 10:30 p.m.
Performances beginning at 2 p.m. will last until approximately 5 p.m.

At HGO performances, the excellent natural acoustics of the theaters in the Wortham Theater Center are relied upon to convey sound from the stage and pit. Electronic sound enhancement is used only with spoken dialogue (as in The Merry Widow), in musicals (as in A Little Night Music and Sweeney Todd), in sound effects (thunder), and at the composer’s direction (as in Nixon in China and The Little Prince). Visible microphones are positioned to record performances for archival purposes.
Houston Grand Opera Chorus
Richard Bado, Chorus Master—The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Patrick Harvey, Assistant Chorus Master—Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Endowed Chair

Supernumeraries

Geordie Alexander
Alyssa Barnes
Megan Berti
Robert Boldin
Laurelle Brown
Robert Dingman Jr.
Cecilia Duarte
Ashly Evans
Joshua Green
Megan Gryga
Esther M. Kelly
Wesley Landry

Miles Robert Lutterbie
Andrew C. Midkiff
Jason Milam
Natasha Monette
Jeff Monette
Mary Beth Nelson
Ardeen Pierre
Martin Lowen Poock
Said Henry Pressley
Emily Louise Robinson
Elisabeth Rosenberg
John Weinel

Marty Blair
Eric Domuret
Dave Harris
Brian Mitchell

Child Supernumeraries
Alexandria McGhee
Morgan McGhee
Austin Roush

Hugh Wheeler was a novelist, playwright, and screen writer. He wrote more than 30 mystery novels under the pseudonyms Q. Patrick and Patrick Quentin, and four of his novels were transformed into films: Black Widow, Man in the Net, The Green-Eyed Monster, and The Man with Two Wives. For films he wrote the screenplays for Travels with My Aunt, Something for Everyone, A Little Night Music, and Nijinsky. His plays include Big Fish, Little Fish (1961), Look: We’ve Come Through (1961), and We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1966, adapted from the Shirley Jackson novel). He co-authored with Joseph Stein the book for a new production of the 1919 musical Irene (1973), wrote the books for A Little Night Music (1973), a new production of Candide (1973), Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1979, based on a version of the play by Christopher Bond), and Meet Me in St. Louis (adapted from the 1949 MGM musical), contributed additional material for the musical Pacific Overtures (1976), and wrote a new adaptation of the Kurt Weill opera Silverlake, which was directed by Harold Prince at the New York City Opera. He received Tony and Drama Desk Awards for A Little Night Music, Candide, and Sweeney Todd. Prior to his death in 1987, Wheeler was working on two new musicals, Bodo and Fu Manchu, and a new adaptation of The Merry Widow.
A Night at the Chinese Opera (nominated for the 2008 TMA Achievement in Opera Award), and Die Fledermaus for Scottish Opera. He also directed a new musical, Pat Kirkwood Is Angry, at the Manchester Royal Exchange, which was also performed at the Brits Off Broadway Festival in New York and the St. James Theatre in London. Blakeley has been an associate director for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; the Glyndebourne Festival Opera; and English National Opera. Future engagements include Riccardo Primo (Richard the Lionheart) for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Rigoletto for Santa Fe Opera, and Madame Butterfly for Los Angeles Opera.

TANYA MCCALLIN (UNITED KINGDOM)
SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

HGO Appearances: Manon (2003).

About the Artist: Theater and opera designer Tanya McCallin works in Europe, the United States, and Australia. She has been associated with many important London theater productions, including premieres of works by Arthur Miller, Pam Gems, and Mike Leigh, and classics by Chekhov, Sheridan, and Shakespeare. Her extensive opera work includes The Barber of Seville for the English National Opera (ENO), which was her first major opera design and is still in the repertoire (also seen in Barcelona); La traviata (Scottish Opera/Welsh National Opera, Geneva, Barcelona, Madrid); and Francesca Zambello’s production of Carmen for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (also seen in Oslo, Australia, and China). She collaborated with David McVicar on The Marriage of Figaro for the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (also seen in Valencia and on DVD), and The Turn of the Screw and Macbeth for the Mariinsky in St. Petersburg. The Turn of the Screw was also seen at ENO and Macbeth in London and Washington, D.C., and at the Metropolitan Opera. Her Manon, another McVicar collaboration, has been seen at ENO and in Dallas, New Zealand, Chicago, and Barcelona. She also designed The Tales of Hoffmann for the Salzburg Festival (and TV); the sets for Semele (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); the costumes for Così fan tutte (Strasbourg); Rigoletto (Royal Opera, Covent Garden, BBC TV, and DVD); costumes for La traviata (Bolshoi); and Der Rosenkavalier (Scottish Opera). This Sweeney Todd has been seen at Théâtre du Châtelet and will travel to San Francisco Opera this fall.

RICK FISHER (UNITED STATES)
LIGHTING DESIGNER


About the Artist: Rick Fisher, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the winner of two Olivier Awards for Best Lighting Design and two Tony Awards, for An Inspector Calls and Billy Elliot the Musical. His work in opera includes Theodore Morrison’s Oscar (Opera Philadelphia); Falstaff and Salome (Japan); Porgy and Bess (Regent’s Park, London); Falstaff and Albert Herring (Los Angeles Opera); The Abduction from the Seraglio and Maoemetto (Garsington Opera); Radamisto (English National Opera); The Tsarinà’s Slippers and Wozzeck (Royal Opera, Covent Garden); the premiere of Oscar, La Grande-Duchesse du Gérolstein, The Pearl Fishers, La bohème, The Last Savage, Wozzeck, Albert Herring, Billy Budd, Madame Butterfly, and Peter Grimes (Santa Fe Opera); Turandot (ENO); Betrothal in a Monastery (Glyndebourne and Valencia); The Fiery Angel and Turandot (Bolshoi); Gloriana and La bohème (Opera North); and The Little Prince (Houston, New York, San Francisco). In his three seasons at the Batingnano Opera Festival, he lit The Audience (Broadway and London); Merchant of Venice (Almeida); Billy Elliot the Musical (the Netherlands, London, Australia, Broadway); Sunny Afternoon (Hampstead and West End, London); The King and I (Théâtre du Châtelet); The Merchant of Venice and Othello (Singapore); Galileo (Royal Shakespeare Company/Birmingham); Great Expectations (Bristol); Othello (Singapore); Judas Kiss and Chariots of Fire (Hampstead and West End); An Inspector Calls (London, Broadway); The Sound of Music (Buenos Aires); Jerry Springer the Opera (London’s National Theatre and West End); and Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake.

LORENA RANDI (UNITED KINGDOM)
CHOREOGRAPHER


About the Artist: Lorena Randi worked extensively as a dancer before establishing herself as a choreographer. After classical ballet training, she graduated from the London Contemporary Dance School. She has danced with the Michael Clark Company (1998–2006), with Mark Morris, Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre, Aletta Collins, Arthur Pita, and Charles Linehan, as well as in many productions for theater, opera, performance art, fashion, and film. In addition to Sweeney Todd, she choreographed Sondheim’s Into the Woods and Sunday in the Park with George directed by Lee Blakeley at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; and Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake.
du Châtelet, Paris, and for Candide and The Importance of Being Earnest directed by Sam Brown for Opéra National de Lorraine. With the artist Martin Creed, she researched and developed Work No. 1020, which was performed at the Edinburgh Festival, Sadleer's Wells, and the Museum of Modern Art, Chicago. She has worked in a variety of genres: she collaborated in 2008 with photographer Nick Knight and Maison Martin Margiela on a film for the fashion website SHOWstudio. She has choreographed live performances by singer Will Young for television and concerts as well as his latest music video. She has also choreographed commercials for Adidas and EDF Energy, and she often performs commissioned solo shows and improvised installations, most recently for International Women’s Day at the Royal Academy of Art, London. Future engagements include The Queen of Spades for English National Opera and Sweeney Todd for San Francisco Opera.

Richard Bado (United States)
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Chorus Master


About the Artist: A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Richard Bado has conducted at La Scala, Opéra National de Paris, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, the Tulsa Opera, the Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, Wolf Trap Opera, and Houston Ballet. An accomplished pianist, he appeared last season in a recital tour with Renée Fleming. He has also played for Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Denyce Graves, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey, and Nathan Gunn and has appeared on A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor. He holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award, and West Virginia University; he also studied advanced choral conducting with Robert Shaw. He is the director of the opera studies program at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. He has served on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Dolora Zajick Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and the International Vocal School in Moscow and has served on the music staffs of the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, the Bolshoi Opera Young Artist Program, Opera Australia, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Chautauqua Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera.

International Energy Development

Scott Gaille is an attorney and executive whose career has ranged from giving oral argument before the United States Court of Appeals to acquiring petroleum concessions around the world. He has travelled to more than one hundred nations searching for international petroleum on behalf of Occidental Petroleum Corporation and other companies. Scott holds a Doctor of Law with High Honors from the University of Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts with High Honors from the University of Texas at Austin, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He is Founder and Managing Director of The Gaille Group and teaches at Rice University’s Graduate School of Business.

Based on Mr. Gaille’s course at Rice University’s Graduate School of Business, “the book on how energy companies grow by acquiring international concessions.”

- BISNOW Magazine
Sweeney Todd

Nathan Gunn (United States)
Baritone—Sweeney Todd


About the Artist: Nathan Gunn's international career has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera; San Francisco Opera; Lyric Opera of Chicago; Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Paris Opera; Bavarian State Opera; Glyndebourne Opera Festival; Theater an der Wien; Teatro Real in Madrid; and the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. His broad repertoire includes the title roles in Billy Budd, Eugene Onegin, The Barber of Seville, and Hamlet; Guglielmo in Così fan tutte; the Count in The Marriage of Figaro; Malatesta in Don Pasquale; Belcore in The Elixir of Love; Ottone in The Coronation of Poppea; Tarquinius in The Rape of Lucretia; and The Lodger in The Aspern Papers. A noted supporter of new works, Gunn most recently created the roles of James Dalton in Iain Bell's The Harlot's Progress at the Theater an der Wien and Yeshua in Mark Adamo's The Gospel of Mary Magdalene at the San Francisco Opera. He has recently ventured outside the standard opera repertoire with appearances in Camelot and Carousel with the New York Philharmonic (both broadcast on PBS) and Show Boat at Carnegie Hall and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. His recording of the title role in Billy Budd with Daniel Harding and the London Symphony Orchestra won the 2010 Grammy Award. This season, he returned to the Metropolitan Opera for a new production of The Merry Widow and the Theater an der Wien for The Pearl Fishers and also appeared in recital at the Schubert Club. He is an alumnus of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where he is currently a professor of voice and the general director of the Lyric Theatre @ Illinois.

Susan Bullock (United Kingdom)
Soprano—Mrs. Lovett


About the Artist: In recognition for her contributions to opera, British dramatic soprano Susan Bullock was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire last year in the Queen's Birthday Honors. She has received particular acclaim for her portrayals of Brünnhilde in Wagner’s Ring cycle and was the first soprano to sing four consecutive cycles of Der Ring des Nibelungen at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, under Antonio Pappano. She has sung this role at a range of international venues including Vienna State Opera; Deutsche Oper Berlin; Oper Frankfurt; Opera Australia; the New National Theatre, Tokyo; and Canadian Opera Company. Appearances as Strauss's Elektra have brought her equal international praise and have led to collaborations with some of the world's leading conductors, including Fabio Luisi, Semyon Bychkov, Seiji Ozawa, Sir Mark Elder, and Edo de Waart. In 2009, she received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Singer of the Year Award for her portrayal of Elektra at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. She has also sung Emilia Marty in The Makropulos Case for Oper Frankfurt and, in 2013, she achieved further success at the Royal Opera in its production of Britten's Gloriana, celebrating the centennial of the composer’s birth. Her diverse concert work includes the Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and also with Zubin Mehta and the Orchestra of the Bavarian State Opera. Current season highlights include her first Minnie in The Girl of the Golden West in a new production for English National Opera. Her HGO performances as Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd represent her first foray into musical theater.

Morgan Pearse (Australia)
Baritone—Anthony Hope


About the Artist: Morgan Pearse studied at the University of Sydney and its Sydney Conservatorium, as well as the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London. In 2013, he won the gold medal at the Royal Over-Seas League Competition. Roles include Lord Ellington in La vie parisienne at the RCM and the title role in Owen Wingrave with Sydney Chamber Opera. Last season at English National Opera (ENO), he performed Pompeo in Benvenuto Cellini directed by Terry Gilliam and Minos in Arianna in Creta at the RCM. He also sang the title role of Imeneo for London Handel Festival and the Count in The Marriage of Figaro, Garibaldo in Rodelinda, and James in the world premiere of Jude Obermüller’s I Remember the Ship at the RCM. Concerts and recitals include Schubert’s Winterreise, Fauré’s Requiem at the Sydney Opera House, performances of Britten’s War Requiem throughout Poland, and Handel’s Messiah with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs at Sydney Opera House. He will reprise Papageno in Miller Outdoor Theatre performances of The Magic Flute in May; this summer he will sing Figaro in The Ghosts of Versailles at Wolf Trap Opera and this fall he will return to ENO as Figaro in The Barber of Seville.

Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
Mezzo-soprano—Johanna


About the Artist: Last summer, Megan Samarin was a Wolf Trap Opera Studio Artist, singing La Marchande in Les mamelles de Tirésias. She earned her bachelor's degree in classical vocal performance at the Manhattan School of Music, where she sang Farnace in La Doriclea, Anne in The Mother of Us All,
and Vénus in Orphée aux enfers. As a member of the Seagle Music Colony Young Artist Program in summer 2013, she sang Madame Larina in Eugene Onegin, Cherubino in John Davies’s The Three Little Pigs, Cis in Albert Herring, Third Graduate in Street Scene, and Ethel in 42nd Street. She was featured at the Brevard Music Center Janiec Opera Company as Soeur Mathilde in Dialogues of the Carmelites and Cousin Hebe in Gilbert and Sullivan’s HMS Pinafore. With the New York Lyric Opera Theater, she performed Hansel in Hansel and Gretel, and with Opera on the Avalon she sang the Flower Girl in The Marriage of Figaro. She is a 2014 District Encouragement Award winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She will sing Second Lady in The Magic Flute at Miller Outdoor Theatre in May; this summer, she will sing Marzia in Vivaldi’s Cato in Utica with Glimmerglass Opera.

**Nicholas Phan (United States)**

**Tenor—Tobias Ragg**


**About the Artist:** Nicholas Phan’s engagements this season include concerts with the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Boston Baroque, and the Vancouver Symphony. He also appears in recital at Carnegie Hall and in Istanbul. He has appeared with many of the leading orchestras in North America and Europe and has toured extensively in Europe with Il Complesso Barocco; he has appeared with the Oregon Bach, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Marlboro, Edinburgh, Rheingau, and Saint-Denis festivals, and at the BBC Proms. He is a founder and the artistic director of Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago, an organization devoted to promoting the art song and vocal chamber music repertoire. Recent opera appearances include Fenton in Falstaff with the Portland Opera, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni with the Atlanta Opera, and Almaviva in The Barber of Seville with the Seattle Opera. Other opera performances have included his debuts at the Glyndebourne Opera and the Maggio Musicale in Florence, as well as appearances with Los Angeles Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, and Frankfurt Opera.

**Jake Gardner (United States)**

**Bass-baritone—Judge Turpin**

**HGO Appearances:** Valentin in Faust (1975).

**About the Artist:** This season, Jake Gardner returned to Virginia Opera and Eugene Opera as Judge Turpin in Sweeney Todd and did a turn as Joseph Porter in HMS Pinafore at Virginia Opera; he also performed in a Holiday Pops concert with Binghamton Philharmonic. North American highlights include Geronte de Ravoir in Manon Lescaut with Washington National Opera; Monsieur de Brétigny in Manon for Lyric Opera of Chicago; Betto in Gianni Schicchi and Hortensio in The Daughter of the Regiment with San Francisco Opera; Baron Zeta in The Merry Widow with Los Angeles Opera; Doc in Bernstein’s A Quiet Place with New York City Opera; Gideon March in Little Women on tour in Japan and also with New York City Opera; his signature role of Sharpless in Madame Butterfly with New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Cleveland, New Orleans Opera, and in Renata Scotto’s production with Palm Beach Opera; Germont in La traviata with Opera Grand Rapids and Opera Omaha; the title role in The Flying Dutchman with Piedmont Opera; Alfonso in Così fan tutte with North Carolina Opera; Horace
Who’s Who

Sweeney Todd

Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly with Chautauqua Opera. He is a former Artist in Residence of The Dallas Opera, where his performances included Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet, Roderigo in Otello, Lord Cecil in Roberto Devereaux, Normanno in Lucia di Lammermoor, and Greenhorn (cover) in the world premiere run of Jake Heggie’s Moby-Dick. He joined Shreveport Opera for Anthony Hope in Sweeney Todd and The Living Opera in Richardson, Texas, for Martin in The Tender Land and Frederic in The Pirates of Penzance.

Cynthia Clayton (United States)
Soprano—Beggar Woman
HGO Appearances: Performances of: Cio-Cio-San in Madame Butterfly (2010), the title role of Tosca (2010), and Mimi in La bohème (2008).
About the Artist: Cynthia Clayton recently won accolades in the title role of Florencia en el Amazonas with Utah Opera, where she previously performed the title role of Tosca, Mimi in La bohème, and the title role in Jenůfa. Other credits include Musetta in La bohème with New York City Opera; Donna Anna in Don Giovanni with Dallas Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City; and Penelope in the North American premiere of Britten’s Gloriana at Central City Opera. Her New York City Opera credits also include appearances as Cio-Cio-San in Madame Butterfly, Mimi, and the Countess in The Marriage of Figaro. She appeared with San Diego Opera as Mary Willis in Carlisle Floyd’s Cold Sassy Tree, as well as Musetta and Micaela in conductor Richard Bonynges’s first performances of La bohème and Carmen; with Festival Opera in the title role of Floyd’s Susannah and Desdemona in Otello; and with Cleveland Opera as Micaela and as Marguerite in Faust. In addition, she has sung Violetta in La traviata in Belgium; Madame Butterfly with Anchorage Opera, Intermountain Opera, and Fort Worth Opera; Liù in Turandot with Knoxville Opera; Nedda in Pagliacci with Opera Delaware and Festival Opera; Massenet’s Manon with Arizona Opera; Alice Ford in Falstaff with Utah Opera; Susannah with Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre; and Manon Lescaut with Intermountain Opera. She is an associate professor of voice at the University of Houston Moores School of Music.

Kevin Ray (United States)
Tenor—Beadle Bamford
About the Artist: In March, Kevin Ray joined his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music, as a guest artist in his first performances of Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos in association

Scott Quinn (United States)
Tenor—Pirelli
About the Artist: Scott Quinn’s 2014–15 season is filled with role debuts: Alfredo in La traviata with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, the Duke in Rigoletto with Atlanta Opera, these performances as Pirelli in Sweeney Todd, Tamino in The Magic Flute with HGO at Miller Outdoor Theatre in May, and Narraboth in Salome with The Dallas Opera. This summer, he sings his first performances of Fernand in La favorite at the Caramoor International Music Festival. In coming seasons, he makes debuts with San Francisco Opera, Den Jyske Opera, and Arizona Opera, among others, all in leading roles. Last season, he sang his first performances of Ferrando in Così fan tutte with Fort Worth Opera and

Tabor in Central City Opera’s The Ballad of Baby Doe; and Bartolo in The Barber of Seville as well as Scarpia in Tosca with Mill City Summer Opera. A favorite with Boston Lyric Opera, he performed there as Music Master in Ariadne auf Naxos, the Mayor in John Musto’s The Inspector, and Scarpia in a concert version of Tosca. With Hawaii Opera Theatre, he was seen as Bartolo, Fredrik in A Little Night Music, Germont, Scarpia, Michele and Gianni Schicchi in Il trittico, and in his role debut as Wotan in Die Walküre.

A scene from Sweeney Todd

About the Artist:

www.HGO.org
with Opera Philadelphia and the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. Recent engagements include his first performances of the title role of Peter Grimes with Chautauqua Opera as well as Don José in Carmen with Wolf Trap Opera and the Lyrique-en-Mer/Festival de Belle-Île. While a Santa Fe apprentice artist, he created the role of the Second Clubman in the world premiere of Paul Moravec’s The Letter. Also with the company, he sang the role of the Poet in Menotti’s The Last Savage, covered the Drum Major in Wozzeck, and performed scenes of the title role of Idomeneo. On the concert stage, he has joined the Philadelphia Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, and the Sunriver Music Festival for Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9.

Adam Gibbs (United States)
Actor—Jonas Fogg
Houston Grand Opera Debut

About the Artist: Although Adam Gibbs is making his HGO debut in a named role, he has appeared previously as a supernumerary, most recently in Lucia di Lammermoor (2011). Most recently has was seen in Houston as Dr. Faustus with the Classical Theatre Company followed by the title character in My Name is Asher Lev with Theater LaB. Other credits include the world premiere of Ether Dome at the Alley Theatre, where he was also seen in Our Town, The Man Who Came to Dinner, and A Christmas Carol. He has also performed at Stages Repertory Theatre as Denny in Life Could Be a Dream, Adam in Yankee Tavern, and Toby in Amy’s View. Some of his other favorites are Hello, Dolly! with Leslie Uggams at Theatre Under the Stars, Sparky in Forever Plaid at Unity Theatre in Brenham, and Jimmy in Thoroughly Modern Millie and Laurie in Little Women at Hits Theatre. Voiceover credits include Grave of the Fireflies and Un-Go, among others. He is a proud member of Actor’s Equity Association.

Music Theatre International (MTI) is one of the world’s leading theatrical licensing agencies, granting schools as well as amateur and professional theatres from around the world the rights to perform the largest selection of great musicals from Broadway and beyond. MTI works directly with the composers, lyricists, and book writers of these shows to provide official scripts, musical materials and dynamic theatrical resources to over 60,000 theatrical organizations in the United States and in over 60 countries worldwide.

Houston Grand Opera
Santa Fe Patron Trip
July 29–August 3, 2015

Be a part of the Houston Grand Opera patrons who set out to explore the historic city of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Enjoy art, spectacular dinners at private Santa Fe homes, and three Santa Fe Opera performances including La finta giardiniera, Salome, and Cold Mountain.

For more information, contact Rudy Avelar at 713-546-0271 or visit HGO.org/SantaFe.
Winter is always a busy time for the HGO Studio! Concert of Arias was held on February 5, the culmination of the 27th Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition. Top honors were awarded to Armenian soprano Mane Galoyan. American tenor Chris Bozeka took second, while Argentinian bass-baritone Federico De Michelis won third prize. The annual Audience Choice Award went to Chinese tenor Yongzhao Yu.

We are delighted that internationally renowned soprano (and HGO Studio alum) Ana María Martínez has established a new annual award. The Ana Maria Martinez Encouragement Award is intended to provide career support to one Concert of Arias singer who shows great promise. This year, Ms. Martinez awarded the prize to Yongzhao Yu.

Now that the audition process is complete, I’m pleased to announce the HGO Studio roster for our upcoming 2015–16 season. All four Concert of Arias prize winners will join the Studio, along with baritone Ben Edquist and pianist/coaches Kirill Kuzmin and Geoff Loff. The roster is completed by second-year Studio artists Pureum Jo, D’Ana Lombard, Sahar Nouri, Sofia Selowsky, and Megan Samarin.

This summer, Studio artists will be busy singing and studying all over the world! Peixin Chen will make his Santa Fe Opera debut as Sparafucile (Rigoletto) and 1st Nazarene (Salome). Five Studio artists have been engaged by Wolf Trap Opera: D’Ana Lombard and Morgan Pearse will sing roles in The Ghosts of Versailles (Rosina and Figaro, respectively); Emily Senturia will serve as pianist/coach for that production; and Thomas Richards will take on the title role in The Marriage of Figaro with Reginald Smith Jr. as Count Almaviva in the same cast. Pureum Jo and Sofia Selowsky will attend the Aspen Music Festival, where Pureum will sing Juliet (Romeo and Juliet) and Sofia will sing Despina (Così fan tutte). Finally, Megan Samarin will perform the role of Marzia in Vivaldi’s Cato in Utica at the Glimmerglass Festival in New York, along with incoming Studio artist Ben Edquist, who will sing Papageno in Glimmerglass’s Magic Flute.

If you’ll be traveling this summer, be sure to catch these performances! We’re very proud of the accomplishments of our Studio artists and look forward to watching their success.

In just a few weeks, HGO Studio artists will complete the season by taking on major roles for performances of The Magic Flute at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion and Miller Outdoor Theatre, conducted by HGO Studio Music Director Bradley Moore (see “Save the Dates” on the facing page). I hope you’ll join us at the park!

Brian Speck, Director
**HGO Studio Faculty & Staff**

**Brian Speck**, Director  
**Bradley Moore**, Music Director  
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair  
**Amra Catovic**, Studio Administrator  
**Carlisle Floyd**, Artistic Advisor  
**Stephen King**, Director of Vocal Instruction  
The Harold Block and Janet Sims/Jill and Ailyn Risley Chair  
**Patrick Summers**, Conducting Instructor and Coach  
Margaret Aikek Williams Chair  
**Patrick Harvey**, Resident Coach  
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Endowed Chair  
**Peter Pasztor**, Resident Coach  
**Tara Faircloth**, Drama Coach  
**Brian Connelly**, Piano Instructor  
Sponsored by Ursula and Saul Balagura  
**Timothy Hester**, Piano Instructor  
Sponsored by Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D.  
**Melissa Marse**, Piano Instructor  
**Jordan de Souza**, Vocal Coach  
**Gerardo Felisatti**, Vocal Coach  
**David Hanlon**, Vocal Coach  
**Laurie Rogers**, Vocal Coach  
**Dr. Irene Spiegelman**, German Diction Coach  
**Christa Gaug**, German Instructor  
Sponsored by Robert L. Turner in honor of John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer

**Enrica Vagliani Gray**, Italian Instructor  
Sponsored by Marsha L. Montemayor  
**Jonathan Ludwig**, Russian Instructor  
**Julie Muller**, English Instructor  
**Catherine Baxter**, English Dialect/Diaglogue Coach  
**Nicole Uhlig**, French Instructor  
Sponsored by Jennifer Sickler  
**Deborah Birnbaum**, Guest Coach  
**John Fisher**, Guest Coach  
**Myra Huang**, Guest Coach  
**Eric Melear**, Guest Coach  
**Kevin Murphy**, Guest Coach  
**James Robinson**, Showcase Director  
**Pierre Vallet**, Guest Coach  
**Evans Family Endowed Chair**

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.

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**HGO Studio Artists 2014–15**

**PEIXIN CHEN**, bass  
The Evans Family/Jill and Ailyn Risley Fellow  
**PUREUM JO**, soprano  
Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/Nancy and Ted Haywood 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  
**MORGAN PEARSE**, baritone  
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Mr. Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow  
**THOMAS RICHARDS**, bass-baritone  
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr Fellow  

**MEGAN SAMARIN**, mezzo-soprano  
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow  
**SOFIA SELOWSKY**, mezzo-soprano  
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow  
**EMILY SENTURIA**, conductor/pianist  
Beth Madison Fellow  
**REGINALD SMITH JR.**, baritone  
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai, Terrell Tone Owen Memorial Endowed Fund at the Community Foundation of Abilene Endowed Fellow  
**CHRISTOPHER TURBESSI**, pianist/coach  
Ms. Marianne Kah/Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D., Fellow

Hotel accommodations for YAVA generously provided by the Lancaster Hotel.  
United Airlines is the official airline of Houston Grand Opera and Concert of Arias.  
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**SAVE THE DATES**

**DON’T MISS THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE HGO ARTISTS IN ACTION!**

**RECITALS AT RIENZI**  
May 7 and 10, 2015  
Recitals are held at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive. Tickets are available through HGO.org or 713-228-OPERA (6737). Call 713-639-7800 for information.

**THE MAGIC FLUTE**  
May 15, 2015  
Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, The Woodlands  
HGO Studio artists are featured in outdoor performances of The Magic Flute. 8 p.m. $20 orchestra seating; FREE mezzanine and lawn seating courtesy of The Wortham Foundation. Visit woodlandscenter.org for information and tickets.

**THE MAGIC FLUTE**  
May 22 and 23, 2015  
Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park  
HGO Studio artists are featured in FREE outdoor performances of The Magic Flute. 8 p.m. Tickets for covered seating may be picked up the day of the performance from 10:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Miller Outdoor Theatre box office. For information, visit milleroutdoorthratre.com.
HGOco is HGO’s broad initiative for connecting the company with the community in which we live. Among HGOco’s many projects, the touring group Opera to Go! performs family-friendly works in schools, churches, and community venues. Each year, HGOco also offers student performances (for school groups only) of a popular opera.

ENCHANTED ADVENTURE: THE MAGIC FLUTE

This February, more than 6,000 students from 120 schools experienced live opera at the Wortham Theater Center. An ideal introduction to opera, Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* enchanted students from Houston, Katy, and Spring, alongside school groups from as far as Victoria, Texas, and even Lake Charles, Louisiana!

Elementary and middle school students attended two-hour Student Matinees on February 10 and 13 while high schoolers saw the full-length version at High School Night on February 11. During intermission, students got a behind-the-scenes look at making an opera come to life: HGO Studio artist Reginald Smith Jr., who sang the role of the Speaker, spoke about his hours of practice while supernumerary Luke Fedell gave a firsthand account of what it’s like to dance onstage in a bear suit. Bus transportation for the Student Matinee performances was generously supported through HGO’s Bus Reimbursement Program.

TAKING A (SPRING) BREAK WITH HGOCO

HGOco’s Storybook artists spent three days during spring break with youngsters and their families at Discovery Green. The spring break outing is so popular that it has become a regular part of the HGOco calendar. The fun includes stories, singing, and interactive programs at the Anheuser-Busch Stage. Teaching artists led First Songs sessions, helping adult participants use music as a tool to interact with their young ones during reading time, and Storybook Opera artists shared music-themed picture books in English and bilingually in English-Spanish.

HSV SINGS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

HGO’s High School Voice Studio (HSV) will showcase the results of a year of musical growth and study with a graduation recital on Sunday, May 17, at 6 p.m. The recital will be held in Duncan Recital Hall at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music and is free and open to the public. Through their recital performances, the seven talented high school seniors who make up the 2014–15 HSVS will compete for scholarships to further their music study, which will be awarded by guest judges at the conclusion of the recital. A small reception follows, and all recital attendees are welcome.
INDOOR CAMPING AT ITS BEST

Musical adventures and a playground for your child’s imagination await at HGOco’s 2015 Summer Opera Camps. Visit HGO.org/operacamp to sign up!

**June 8–12**

**OPERA EXPERIENCE**

For students entering grades 4–9 this fall

Develop a better understanding of healthy singing and improve music reading and theory skills by performing songs from Broadway-style repertoire.

Fee: $200

**June 15–19**

**CREATE AN OPERA**

For students entering grades 3–6 this fall

Write words, compose music, design and build sets, props, and costumes—and perform a musical version of *The Day the Crayons Quit*.

Fee: $200

**June 15–26**

**ART OF OPERA**

For students entering grades 7–12 this fall

Enhance vocal and dramatic skills by performing *The Tinker of Tivoli* based on music by Rossini. A recommendation letter from a choir director or voice teacher is required.

Fee: $350

From top: Last year’s **Create an Opera** campers conceived, built, and performed their own musical version of *The Quiltmaker’s Gift*.

Art of Opera 2014 campers performed a student version of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

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AJAMIE
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Houston Grand Opera is thrilled that Ajamie LLP has joined as a new corporate partner for the 2014–15 season. This season, the firm generously supported HGO’s season-opening production of Otello and the 2015 Concert of Arias.

With offices in Houston and New York, Ajamie LLP is one of the nation’s premier law firms with a national and international practice in complex commercial litigation and arbitration. The firm’s lawyers are all seasoned litigators with trial courtroom experience. Among the firm’s landmark victories are two of the largest awards ever handed down by arbitration panels for investors, including a record $429.5 million award, as well as a record $112 million jury award on a civil RICO Act claim.

Thomas R. Ajamie, founder and managing partner of Ajamie LLP, was recently named one of the National Law Journal's “Top 50 Litigation Trailblazers,” and has been recognized as a leading lawyer by numerous legal publications, including Chambers USA, Euromoney’s Benchmark Litigation, Lawdragon, and Best Lawyers, among others.

A longtime supporter of the Opera, an HGO trustee, and a Patron Circle member of the Sundance Institute, Tom is also founder of The Ajamie Foundation, which promotes tolerance and equality among youth. The foundation offers university scholarships to students who display respect and support diversity initiatives in our society.
EL PASADO PREVIEW AT HUGO’S

Guests were treated to a special preview of HGO’s second mariachi opera, *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina/The Past is Never Finished* on January 26. Graciously hosted by Hugo’s, the evening included tequila cocktails and featured a special musical presentation by mezzo-soprano Vanessa Alonzo and pianist Joseph Li.

CONCERT OF ARIAS WELCOME RECEPTION

Concert of Arias honoree Mariquita Masterson generously hosted the semifinalists of the 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition in her home on January 31, along with HGO Studio members and Concert of Arias underwriters. Guests enjoyed tamales, margaritas, and true Texas hospitality.
**CONCERT OF ARIAS**

On February 5, eight young opera performers competed in Concert of Arias, the final round of the annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. This year's event, chaired by Jana and John Scott Arnoldy, honored Mariquita Masterson and celebrated the 27th year of the competition. Following the performance, more than 450 guests attended a special black-tie dinner held in the Wortham Theater Center Grand Foyer.
**MADAME BUTTERFLY CAST PARTY**

HGO Patrons gathered to celebrate the opening of *Madame Butterfly* on January 23 at the new Montrose showroom of David Peck USA. Hosted by Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson, Anna Dean, and David Peck, the late-night reception provided the perfect venue for guests to mingle with the cast and creative team and admire Peck’s creations.

On January 29, HGO trustees met for their annual winter meeting and were amazed by the work of Dotti Staker, head of HGO’s Wig and Makeup Department, and Norma Cortez, head of the Costume Department. The two of them transformed trustees Gwyneth Campbell and Stephen Kaufman into the Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute* and Judge Turpin from *Sweeney Todd*, respectively.
THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

As a follow-up to last season’s Ring 101, HGO Dramaturg Paul Hopper presented Ring 201, a one-hour discussion on Wagner’s Ring cycle, on January 7. More than 500 subscribers, patrons, trustees, and board members packed the Orchestra level of the Cullen Theater for the presentation and Q&A session about Wagner’s epic work.

THE MAGIC FLUTE CAST PARTY

Following the opening performance of The Magic Flute, HGO Patrons celebrated at Vinson & Elkins LLP with event hosts Glen Rosenbaum, Jackson Hicks, and Brenda Harvey-Traylor. HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers introduced the cast and creative team to great applause, and guests enjoyed a delectable late-night buffet by Jackson and Company.
Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera

Our profoundest thanks go to each of the 6,648 generous and visionary donors to Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera.

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APRIL

18, 22, 25, 30, MAY 3m
• Performances of Wagner’s Die Walküre. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Night for Young Professionals in the April 18 performance only.

24, 26m, 29, MAY 2, 8, 9
• Performances of Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler’s Sweeney Todd. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Night for Young Professionals in the April 24 performance only.

26
• Behind the Music: An intimate conversation about Sweeney Todd immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

MAY

3
• Behind the Music: An intimate conversation about Die Walküre immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

6–8
• Opera to Go! presents free public performances of The Pastry Prince at Miller Outdoor Theatre, 6000 Hermann Park Dr. 11 a.m. daily.

7, 10
• HGO Studio Recital at Rienzi. Hear HGO Studio artists in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, MFAH’s decorative arts wing, 1406 Kirby Drive. May 7 at 7:30 p.m., May 10 at 5 p.m.

13, 16, 17m

15

JUNE

2
• HGO Association Annual Meeting. Wortham Theater Center, 5–7 p.m. Open to board, trustees, and donors. Call 713-546-0217 for information.

JUNE OPERA CAMPS

For information, visit HGO.org/opercamp. All camps held at the Wortham Theater Center.

8–12
• HGoco’s Opera Experience camp for students entering grades 4–9 this fall. Learn and perform songs from Broadway-style repertoire while developing healthy singing technique. Fee: $250.

15–19
• HGoco’s Create an Opera camp for students entering grades 3–6 this fall. Write words, compose music, design and build sets, props, and costumes—and perform an original musical version of The Day the Crayons Quit. Fee: $200.

15–26
• HGoco’s Art of Opera camp for students entering grades 7–12 this fall. Enhance vocal and dramatic skills by performing The Tinker of Tivoli, based on music by Rossini. Recommendation from choir director or voice teacher required. Fee: $350.
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Bobby Baker, Assistant Carpenter
Gregory Banfield, Assistant Electrician*
Kristen E. Burke, Production Stage Manager
Michael Clark, Lighting Supervisor
Andrew Cloud, Properties Associate*
Norma Cortez, Head of Costumes*
Kyle Coyer, Assistant Technical Director
Esmeralda De Leon, Costume Coordinator
Brandon Dismukes, Production Master Carpenter*
Meg Edwards, Assistant Stage Manager
Mary Elsey, Assistant Stage Manager
Zoltan Fabry, Master Propertyman*
Megan, Properties Design Director*
Mario Gutierrez, Chief of Security
Ed Hamala, Assistant Carpenter/Head Flyman
Debbie Harrington, Costume Shop Supervisor*
Eduardo Hawkins, Head Soundman*
Sonia Henao, Technical Assistant
Julie Hurley, Assistant Stage Manager
Susan Li, Assistant Director
Marcie Lou, Technical/Production Administrator
Shawna Lucey, Assistant Director
Jessica L. Mullins, Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager
Michael Mullins, Assistant Technical Director/ HGoco Technical Director
Liz Petley, Assistant Stage Manager
Albert Pike, Master Electrician*
Mercedes Ramirez, Draper*
Maria Luisa Salinas, Costume Technician
Omer Ben Seadia, Assistant Director
Dotti Staker, Wig and Makeup Department Head*
Christopher Staub, Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager
Paula Lea Tran, Costume Technician
Myrna Vallejo, Costume Coordinator*
Annie Wheeler, Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager*

* denotes 10 or more years of service
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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.HGO.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@hgo.org.

During HGO’s active repertory periods, the Center will be staffed 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 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 Encore Café prior to the performance, call 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@hgo.org.
How does it feel to be thought of as the Wagner-Strauss soprano that we’ve been waiting for, as Heidi Waleson put it in Musical America?

Well, there’s hardly any pressure behind that sort of thing! You know, when I listen to myself, I’m so critical of every note that I don’t hear anything I like. So I’m thrilled that people are happy. I am so lucky and I love the music so much—I just hope I’m doing a modicum of service to it.

Tell me a little more about your transition to your current repertoire. You sang your first Ortrud at HGO?

Yes. I didn’t actually think that it was that big of a leap at that point—but people were very surprised that I was cast as Ortrud. But [HGO Artistic and Music Director] Patrick Summers knew it was a great fit. Patrick always has stood by me; he has always understood what’s been going on with my instrument. He’s always understood my psyche. I really don’t know what I would have done without him, to be perfectly honest. He’s also had some ideas that I thought were absolutely bananas. When I got the offer from HGO to sing Eboli in Don Carlos, I said, “Eboli? A mezzo part?” But it fit me perfectly—he was right.

I’m also very grateful to the Metropolitan Opera because I did a lot of understudying there and I learned a lot of roles that way. When it was time for me to show that I could sing this repertoire, I was ready.

Brünnhilde is such a pinnacle role. Why?

It’s one of the most in-depth characters that a female can play in opera. She’s a headstrong teen, but then things change so quickly. And we see every emotion, all the grief, anger, joy, resignation, bravery, fear—everything. This all happens over the course of three operas, but it’s so rare to find a character with such a broad spectrum of feelings, emotions, colors. People have said, and I agree, that the relationship between Wotan and Brünnhilde is the central love story of the entire Ring cycle. So the final scene is, for me, one of the most heartbreaking scenes in all of opera.

And Brünnhilde is the hero Wotan has been looking for—

She is the hero. He just misses the whole thing.

What do you feel like will be different about your Brünnhilde?

I don’t see her as a super-strong warrior maiden. She’s a kid. She has a huge capacity for love, and when she and Siegmund meet, she sees that there are other beings who have this same kind of passion and it makes her all the more fragile. There’s a fragility to her that I don’t always see [in other interpretations], so that’s what I hope to be able to portray.

Critics have often noted your nuanced character portrayals. Where does that acting ability come from?

When you’re dealing with music that is through-composed, it’s as if you’re having a chat with somebody. So for me, it always just has to do with really paying attention to the person that you’re interacting with. And Wagner was brilliant. He gave you everything in the text and in the music. Even if you don’t know quite what you’re thinking, there’s a leitmotif that tells you what you are thinking.

Is it true you found out that you could sing by chance?

Completely by accident. I was going to be a high school band teacher, and I was a clarinet major. The instrumental majors had to take sight singing placement exams. They liked my singing better than my clarinet playing, which was a giant blow. But then I realized I could wear lipstick, which totally makes me a soprano. ☺
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