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Welcome to the Wortham Theater Center!

We continue our 2019–20 season with our first-ever presentation of Donizetti’s bel canto gem *La favorite* and Verdi’s monumental *Aida* in an exciting new production. In the title roles, we are especially proud to present two of our most distinguished HGO Studio alums—mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton as Léonor de Guzman, “the favorite” of the Donizetti opera’s title, and soprano Tamara Wilson as Verdi’s tragic captive princess, Aida.

We began talking to Jamie about singing Léonor in *La favorite* during her days in the Studio, and now the time is right for her to take on the notoriously demanding role—its difficulty being the primary reason the opera isn’t performed more often. The dream cast joining her includes renowned tenor Lawrence Brownlee as Fernand, the man she truly loves; baritone Jacques Imbrailo as King Alphonse XI, whose unhappy mistress she is; and Studio alum Federico De Michelis as Balthazar, who, representing the tremendous power of the church in the 14th century, is instrumental in bringing the classic love triangle to its heartbreaking conclusion. The distinguished conductor Christophe Rousset makes his HGO debut at the podium, and the ever-inventive Kevin Newbury directs.

Tamara Wilson triumphed as Aida for her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2014, and it suits her so well that it has become part of her core repertoire. We welcome Melody Moore and Catherine Martin sharing the role of her romantic rival, Amneris—another love triangle!—along with tenor Russell Thomas in his HGO debut as Aida’s lover, Radames; and Studio alums Reginald Smith Jr. and Peixin Chen, respectively as Aida’s father, King Amonasro, and the high priest, Ramfis. Although we have presented *Aida* regularly over the years, we couldn’t be more excited about this particular production. *Aida* demands grand spectacle, and you’ll find it here, but it will be different from any *Aida* you’ve seen before, owing to the vision of director Phelim McDermott—making his HGO debut fresh from his triumph at The Metropolitan Opera with *Akhnaten*—and his wonderful team, including Basil Twist as silks choreographer. Patrick is thrilled to conduct this landmark opera—one of his favorites—at HGO for the first time. Prepare for a breathtaking experience, both visually and musically!

We hope you enjoy the performance.

Please join us on February 7 for Concert of Arias, the final round of our annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. Find more information on p. 3.
For information on all Houston Grand Opera productions and events, or for a complimentary season brochure, please email the Customer Care Center at customercare@hgo.org or telephone 713-228-6737. Houston Grand Opera is a member of OPERA America, Inc., and the Theater District Association, Inc.

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Pictured: A selection of celebrated past Concert of Arias winners and HGO Studio alumni.

After three years around town, we return to the Wortham Theater Center-turned mysterious Marrakesh for an exotic festival of the senses. A dreamy Moroccan adventure begins in the old city. A bustling market and surprises await, with music, cocktails, and a silent auction. The charm continues, by glow of lantern light, with a Mediterranean feast and dancing the night away.

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History in the Making

HGO’s Principal Guest Conductor and this season’s Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Eun Sun Kim was named the next music director of the San Francisco Opera in December 2019. Eun Sun Kim will be the first woman to hold the music director post at an American company of major size and stature. She made her American debut in 2017 conducting HGO’s La traviata at The Resilience Theater, after Hurricane Harvey wreaked havoc in Houston.

“I am moved to hear that my gifted colleague Eun Sun Kim, in addition to being HGO’s Principal Guest Conductor, will be the new music director of San Francisco Opera,” says HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers. “She is a brilliant musician, a superb conductor, a keen judge of talent, and an empathic and gracious colleague. She is the perfect person at the perfect time for the beloved company.”

Eun Sun Kim will conduct HGO’s production of Salome this upcoming spring and will return to open the 2020–21 season with Carmen.

Opéra News Awards honors Ana María Martínez

Each year, OPERA NEWS pays tribute to five extraordinary men and women who have had a transformative effect on the world of opera. Among the 15th annual OPERA NEWS Award’s recipients is HGO Artistic Advisor and beloved soprano, Ana María Martínez.

Her tremendous vocal talent is only upstaged by her empathy and dedication to the future of opera. This past year, Martínez joined HGO’s artistic team as the company’s first-ever artistic advisor. In her new role, Martínez advises on casting and future productions, mentors the HGO Studio artists, contributes to the Concert of Arias, and works with HGO to develop programming that connects to Houston communities. Her long history with Houston Grand Opera began when she won first prize in the 1994 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and became a member of the HGO Studio (1994–95). In 2015, she inaugurated her Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award at Concert of Arias, an award that provides career support to one singer who shows great promise.

The honorees will be celebrated at a black-tie gala on Sunday, April 5, 2020 in New York City. A musical tribute will also be performed in honor of the recipients.

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Dear Opera Patron,

As dedicated supporters of Houston Grand Opera, Novum Energy is honored to welcome you to Donizetti’s La favorite and Verdi’s Aida. We are excited you are joining us for today’s performance and are proud to be Grand Underwriters for HGO’s new production of Aida.

Founded in 2011, Novum Energy is an international physical oil supply and trading company. Committed to industry excellence in terms of delivery standards and customer service, we stand as a link between global oil refiners and consumers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are socially committed to serving our local communities by actively engaging in philanthropic work. Through our initiatives, we strive to support the underprivileged and promote cultural appreciation. We have a passion for music and believe HGO is a cornerstone of the arts in Houston.

Thank you for sharing our passion for opera and please enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

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We are proud of our longstanding partnership with HGO, which includes pro bono legal services, special event hosting, board leadership, and support of world-class productions like the one we are experiencing this evening.

Thank you for attending, and we hope you enjoy the performance!

Sincerely,

Scott N. Wulfe
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Two years ago, HGOco Senior Education Manager Alisa Magallón and HGOco Director Carleen Graham started discussing the idea of creating an opera and educational residency aimed at increasing HGO’s engagement with teenage audiences in Houston. Their discussions eventually sparked the creation of *Marian’s Song*, HGO’s 68th world premiere, which hits the stage of the Cullen Theater this March. The chamber opera, composed by former HGOco Music Director and Composer in Residence Damien Sneed to a libretto by Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, Houston’s poet laureate emeritus, tells the story of legendary vocalist Marian Anderson through the eyes of a modern-day college student named Nevaeh.

I sat down with Sneed, Mouton, and Dennis Whitehead Darling (the opera’s director) recently so they could share their thoughts about what it was like bringing Marian Anderson’s inspirational story of identity and perseverance to the stage.
EMILY N. WELLS: What influences have shaped your work in bringing Marian’s legacy to the stage?

DEBORAH D.E.E.P. MOUTON (DM): Marian’s autobiography was a great source of insight. Not only was I able to learn about her, I was able to see what special events in her own life she held sacred. In addition, I referred to some of the song archetypes from The Greatest Showman and some of the dialogue cues from Hamilton. While this piece is not rap or a musical, the rhythmic cues and language are different than a classic opera, so they both served as great resources.

DAMIEN SNEED (DS): My godmother, the late Jessye Norman, was a huge influence on my work to bring Marian Anderson’s legacy to the stage. She had a close relationship with Marian Anderson and shared a lot of pertinent and personal information with me.

DENNIS WHITEHEAD DARLING (DWD): As an African American director, I am very passionate about theater that examines, debates, or provides new insight into the issues that face people of color or any marginalized group. Marian’s Song is an opportunity to share with a new generation a story about a remarkable African American icon whose humility, perseverance, and vocal talent became the catalyst for social change. Her legacy paved the way for me and other artists of color to have the opportunity to be a part of this retelling of the story of an American icon.

Please share an aspect of the creative process that has been challenging for you as an individual artist.

DM: I don’t think I have ever had the opportunity to work in layered collaboration. Typically, I work closely alongside another artist. We are entangled in some ways. This was a very different process. Each of us had input and some discussion, but much of the creation was done in a silo. Then, we would come back and consult. It was challenging at first to not have that voice to bounce things off of in real time.

DS: A challenging aspect of the creative process was having limited time and resources while trying to tell the story of such a huge figure in America’s history as well as the opera world.

DWD: Thus far, the most challenging aspect of bringing Marian’s Song to the page is editing down her remarkable life to a 60-minute opera. Marian’s journey from obscurity to becoming an American and international icon is difficult to capture in such a short time. Fortunately, Nevaeh, a character who communicates through spoken word created by our talented librettist, provides a modern reflective perspective that propels the story along.

What message or feeling do you want the audience to be left with after experiencing this opera?

DM: I want the audience to be left with two responses. The first would be a sense of connection. Most people know Marian, but know little about her true resilience and fortitude. I want people to see themselves in her. They should be able to connect with their fellow humans and with history greater. The second is a sense of urgency. The world around us is changing greatly. Nevaeh, the main character, chooses to do something about it. We all have that choice. I want us to look around and find a place to plug in, offer understanding, or make the world easier or better for someone who we have no other reason to help but our unbridled kindness.

DS: As composer, I want the audience to be left with the story of Marian’s life through the confluence of African American musical styles mixed with those in the European tradition.

DWD: My goal as an artist and storyteller is to present a transformative and emotionally engaging experience that not only informs but inspires the viewer to create positive change in the world. Marian’s Song gives us this opportunity by sharing her story from her humble beginnings to her rise as an American icon. Marian Anderson’s grace, dignity, and talent transcended racial barriers and stirred a nation into taking positive steps toward racial equality. I hope that Marian’s Song will inspire this generation and generations to come and will help them recognize that even the most humble among us can be the catalyst that sparks positive social change.

Please join HGOco on March 5 and 6, 2020 in the Cullen Theater for the world premiere of Marian’s Song. For more information, visit HGO.org/marian.
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A FAVORITE WAS ONCE A STAPLE, SO WHY DID IT DISAPPEAR FOR SO LONG?

LA FAVORITE

REVIVED
I’m always delighted when asked what certain operas are “about,” because opera carries several histories within it. Opera is primarily a musical form that became theatrical and this further complicates the question of what any single opera is “about,” because it is about both its time and our own.

So, what is Donizetti’s La favorite about? It is about the mistress of a powerful man that was commissioned for the mistress of a powerful man. But it is also considerably more.

La favorite was one of the two or three most popular operas of the 19th century. It is set in Spain, written by an Italian, and sung in French. If the opera was known at all more recently, it was in its translated Italian version, La favorita. In one way, La favorite is “about” singing, in that everything in the opera is illuminated by the life force of singing, and the opera has one of the great scores of its era, a wonderland of gorgeously spinning vocal lines and memorably toe-tapping choruses. Going deeper, La favorite is about the intersection of religious faith and physical desire, and beneath that it is about the unique Spanish crossroads of the Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish faiths, though those conflicts are as subtle as they were forced to be in the censor-driven world of 19th century opera. In the words of La favorite’s director, Kevin Newbury:

La favorite is a story in which faith and sexuality collide. The primal forces of attraction and jealousy invade a repressed, patriarchal landscape where women suffer punishment and humiliation at the hands of the men in power. Our production begins in a seemingly naturalistic world that gradually transforms into something more heightened and abstract, mirroring Fernand’s psychological crisis of faith.

The “favorite” of the title is the character of Léonor, played at HGO by Jamie Barton. Rosine Stolz, for whom the opera was written, was the mistress of the impresario who commissioned it, Léon Pillet, the director of the Paris Opera, and their relationship was one of the world’s more delicious scandals at the time adding an extra layer of naughtiness to the opera’s history. Personal eccentricities aside, Stolz was a great singer, and Donizetti wrote two iconic title roles for her, Mary Stuart, and Léonor in La favorite.

In art, favorites have generally been women favored by powerful men, but in life, many of history’s more famous favorites were men promoted by a female monarch, like Elizabeth I’s Robert Dudley, Earl Leicester, or Robert Deveraux. The recent film, The Favourite, for which Olivia Coleman won the 2018 Academy Award for Best Actress, bears no relationship to Donizetti’s opera, but its subject is the competition for a monarch’s favor, and the film ingeniously defies expectations and norms.

Operas come in and out of popularity. A century ago, two of the most popular operas are almost never seen today: Charpentier’s Louise and Ponchielli’s La Gioconda. Some of this is just the inevitable march of time and how that causes some things to fall away. But why did such a popular opera as La favorite disappear while others didn’t? Others of Donizetti’s operas have lived into the 21st century, like his ravishing Lucia di Lammermoor, though it is also a good example of an opera not popular for almost a century and brought back into prominence by great singers. The best explanation for La favorite’s disappearance is the public’s longtime preference for star sopranos and tenors over the lower-voiced mezzo-sopranos, as well as the late 19th century’s obsession with the massive operas of Wagner that made most of the bel canto operas seem orchestrally meek by comparison—which they are not. La favorite appears in the repertoire now for the same reasons Lucia did: because a singer with the exemplary gifts of mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton has appeared in the world to revive it.

La favorite appears in the repertoire now for the same reasons Lucia did: because a singer with the exemplary gifts of mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton has appeared in the world to revive it.
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Location Matters
Live where everyone wishes they could.
The title character in Donizetti’s *La favorite* was a true historical figure in medieval Castile, with whom King Alfonso XI had ten children. While the opera’s title implies—to present-day English speakers—that Léonor de Guzman was the king’s favorite mistress out of many, she was in fact his only mistress (he was married to Maria of Portugal, with whom he had two children). The term “favorite” refers to a specific role, one in which a mistress to the king holds significant lands and has influential political sway. Léonor de Guzman was being primed for queenship in their very public, scandalous affair. Much to the dismay of the nobility, she held many important lands and castles throughout the Kingdom of Castile.

While the opera ends with the title character’s death (no surprise there!), the historical Léonor outlived King Alfonso XI. After his death, Queen Maria had Léonor arrested and executed, not just for revenge, but also to further delegitimize the children she had with the late king. When King Alfonso XI died in 1350, his only living son with Maria became king, Pedro I. Alfonso’s oldest living son with Léonor was Enrique II; he retained the support of much of the Castilian nobility who saw in him a much weaker and more pliable monarch than Pedro. For 19 years, Pedro and Enrique waged a war of succession, the Castilian Civil War, until Pedro was finally assassinated at the hands of his half-brother. Léonor’s son became the official king of Castile in 1369 and Léonor’s lineage can be traced directly to the current Spanish monarch.

---

*Pictured: The royal family of Spain with daughter Leonor, Princess of Asturias*
King Enrique IV of Castile only had one daughter. The king’s detractors spread rumors that Enrique IV was impotent, and that the queen’s pregnancy was really with a male favorite at court, delegitimizing the king’s only offspring from her claim to the throne. This led Enrique to designate his half-sister Isabela to be the heir presumptive to the Castilian throne.

Carlos I was the son of Juana the Mad. He acted as co-regent during Juana’s reign while she was in forced confinement.

General Francisco Franco overthrew the Second Spanish Republic and ruled Spain under a military dictatorship until his death in 1975. This period in Spanish history is commonly referred to as Francoist Spain.

The son of Alfonso XIII, Pedro I never reigned, but he was the figurehead of the royal house of Spain from his father’s death in 1941 until 1975, when he renounced the throne in favor of his son, Juan Carlos I of Spain.

Juan Carlos I was being groomed by General Franco to continue the dictatorship of Francoist Spain; after Franco’s death in 1975, however, Juan Carlos I took steps to dismantle the dictatorship and oversaw Spain’s transition to a constitutional monarchy.

King Felipe VI’s oldest daughter is the heir presumptive to the Spanish crown. She is now fourteen years old, and she is the 21st-great-granddaughter of Léonor de Guzman, the title character in Donizetti’s La favorita. Her name also happens to be Leonor.
Felipe II of Spain is known to opera lovers by his Italian name, “Filippo due,” the bass king in Verdi’s Don Carlos.

Felipe IV’s daughter, Maria Theresa, married King Louis XVI of France. When her half-brother, Carlos II, was unable to produce an heir to the Spanish crown, her grandson abdicated his rights to the French throne to become Felipe V, King of Spain.

The reign of Carlos II of Spain was marked by his impotence and severe physical disabilities. His inability to produce an heir led to a war over the European power balance: his closest heir was the grandson to his half-sister, who was also in the line of succession for the French throne. From 1701–1714, an alliance of the English, Dutch, and Austrian royalties tried to prevent Carlos II’s grand-nephew from remaining the King of Spain—only when Felipe V renounced all claims to the French throne did the War of Spanish Succession end.

From 1808 to 1813, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte deposed Ferdinand VII and propped up the rule of his brother, Joseph I, the first monarch of Spain who was not a direct descendant of Léonor de Guzman since Pedro I (1350–1369). Joseph I abdicated the Spanish crown back to Ferdinand VII in 1813.

Known as “the Peacemaker,” Alfonso XII of Spain was living in exile in Paris when the fledgling Spanish republic under Amadeo I fell into further turmoil. A military coup overthrew the failed republic, and Alfonso XII returned from exile to reinstate the monarchy. This officially returned the lineage of Léonor de Guzman to the Spanish throne.

Alfonso XII

AMADEO I

From 1868-1870, the political leaders of the Spanish legislature tried to establish a republic, but reinstated a new monarchy under Amadeo I, an Italian prince, in 1870. Only three years later, he abdicated the throne and returned to Italy, declaring the politically tumultuous Spain as “unrulable.”

Key

- Direct lineage from Léonor de Guzman to present-day Spanish monarchy
- Ruled but not descended from Léonor de Guzman
- Descendants of Léonor de Guzman that ruled but are not direct to present-day monarchy
- Did not rule Spain
LA FAVORITE

An Opera in Four Acts
Music by Gaetano Donizetti | Libretto by Alphonse Royer, Gustave Vaëz, and Eugène Scribe
Sung in French with projected English translation

BROWN THEATER, WORTHAM THEATER CENTER

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**QUICK START GUIDE**

**STORY IN A NUTSHELL**

In 1340 Castile, Fernand tells Balthazar, the superior of his monastery and the father of the queen of Castile, that he wants to leave his life as a monk because he has fallen in love with a beautiful woman, Léonor, who has never revealed her true identity to him. Fernand meets with Léonor, who still refuses to reveal her identity. She tells him they will never be able to meet again and gives him a parting gift: a rank in the army. Fernand speculates that Léonor must be someone with significant political connections to help him in this way.

A few months later, King Alphonse XI returns victorious from the Battle of Río Salado. The king muses on his love for his mistress Léonor and his desire to divorce the queen for her. This is the same Léonor that Fernand loves. Because Fernand played an important role in the military triumph, the king honors him with any reward he requests. Fernand asks for Léonor’s hand in marriage. Alphonse XI acquiesces to the request knowing that divorcing his queen would cause a scandal with the church. He orders Fernand and Léonor to be married within the hour.

Léonor sends her confidante, Inès, to tell Fernand about her past with the king, but she is detained before Fernand can be informed. He learns of Léonor’s position with the king only after the wedding ceremony and publicly rebukes Léonor before leaving to restart his monastic life. Léonor comes to the monastery to plead for compassion; Fernand is ready to forgive her when, grieved and exhausted, she collapses.

*A full synopsis appears on p. 31.*

**FUN FACT**

The title of the opera is oftentimes understood to mean that Léonor was simply the “favorite” mistress of King Alphonse XI. In fact, the term “favorite” has a more specific historical meaning: a mistress of a king who was given significant political influence and holdings of land. The real-life Léonor was allowed to hear political matters as though she were on the king’s court, was given much land, and mothered ten of the king’s 12 children. When the king died, his wife, Queen Maria of Castile, had Léonor arrested and killed. Léonor’s son Enrique II eventually overthrew Alphonse and Maria’s son, Pedro the Cruel of Castile, to take the throne. Léonor’s lineage can be traced directly to the current Spanish monarch.

*To learn more about the descendants of Léonor de Guzman, see page 25.*

**WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

Bel canto opera is a genre of opera developed in the early 19th century to showcase the vocal prowess of an opera singer. “Bel canto” translates to “good singing,” and the music of these operas—most famously composed by the trio of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti—is designed to highlight the operatic voice. The bel canto “double aria” is a traditional structure in which a character sings what appears to be two arias back to back: first, the cavatina, in a slower tempo, followed by the cabaletta in a much faster tempo. Only King Alphonse XI and Léonor sing traditional double arias in *La favorite*; Alphonse in his first appearance as he muses on his love for his mistress, and Léonor in Act III as she resolves to tell Fernand the truth of her past.
Cast & Creative

CAST (in order of vocal appearance)

Balthazar          Federico De Michelis ‡
Fernand            Lawrence Brownlee
Inès               Elena Villalón
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai Fellow
Léonor de Guzman   Jamie Barton ‡
Alphonse XI        Jacques Imbrailo
Don Gaspar         Christopher Bozeka ‡
A Gentleman        Esteban Cordero *

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor          Christophe Rousset *
Director           Kevin Newbury
Set Designer        Victoria Tzykun *
Costume Designer    Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer   D.M. Wood
Assistant Lighting Designer Michael James Clark
Fight Director      Luke Fedell
Chorus Master       Richard Bado ‡
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Musical Preparation Ben Manis
Alex Munger †
Dr. Saul and Ursula Balagura/
Mr. Trey Yates Fellow
Peter Pasztor †
Blair Salter †
French Diction Coach Ugo Mahieux *
Stage Manager      Annie Wheeler
Assistant Director  Katrina Bachus
Supertitles by     Jeremy Johnson

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Supertitles called by Elizabeth Gautsche.
Selected scenery, props, and costumes originally created for the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts production of Carl Maria von Weber’s Euryanthe.
Additional scenic elements by Arts Tech Group Scenic Studios; construction and scenic art performed by employees represented by IATSE, Local #15 and IATSE, Local #488.
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, IATSE, 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 IATSE, Local #51.
Wardrobe personnel provided by Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local #896.
This production is being recorded for archival purposes.

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

ACT I
In the Monastery of St. James, the monks are making their way to worship. Superior Balthazar, father of the Queen of Castile, enters with Fernand. Fernand confesses that he wishes to renounce his novitiate because he has fallen in love with a beautiful, but as yet unknown, lady. His faith in God remains, but he wishes to leave the monastery in search of her. Balthazar angrily sends Fernand out of the monastery, warning him of the dangers of the outside world. He predicts that Fernand will one day return to the cloisters, a disappointed if wiser man.

Fernand finds his lady, Léonor, and declares his love for her while still unaware of her real identity. He is met by Inès, Léonor’s companion, who impresses him with the need for secrecy. Léonor enters. She tells him that their love can only lead to sorrow and that they must not meet again before handing him a document to help him in his future. Shortly after, the arrival of Castilian King Alphonse XI is announced and Léonor leaves. Fernand is left believing that Léonor’s social rank must be so high that she could never stoop to marry him. Reading the document she has left him, he finds a commission in the army—an opportunity for advancement and for him to gratify his highest ambitions.

ACT II
Alphonse, with the help of Fernand, who is now a military officer, has defeated the Marinids and taken Alcazar. In conversation with the courtier Don Gaspar, Alphonse expresses his pleasure at Fernand’s bravery. Alone, the king expresses his love for Léonor and his desire to divorce the Queen and marry her. He realizes this will provoke the opposition of his powerful father-in-law, Balthazar, who is ultimately backed by the Pope. Léonor enters and expresses her anguish at remaining his mistress rather than his Queen. King Alphonse suspects that he is losing her affection. Don Gaspar enters with news that a letter has been discovered revealing that Léonor has a lover. She makes no denial, but at that moment Balthazar enters, a Papal Bull in hand, and threatens King Alphonse with an interdict if he does not abandon his plans for the royal divorce.

INTERMISSION

ACT III
Alphonse is to honor Fernand for his role in the war. He asks Fernand what reward he would like and Fernand asks to marry the woman who has inspired him in his bravery. Alphonse asks who she is, and Fernand indicates that it is Léonor. The king is astonished to learn that Fernand is his successful rival. In an abrupt change of mind, he orders Fernand and Léonor to marry within one hour. Léonor is left with mixed feelings of apprehension and delight. She decides that Fernand must be informed about her past and sends Inès to him with a letter confessing her true identity. However, unknown to Léonor, Inès is arrested before she can see him. Fernand only learns the truth after the wedding ceremony. Considering himself dishonored by the King, he leaves Léonor and entrusts himself to Balthazar.

ACT IV
Balthazar’s daughter, the Queen, has died of jealousy and grief, and her body has been sent to him at the Monastery of St. James. Prayers are being said for her repose. Fernand is preparing to enter his new religious life. Léonor enters in a state of exhaustion and faints before the cross. At first Fernand rejects her, but eventually moved by her love and sincerity, he is willing to give himself to her once more, but it is too late. Léonor collapses once more and dies in his arms.
HGO Orchestra

Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

VIOLIN
Denise Tarrant, Concertmaster *
Sarah and Ernest Butler
Concertmaster Chair
Chloe Kim, Assistant Concertmaster *
Natalie Gaynor, Principal Second Violin *
Carrie Kauk, Assistant Principal Second Violin *
Hae-a Lee-Barnes *
Miriam Belyatsky *
Anabel Detrick *
Rasa Kalesnykaite *
Chavdar Parashkevov *
Mary Reed *
Erica Robinson *
Lindsey Smith-Butler *
Suzanne VerMeulen *
Melissa Williams *
Kana Kimura *
Mila Neal *
Hannah Watson *

HARP
Joan Eidman, Principal *

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

BASSOON
Amanda Swain, Principal *
Michael Allard *

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

BASSOON
Amanda Swain, Principal *
Michael Allard *

CELLO
Barrett Sills, Principal *
Erika Johnson, Assistant Principal *
Ariana Nelson *
Wendy Smith-Butler *
Steven Wiggs *

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

TRUMPET
Tetsuya Lawson, Principal *
Randal Adams *
Daniel Egan *
Charles Geyer *

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén, Principal *
Mark Holley *
Ben Osborne *

TUBA
Mark Barton, Principal *

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown, Principal *
Christina Carroll *

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER
Richard Brown *

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.

* HGO Orchestra core musician
HGO Chorus

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

Nathan Abbott
Ofelia Adame
Geordie Alexander
Dennis Arrowsmith
Stephen Ash
Sarah A. Bannon
Megan Berti
G. Leslie Biffle
Steve Buza
Christopher Childress
Patrick Contreras
Esteban Cordero
Callie Jo Denbaugh
Justin Dunkle
Ashly Evans
Dallas Gray
Suzanne Gregory
Jessica Suzanne Hahn
Nancy Hall
Julie Hoeltzel
Jon Janacek
Joe Key
Wesley Landry
Britany Lovett
Lindsay Lymer
Sarah Lysiak
Alejandro Magallón
Gregory D. McDaniel
Katherine McDaniel
Jeff Monette
Natasha Monette
Cristino Perez
Patrick Perez
Abby Powell
Nicholas Rathgeb
Kendall Reimer
James Resch
Hannah Roberts
Emily Louise Robinson
Johnny Salvesen
Christina Scanlan
Kate Smith
John Stevens
Lauren Stocker
Denise Ward
John Weinel
Jennifer Wright

SPECIAL CREDITS

Blazek & Vetterling LLP—Houston, Auditors
Apurva Thekdi, M.D., Consulting Physician
and Otolaryngologist
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Who’s Who

CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET
(FRANCE)
CONDUCTOR

Christophe Rousset is making his HGO debut with *La favorite*. He is the founder of the ensemble Les Talens Lyriques, an internationally recognized harpsichordist, and conductor inspired by a passion for opera and the rediscovery of the European musical heritage. He studied harpsichord with Huguette Dreyfus at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, then with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, winning the coveted First Prize in the Seventh Bruges International Harpsichord Competition at the age of twenty-two. He has appeared with Les Talens Lyriques all over the world, including Opéra National de Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Philharmonie de Paris, Opéra Royal de Versailles, Dutch National Opera, Lausanne Opéra, Teatro Real Madrid, Vienna Staatsoper and Theater an der Wien, and the Barbican Centre. As a guest conductor he has appeared at Liceu Barcelona, San Carlo Naples, La Scala Milan, Opéra Royal de Wallonie, London’s Royal Opera House, Orquesta Nacional de España, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orchestre du Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Christophe Rousset is a Knight of the French Legion of Honour, a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters, and a Knight of the National Order of Merit.

KEVIN NEWBURY
(UNITED STATES)
DIRECTOR

Kevin Newbury is a theater, opera, and film director based in New York City. Previously for HGO, he directed *Norma* (2018), *Mary Stuart* (2012), *The Magic Flute* (2008), and the HGOco world premiere of *O Columbia* (2015). He has directed over 60 original productions and his work has been presented by many opera companies, festivals, and symphonies including the Park Avenue Armory, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Minnesota Opera, the San Francisco Symphony, L’Opéra de Montreal, the Prototype Festival, Bard Summerscape, Portland Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Philadelphia Orchestra, Seattle Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, the Virginia Arts Festival, the Wexford Festival, Center Theatre Group, and American Repertory Theatre, among many others. Recent world premiere highlights include Gregory Spears/Greg Pierce’s *Fellow Travelers* (Cincinnati Opera, Prototype Festival/NYC, Lyric Opera of Chicago); Mason Bates/Mark Campbell’s *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, and San Francisco Opera); Todd Almond’s *Kansas City Choir Boy* (NYC, Boston, L.A., and Miami); Kevin Puts/Mark Campbell’s *The Manchurian Candidate* and Douglas J. Cuomo/John Patrick Shanley’s *Doubt* (Minnesota Opera); Jimmy López/Nilo Cruz’s *Bel Canto* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, broadcast on PBS’s *Great Performances*); and Gregory Spears/Tracy K. Smith’s *Castor & Patience* (Cincinnati Opera). Theater includes *Candy and Dorothy* (GLAAD Media Award). Films include *Monsura Is Waiting, Stag*, and *Epiphany V*, which have played at over 40 festivals and won several awards.

VICTORIA TZYKUN
(UNITED STATES)
SET DESIGNER

Victoria “Vita” Tzykun is a scenic, costumes, and projections designer for companies such as The Bolshoi Theater (Russia), Norwegian Opera, Santa Fe Opera, LA Opera, Seattle Opera, Minnesota Opera, Dallas Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Utah Opera, Wexford Opera Festival (Ireland), Boston Lyric Opera, Atlanta Opera, Portland Opera, Kristiansund Opera (Norway), Juilliard Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Prototype Festival (NYC), National Sawdust (NYC), Theatro Imeras (Athens), 3LD Art & Media Center (NYC), and Cherry Lane Theatre (NYC), among others. Her recent projects include set design for the critically acclaimed world premiere of the (R)Evolution of *Steve Jobs* (Santa Fe Opera); set and costume design for *Faust* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); costume design for the world premiere of *Dinner At Eight* (Minnesota Opera); and costume design for the Russian premiere of *The Passenger* (Yekaterinburg State Academical Opera and Ballet Theatre and Bolshoi Theater in Moscow). Her numerous films and tv credits include art direction for *Lady Gaga’s ABC Thanksgiving Special*; production design for several award winning feature films and shorts; and commercials for leading entities such as PBS, DirectTV, Axe, Bulova, and Qualcomm. Upcoming projects include production design for Brooklyn Academy of Music’s annual Gala; set and costume design for *Wozzeck* at Des Moines Metro Opera; and costume design for the World Premiere of *Edward Tulane* at Minnesota Opera.
Jessica Jahn’s costumes were last seen at HGO for this season’s Rigoletto. She made her HGO debut in Mary Stuart in 2012, and she returned to HGO in 2018 for both West Side Story and Norma—the latter of which had previously been seen at San Francisco Opera and Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona. A selection of the Brooklyn-based designer’s past credits includes The Crucible for Glimmerglass Festival; Gloria: A Life with Daryl Roth Theatre; Once On This Island with Paper Mill Playhouse; Norma with Canadian Opera Company and Lyric Opera of Chicago; Mary Stuart for Seattle Opera; Monodramas and Moses in Egypt for New York City Opera; Dead Man Walking for Washington National Opera; Anna Bolena for Lyric Opera of Chicago; The Manchurian Candidate at Minnesota Opera; and Moby Dick for Utah Opera and Pittsburgh Opera. In 2020, her designs will be seen in the Chicago premiere of Blue at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Jahn is an adjunct costume design professor with Brandeis University’s Theatre Arts Department.

DM Wood is a lighting designer whose work includes the world premiere of 4.48 Psychosis (Royal Opera House, Lyric Hammersmith), followed by the French premiere (Opéra National du Rhine), and the U.S. premiere (Prototype Festival, NYC); Madama Butterfly and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Opéra Orchestra National Montpellier); Les Enfants Terribles, L’elisir d’amore and Medea (Opera Omaha); Berenice (Royal Opera House, Linbury); The Twilight Zone (Ambassadors Theatre, London West End); James Bond Symphony (Orchestre National de Lyon); Star Wars en Concert (Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier and Orchestre National de Lyon); the world premiere of Mamzer Bastard (Royal Opera House, Hackney Empire); L’heure Espagnole, Gianni Schicchi, Candide, and the world premiere of L’importance d’être constant (Opéra National Lorraine); Maria Stuarda (Seattle Opera); Kansas City Choir Boy (Miami, L.A., Boston, NYC); Il barbiere di Siviglia, Le nozze di Figaro, and La bohème (Boston Lyric Opera); Anna Bolena (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Euryanthe and Die Liebe der Danae (Bard Summerscape); La Favorite (Oper Graz); L’enfant et les sortilèges (The Bolshoi), Il Trittico (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden); and the world premiere of Wild Swans (Young Vic, London and American Repertory Theater). Ms. Wood received the U.K.’s Knights of Illumination Award for her design of Suor Angelica (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden).

Richard Bado, an alumnus of the HGO Studio (1984–85), is director of artistic operations and chorus master at HGO. Bado made his professional conducting debut in 1989 leading HGO’s acclaimed production of Show Boat at the newly restored Cairo Opera House in Egypt. Since then, he has conducted at La Scala, Opéra national de Paris, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, Tulsa Opera, the Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, and Wolf Trap Opera. An accomplished pianist, Bado appears regularly with Renée Fleming in recital. He has also played for Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Denyce Graves, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey, Jamie Barton, Ryan McKinny, and Nathan Gunn. Bado holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award, and West Virginia University; he also studied advanced choral conducting with Robert Shaw. For 12 years, he was 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, the International Vocal School in Moscow, and the Texas Music Festival. He received HGO’s Silver Rose Award in 2013 in celebration of his 25th year as chorus master.

Texas native Denise Tarrant began her professional violin career at the age of 16 with the Midland-Odessa (Texas) Symphony. Afterward she studied at the University of Houston, Rice University, Trinity University (London), and the Royal College of Music (London). She became HGO’s concertmaster under the baton of Patrick Summers in 1999. Highlights of her work at HGO include the world premieres of Ricky Ian Gordon’s The House without a Christmas Tree (2017), Jake Heggie’s It’s a Wonderful Life (2016), Carlisle Floyd’s Cold Sassy Tree (2000) and Tod Machover’s Resurrection (1999), as well as Floyd’s Of Mice and Men (2002) and Catán’s Florencia en el Amazonas (2001), all of which have been released on CD. She further performed in the world premieres of Tarik O’Regan’s The Phoenix (2019); Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players (2016); André Previn’s Brief Encounter (2009); Heggie’s Three Decembers (2008) and The End of the Affair (2004); Mark
Adamo’s Lysistrata (2005); Catán’s Salsipuedes (2004); and Rachel Portman’s The Little Prince (2003). She has been concertmaster of the Houston Ballet Orchestra since 1988 and has been featured as a violin soloist in numerous Houston Ballet productions including Stanton Welch’s Maninyas (Ross Edward’s Violin Concerto), Clear (Bach’s Concerto for Violin and Oboe), The Four Seasons (Vivaldi), and Natalie Weir’s Steppenwolf (Bruch Violin Concerto).

JAMIE BARTON
(UNITED STATES)
MEZZO-SOPRANO—
LÉONOR DE GUZMAN
HGO Studio alumna Jamie Barton (2007–09) is a Grammy Award nominee and the winner of the 2017 Beverly Sills Artist Award, the 2015 Richard Tucker Award, and both the Main and Song Prizes at the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. She appears regularly at HGO, most recently in Bellini’s Norma as Adalgisa (2018), Wagner’s Ring cycle as Waltraute/Second Norn in Götterdämmerung (2017) and as Fricka in Das Rheingold (2014) and Die Walküre (2015). Critically acclaimed by virtually every major outlet covering classical music, American mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton is increasingly recognized for how she uses her powerful instrument offstage—uplifting women, queer people, and other marginalized communities. Her lively social media presence on Instagram and Twitter (@jbartonmezzo) serves as a hub for conversations about body positivity, diet culture, social justice issues, and LGBTQ+ rights. Her debut solo album, All Who Wander, featuring songs by Mahler, Dvorak, and Sibelius, earned the 2018 BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award. This season, Jamie headlined Last Night of the Proms at Royal Albert Hall, made her role debut as the titular Orfeo in Orfeo ed Euridice at The Metropolitan Opera, and brought her feminist recital with pianist Kathleen Kelly to London, Atlanta, and San Francisco. She will appear as Eboli in Don Carlo at Dallas Opera, Fricka in Die Walküre at Reykjavik Arts Festival, and Brangâne in Tristan und Isolde with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Santa Fe Opera, and returns to The Metropolitan Opera for a role debut as Elisabetta in Donizetti’s Maria Stuarda, with a Met Live in HD performance simulcast to cinemas in over seventy countries.

BARBER OF SEVILLE (2011), and Don Ramiro in La Cenerentola (2007). Named the 2017 Male Singer of the Year by both the International Opera Awards and Bachtrack, Brownlee not only keeps an active performance schedule but also serves as artistic advisor at Opera Philadelphia, helping the company to expand its repertoire and aiding in diversity efforts and community initiatives. He continues his recital tour of Cycles of My Being, a song cycle that centers on what it means to be an African American man living in America today. Recent highlights included returns to Opéra national de Paris, Opernhaus Zürich, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège, as well as a 12-stop US tour with Eric Owens performing at the Seattle Symphony, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as a performance at Carnegie Hall with Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran.

JACQUES IMBRAILO
(SOUTH AFRICA/ UNITED KINGDOM)
BARITONE—ALPHONSE XI
Jacques Imbrailo returns to HGO after performing Guglielmo in Così fan tutte (2014) and Tarquinius in The Rape of Lucretia (2012). This season he performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Albert in Werther and makes his house debut at Komische Oper Berlin as Marcello in La bohème. He returns to the role of Horatio in a concert performance of Brett Dean’s Hamlet at Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. Other recent highlights include the title role in Billy Budd at the Royal Opera House, Teatro Real and Norwegian National Opera. He made his debut for Minnesota Opera as Count Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro, Pellèas in Pelléas et Mélisande for Opera Vlaanderen and Opéra national du Rhin, Zurich Opera, the Royal Swedish Opera, Welsh National Opera and Essen Opera; Michael in the world premiere of Kasper Holten’s production of Brothers for Danish National Opera; Zurga in The Pearl Fishers for ENO; Horatio in Brett Dean’s Hamlet at Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Messner in the world premiere of Jimmy López Bel Canto at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; the title role in Don Giovanni for Perm Opera with Teodor Currentzis and for Scottish Opera; and Valentin in Gounod’s Faust in Baden-Baden.

FEDERICO DE MICHELIS
(ARGENTINA)
BASS—BALTHAZAR
Argentinian bass-baritone Federico De Michelis, a graduate of the HGO Studio (2015–17), has been seen at HGO as Nourabad in The Pearl Fishers (2019), Colline in La bohème (2018), Achillas in Julius Caesar (2017); selected...
performances of Dulcamara in *The Elixir of Love*, Thomas Betterton in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*, and Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro* (all in 2016); and performances of Angelotti in *Tosca*, Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*, and the King in *The Little Prince* (all in 2015). He was previously a member of the Opera Studio of Teatro Argentino de La Plata and a student at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía in Madrid. In the current season, he will reprise the role of Nourabad in *The Pearl Fishers* for his debut with the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona and will debut with the North Carolina Symphony in the Mozart Mass in C Minor. Recent performances include his debut with Palm Beach Opera as the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*; his Philadelphia Orchestra debut performing Sciacrone in *Tosca* under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin; a series of concerts in Key West, Florida, as part of the Florida Keys Concert Association; Brander in *La damnation de Faust* with Aspen Music Festival; and Mr. Flint and Timur in *Billy Budd* and *Turandot*, respectively, with Des Moines Metro Opera.

**CHRISTOPHER BOZEKA (UNITED STATES)**

**TENOR—DON GASPAR**

HGO Studio alumnus (2015–17) Christopher Bozeha won second prize in the 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. At HGO, he sang Pedrillo in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (2017); select performances of Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*; Spolella in Miller Outdoor Theater performances of *Tosca* (2016); Male Emilia in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*, Hunter in *Rusalka*, and Don Curzio in *The Marriage of Figaro* (all in 2016); and Drunkard/ Lamplighter in *The Little Prince* (2015). Recent engagements include the role of Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as a Gerdine Young Artist and returned to the Tanglewood Music Center as a Performance Spectator. During the 2019–20 season at HGO, her other roles include the Page in *Rigoletto* and La Woman in selected performances of the world premiere of *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*. In summer 2020, she makes her Santa Fe Opera debut as First Wood Sprite in *Rusalka*.

**ELENA VILLALÓN (UNITED STATES)**

**Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai Fellow SOPRANO—INÉS**

Originally from Austin, Texas, first-year HGO Studio soprano Elena Villalón was named a winner of the 2019 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions only months after winning the Audience Choice Award in HGO’s 2019 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. She recently completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music (CCM) under the tutelage of William McGraw. She has been a vocal fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and is an alumna of HGO’s 2018 Young Artists Vocal Academy. Previous appearances at CCM include Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Lucy in *The Telephone*, and Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring*. She was the Nipper Scholar at CCM and won first prize in the 2018 Three Arts Competition, 2018 Dayton Opera Guild Competition, and the 2017 CCM Undergraduate Voice Competition. In summer 2019, she performed Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as a Gerdine Young Artist and returned to the Tanglewood Music Center as a soprano fellow. During the 2019–20 season at HGO, her other roles include the Page in *Rigoletto* and La Woman in selected performances of the world premiere of *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*. In summer 2020, she makes her Santa Fe Opera debut as First Wood Sprite in *Rusalka*.

**ESTEBAN CORDERO (UNITED STATES)**

**TENOR—A GENTLEMAN**

Puerto Rican tenor Esteban Cordero is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council District Auditions in Puerto Rico, a finalist in the New Orleans Region, and the Meistersinger International Singing Competition in Austria. Cordero holds a master’s in music degree from Yale School of Music, and a Bachelor of Music from the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico. His repertoire includes Rodolfo in Puccini’s *La Bohème*; Des Grieux in *Manon* by Jules Massenet; Nemorino in *L’élixir d’amore*; Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*; Tamino in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*; and Spalanzani/Nathaniel in *Les contes d’Hoffmann*. Recent engagements include L’Aumônier in Poulenc’s *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* and Roderigo in Verdi’s *Otello* for Ópera de Puerto Rico.
A six-year multidisciplinary initiative designed to highlight the universal spiritual themes raised in opera and to enable a wider segment of the Houston community to engage in programming that illuminates opera’s beauty, emotional power, and the potential to heal. Four mainstage operas—Saul, El Milagro del Recuerdo, La favorite, and The Magic Flute—are further explored within the theme of identity.

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where it now stands. Does its nearly two millennia in Italy make it Italian, or is it still Egyptian?

Some similar questions could be asked of Verdi’s extraordinary 1871 opera Aida, indisputably one of the greatest operas ever written.

Is Aida an Egyptian work of art because of its characters and setting, or is it Italian, because of its composer and the language spoken by each of its characters? Or is it perhaps partly French, because of the origin of the scenario on which it is based, or because Paris and not Cairo was the center of 19th century studies of Ancient Egypt? Is Aida a somewhat worn operatic love triangle, or is it a timeless allegory of how war
crushes lives? Aida is all of these things, and the generations who have hummed its thrilling melodies or delighted in its iconography—and those who have recently re-written it into a musical by Elton John—have all collectively made it a work of universality. The late 19th century loved theatrical settings that were exotic and unknown to the western countries where opera was predominant: the point of the settings wasn’t our differences, but our human similarities. Opera is a huge cultural melting pot.

Composers are attracted to subjects for varying reasons, and many artists try to work out in art what they can’t in life. Verdi’s Aida aligns with several themes that appear in each of his 25 operas: the relationship of fathers to daughters was especially poignant for him because he lost his only two children, two daughters, before either saw a second birthday. He was drawn to characters at war between public duty and private passion, so the wartime world of Aida would have appealed to him. Aida’s Egyptian setting, though, was likely a secondary consideration, present solely because Aida was commissioned for the grand opening of the Khedivial Opera House in Egypt, an opera house constructed to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. Over time, Aida’s Egyptian setting has become a more primary focus for some and a huge inspiration to designers to create all kinds of fanciful Egyptians—none of them realistic. The opera is set in Egypt’s Middle Kingdom, somewhere between 1975 and 1650 BC, when obviously any music now known to us would be anachronistic. This broad setting of Aida leaves enormous creative room for a director, making it the perfect project for a fertile theatrical mind like Phelim McDermott’s, who directs our new production.

In casting and performing Aida, the first person we consult is Verdi himself. Since he has been dead since 1901, how do we do this? In the most joyous possible way, we go to the score and deeply explore the demands he put there, trying to connect ourselves with him and his time. The extraordinary thing about Verdi is that all of his wishes are so clear and trying to reach his demands is the most thrilling aspect of a live Verdian performance.

There are a few hallmarks to great singing, and they have always been rare: to sing Verdi with distinction, one must have first a unique sonic imprint—a fingerprint in sound. Opera happens in natural sound without the help of microphones, so a singer must also have considerable amplitude. This doesn’t simply mean a “loud” voice, because vocal quality is not measured in decibels but in natural sound without the help of microphones, so a singer must also have considerable amplitude. This doesn’t simply mean a “loud” voice, because vocal quality is not measured in decibels but in resonance, depth, and beauty. Tonal radiance must be combined with great heart—a gifted singer should make you cry from the sheer beauty of what they are singing. Everything an accomplished singing voice can do—fast notes, long sustained notes, rafter-ringing fortissimos, and rapturous soft singing—is required in Aida as well as in the other opera of our winter repertoire, Donizetti’s La favorite. Another important emblem of great singing has to do with words and what a singer’s voice does to them. Verdi was fanatical with singers about the color, shape, and clarity of words; his scores are painted with the colors of words. All great acting in opera is rooted in singing and an actor’s intimate relationship to text: everything in opera begins with the voice, and all of opera’s many other arts extend outward from singing, which remains paramount. Acting in opera is not about a singer’s looks, weight, ethnicity, or sexuality, but about the universal empathy required to connect with another human life. Opera singers of all backgrounds, identities, and perspectives can and must be represented on stage, so that our audiences can see themselves and others through the breathtaking kaleidoscope of human empathy.

A great production of an opera, whether traditional or avant-garde, is striving to relevantly connect with a contemporary audience. It can succeed if it builds a clear bridge between our modern life and whatever the composer placed within the work in the first place—an arc between “now” and “then.” In a live art form like opera, a singing actor is going to be sought more for their ability to bring a character alive both musically and vocally from within. In other arts, especially those that last forever like film or photography, the need for authenticity is quite different, and obviously not focused on any live demands. That Verdi happened to write five roles in Aida that only a few artists in any generation are capable of singing obviously multiplies the intricacies of casting it, particularly if one views the score as a kind of constitution or roadmap to something more universal than its setting. Constitutions aren’t nations, just as maps aren’t cities, but like a musical score, they do give us a common starting place, and they command a deserved respect for their guidance.

Happily, Aida exists for us to enjoy. Like that ancient obelisk in Rome, with its Latin script set into ancient Egyptian stone, Aida now mysteriously watches over the centuries. They both invite us to understand them better with each passing year and to hopefully learn something about ourselves as we do.

This broad setting of Aida leaves enormous creative room for a director, making it the perfect project for a fertile theatrical mind like Phelim McDermott’s, who directs our new production.
the next generation of opera

BY NATALIE BARRON
Associate Director of Marketing and Communications

Jamie Barton at 2019 BBC PROMS. Photo by Chris Christodoulou.
What has been your experience in the opera world and how do you think it is evolving?

Lawrence Brownlee (LB): Thankfully, the world of opera is expanding and changing. I think it is acceptable for us as singers to be uniquely who we are and to fully represent our heritages with pride. I have been diligently trying to work on diversifying opera audiences because it is a passion of mine. I try to engage civic entities in the cities I visit and provide interesting programs and experiences, like the Giving Voice concert recently performed at HGO. I hope it will whet the appetites of people who have never been to opera and show them that opera can be young, hip, and cool.

Jamie Barton (JB): My experience in the opera world has been wonderful in most ways, but I’m very glad of the direction I see opera going. I want to see more diversity represented on stage—diversity of race, age, disability status, sexuality, and gender—and I believe that audiences want that too. We all want to see ourselves represented on stage! When I have the opportunity to sing leading romantic roles like Léonor de Guzman in La favorite, the feedback from fans is overwhelmingly positive. They are so happy to see a curvy woman playing a romantic lead, because it makes them feel seen. I truly believe that if the art form continues in the direction of inclusion, we will see more diverse and larger audiences as well.

Tamara Wilson (TW): The opera world itself is becoming more diverse. It’s slow, but it is changing. Currently, it is more noticeable on the stage in the talent being hired, but behind-the-scenes must also catch up and continue hiring more diverse administrators. Opera should reflect the demographics of the populace. Operatic stories are about the main underlying human themes: love, loss, trial, and tribulation. These themes lend themselves to all walks of life, and the productions presented should represent that fact. I am fortunate to be in a place in my career where I am afforded more choice in what productions I accept. While I think it should be the responsibility of opera companies and directors to think about what they want to present to their audience, it is on the singers to stand up and be accountable as well.

Many opera companies are becoming more reflective of their communities through diverse casting and commissioning new operas, like HGO’s El Milagro del Recuerdo and Marian’s Song, that put the focus on cultures that are sometimes overlooked. Why do you think it is important for companies to be more diverse in their casting decisions and through the new productions they are bringing to their stages?

LB: It is true that seeing someone who looks like you on stage allows audiences to experience the opera in a different way. One can imagine themselves in that situation and thus be transported into another world. It is extremely important to tell the unique stories of various communities that are a part of any metropolitan area. I appreciate the diverse casting and programming.

JB: When I see a show where I see someone I can relate to on stage, it makes the entire experience more special. If what is shown on the opera stage is predominantly white, thin, and heterosexual (as it has been for a very long time), then the art form will appeal mostly to those who identify with those traits. On some level, that tells the audience that being white, thin, and heterosexual is what they should hope to be. I simply disagree. Being exactly who you are is a beautiful thing, and opera should work to celebrate humanity in its varied forms.

TW: Adding new and relevant stories to the operatic repertoire is essential; otherwise our artform becomes stagnant. We have a generation that has grown up where music and the arts are secondary or nonexistent in education. The generation coming up is more socially conscious, and we want to see our diversity reflected onstage. The world of opera needs to be inclusive if it wants to evolve.
How does your identity and the experiences you have gone through in life inform your interpretation of operatic roles?

LB: I was told many years back that I must use my physical and personal attributes to inform any role that I take on. I am a rather short man of color. My approach to playing the role of a prince is going to be different than someone who is tall, blonde, and white. This, however, allows a totally different experience that can touch a person in a different way. We must be our unique selves because our realities and life experiences will absolutely inform how we inhabit characters.

JB: I am a plus-sized, white, bisexual woman, and not all of those are thought of as good attributes by all people. But, every single one of those descriptors has informed who I am as an actor and singer. I used to try and camouflage my size onstage. I’d work with the costume department to try and make me look as slender as possible, and I’d do what I could onstage to not accentuate my double chin or my big belly. Those efforts inevitably hindered my ability to really sink into the character. I was constantly concerned with how I was appearing, even while trying to sing in different languages and follow the conductor! I’ve finally arrived at a point in life where I truly love who I am (“flaws” and all). I’ve stopped worrying about if they can see my double chin. Truth be told, in real life, I’m already a love interest and heroine in my own story. It’s easier to play one onstage when I acknowledge that reality in my own life!

TW: An excellent opera singer brings a part of their soul to the roles that they interpret, but at the same time, I do not need to murder someone in real life to know how to play Tosca. Every singer, regardless of background and life experience, should have the ability to use their imagination to bring a character to life. The roles I play are often labeled as “beautiful women” by other characters, and I am not what society deems as a classically beautiful woman due to my body shape. This means that some people do not believe in my character or the plot, but that is beyond my control. I do not consciously try to place my identity into a character. I try to empathize and explore traits we may share or that I have observed in other people to create what I hope is a fully realized character. I know that my body is my instrument and that makes my voice unique. The more performers of all shapes and sizes, races, backgrounds, that appear on stage, the more it becomes the new normal.

PC: Opera singers are emotional carriers. My life experiences have helped me to build up the roles I sing. I was born into a poor family and my father passed away when I was only 11 years old. My mom and I had a very hard time when I was young and we struggled to make ends meet. She worked four jobs at the same time to support my studies at art school and I used the student loans to supplement the remaining tuition in order to finish my degree. I am fortunate that my mom is an optimistic, cheerful, and strong woman that supported me going after my dreams. I learned so much from her. From those experiences, I am the artist I am today and try to bring that emotion to every role I sing.

There are some classic operas in the standard repertoire in which stereotypes are used that are sometimes offensive to modern audiences. With the advent of the MeToo era and call-out culture, some opera companies are starting to address these tropes so they can present modern interpretations of the operas. What are your thoughts on this movement? Should certain operas be reinterpreted to make them more palatable to new generations of opera-goers?

LB: It is not possible to erase history, but we can make bold choices in addressing certain subjects deliberately to show that we want to move forward in a positive way. I think if many of these composers were alive today, they would have different sensibilities. Are we going to stop doing these masterpieces? I hope not, but I think artistic license can be taken in a smart way to allow fresh and exciting ideas without undermining the classic story completely. I have already seen respectable attempts to address such topics, but we need to keep pushing the envelope.

JB: I’m so happy that we’re experiencing this movement in our world. I know that some people find it uncomfortable, but I think it’s necessary in the move towards addressing power abuse in the world, as well as true equality of the sexes. While it’s an old art form, opera has had a long history of reimagining stories to be presented on stage. It’s one of the reasons opera has remained relevant. As long as we want audiences to be interested in coming to shows, then we absolutely have to be invested in speaking to the minds of the people who are in the opera house. I don’t think many people want to see another Don Giovanni where the actions of the title character are glossed over.

TW: It is the responsibility of directors and producers to bring productions to the stage that connect with today’s audiences. It is important to understand that these stories are still in the repertoire because they are universal. When it comes to difficult moments and storylines, we must remember that these were specific to the original audience, just as jokes or stereotypes written in our modern operas may be off-putting to future generations. The stories in opera are not the problem alone; it’s
how we interpret them. There should always be a reason behind our choices as artists, and that depends on which aspect of a story the production is focused. *Aida*, for example, the basic story is about two countries at war shown through the eyes of lovers from opposing sides. It’s *Romeo and Juliet*. It is love conquers all even in death; a love story that could be set in any era and between any two warring factions. There are many ways to portray love overcoming hate. It is possible for this story and others to hold a mirror up to modern society, but we lose out when we only portray the repertoire traditionally. Whatever the concept, the most important things are to make it clear to the audience why certain choices were made and to tell the story to the best of your ability without intentionally harming a specific demographic of the community.

Diversity and inclusion extend to opera audiences as well. That is why HGO has several programs, like our NEXUS Affordable Ticket Program, which allows first-time operagoers to purchase their first ticket for $15 dollars, and our Pay Your Age program, which allows operagoers 24 and under to pay their age for a ticket. HGOco does great work in this area through their community outreach and by providing student matinees. Why is it important for everyone, and especially young people, to get the opportunity to experience opera?

**LB:** Opera has changed my life, and I would like everyone to have the chance to experience it. It is not for everyone, but I think the main reason people shy away from it is because they think it is not meant for them. I grew up in an African-American community with gospel, yet fell in love with opera because of my exposure to it. I believe others may have the same experience. The various programs existing to attract new people are wonderful. How we market these programs and to whom we market them are very important. I have always made myself available for engagement opportunities to various groups regardless their race, socioeconomic background, age, or sexual orientation. It is important for us as singers to be ambassadors, working to ensure opera’s longevity.

**JB:** Ok, first and foremost, I want to hug HGO for implementing these discount ticket programs. How incredible! Thank you! It is so important for opera companies to do whatever they can to get new operagoers (of ANY age) into the house, because this art form doesn’t thrive without the audience. Beyond that, it’s important to the human experience to get out of our comfort zones and try new things. That’s what life is all about, right? If someone has never been to an opera, I hope they will try it out. They can’t get that experience on Netflix, trust me! We need to be truly dedicated to producing operas that are worthy of people trying it out for the first time. Luckily, Houston is home to one of the best opera houses in the world, so chances are, the audience will see something they will love.

**TW:** Young people need to believe that opera is not something for rich people exclusively. As an art form, we have several things stacked against us. Opera is a European art form created hundreds of years ago. It is performed (mostly) in foreign languages. However, every time I meet a young person who has come to the opera for the first time, they say, “Wow, that was so cool!” People want to experience the spectacle and listen to huge orchestras with unamplified voices soaring above them. They want to experience music with their whole body and not just through headphones. Putting on quality shows with quality musicians will win half the battle. The rest is making sure the door is open to everyone! Art should never be exclusive.

**PC:** I think that it is great that HGOco has programs that provide the opportunities to see operas outside of the theater. It helps to break down the barriers that surround the art form. By providing affordable tickets, it is bringing a new audience into the Wortham. People don’t know opera very well, because of language barriers or cultural backgrounds. In China, and in America, there is this misconception that opera is too hard to understand and it is only for rich people. But I am seeing changes here in America. The young people are willing to experience opera; so we should give them that opportunity to see a sad opera, funny opera, romantic opera. We need to let them know that opera is not hard to understand. It is exactly like a good movie or book. Singers bring the story to life with their voices—it has the power to make audiences laugh, or cry, or leave them craving more opera.
AIDA

An Opera in Four Acts | Music by Giuseppe Verdi | Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni

Sung in Italian with projected English translation

BROWN THEATER, WORTHAM THEATER CENTER

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours 54 minutes, including one intermission.

Co-Production with ENO and Grand Théâtre de Genève.
In ancient Egypt, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians are at war. Radames, a commander of the Egyptian forces, and Aida, a captive, are secretly in love with each other. Amneris, the daughter of the Egyptian king, is also in love with Radames and suspects that Aida is the one he truly loves. After Radames leaves for battle, Amneris falsely tells Aida that he was slain; this spurs Aida to confess her love for Radames, and Amneris swears revenge. Radames returns from battle victorious with spoils of war. His prisoners include Amonasro, Ethiopian king and father to Aida. The king of Egypt promises Radames a reward of his choosing and he asks for freedom for the Ethiopian captives. The king grants this request and offers Amneris’ hand in marriage.

On the eve of his wedding to Amneris, Radames and Aida declare their love for one another. He wants to flee with her and tells her about a safe escape route; in doing so, he unwittingly reveals the location of the Egyptian army. Their conversation is overheard by Amneris, and Radames is arrested as a traitor. He is condemned to death and sealed in a temple. Once there, he sees Aida has hidden herself there in order to die with him.

*A full synopsis appears on p. 49.*

**Aida** was commissioned by Isma'il Pasha, the khedive of Egypt, to celebrate the opening of the new Royal Opera House in Cairo in 1869. When the sets and costumes were stuck in the Siege of Paris, Verdi’s *Rigoletto* was performed for the opening instead. Eventually *Aida* received its world premiere in Cairo in 1871. This is a quintessential opera of his late period of composition, characterized by grand forces and impassioned stories.

**WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

The “Triumphal March” that accompanies Radames’s return to Egypt in Act II is one of the most recognizable moments in opera and offers the opportunity for incredibly elaborate spectacle.

In the 1871 Cairo premiere, a dozen elephants and 15 camels took part in the Triumphal March; in the 2000 production in Shanghai, the cast of the opera exceeded 2,000 people, with the People’s Liberation Army providing 1,650 soldiers to march through an open-air arena at the Shanghai International Arts Festival.

**FUN FACT**

What to listen for

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Cast & Creative

CAST (in order of vocal appearance)

Ramfis Peixin Chen †
Radames Russell Thomas *
Amneris Melody Moore (JAN. 31, FEB. 2m, 8)
Catherine Martin † (FEB. 11, 14, 16m)
Aida Tamara Wilson †
King of Egypt Musa Ngqungwana *
Messenger Christopher Bozeka †
Priestess Dorothy Gal †

The Evans Family/
Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow

Amonasro Reginald Smith, Jr. †

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director Phelim McDermott *

Associate Director Joe Austin *
Set Designer Tom Pye *
Costume Designer Kevin Pollard *
Original Lighting Designer Bruno Poet
Revival Lighting Designer Michael James Clark
Choreographer Jorrell Lawyer-Jefferson *
Silk Effects Basil Twist

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

Musical Preparation Kirill Kuzmin †
Geoffrey Loff †
Ben Manis
Kyle Naig †
Stephanie Larsen/
Dr. and Mrs. Miguel Miro-Quesada/
Kathy and Richard Stout Fellow

Stage Manager Brian August *
Assistant Director Joshua Horowitz
Supertitles by Scott Heumann, adapted by
Jeremy Johnson

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Supertitles called by Elizabeth Gautsche.
Acrobatics consultants for this production are Cirque La Vie.
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,
IATSE, 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 IATSE, Local #51.
Wardrobe personnel provided by Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local #896.
This production is being recorded for archival purposes.

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

**ACT I**
In the royal palace of the pharaoh, a young captain of the guard, Radames, learns from the High Priest, Ramfis, that Ethiopia is threatening the Nile valley. Radames secretly hopes to be chosen as commander of the army, envisioning a glorious victory that would enable him to free his beloved Aida, the Ethiopian slave whom he cannot publicly admit his love for. Unfortunately, Amneris, Princess of Egypt, is also in love with Radames; when she sees him with Aida, she senses their forbidden love.

A royal messenger reports that the Ethiopians, led by King Amonasro, are indeed marching on Thebes. Radames is appointed commander of the Egyptian army. Hearing this news, Aida is torn between her duty to her country and her love for Radames, since, unbeknown to the Egyptians, she is King Amonasro’s daughter.

Radames is taken to the Temple of Vulcan, where the priests ask the god Ptah to bless the sacred sword that Radames will take into battle to defend Egypt’s soil.

**ACT II**
The Egyptians have won the war. Amneris and her attendants prepare for Radames’ triumphal return. When Aida approaches, Amneris dismisses her attendants and tests her, telling her that Radames was killed in the battle. Aida’s reaction reveals her love for Radames, and her joy when Amneris admits that Radames is still alive only confirms her suspicions. Threatening her rival, Amneris departs for the festivities.

Radames and the Egyptian army parade in triumph through the city, bringing with them the conquered Ethiopians. Among them is Aida’s father, King Amonasro, who quickly warns Aida not to betray his rank. He pleads for his fellow captives’ lives, but Ramfis and the priests demand their death. Radames, however, requests their freedom as his reward. The king releases all but Amonasro and Aida; he then presents Radames with Amneris’s hand in marriage, leaving Aida in despair.

**INTERMISSION**

**ACT III**
On a moonlit bank of the Nile, Amneris enters the Temple of Isis for a wedding vigil. Aida waits in secret for Radames, but her father appears first, explaining that the Ethiopians have re-armed and will continue to fight. He extracts a promise from Aida to ask Radames where the Egyptian army plans to enter Ethiopia. Radames arrives; Aida slowly convinces him to prove his love by running away with her, and then tricks him into revealing the route of the Egyptian army. At that moment, Amonasro steps out of hiding, identifying himself as Aida’s father and the king of Ethiopia. Amneris comes out of the temple and denounces Radames as a traitor. Amonasro attacks Amneris, but Radames intervenes, allowing Aida and her father to escape, while he surrenders himself to Ramfis.

**ACT IV**
Amneris is torn between her love for Radames and the rage she feels because of his betrayal. She sends for him and offers to save him if he will renounce Aida. He refuses, and in a fury, she sends him to trial, where he is quickly convicted. Overcome with remorse, Amneris curses the priests who condemn him to death.

Buried alive in a crypt beneath the temple, Radames thinks of Aida, hoping she is safe and well. She, however, has secretly come back to Egypt and is hidden in the tomb to await the outcome of his trial. Weak and faint with hunger, she emerges from the shadows to join him: Radames tries desperately to save her, but in vain. The lovers prepare to be united in eternity as Amneris, outside the tomb, alone and desperate, prays for Radames’ soul and for peace.

**HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY**
HGO Orchestra

Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

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

**VIOLA**
Eliseo Rene Salazar, Principal *
Lorento Golofeev, Assistant Principal *
Gayle Garcia-Shepard *
Erika C. Lawson *
Suzanne LeFevre *
Dawson White *
Elizabeth Charles
Meredith Harris

**CELLO**
Barrett Sills, Principal *
Erika Johnson, Assistant Principal *
Ariana Nelson *
Wendy Smith-Butler *
Steven Wiggs *
Steve Estes *

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

**FLUTE**
Henry Williford, Acting Principal *
Masha Popova
Izumi Miyahara

**OBEO**
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert, Principal *
Mayu Isom *

**ENGLISH HORN**
Spring Hill

**CLARINET**
Sean Krissman, Principal *
Eric Chi *

**BASS CLARINET**
Molly Mayfield

**BASSOON**
Amanda Swain, Principal *
Michael Allard *

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

**TRUMPET**
Tetsuya Lawson, Principal *
Randal Adams *

**TROMBONE**
Thomas Hultén, Principal *
Mark Holley *
Ben Osborne

**TUBA**
Mark Barton, Principal *

**HARP**
Joan Eidman, Principal *
Laurie Meister

**TIMPANI**
Alison Chang, Principal *

**PERCUSSION**
Richard Brown, Principal *
Christina Carroll
Karen Slotter

**BANDA**
Barbara Butler (Trumpet)
George Chase (Trumpet)
Noah Dugan (Trumpet)
Daniel Egan (Trumpet)
Charles Geyer (Trumpet)
Mark Grisze (Trumpet)
Theresa Hanebury (Trumpet)
Gerardo Mata (Trumpet)
Steve Warkentin (Trumpet)
Kevin McIntyre (Horn)
Connor Monday (Horn)
James Wilson (Horn)
Matt Dickson (Trombone)
Harry Gonzales (Trombone)
Brian Logan (Trombone)
Steven Needham (Tuba)
Laurie Meister (Harp)

**ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL MANAGER**
Richard Brown *

* HGO Orchestra core musician
HGO Chorus

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

Nathan Abbott
Ofelia Adame
Geordie Alexander
Preston Andrews
Dennis Arrowsmith
Cody Arthur
Zachary Barba
Megan Berti
G. Leslie Bifflle
Steve Buza
Andrew B Campbell
Christopher Childress
Patrick Contreras
Esteban Cordero
Sybil Elizabeth
Crawford
Robert Dee
Callie Jo Denbigh
Justin Dunkle
Stacia Morgan Dunn
Ashley Duplachnen
Ami Figg
Don Figg
Brian M. Gibbs
Maurice E Goodwin
Dallas Gray
Sarah Jane Hardin
Marvin Henderson
Lauren Henderson-Turner
Frankie Hickman
Austin Hoeltzel
Julie Hoeltzel
Jon Janacek
James Jennings
Joe Key
David Kirkwood
Brienne Kollmorgen
Michael Kollmorgen
Wesley Landry
Sarah L. Lee
Amanda Levy
Katie Loff
Aarianna B. Longino
Melissa Lubecke
Lindsay Lymer
Alisa Magallon
Alejandro Magallón
Heath Martin
Antonio Martinez
Neal Martinez
Norman Lee Mathews
Katherine McDaniel
Jeff Monette
Natasha Monette
Matthew Neumann
Cristino Perez
Patrick Perez
Geoffrey Peterson
Abby Powell
Nicholas Rathgeb
Gabrielle Reed
Kendall Reimer
Tyler Resto
Hannah Roberts
Emily Louise Robinson
Kathleen Ruhleder
Johnny Salvesen
Christina Scanlan
Valerie Serice
Paul Joseph Serna
Rodney Sharp II
Brian David Shircliffe
Kade I. Smith
Haley Stage
John Stevens
Elizabeth Vickers
Miles Ward
John Weinel
Dalton Woody
Jennifer Wright
Patrick Wright

Dancers

Mike Baerga
Tuesday Moon Boswell
Wes Cordova
Edward DeShane
Kristen Frankiewicz
La’Rodney Freeman
Kharma Grimes
Jasmine Harris
Tasha Heggem
Justice Jackson

Supernumeraries

Carlos Cantu
Juan Cruz
Troy Faldyn
Luke Fedell
Brandon Hovratschek
David Howard
Cesar Jaquez
Orlanders Jones
Jayden Key
Alan Kim
Osmar Martinez
Steven Scott Mendoza Jr.
Jordan Tannous
Harold Trotter
Nick Ward
Cylis Wilson

Festival
APRIL 9, 10 & 11, 2020 7:30 P.M.
Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater • Houston
Hofesh Shechter Company, London, UK
Hofesh Shechter
Royal Danish Ballet’s Kammerballetten
Copenhagen, Denmark
Tobias Praetorius,
Sebastian Kloborg
Semperoper Ballett Dresden
Dresden, Germany
David Dawson
Sydney Dance Company, Australia
Rafael Bonachela
Dunia Dance Theatre
Belgium/Zimbabwe
Harold George &
Film Director Antoine Panier
Laboration Art Company, France
Laura Arend
And More to Come!
Members of Sydney Dance Company (Australia) performing ab [intra].
Choreography by Rafael Bonachela, Photo by Pedro Greig.

Don’t Miss the CHOREOGRAPHERS’ FORUM on APRIL 8, 2020, 7PM
at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. FREE event.

BUY TICKETS ONLINE
www.dancesalad.org

HCO.org
Who's Who

**PATRICK SUMMERS (UNITED STATES)**
*Margaret Alkek Williams Chair CONDUCTOR*

Patrick Summers was named artistic and music director of HGO in 2011 after having served as the company’s music director since 1998. Some highlights of his work at HGO include conducting the company’s first-ever complete cycle of Wagner’s Ring and its first performances of the Verdi Requiem; collaborating on the world premieres of Tarik O’Regan’s The Phoenix, André Previn’s Brief Encounter, Christopher Theofanidis’s The Refuge, Jake Heggie’s It’s a Wonderful Life, The End of the Affair, and Three Decembers, Carlisle Floyd’s Cold Sassy Tree and Prince of Players, and Tod Machover’s Resurrection; leading the American premiere of Weinberg’s Holocaust opera The Passenger, both at HGO and on tour to the Lincoln Center Festival; and nurturing the careers of such artists as Christine Goerke, Ailyn Pérez, Joyce DiDonato, Ana María Martínez, Ryan McKinny, Tamara Wilson, Albina Shagimuratova, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Norman Reinhardt, Jamie Barton, and Dimitri Pittas. Maestro Summers has enjoyed a long association with San Francisco Opera (SFO) and was honored in 2015 with the San Francisco Opera Medal. His work with SFO includes conducting Jake Heggie’s Moby-Dick, which was recorded and telecast on PBS’s Great Performances. In 2017, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree by Indiana University. He was recently named artistic director of the Aspen Music Festival’s opera program alongside Renee Fleming. During the 2019–20 season at HGO, he conducts Saul and Aida. Other engagements include conducting Dead Man Walking at the Israeli Opera and Carmen at Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona.

**PHELMIC MCDERMOTT (UNITED KINGDOM)**
*DIRECTOR*

Phelim McDermott makes his HGO debut directing this new production of Aida. He is a founding member of Improbable and the company’s co-artistic director. His credits include 70 Hill Lane; Lifegame; Animo; Coma; Spirit; Sticky; Cinderella; The Hanging Man; Theatre of Blood (in collaboration with the National Theatre); Panic; Beauty and the Beast (in co-production with ONEOFUS); The Tempest (a co-production with Northern Stage and Oxford Playhouse); Opening Skinners Box (a co-production with Northern Stage and West Yorkshire Playhouse); Lost Without Words (a co-production with the National Theatre); and Bambino, an opera for babies (co-produced with Manchester International Festival and Scottish Opera). Opera credits include Philip Glass’s Satyagraha (LA Opera); The Perfect American, and the Olivier Award-winning Akhnaten, Mozart’s Così fan tutte (ENO and The Metropolitan Opera); and most recently Aida (ENO and Grand Théâtre de Genève). Other productions as director include the Olivier Award-winning Shockheaded Peter; Alex (The Arts Theatre); The Ghost Downstairs (Leicester Haymarket); Dr Faustus, Improbable Tales (Nottingham Playhouse); The Servant of Two Masters, The Hunchback of Notre Dame; The Government Inspector (West Yorkshire Playhouse) and as Artistic Collaborator on She’s Leaving Home (produced by 20 Stories High).

**JOE AUSTIN (UNITED KINGDOM)**
*ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR*

Joe Austin makes his HGO debut as Associate Director of this new production of Aida. Previous direction includes Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro (Nevill Holt Opera); Wagner’s Siegfried and Britten’s Saint Nicolas (Opera North); Strauss’ Salome (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra); Stephen McNeff’s Vivienne (Linbury Studio, Royal Opera House); Cavalli’s La Calista (Hampstead Garden Opera); Haydn’s Lo Speziale (Retrospect Ensemble); Britten’s Albert Herring (Surrey Opera); Janacek’s The Cunning Little Vixen, Kodály’s Háry János, Handel’s Orlando, and Gluck’s Orpheus and Eurydice (Ryedale Festival); and Mendelssohn’s The Homecoming and Britten’s The Prodigal Son (Grimeborn Festival). As associate and revival director Austin has worked on Fanciulla del West (Santa Fe Opera), Der Ring des Nibelungen (Opera North), Don Giovanni (Basel Theatre and Norwegian Opera), The Twilight Zone (Almeida Theatre), and Tosca (Nevill Holt Opera). He runs his own opera course, having taught at Morley Opera School and British Youth Opera.

**TOM PYE (UNITED KINGDOM)**
*SET DESIGNER*

Tom Pye makes his HGO debut in this new production of Aida. Pye’s opera credits include Così fan tutte, The Death of Klinghoffer, and Eugene Onegin (ENO and The Metropolitan Opera); Akhnaten (ENO, LA Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera); Liceu in Barcelona. During the 2019–20 season at HGO, he conducts André Previn’s Moby-Dick, which was recorded and telecast on PBS’s Great Performances. In 2017, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree by Indiana University. He was recently named artistic director of the Aspen Music Festival’s opera program alongside Renee Fleming. During the 2019–20 season at HGO, he conducts Saul and Aida. Other engagements include conducting Dead Man Walking at the Israeli Opera and Carmen at Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona.
Kevin Pollard makes his HGO debut after an acclaimed run of Akhnaten at The Metropolitan Opera. Pollard’s costume designs for opera include Ernani (Teatro alla Scala); Aida (ENO and Grand Théâtre de Genève); Hansel and Gretel (Teatro alla Scala); The 60th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary Gala (The Metropolitan Opera); King Arthur (Staatstoper-Berlin and Theater an der Wien); the Olivier Award Winner of Best New Opera production, Akhnaten (ENO, LA Opera); Les付费eeres de perles (ENO and The Metropolitan Opera); Mackie Messer (Salzburg Festival); L’amour de loin (ENO, Vlaamse Opera, Canadian Opera Company); The Enchanted Island (The Metropolitan Opera); Satyagraha (ENO, The Metropolitan Opera, and LA Opera); and The Magic Flute (WNO). In addition to costume design for theatre, film, and dance, Pollard also lectures in costume design and production.

Bruno Poet’s work returns to HGO after the successful new production of Don Giovanni last spring. His upcoming and recent lighting designs include The Unknown Soldier (Royal Opera, Covent Garden); Il trovatore (Royal Danish Opera); The Merry Widow (ENO); Oklahoma! (Grange Park Opera); Marco Polo (Guangzhou Opera House); and the U.K. tour of Dusty (2018). Further lighting credits include Carmen (Bregenz Festival); Julius Caesar (Bridge Theatre); and Big Fish (The Other Palace). Lighting credits in London’s West End include Tina: The Musical; Miss Saigon; and From Here to Eternity. Poet’s designs for events include Fast and Furious Live Arena Tour and Giudizio Universale for Auditorium Conciliazione in Rome. His design for Rusalka for the Sydney Opera won the Australian Green Room Award. He won the Oliver award for his lighting on Danny Boyle’s Frankenstein at the National Theatre and a Knight of Illumination Award for his lighting on the Icelandic rock band Sigur Rós’s 2012–13 world tour. He subsequently designed the lighting for the group’s 2016–17 world tour.

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Costume Designer

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Bruno Poet (United Kingdom)

Original Lighting Designer

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Keivan Poet (United Kingdom)

Original Lighting Designer

Award winning light designer Bruno Poet’s work returns to HGO after the successful new production of Don Giovanni last spring. His upcoming and recent lighting designs include The Unknown Soldier (Royal Opera, Covent Garden); Il trovatore (Royal Danish Opera); The Merry Widow (ENO); Oklahoma! (Grange Park Opera); Marco Polo (Guangzhou Opera House); and the U.K. tour of Dusty (2018). Further lighting credits include Carmen (Bregenz Festival); Julius Caesar (Bridge Theatre); and Big Fish (The Other Palace). Lighting credits in London’s West End include Tina: The Musical; Miss Saigon; and From Here to Eternity. Poet’s designs for events include Fast and Furious Live Arena Tour and Giudizio Universale for Auditorium Conciliazione in Rome. His design for Rusalka for the Sydney Opera won the Australian Green Room Award. He won the Oliver award for his lighting on Danny Boyle’s Frankenstein at the National Theatre and a Knight of Illumination Award for his lighting on the Icelandic rock band Sigur Rós’s 2012–13 world tour. He subsequently designed the lighting for the group’s 2016–17 world tour.
Recent opera highlights include a return to The di Valois in Amelia in roles in (ENO). Her 2019–20 season includes performing the title in Calixto Bieito’s new production of was nominated for an Olivier Award for her London debut Richard Tucker Award in 2016. Additionally, in 2016, she was spotted in New York by The Jim Henson International Festival of Puppetry with his award-winning The Araneidae Show. Coupled with the critically and popularly praised and multiple award-winning Symphonie Fantastique, Twist was revealed as a singular artist of unlimited imagination. Highlights of Twist’s subsequent work have included Petrushka (commissioned by Lincoln Center), Dogugaeshi (The Japan Society), Behind the Lid (Silver Whale Gallery), and Arias with a Twist co-created with nightlife icon Joey Arias.

RICHARD BADO (UNITED STATES)
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
CHORUS MASTER
For information about Richard Bado, please see p. 35.

DENISE TARRANT (UNITED STATES)
Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
CONCERTMASTER
For information about Denise Tarrant, please see p. 35.

TAMARA WILSON (UNITED STATES)
SOPRANO—AIDA
HGO Studio alumna Tamara Wilson (2005–07), a noted interpreter of Verdi roles, was seen most recently at HGO as Chrysothemis in Elektra in 2018. Other HGO roles include Leonora in Il trovatore (2013); Elisabeth de Valois in the five-act French Don Carlos (2012); Miss Jessel in The Turn of the Screw (2010); Konstanze in The Abduction from the Seraglio (2008); and Amelia in A Masked Ball (2007), among others. She won first prize in HGO’s 2005 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award in 2016. Additionally, in 2016, she was nominated for an Olivier Award for her London debut in Calixto Bieto’s new production of La forza del destino (ENO). Her 2019–20 season includes performing the title roles in Aida and Turandot (Canadian Opera Company); Amelia in A Masked Ball (Deutsche Oper Berlin); Elisabetha di Valois in Don Carlo (Oper Frankfurt); Tristan und Isolde (The Santa Fe Opera); and the title role in Aida at HGO. Recent opera highlights include a return to The Metropolitan Opera for the title role in Aida, the same role in which she made her Met debut; Leonora in Il trovatore (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Desdemona in Otello (Canadian Opera Company); the title role in Ariadne auf Naxos (Teatro alla Scala); Chrysothemis in Elektra (Zurich Opera); and Elisabetta di Valois in Don Carlo (Bavarian State Opera and Zurich Opera).

RUSSELL THOMAS (UNITED STATES)
TENOR—RADAMES
Russell Thomas makes his role and HGO debut as Radames in HGO’s new production of Aida.

Thomas continues his Verdi role debuts this year as Don Alvaro in La forza del destino (Deutsche Oper Berlin), and as the title character in Ernani (San Francisco Opera). He has performed major roles at some of the world’s leading opera houses, including The Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera, ENO, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, among others. Last season, Thomas made his role debut as the title character in Verdi’s Otello (Canadian Opera Company and Deutsche Oper Berlin). His roles include Manrico in Il trovatore (Bayerische Staatsoper and Lyric Opera of Chicago); title role in Idomeneo (Salzburg Festival); title role in Roberto Devereux (San Francisco Opera); and Tito in La clemenza di Tito (LA Opera). Concert performances include Los Angeles Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, World Orchestra for Peace in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 at the BBC Proms, and Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Thomas has received prizes from the George London Foundation for Singers, Liederkranz Foundation, Licia Albanese Puccini Foundation, and Richard Tucker Music Foundation. In 2010, he swept the Grand Prize, Audience Prize, and Tenor Prize of the Francisco Viñas Competition in Barcelona, Spain.

MELODY MOORE (UNITED STATES)
SOPRANO—AMNERIS
(JAN. 31, FEB 2m, 8)

Melody Moore makes her role debut as Amneris in HGO’s production of Aida. Other notable HGO appearances include Senta in The Flying Dutchman (2018), Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni (2019), Dorabella in Così fan tutte (2014), Freia in Das Rheingold, and Marta in The Passenger, both on the main stage and on tour to the Lincoln Center Festival (all in 2014); and Julie LaVerne in Show Boat (2013). This season she will make her role and house debut as the Foreign Princess in Rusalka at Cincinnati Opera. Additionally, Ms. Moore will sing Donna Anna in Don Giovanni at Opera Naples and will conclude her season as Santuzza.
in Cavalleria Rusticana at Seattle Opera. Concert highlights include her debut with the Houston Symphony Orchestra in Mahler’s Das klagende Lied under the baton of Music Director Andrés Orozco-Estrada, the title role in Strauss’s Salome at Bard College, and a solo recital and masterclass at Lawrence University. In the summer, she sings Vaughan Williams’ masterful Sea Symphony with the Oregon Symphony, led by Carlos Kalmar. Recent career highlights include a house and role debut at Seattle Opera in the title role in Janáček’s Katya Kabanova, appearances with San Francisco Opera in the title role of Tosca, Susan Rescorla in Heart of a Soldier, Mimi in La bohème, and the Countess in The Marriage of Figaro; and performances in Francesca Zambello’s Ring cycle at Washington National Opera.

Catherine Martin, an HGO Studio alumna (2009–12), continues to make an impact in repertoire ranging from Verdi and Wagner to Strauss and Bellini. Her most recent roles at HGO include Wellgunde in Das Rheingold (2014) and Götterdämmerung (2017), and Amneris in Aida (2013). The 2019–20 season sees her return to the role of Wellgunde in Götterdämmerung with the National Taichung Theatre in Taiwan, the cover of Sister Helen Prejean in Dead Man Walking and singing the 2nd Norn in Götterdämmerung and Waltraute in Die Walküre at Lyric Opera of Chicago, covering Marguerite in Berlioz’s Le damnation de Faust with the Metropolitan Opera, and Celeste in the world premiere of Castor and Patience with Cincinnati Opera. Her 2018–19 season included Wowkle in La fanciulla del West with Maryland Lyric Opera, Tamara in Enemies, A Love Story with Kentucky Opera, Eva Crowley in An American Dream with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Verdi’s Requiem with the El Paso Choral Society, Maddalena in Rigoletto with New Orleans Opera, Herodias in Salome with Dayton Opera, and Grimerde in Die Walküre with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Peixin Chen

HGO Studio alumnus Peixin Chen (2012–15) appears regularly at HGO, most recently as Oroveso in Norma (2018). Other HGO roles include Doctor Bartolo in The Barber of Seville (2018) and as the bass soloist in Verdi’s Requiem (2017); Doctor Bartolo in The Marriage of Figaro (2016); Sarastro in outdoor performances of The Magic Flute (2015); Montano in Otello, Second SS Guard in The Passenger, and Usher in Rigoletto (all in 2014); Ferrando in Il trovatore (2013); and Customs House Guard in La bohème (2012–13). He entered the Studio after winning third prize in HGO’s 2012 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. This season’s performances include The Magic Flute (New Orleans Opera); La bohème (Opera Naples); and Madama Butterfly (Portland Opera). On the concert stage, Peixin Chen appears with the Indianapolis Symphony and Krzysztof Urbański in Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis and with the Kansas City Symphony and Michael Stern in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Highlights of the recent years include his Opera Philadelphia debut as Sarastro in the acclaimed production of The Magic Flute co-directed by Suzanne Andrade and Barrie Kosky; Sparafucile in Rigoletto (Lyric Opera of Kansas City); and Old Patriarch in Dvořák’s Dmitrij (Bard Music Festival).

Musa Nqungwana

Musa Nqungwana makes his HGO debut as King in Aida. This season, Musa sings the title role in Porgy and Bess (Washington National Opera, Atlanta Opera, Grange Park Opera, and Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra); Leporello in Don Giovanni (Pittsburgh Opera); the Wanderer in Wagner’s Siegfried (North Carolina Opera); and as Paolo Albiani in Verdi’s Simon Boccanegra (Washington Concert Opera). Highlights of recent engagements include performances in the title role Porgy
and Bess (The Glimmerglass Festival); Queequeg in Moby Dick (LA Opera, Dallas Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Utah Opera); Lescaut in Manon Lescaut (Dallas Opera); Zuniga in Carmen (Philadelphia Opera, Norwegian National Opera, and Palm Beach Opera); and King Balthazar in Amahl and the Night Visitors (On Site Opera). His recent debuts have included Amonasro in Aida at (ENO); Angelotti in Tosca (Canadian Opera Company); Gottardo in La gazza ladra (The Glimmerglass Festival); and Colline in La bohème (Washington National Opera). He was the 2013 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and graduated from the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) in Philadelphia. He is the author of Odyssey of an African Opera Singer, a memoir published in South Africa by Penguin Random House.

DOROTHY GAL
(UNITED STATES)
The Evans Family/
Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
SOPRANO—PRIESTESS
Second year HGO Studio artist
Dorothy Gal won second prize in HGO’s 2018 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and made her HGO mainstage debut as Zerlina in Don Giovanni this past spring. She participated in Marilyn Horne’s The Song Continues workshop at Carnegie Hall and was a vocal fellow at Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute. She has appeared on WQXR’s Young Artists Showcase, was a New Horizons Fellow at the Aspen Summer Music Festival and is an alumnus of Houston Grand Opera’s Young Artists Vocal Academy (2015). Roles include Amy in Little Women, Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi, Poussette in Manon, and Zerlina in Don Giovanni. She portrayed Sandrina in La finta giardiniera at Rice University before returning to Des Moines Metro Opera to sing First Wood Sprite in the company’s mainstage production of Rusalka in the summer of 2018. This past summer she sang the role of Anne Egerman in A Little Night Music at Aspen Music Festival. Her HGO roles during the 2019–20 season are Countess Ceprano in Rigoletto and Papagena in The Magic Flute.

CHRISTOPHER BOZEKA
(UNITED STATES)
TENOR—MESSENGER
For more information about Christopher Bozeka, please see p. 37.
JOIN THE GUILD IN HONORING SUSAN GRAHAM AT SPRING EVENT 2020

The Houston Grand Opera Guild is thrilled to honor world-renowned mezzo-soprano Susan Graham on this special evening. Join us in celebrating Susan Graham’s stellar career, including seven roles she has performed with Houston Grand Opera. This spring, she returns for a role debut as Herodias in Francisco Negrin’s production of Strauss’s Salome.

The many accolades Graham has received include being named “Vocalist of the Year” in 2004 from Musical America, a Grammy in 2004 for Best Classical Performance, being hailed in Gramophone magazine as “America’s favorite mezzo,” and an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music. The French government awarded her the coveted Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in recognition of her popularity with French audiences and in gratitude for championing the French repertoire.

Courtesy of susangraham.com.
For tickets and information visit HGOguild.org/SpringEvent2020.

Save the dates

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020: Spring Event

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020: Opera Night Live
Enjoy in-depth interviews with the production’s artists as they discuss Strauss’s Salome. HGO Guild provides this educational event free to the community.

FEBRUARY 24 – MARCH 13, 2020: Artist in Residence
Reserve your personalized opera presentation by a member of the HGO Studio at your home or at work. This program is sponsored by the HGO Guild.

FEBRUARY 24: HGO Guild Wine Tasting Event
For tasty wines and crudités, join us at Houston Wine Merchant (2426 S. Shepherd Dr.) from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. No reservations needed.

For more information on these and other Guild activities, visit HGOguild.org, email guild@hgo.org, or call 713-546-0269.
Dennis Whittaker has been the principal bassist for the Houston Grand Opera orchestra for over 20 years and has even earned a reputation as the “opera bass player” in the international bass community. I talked to him about his journey as both an educator and an artist, and what he loves most about his work in Houston.

PL: Let’s just start with where you grew up.

DW: I grew up in Kansas City. My mother was a secretary at a trucking company and bank and my father was a photojournalist for the Kansas City Star—but he was also a bit of a Renaissance man. He played guitar and I grew up listening to him make up songs on the spot. I have one younger brother who played drums for a while, but he became more involved in speech and debate teams as well as computers.

PL: At what age did you start playing instruments?

DW: I started playing violin in fifth grade and played for two years in my middle school orchestra. I stunk at it, but I loved it. In seventh grade, my teacher said, “you have square hands, Dennis. You would be a great bass player.” We didn’t have a bass player and I was last chair violin. So, I figured out later that he was just feeding me a line to motivate me to play the bass. But somehow, the notes fit under my fingers right away and my ears were tuned better for bass. I also played in jazz band. We had a very active public education system in Kansas City, at that time. All of the school ensembles—jazz band, orchestras, show choir, etc.—performed in the community regularly.

PL: And what about high school? Were you thinking then that you were headed for a career as an instrumentalist?

DW: Looking back on it, I think that I was very much living in the moment. What gave me pleasure was the next concert, the next show, the next jazz band, the next rehearsal. I wanted to go somewhere where I could play. I wanted to major in music, but I didn’t know if I wanted to do performance or education. My high school orchestra teacher wanted me to go to Juilliard and I wanted to go to Baylor. I wanted to leave Kansas City, not because I hated Kansas City, I just wanted to go explore. I ended up at Baylor. I went in as a performance major, and then my freshman year I changed to music education because that was where the jobs were.

PL: So you were then focused on music education. When did a career in performing come back into focus?

DW: In 1986 I won a competition by a bass player named Gary Karr, the founding member of the International Society of Bassists. Gary Karr also had a foundation that sponsored a competition in which you could win a bass. When I won this competition in 1986, I not only won a professional quality instrument to play on, but I also realized that I had a voice that could compete on the national level.

So, after finishing my degree in Music Education at Baylor, I went to Northwestern in Chicago. I finished graduate school in 1990 and then I went back to Waco to teach at a public school. After two years in Waco, I got a job teaching in the Houston area. I taught in Pasadena for one year and then in Kingwood for several years.

PL: What eventually pulled you away from teaching?

DW: In 1996, three things happened. I won the principal job for the Houston Grand Opera, I won a substitute position with the Houston Symphony, and I secured the bass teacher job at the University of Houston. It was hard because at that time there was no promise of a career. I feel like I won the lottery at the opera because I went from playing two productions per season, to six each season over the course of my tenure. At University of Houston, I grew the bass studio from one to sixteen students. Eventually this led me to build up an income that was comparable to what I was making before—but it was very scary.

PL: What is the biggest difference between playing with the symphony and playing with the opera?

DW: As a performer, the opera experience is much more multidimensional than the symphony experience. On stage, the musical energy comes from the director. In the pit, the energy comes from the conductor, but there are so many variables that can change the energy during the performance—singers, orchestral soloists, the chorus, the acting. As a bass player, I feel like my job is to help keep the time going, even if any unexpected energy shifts occur. I communicate often with the music director to unify our strategy to make that happen.
PL: And when other conductors come in, do they have a different view?

DW: Yes, very much. Even doing *La bohème*. We’ve done *La bohème* maybe ten times in my time here. But with different conductors, it’s never the same opera twice.

PL: Do you still play jazz?

DW: I do, but not professionally. I am still in the freelance pool, so I do play some non-classical gigs. I played with The Who for instance and I will be playing with The Eagles. I still have friends that I play jazz and wedding receptions with.

PL: And what about your work at University of Houston—how has your earlier career as an educator and your performance career influenced your teaching there? Your own career path is a good example that there is no definitive path!

DW: There is no career path. When people say, “I want to do what you do,” I respond, “okay. Well, get married young, go teach for six years, witness some horrific things with your students, take a risk for three years and make no income, make an exciting life outside of music, and so on.” I mean, there’s all these things that make life richer and put things in perspective for a community and for people. At UH, I’ve been trying to mold my teaching model into more of a mentorship and I’m talking to students about the cost-benefit analysis of being working artists. In Houston for instance, there are fourteen living wage, salaried positions for bass players—and I have two of them.

PL: Is there a show that you’ve worked on at HGO that you’re particularly proud of?

DW: *The Passenger*. I loved going to New York and taking *The Passenger* there. The story is still something that I can’t listen to casually. I have to really have a good glass of scotch when I listen to that. And then *A Coffin in Egypt* performed in Wharton just for that audience connection to see those people looking at the opera—their own story—for the first time. *Saul* was spectacular. The Britten operas are still a treasure to me because it was a small orchestra and I got to play the one bass part. *Billy Budd*—there were two performances of *Billy Budd* that were absolutely mind-blowing for me musically. And then *Hansel and Gretel* because I got to meet Maurice Sendak. So those are the ones that stand out—I guess there are more than just one!

PL: You have been a valued member of the HGO family for quite some time. What has changed in your time here and what has stayed the same?

DW: I think what impresses me right now is how significant HGO seems to represent in our community. I think that the company is still setting the standard for opera companies across the world. We’re still doing world premieres, but we’re also still very focused on local stories. And to me, that’s always been the part of this company that gives me the most pleasure—is knowing that the company that I yield my artistic energies towards is using it in a very productive, very forward-thinking way.
Ticket sales cover less than 25 percent of the cost to produce HGO's season, so come join this special family of opera lovers today and watch as great opera is produced before your very eyes.

When you become an HGO Patron, you’ll enjoy exclusive benefits to make your opera experience even better, including valet parking, green room access, dress rehearsal passes, lectures, recitals, and much more.

We can’t do it without you. Join today!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit HGO.org/support-us or contact Kelly Nicholls, director of development, at 713-980-8688 or knicholls@hgo.org.
Celebrated HGO Studio Alumni Make Grand Returns for La favorite and Aida

This winter’s productions of La favorite and Aida provide much for the HGO Studio to celebrate. Tamara Wilson and Jamie Barton, two of the Studio’s most illustrious graduates, return to HGO to sing the leading roles in these operas. In each case, these appearances at HGO were planned years in advance, providing the organization with an opportunity to showcase these extraordinary performers. They are joined by several other Studio alumni: Peixin Chen and Reginald Smith, Jr. in Aida, Federico De Michelis in La favorite, and Christopher Bozeka in both productions.

Since their time in the Studio, both Tamara and Jamie have gone on to win one of opera’s greatest prizes: The Richard Tucker Award, a $50,000 prize given to one American singer each year who is in the early stages of an exceptional singing career. Each spring, the opera world anticipates the announcement of the winner, and it was a proud time for the Studio when these two artists won the prize in back-to-back years (Jamie in 2015 and Tamara in 2016). Both singers have performed all over the world, and their lists of career highlights are already long.

Casting opera is a tricky business, as many roles in the repertoire require a singer with specific and rare gifts. We often wonder where we will find singers for the most challenging roles in the future; while the art form relies on them to continue, the level of natural talent, skill, and artistry required is rarely encountered and far from ensured. Even the most talented singer requires years of technical work, language training, coaching, and experience on stage to reach a level of readiness for a role like Aida or Léonor. Training is extremely important, and the Studio ensures that performers of the very highest quality continue to hone their skills so they are prepared when they enter into the professional world. Because the quality of the Studio’s training and the caliber of the singers in the program is outstanding, it’s not unusual to consult our list of alumni as one of our first resources in the search for the right artist to fill a demanding role.

The architecture of a singer’s career is important; in each voice type, there are roles which are traditionally performed before others, leading to a progression that happens through the span of a singer’s professional career. While the order may be different for each person, our young singers begin planning their path while still in training at the Studio. HGO plays a role in that planning by inviting artists back to perform in our mainstage productions. Sometimes that invitation is only a year or two after the singer’s graduation, and in other cases it may be a decade or more later—it just depends on where the role fits in the singer’s timeline. The important thing is that it is the right opportunity at the right time.

This winter we’re fortunate to have Jamie and Tamara back at HGO in the height of their careers. They are respected all over the world for their brilliant artistry and passionate, thrilling performances. We’re also honored to have both singers joining us in February for a night that was a career-defining moment for both: the Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. This year, Tamara (2005 first-prize winner) will serve as the competition’s guest judge, while Jamie (2007 third-prize winner) will represent the Studio and HGO as online host for the livestream. After this year’s winners are selected, we’ll invite some of them to join the HGO Studio—an invitation to look to the future, much in the same way Jamie and Tamara did at the beginning of their careers. We look forward to the day when the singers selected to come to Houston will have their own returns in HGO productions to continue the tradition.

—Brian Speck, HGO Studio Director

The Houston Grand Opera Studio is one of the most highly respected young artist programs in the world. For more than 40 years it has served young singers and pianist/coaches, providing a bridge between full-time training and full-fledged operatic careers. Alumni of the Studio perform at the best opera houses all around the world and make frequent return appearances to the Wortham stage. For more information, visit HGO.org/Studio.
HGO STUDIO ARTISTS 2019–20

Lindsay Kate Brown
mezzo-soprano
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover/Lynn and Henry Gissel Fellow

Dorothy Gal
soprano
The Evans Family/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow

Geoffrey Hahn
baritone
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow

Leia Lensing
mezzo-soprano
Drs. Liz Grimm and Jack Roth/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

Alex Munger
pianist/coach
Dr. Saul and Ursula Balagura/Mr. Trey Yates Fellow

Kyle Naig
pianist/coach
Stephanie Larsen/Dr. and Mrs. Miguel Miro-Quesada/Kathy and Richard Stout Fellow

Nicholas Newton
bass-baritone
Dr. and Mrs. Theodore J. Haywood/Kathleen Moore and Steven Homer/Jill and Allyn Risley Fellow

Daniel Noyola
bass
Beth Madison Fellow

Richard Trey Smagur
tenor
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow

William Guanbo Su
bass
Anne and Albert Chao Fellow

Elena Villalón
soprano
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai Fellow

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Michael Heaston, Music Director
Jamie Gelfand, Studio Manager
Carlisle Floyd, Artistic Advisor
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Sponsored by Maressa Montemayor
Nicole Uhlig, French Instructor
Brian Connelly, Piano Instructor
Robert Kearley, Showcase Director
Sponsored by Marcheta and John Beasley
Margo Garrett, Guest Coach
Kathleen Kelly, Guest Coach
John Churchwell, Guest Coach

HGO STUDIO UNDERWRITERS

The HGO Studio receives generous support from Sylvia Barnes and Jim Trimble, Mr. Patrick Carfizzi, Brenda Harvey-Traylor, Jerry and Sharyn Metcalf, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Reynolds.

The HGO Studio is grateful for the in-kind support of the Texas Voice Center.

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, Gwyneth Campbell, and Dr. David and Mrs. Norine Gill.

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Residencies: Allowing More Time for Relationship Building and Learning

HGOco strives to provide a range of opportunities for Houstonians of all ages to engage and learn through the inspiration of opera. Fulfilling this ambition through learning programs, HGOco offers Opera To Go!, a 45-minute operas performed in schools, professional development for teachers, students performances, and residencies.

Residencies are often at a school or a community partner’s campus. From the beginning of our season and through the end of December, HGOco teaching artists have worked in seven unique residencies bringing music, creativity, as well as social and emotional learning into the lives of adults and children alike. Over 100 hours were invested in teaching students how to use music as a means of storytelling and expression.

Three residencies were delivered through the We Belong initiative, which partners with local refugee service organizations. These took place at Collins Elementary, Alief Middle School, and in conjunction with Kijana Youth Program. Defining what “home” means to these children, the residencies brought them into a welcoming and safe place to explore their identity and place in the world through music.
HGOco’s in-school program allowed teaching artists help students write an original opera which was created and performed in Spanish at Wharton Dual Language Academy. Students drew on their learning from American History and retold the events leading up to the American Revolution in their own words and melodies.

Outside of the academic arena, three very important residencies cultivated Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and well-being. These included our first ever Creative Aging course for adults 55+, a weeklong intensive with music therapists at Methodist Hospital’s short-term mental health unit, and 15 visits to Harris County’s Juvenile Detention Center. Using key SEL guidelines, these unique residencies explored self-awareness and purpose utilizing music as a vehicle to express and analyze our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and personal narratives.

HGOco will lead more residencies throughout the season with a goal of fifteen unique, in-depth learning experiences this year.

—Alisa Magallón, Senior Education Manager

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Opera INSPIRES

BY SHINA BHARADWAJA
Development Communications Manager
HGO RESIDENCIES UTILIZE MUSIC TO SUPPORT AT-RISK STUDENTS

Childhood is typically viewed as a happy, carefree stage of life spent growing and learning under the loving care of family members and school. Sadly, that is not the reality for all children. Some spend time in care of the state.

Such is the case for the children at Excel Academy, a charter school located within Harris County Juvenile Detention Center (Harris County JDC). Students range in age from 12 to 17 years old and can be with the academy anywhere from a few days to months.

In January 2019, HGO’s highly successful community program Cultivating Empathy through Music & Storytelling arrived at Harris County JDC. Designed to fit within a 90-minute class period, the curriculum, led by HGO teaching artists, encouraged students to identify emotions while listening to various types of music. The students then selected a song that reminded them of positive memories to discuss with peers. HGO Teaching Artists worked with all of the students during the program.

“We didn’t know what to expect,” says HGOco Director Carleen Graham. “But the program was more successful than we could have ever anticipated.”

As HGO Teaching Artists used music to inspire at-risk students to express themselves in productive ways, the impact was felt across the whole center. The staff was excited by the progress; particularly the students’ improvement in empathy and communication skills.

Additionally, the program included live performances. “The look on the kids’ faces when those big voices, magnified by the sparse cement room, echoed around them, was priceless,” says HGOco Director Carleen Graham. “It kept me positive. Music is everything to me!” another student says.

HGO was able to bring Cultivating Empathy through Music & Storytelling back to Harris County JDC in March, April, and October 2019.

In the spring of 2019, HGO partnered with DACAMERA of Houston to bring another residency to at-risk children. The second curriculum consisted of a 14-week program for 20 girls at Harris County Youth Village in Seabrook, Texas. The program culminated in a performance entitled I Am My Future, which celebrated the positive future each girl had envisioned for herself. Students shared their original songs and poems and performed choreographed dances they created, all with the help of HGO and DACAMERA teaching artists.

“I had fun because singing is my life. I felt like people enjoyed us and I feel like I now know my future,” says a participant, “I cooperated with my peers and let out my emotions. We learned about empathy.”

As opera lovers, you know music has the undeniable ability to inspire, shape, and transform us. Thanks to your support, many of the children at Harris County Juvenile Detention Center and Harris County Youth Village now know the incredible power of music too.

“It brought the shyness out. My mom came for support. It was great!” says another participant.

Currently, additional residencies are in the works. But only with your help will I Am My Future and Cultivating Empathy through Music & Storytelling continue to help children in need.

When you give to HGO you don’t just support world-class opera at the Wortham Theater Center, you positively impact the lives of those in our community that need it most.
At the rare intersection of popular music and the classics is Matt Ringel. As HGO Board of Directors’ Marketing and Communications Vice Chair and as the Executive Vice President at Red Light Management, Matt has dedicated his life to promoting some of the world’s greatest talents.

**Does your work at Red Light Management and HGO have anything in common?**

At Red Light Management we manage the careers of over 350 artists including some very recognizable talents like Dave Matthews Band, Lionel Richie, and Luke Bryan. Considering how different the musical genres at work are compared to opera, there isn’t much overlap except for my love of both. My ideal week would consist of attending a rock concert, a country show, and then an opera!

**Considering that you work in a very different genre of music, how did you fall in love with opera?**

My parents strongly influenced my interest as a child. Both are opera lovers and my father even sang in the children’s chorus at The Metropolitan Opera. Although a life-long pianist, I started my career in management consulting. Eventually I transitioned to music and was awarded a Marshall Scholarship to pursue a PhD in Musicology with a focus in Opera History from the University of London. While there, I consulted for world-class companies like The Metropolitan Opera and The Royal Opera House.

**Do you have a favorite HGO production?**

In 2018 I saw Christine Goerke in HGO’s riveting production of Strauss’ *Elektra* in the Convention Center after Hurricane Harvey. HGO’s strength after tragedy was incredible—not many other companies could manage such a feat. It’s one of the reasons I decided to become more involved at HGO.

**What are you most excited to be involved in as Marketing and Communications Vice Chair on the HGO Board?**

Opera can never be taken for granted. It must be marketed to keep audiences coming back and to give new audiences compelling reasons to try it. The creative work of HGO, and its unique Studio, is world-class and I find it an exciting and rewarding challenge to help more people discover opera.

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**RICHARD STOUT**

Life-long sailor, retired newspaper executive, bird hunter, and opera aficionado are just a few of many ways to describe HGO Trustee Richard Stout.

During WWII Rich’s father was in the Navy and Rich moved frequently as a child, everywhere from Miami to Boston and Long Island. So, by the time they moved to Colorado after his father transitioned into the newspaper business, Rich’s passion for boating was well underway.

Considering his love for being on the water, it was surprising to those close to Rich when he chose to become a Naval fighter pilot, rather than a sailor, when drafted during the Vietnam War.

“I didn’t intend on becoming a pilot or a sailor. I earned a bachelor’s degree in pre-med from the University of Nevada with the intention of going to medical school—but that all changed when I was drafted,” Rich recalls.

After ten years as a Naval pilot, Rich resigned his commission to join the family newspaper business.

“I knew it was time, so I headed back to Nevada. There I met my wife, started a family, and first developed my love for opera,” Rich says.

Rich and his family became big supporters of the Nevada Opera and he was elected President of the Board at Pioneer Center for the Performing Arts. Sadly, in 2015, Rich’s wife passed unexpectedly.

“It was very difficult. I moved in and out of three houses, but nothing felt right—until I moved to Houston, came to HGO, and met Kathy,” says Rich.

Last year, Rich attended his first HGO show with friends Brad and Laura McWilliams. Although more of a Verdi man himself, seeing Puccini’s *La bohème* is his favorite HGO pastime as that’s where he met Kathy.

“Brad and Laura wanted me to meet Kathleen Cross because they knew we had some common interests, but I don’t think anyone could’ve known how well we would get along,” says Rich with a smile.

Both having a deep connection to opera and boating, Kathy and Rich quickly hit it off and have been practically inseparable ever since—even underwriting Studio Artist Kyle Naig together!

These days Rich and Kathy spend most of their time boating at Kathy’s river home in Alexandria Bay, with grandchildren, their adorable Labrador, Boomerang, or at HGO watching their favorite productions.
WINSTEAD PC

Winstead PC is among the largest business law firms in Texas, providing comprehensive legal services for mid-market and large businesses. Winstead’s business transactions and litigation practices serve key industries including aviation, financial services, healthcare, investment management/private equity, life sciences, real estate and sports business. Clients rely on the vast experience and technical resources Winstead has to offer, and they keep coming back deal after deal, case after case, year after year as their organizations grow and change.

Winstead’s attorneys are practical, roll-up-your-sleeves lawyers committed to using their broad legal experience to relentlessly pursue innovative solutions. From practice to practice, they deliver a consistent client experience—with responsive attorneys who know how to get things done, and business-friendly rates that are aligned with the goals of the engagement.

Winstead’s commitment to serving our communities dates back to the firm’s inception. The company proudly collaborates with local communities in Texas, coast to coast, and around the globe. Winstead has offices in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and The Woodlands, as well as Charlotte, North Carolina.

In addition to supporting Houston Grand Opera, Winstead attorneys and staff are highly involved in the community as volunteers for a wide range of social programs, outreach activities and civic projects, and devote many hours to support organizations and community events throughout the year. Winstead also gives pro bono legal assistance to both individuals and nonprofit organizations supporting charitable organizations, volunteering our time as board members, and assisting with fundraising projects.

The firm provides underwriting support for HGO’s mainstage productions and annual Opening Night dinner event. Tom Van Arsdel, managing shareholder, and Shareholder Mike Hilliard represent the firm as HGO Trustees.

HGO is absolutely delighted to have Tom and his wife, Kristie, and Mike and his wife, Kay, as part of the HGO family, and to count Winstead as a dedicated partner.
OPENING NIGHT DINNER
OCTOBER 18, 2019

On October 18, HGO opened its 65th season with a new production of Verdi’s beloved *Rigoletto* followed by a much-anticipated return to the Ray C. Fish Plaza for a celebration dinner. Chaired by Drs. Rachel and Warren A. Ellsworth IV (Warren’s late father Warren Ellsworth III was a celebrated member of the HGO Studio in 1979–80), the event’s guests were greeted by a juggling jester under a clear-top tent and the backdrop of the night’s sky. Perryn Leech opened the festivities just off the Astros game 5 loss to the Yankees, stating the only person who had endured a worse night than the opera’s tragic title character, was Justin Verlander. Patrick Summers later introduced the cast and artistic team of the new production. The Events Company provided an elegant setting of lush fall florals and Italian murals. Tony’s Catering served an inspired dinner that flowed like an aria and ended with “Ah! The Curse”—a flourless chocolate cake complimented by a custom gilded *Rigoletto* chocolate bar.
The cast and creative team of Rigoletto with Patrick Summers and Perryn Leech

Danny and Isabel David, Judge Beau Miller

Jay and Gretchen Watkins, Carrie and Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl

Alfredo and Marcia Vilas, Venetia Stelliou Chacón and Arturo Chacón-Cruz

Mary Sage and Marguerite Swartz

John and Janet Carrig

Drs. Rachel and Warren A. Ellsworth IV
On October 25, HGO’s Laureate Society welcomed HGO Studio alum Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen (David in Saul) accompanied by Michael Leopold on lute, theorbo, and guitar for the annual Laureate Society Recital. The 2017 Concert of Arias winner and first countertenor in HGO Studio history (2017–18 season) delighted Laureate Society members with a program spanning centuries from John Dowland to Henry Purcell to the crooning of Cole Porter. The recital is an annual treat reserved for HGO’s Laureate Society members, opera lovers who have made commitments to HGO in their estate plans.

On October 25, Sara and Gabriel Loperena hosted an opening night cast party like no other, inspired by HGO’s North American premiere of Handel’s Saul. Decked out by the talents of Kirksey Gregg Productions, the Forest Club’s tented patio was transformed into the lavish feast table from the Barrie Kosky production (pheasants, game carcass, and all). Christopher Purves (Saul) enthusiastically thanked the company and HGO Guild for creating such a beautiful experience for the artists, both onstage and off.
On November 6, HGO presented *In War & Peace—Harmony through Music*, a special concert event featuring international opera star and HGO Studio alumna Joyce DiDonato followed by an on-stage dinner benefiting HGO’s artistic and education programming. Following the concert, more than 200 awe-struck guests were led to the Brown Theater stage for a seated dinner catered by City Kitchen. A stunning explosion of pastel roses by The Events Company set the stage, with the majestic red velvet house as backdrop. HGO Studio artist Kyle Naig provided ambience on piano. Perryn Leech and Patrick Summers thanked event supporters and lead underwriters Bill and Sara Morgan and Janice Barrow. Ms. DiDonato, who considers HGO one of her artistic homes, mingled and remarked on her love for the company and audience.
On October 23, HGO Patrons gathered for a private reception with Donna Stirrup, revival director of Saul, before the final dress rehearsal of the opera in advance of its official opening night. HGO Patrons enjoy access to all dress rehearsals throughout the opera season.

From upper left, clockwise: Ken and Carolyn Yeats, Elizabeth Schwarze, and Hannelore Schwarze; Saul revival director Donna Stirrup speaking to Patrons at private reception; Crystal Wreden, Emily Bivona, and Megan Roiz; Troy Sullivan and Kiana Caleb.

PATRON

On October 23, HGO Patrons gathered for a private reception with Donna Stirrup, revival director of Saul, before the final dress rehearsal of the opera in advance of its official opening night. HGO Patrons enjoy access to all dress rehearsals throughout the opera season.

BECOME AN HGO DONOR Today!

Donors make great opera possible—and have fun while doing it! Below you’ll find some recent Patron, Trustee, and Underwriter events that offered HGO supporters behind-the-scenes access and unique opportunities to learn more about how world-class opera is made. Become an HGO Donor today, and join us for exclusive upcoming events.
On October 25, HGO Underwriters and the cast and creative team of Saul celebrated the opera’s opening night at the cast party following the performance. HGO Underwriters enjoy exclusive benefits, including invitations to join all cast parties throughout the season.

On November 12, 14, and 21, HGO Trustees enjoyed a series of private masterclasses where some of our talented HGO Studio artists were coached by Director of Artistic Operations and Chorus Master Richard Bado, HGO Studio Director of Vocal Instruction Dr. Stephen King, and HGO Studio Music Director Michael Heaston. HGO Trustees enjoy access to masterclasses, in-home salons, and closed rehearsals throughout the opera season.

From upper left, clockwise: Assistant Conductor and HGOco Music Director Geoffrey Loff, HGO Studio artist Leia Lensing, and Terrylin Neale; Ursula and Saúl Balagura, Terrylin Neale, Mary Roediger and Ralph Herbert; HGO Studio artist Leia Lensing and HGO Studio Music Director Michael Heaston.

From upper left, clockwise: Members of the cast and creative team of Saul; Lulu Tam and Hugh Zhang; Drs. Rachel and Warren Ellsworth IV with Caroline Ellsworth; Chris Purves and HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers.

Visit HGO.ORG/SUPPORT-US OR CALL 713-980-8685 TO BECOME A PATRON, TRUSTEE, OR UNDERWRITER TODAY.
JUDY AND RICHARD AGEE

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

ANCHORAGE FOUNDATION OF TEXAS

Many Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds experience opera for the first time during HGO’s free public performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre, an annual tradition made possible by the longstanding generosity of Anchorage Foundation of Texas. The Foundation has been improving the quality of life in Houston for four decades, and made a generous contribution to HGO’s Hurricane Harvey recovery fund. Marc Melcher is president of Anchorage Foundation of Texas, and his family has been involved with HGO for over 25 years.

ROBIN ANGLY AND MILES SMITH

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

JANICE BARROW

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

THE BROWN FOUNDATION, INC.

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

ZANE AND BRADY CARRUTH

Brady is the chief executive officer and president of Saratoga Financial Group and is a trustee of The Wortham Foundation, Inc. Zane is the President of Carson Marketing, LLC, with over 25 years of marketing experience. HGO subscribers since the 2012–13 season, Zane and Brady are members of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence and served as the chairmen of the 2017 Opera Ball. HGO is proud to have Zane on the HGO Board of Directors. She also serves on the Marketing and Communications Committee. In 2016, HGOco presented a world premiere Storybook Opera program based on Zane’s children’s book, The World’s First Tooth Fairy...Ever.
ANNE AND ALBERT CHAO
Anne and Albert have been subscribers and supporters of HGO for the past two decades. While serving as president and CEO of Westlake Chemical Corporation, Albert finds time for numerous cultural causes. He is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and was the co-chair of Inspiring Performance—The Campaign for Houston Grand Opera. Over the years, the Chaos have sponsored HGO special events, the HGO Studio, HG0co’s Song of Houston, and mainstage productions. The couple has also supported the HGO Endowment through their family foundation, the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation.

LOUISE CHAPMAN
Louise Chapman of Corpus Christi, Texas, a longtime supporter of HGO, recently joined the HGO Board of Directors. Louise’s late husband, John O. Chapman, was a south Texas agricultural businessman and philanthropist. In addition to HGO, the Chapmans have supported numerous organizations in health, education, and the arts, including Texas A & M University, the Corpus Christi Symphony, and the Art Museum of South Texas. Louise and HGO Trustee Connie Dyer have known each other since they were college roommates at The University of Texas.

CONOCOPHILLIPS
For over 40 years, ConocoPhillips has supported various programs at HGO, from special events to mainstage productions, including the 2019–20 season-opening production, Verdi’s Rigoletto. In 2009, the company gave a major multi-year grant to establish ConocoPhillips New Initiatives, a far-reaching program that allows HG0co to develop new and innovative education and community collaboration programs. Kelly Rose, general counsel and SVP, serves on the HGO Board of Directors. Janet Langford Carrig, chair of the HGO Board of Directors, is a recent retiree from ConocoPhillips and represented the company within the opera family for many years.

JIM AND MOLLY CROWNOVER
Jim Crownover was the chairman of the HGO Board of Directors 2016–18. He has been a member of the board since 1987 and has served on the Executive, Governance, Development, and Finance Committees. He and his wife, Molly, have been HGO subscribers for 30 years and are members of HGO’s Laureate Society and Impresarios Circle. In 1998, Jim retired from a 30-year career with McKinsey & Company, Inc., and currently serves on the boards of Chemtura Corporation, Weingarten Realty, Republic Services, Inc., and FTI Consulting. Jim also serves and supports the Houston Ballet, Rice University, the Houston Zoo, United Way Houston, Project Grad Houston, and a number of other organizations.

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

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

THE ELKINS FOUNDATION
Established by Margaret Weiss Elkins and James A. Elkins Jr. in 1956, The Elkins Foundation enriches our community by supporting a wide variety of educational, healthcare, cultural, community, and religious organizations. We are honored that Jenny Elkins and her family have been part of the HGO family for more than 15 years.

DRS. LIZ GRIMM AND JACK ROTH
HGO subscribers since the 2013–14 season, Liz and Jack have both committed themselves to cancer research and patient care through their work at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Jack is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and serves on the HGO Studio Committee. Liz and Jack were generous underwriters of HGO’s historic, first-ever Ring cycle and are lead supporters of HGO’s upcoming German repertoire, including last season’s Elektra. Additionally, Liz and Jack chaired the 2018 Opera Ball on April 14, 2018.
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ENDOWMENT, INC.

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

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO

For more than 15 years, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ has supported HGOco’s arts education programs, helping more than one million Houston area students experience the magic of live opera through Opera to Go!, the Student Performance Series, and Storybook Opera. A 501(c)(3) charity, the Show has committed more than $475 million to the youth of Texas since 1932. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is the world’s largest livestock show and rodeo, with more than 2.4 million attendees in 2019.

HOUSTON METHODIST

For over ten years, Houston Grand Opera has partnered with Houston Methodist, the official health care provider for HGO. Houston Methodist’s Center for Performing Arts Medicine (CPAM) is the only center of its kind in the country, comprising a specialized group of more than 100 physicians working collaboratively to address the specific demands placed upon performing artists. In addition to the first-rate medical care CPAM provides HGO artists, Houston Methodist also generously supports HGO’s special events and mainstage productions, is a major community partner on Seeking the Human Spirit, and is the presenter of HGO’s young professional programs. HGO is fortunate to have Dr. Warren Ellsworth and Dr. Apurva Thekdi serve as Houston Methodist’s corporate trustees.

THE HUMPHREYS FOUNDATION

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

DONNA KAPLAN AND RICHARD LYDECKER

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

NANCY AND RICHARD KINDER

Nancy and Rich became HGO subscribers during the 2000–01 season. Rich is co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Kinder Morgan, and Nancy is a focused philanthropist whose work has positively impacted communities throughout Houston and beyond. Rich and Nancy established the Kinder Foundation in 1997 to provide impactful gifts to projects dedicated to urban green space, education, and quality-of-life issues in the Greater Houston area. HGO is indebted to the Kinders for their visionary support in areas including general operations, mainstage productions, special events, and especially HGOco, the Opera’s innovative education and community collaboration initiative.

CLAIRE LIU AND JOSEPH GREENBERG

Claire and Joe have subscribed to HGO for many seasons and are members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Claire serves on the HGO Board of Directors and is chair of the Finance Committee. She was the honoree of the last season, and Joe is founder, president, and CEO of Alta Resources, L.L.C., a private company involved in the development of shale oil and gas resources in North America. Claire and Joe support many organizations, with particular emphasis on educational organizations including YES Prep and Teach for America. An avid runner, Claire has completed a marathon in all 50 states.

BETH MADISON

This season marks Beth’s 23rd as an HGO subscriber. HGO has had the honor of her support since 2004. Past chair of the HGO Board of Directors, she currently serves on the HGO Studio Committee, and is an active member of HGO’s Founders Council. She was the honoree...
at the 2017 Concert of Arias. Beth generously supports the HGO Studio, special events, and mainstage operas. Beth has been inducted into the Greater Houston Women’s Hall of Fame and serves on the University of Houston System Board of Regents.

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

**SIB MOORHEAD**
Sid Moorhead is the owner of Moorhead’s Blueberry Farm in Conroe, Texas, a family business that started as his father’s hobby over 40 years ago. After working for several years as a computer analyst, Sid left the corporate world to run the farm. He’s been an opera lover since he was in college, and he joined the Opera as an HGO Trustee in 2014. Now a member of the HGO Board of Directors, Sid enjoys traveling to experience opera around the world on our HGO Patron trips. We’re thrilled to have Sid as a valued member of our HGO family.

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

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

**THE MELLON FOUNDATION**
Established in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation supports a wide range of initiatives to strengthen the humanities, arts, higher education, and cultural heritage. The driving force behind so many of HGO’s new commissions, The Mellon Foundation’s longstanding support of HGO helps us tell relevant new stories and add to the operatic repertoire by developing new works, like Javier Martínez and Leonard Foglia’s *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*.

**NOVUM ENERGY**
Founded in 2011 in Panama, Novum Energy is an international physical oil supply and trading company committed to industry excellence in delivery standards and customer service. Founder and President Alfredo Vilas serves on the HGO Board of Directors and has over 20 years of experience and a passion for service to the community through cultural, recreational, and philanthropic work. Novum Energy has supported a number of HGO productions, including last season’s *West Side Story* and the mariachi operas *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* and *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*.

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

**THE POWELL FOUNDATION**
Founded in 1967 by Houston-based attorney Ben H. Powell and his wife, Kitty King Powell, The Powell Foundation improves the lives of residents of Harris, Travis, and Walker counties through charitable work in the fields of education, conservation,
human services, and the arts. In addition to its longstanding support of HGOco’s impactful student programs, The Powell Foundation was among the lead contributors to HGO’s Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts.

**SCHLUMBERGER**  
Schlumberger is a leading corporate contributor to HGO, supporting the main stage and a wide range of special projects over nearly 20 years. Schlumberger’s leadership gift was integral to launching HGO’s ongoing affordability program, the NEXUS Initiative, in 2007—since then, NEXUS has made great opera accessible to more than 275,000 people. HGO is honored to count Schlumberger among its most dedicated corporate supporters. Fred Dyen, Cameron Group HR director, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

**SHELL**  
Shell is a leader in the Houston arts community, supporting HGO for over 40 years. Shell’s leadership support makes opera more accessible to everyone through the NEXUS Initiative for Affordability and inspires young minds with STEM-aligned arts education opportunities like our annual Opera Camps. Shell was also a major supporter of HGO’s Hurricane Harvey recovery. HGO is honored to have De la Rey Venter, executive vice president of integrated gas ventures, represent Shell on our board of directors, as well as HGO Trustee Christos Angelides, external relations general manager of integrated gas ventures.

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

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

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

**VINSON & ELKINS LLP**  
HGO has been privileged to have the support of international law firm Vinson & Elkins LLP for nearly three decades. For more than 100 years, V&E has been deeply committed to empowering the communities in which it serves. It has enriched the cultural vibrancy of Houston by supporting HGO through in-kind legal services and contributions to special events and mainstage productions, including this season’s Aida. The Opera is honored to have two V&E partners serve on its board of directors: from left, Chris Bacon and Glen A. Rosenbaum.

**MARGARET ALKEK WILLIAMS**  
Margaret, a longtime singer, possesses a deep affinity for all music, and especially opera, supporting HGO for over 30 years. Currently, Margaret continues her parents’ legacy as chairman of their foundation, where her son Charles A. Williams serves as president. HGO is humbled by Margaret’s incredible generosity and dedication to the company, both as an individual donor and through her family’s foundation. She has endowed the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair, held by HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, and is a member of HGO’s Laureate Society. A valued member of the HGO Board of Directors, Margaret was the honoree of the 2009 Opera Ball and chairman of the 2014 Ball, and she generously chaired the 2018 Hurricane Harvey benefit Concert HGO and Plácido: Coming Home!
THE WORTHAM FOUNDATION, INC.

In the 1980s, the Wortham Foundation contributed $20 million to lead the capital campaign for the Wortham Theater Center, guided by businessman Gus S. Wortham’s early recognition of the vital role of the arts in making Houston an appealing place to live and work. During their lifetimes, Gus and his wife, Lyndall, were dedicated to improving the lives of Houstonians. The Foundation continues to support the Opera through the Wortham Foundation Permanent Endowment and generous annual operating support. This leadership support has been vital to HGO’s growth and commitment to excellence. The Wortham Foundation’s support of HGO’s Hurricane Harvey recovery helped to bring the company back home, and we are deeply grateful.

LYNN WYATT

Lynn’s generosity touches every aspect of HGO. She is a Lifetime Trustee of HGO and serves as the vice chairman of the HGO Board of Directors. She serves as vice-chair of HGO’s Governance Committee and chaired HGO’s Golden Jubilee Gala in 2005. Oscar Wyatt endowed The Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Fund in 2010, honoring Lynn’s service to the company and dedication to bringing the world’s best operatic artists to HGO, and she was the honoree at the 2010 Opera Ball. Lynn and Oscar have been lead supporters of a number of HGO productions and programs, including the multiyear company-wide initiative Seeking the Human Spirit.
Members of Houston Grand Opera’s Patrons Circle support the opera at a level of $5,000 or more, thereby making possible the incredible work of HGO. Members of the Society are entitled to many benefits at the Opera, including complimentary valet parking, Masterson Green Room privileges during performance intermissions, personalized ticket service, two tickets to all open dress rehearsals, Opera Guild membership, a discount on Opera Guild Boutique purchases, and more. HGO gratefully recognizes Patrons. For information on joining the Patrons Circle, please call Kelly Nicholls at 713-980-8698.

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**January 24–February 9**
Performances of Donizetti’s *La favorite.* Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission mixer for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 24 performance only.

**January 26**
*Behind the Music:* an intimate conversation about *La favorite* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

**January 30, 31 & February 1**

**February 2**
*Behind the Music:* an intimate conversation about *Aida* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

**February 7**
*Concert of Arias:* the 32nd Annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers. Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater. Live finals of the competition at 7 p.m. Celebration Dinner to follow in the Grand Foyer. Laura and Brad McWilliams, chairs. For information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

**February 15**
*HGO Studio Recital Series:* Artists of the HGO Studio perform at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Audrey Jones Beck Building (5601 Main Street). 7:30 p.m.

**February 27**
*Happy Birthday Marian:* Join us for this candlelight labyrinth and program at Emancipation Park at 6:30 p.m.

**March 5 & 6**
HGOco presents HGO’s 68th world premiere, Damien Sneed and Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton’s *Marian’s Song.* Wortham Theater Center’s Cullen Theater, 7 p.m.

**March 16–20**
Spring Break at Discovery Green®: HGOco presents activities and performances at Discovery Green®, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily.

**March 28**
*Spring Event:* the HGO Guild holds its annual fundraiser at the Houston Racquet Club (10709 Memorial Dr.) at 6:30 p.m. The seated dinner includes a silent auction and live music. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit HGOguild.org.

**March 28 & 29**
*Songs on the Water:* Enjoy a 90-minute boat ride on the Buffalo Bayou that includes a recital, wine and snacks. Allen’s Landing, 4 and 6 p.m.
APRIL

APRIL 4
Opera Ball 2020: Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center, 6:30 p.m. Followed by the Encore Party. For information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

APRIL 7
Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to enjoy wine and snacks while learning more about Salome from a member of the production team. Wortham Theater Center, 6:30 p.m. Free, but reservations are recommended. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit HGOguild.org.

APRIL 17–MAY 1
Performances of R. Strauss’s Salome, Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater.

APRIL 19
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Salome immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

APRIL 23
Through the Lens: Join us for this STHS film shorts screening at Enterprise Plaza (1100 Louisiana) at 7 p.m.

APRIL 24–MAY 8
Performances of Mozart’s The Magic Flute. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission mixer for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 24 performance only.

APRIL 26

MAY

MAY 7 & 10
HGO Studio Recital Series: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1406 Kirby Dr.). May 7 at 7:30 p.m. and May 10 at 5 p.m.

MAY 9
HGOco presents the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio Graduation Recital and Scholarship Competition. Duncan Recital Hall, Rice University. 6 p.m. Free.

MAY 27
HGO Association Annual Meeting and Reception: Wortham Theater Center, 5–7 p.m. Open to members of the HGO Board of Directors, HGO Trustees, and donors. Call 713-546-0217 for information.

JUNE

JUNE 8–19
Create an Opera: New curriculum in partnership with AFA. For students in rising grades 3–8.

JUNE 12, 15–19
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JUNE 15–26
Art of Opera: A two-week camp that culminates in a fully staged production.

All camps are held at the Wortham Theater Center. The final performance for the Art of Opera camp will be held at the Heinen Theatre on the central campus of Houston Community College. For more information, visit HGO.org/community-programs.

MAKE PLANS NOW TO SEE HGO’S EXCITING SPRING REP!

Off with His Head

R. Strauss’s powerful psychodrama Salome returns to HGO for the first time in 20 years in a new production directed by Francisco Negrin. The revolutionary score reinvents Oscar Wilde’s biblical drama of a deeply disturbed princess, Salome, who has fallen in love with Jokanaan (John the Baptist). After Jokanaan denies her advances, Salome skillfully manipulates her lecherous stepfather Herod into granting her a favor in exchange for performing the infamous and seductive “Dance of the Seven Veils.” The favor—of course—Jokanaan’s head.

Lise Lindstrom makes her HGO debut in the thrilling title role and is joined onstage by HGO Studio alumnus baritone Ryan McKinny as Jokanaan. The recently appointed music director of San Francisco Opera, Eun Sun Kim, returns to conduct as HGO principal guest conductor.

The Magical and Mystical World of Kosky

Filled with captivating, interactive projections, Barrie Kosky and Suzanne Andrade transform Mozart’s The Magic Flute into a live and not-so-silent silent film. The breathtaking production uses a silent-film aesthetic with 21st-century technology to deliver a Magic Flute unlike any that has been seen at HGO.

The classic story centers on the noble Prince Tamino’s quest to rescue Pamina, a beautiful princess. Along the way, he is tested by forces of darkness and must overcome evil to discover truth and the meaning of justice.

Norman Reinhardt sings the role of Tamino opposite Ying Fang as Pamina. Recent HGO Studio alumnus Thomas Glass is the comedic birdwatcher Papageno and So Young Park is the Queen of the Night. The 2016–17 Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, Jane Glover, returns to HGO to conduct this mystical production.

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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 713-228-6737. You can also email customercare@hgo.org. Throughout the season, the Center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. During performance runs, the Center is open until 6 p.m., and on performance days, it is open until curtain time. 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.

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Full-season and mini-package 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 the performance begins. 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.

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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 713-228-6737 for full details.

Descriptive services for persons with vision loss are available with 48-hour advance reservations. Please call 713-980-8662 for details.

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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.

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